

The DAWN

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY TEACH SERIES, Part 4

The Mission of the Church

“When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”
—Ephesians 4:8-12

WHEN OUR Lord Jesus was put to death as a malefactor by the cruel method of crucifixion, it seemed that the powers of darkness had triumphed, and that God's purpose to perfect saints for the work of the ministry of reconciliation had been defeated. But this seeming victory of the Adversary was short indeed, for our Lord was raised from the dead on the third day as it had been foretold that he would, and later he ascended on high.

By our Lord's resurrection and ascension a great victory was gained, for we are told that 'he led captivity captive', or, as the **Marginal** reference renders it, "He led a multitude of captives [purchased the whole race of mankind, captives to sin and death]." Beyond this great victory, he 'gave gifts unto men'. The purpose of his gifts to men was to carry out God's original design, which was to perfect saints for the work of the ministry of reconciliation and to edify or build up the body of Christ.

The task of developing and perfecting God's saints—his holy ones—has been a comparatively slow and difficult task. God did not choose to accomplish this tremendous task either by "might," or by "power," but, as he declared, "by my Spirit." (Zech. 4:6) It is God's Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the consecrated footstep followers of his Son that causes them "both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—Phil. 2:13

As the LORD's people are influenced and led by the Holy Spirit they become interested in carrying out his plans and purposes. Their Heavenly Father's interests become their interests. So when we speak of the church's mission being that of perfecting the saints for the future work of service, it is understood that this is also God's mission for the church, that there is a oneness of purpose between God and his people, the same oneness that exists between the Heavenly Father and his Only Begotten Son.

The LORD foresaw the needs of the church, and provision was made for those needs. In order for the LORD's people to understand the Word of God, they would need apostles to outline and declare the basic faith of the saints; they would need prophets—expounders—to proclaim the Word of truth; they would need evangelists to "teach [disciple] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19); they would need pastors, or shepherds, individuals to visit, encourage, strengthen, hold together, and defend the flock of God; they would need teachers to instruct them in the proper understanding of the truth contained in the Scriptures. Therefore the LORD 'gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers'. Provided in this way, the church could carry out its mission.

Before anyone can be trained and prepared for the future work of service, he must first become a disciple of Christ. This requires the work of the evangelists. Their duty is to make disciples of those who will receive their message. The

word disciple signifies 'pupil', and those interested through the evangelists are as pupils in the primary department of the school of Christ. As they become instructed in righteousness, their full consecration is in order, as represented in baptism—death to self and to the world—buried with Christ by baptism into his death.—Rom. 6:3-5

Those who go this far, who respond to the preaching of the Gospel and inquire concerning the way, the truth, the life, and who, with true repentance from sin, desire to become disciples of Christ, and who then take this step of consecration, are baptized thereby into the church, 'the Body of Christ'. Paul's words, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular," then applies to them.—I Cor. 12:27

These do not need their names written on any earthly roll or register. The names of such, we are told, are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. (Rev. 21:27) Concerning those who are faithful to their covenant, the Master said, "I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (Rev. 3:5) The seal of their acceptance is the Holy Spirit, whose leadings and instructions and marks of character daily become more and more discernible to them and to others, as they thereafter seek to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Once begotten of the Holy Spirit, these consecrated followers of the Master are then in a position to begin their preparation for the future work of service which will take place in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. In all good schools, the students are first taught the principles of the subject they are studying, and then they are given problems to solve, or laboratory experiments to perform, that they may thoroughly acquaint themselves with their subject, both in theory and in practice. Christians in the school of Christ are also first given rules and commandments by which to live, then they are tested in the world, which we might speak of as being God's laboratory.

As students of the Word of God, which is the 'textbook' used in the school of Christ, they become acquainted with God's wonderful plan of salvation, and the boundless love that prompted God to give his Only Begotten Son to make possible the salvation of the world. They learn of the perfect attributes of God's character, which are Love, Wisdom, Justice, and Power. They learn of Jesus' faithfulness in carrying out the will of God—how he "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" (Heb. 1:9); how, "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8); and how he "poured out his soul unto death." (Isa. 53:12) In a word, we might say that these must learn and prove "what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:2

Upon learning the plan, character, and will of God, pupils in the school of Christ are required to act in conformity with their Christian education. When the faithful students in this school learn of God's wonderful plan of salvation, they are commissioned by the Holy Spirit to proclaim it to others, "to preach good tidings unto the meek; . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the Day of Vengeance [against all evil] of our God; to comfort all that mourn." (Isa. 61:1,2) When they learn of God's perfect and holy character they are told, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) When they learn God's will to be "even . . . [their] sanctification," they are then expected to become completely sanctified.—I Thess. 4:3

In that the church is being prepared for their future work of service, it is befitting, indeed, that they should be thoroughly trained for the service, for the ministry of reconciliation, and that they shall then be called upon to perform. What better training could the church have for their future work of service than to engage in that work even now!

Ah! but one might say, "Now is not the time for the world to be reconciled to God. How can we engage in that ministry now?" Nonetheless, we have the apostle's declaration that God "hath given to us [the church] the ministry of reconciliation; . . . and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:18-20) Verse 20 in *Wilson's Diaglott* reads: "On behalf of Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors; as if God were inviting through us, we entreat, on behalf of Christ—be you reconciled to God." Even though the present time is not for the conversion of the world, nor for their atonement with God, yet from the apostle's words we gather that it is the church's privilege to go forth with the 'word of reconciliation', saying, 'be ye reconciled to God'.

If the joyful message were appreciated it would bring ready response from every place; but alas, it was, and still is, rejected. Nor should this seem strange; for the prophet, speaking for the 'royal priesthood' cried, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the Arm of the LORD revealed?" (Isa. 53:1) The Arm of Jehovah—Christ, the power of God—offers salvation to as many as believe his report—even as many as the LORD our God calls to be of the royal priesthood; for "no man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God."—Acts 2:39; Heb. 5:4

Salvation can be had at the present time through Christ, but only at the cost of entire self-denial and complete acquiescence to the Heavenly Father's will. The way that leads to life at the present time is said to be "narrow." (Matt. 7:14) For this reason it becomes a "savour of death unto death" to those who know it not, and a savor of "life unto life" to those who realize it. (II Cor. 2:16) In that men are frantically trying to save and preserve their lives, it is no wonder that baptism into Christ's death is offensive and obnoxious to them.

Under present circumstances, with sin abounding in the world, the faithful 'ambassadors' of God, in Christ's name and stead—as members of his body—are hated and persecuted, even as were their Lord and his apostles. Hence the measure of self-sacrifice and suffering for Christ endured by each of these becomes a measure from God's standpoint of the faithfulness of each as an ambassador.

Those who have faithfully engaged in the ministry of reconciliation, or atonement, under the adverse conditions of this Gospel Age, shall have received the necessary schooling and training to qualify them for their future work of service. We see how wonderful has been the training and perfection of the saints for this future work of service.

DEVELOPING EVERY GRACE

Our Lord gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, not only for the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service, but also for "the edifying of the body of Christ." The apostle declared that the usefulness of these 'gifts' to the church would not cease until "we all come, in [or into] the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."—Eph. 4:12,13

The apostle apparently realized that before the 'body of Christ' could be properly built up or edified, a unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God would be requisite. Without this unity of faith and knowledge, they would be as "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." (Eph. 4:14) Once established in doctrine, every member of the church could then properly develop into a 'perfect man', unto the 'measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'. This, of course, implies the development of all the graces and fruits of the Holy Spirit.

In order for the Christian to develop every grace, he must put off the 'works of the flesh', and become filled with God's Holy Spirit. If God's Holy Spirit is allowed to have free course in a Christian's life, unhindered by other influences,

it will result in the development of the 'fruit of the Spirit'. The Apostle Paul tells us that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. 5:22,23) The development of the fruitage and graces of the Holy Spirit results in that "holiness without which no man shall see the LORD." (Heb. 12:14) It has been the mission of the church, then, to develop in herself every grace—else she could never be accepted of him who loved her and bought her with his blood.

How can the church develop in herself every grace? Surely not by each member isolating himself from the other members of the church—the body of Christ. No, rather by their gathering together unto the Lord, and with the fellow-members of his body. By this means they can encourage one another "unto love and to good works." (Heb. 10:24) The apostle emphasizes the need of interdependence within the body of Christ. He says: "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."—Eph. 4:16

The Master used the illustration of a vine and its branches, to show his relationship to the church and their dependence upon him. He said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. . . . He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."—John 15:1-5

The graces that the church is to develop in herself may be summed up in one crowning grace, which is love. Faith, hope, joy, etc., are the result of love for our Father and our confidence in his love, as expressed in his promises to us. Love in its various phases constitutes the fruit which must

be found in every branch if it is to retain its place in the vine and be glorified with Christ.

Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that other things will do, and that we may pass the divine inspection without this fruit. The study of the truth, the proclamation of the truth, the good works unto all men, the laying down of our lives for the brethren, etc., are only acceptable to the Father in proportion as they are the results of this fruitage in our hearts. The apostle expresses this forcefully when he says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing."—I Cor. 13:3

We see, then, the thought is that we must cultivate in our hearts the graces of the Holy Spirit, and that we must have these graces in an abounding measure to be pleasing to the LORD. We must bear much fruit. The manifestation of this fruit, therefore, undoubtedly will be through various channels—laying down our lives for the brethren, opportunity by opportunity; doing good unto all men; proclaiming the truth; studying the truth. If we give our 'bodies to be burned' on God's altar of sacrifice through our faithfulness to the principles of righteousness and through our love and loyalty to the LORD, then happy are we indeed.

GOD'S WITNESS TO THE WORLD

In Matthew 24:14 we read, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Some feel that this text of Scripture has reference to the conversion of the world before the end of the Gospel Age. But **witnessing** to the world does not imply the **conversion** of the world. The text says nothing concerning the manner in which this testimony would be received. However, the context clearly shows that this witness would not result in the conversion of the world, but rather that the world would be in ignorance of the Lord's presence, even as the people in Noah's day 'knew not' of the Flood until it overwhelmed them.

So while the witness may have been given to all nations, yet this did not effect their conversion, nor even the illumination of their minds concerning Christ's Second Advent; otherwise, the "tribes of the earth" would not "mourn" when they see the "Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."—Matt. 24:30

The witness of the Gospel, which was to be preached in all the world, was not given until the nineteenth century. While the Early Church faithfully preached the 'Gospel of the kingdom', yet their proclamation fell short of being a 'witness unto all nations'. Nor are we to think of this witness as having been given during the time when the "woman" (the true church) fled into the wilderness condition, for within this same period God's "two witnesses," the Old and New Testaments, prophesied for "a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth [dead languages]." (Rev. 12:6; 11:3) It was not until the end of the 1,260 symbolic years—a day representing a year—which terminated in 1799, that the 'two witnesses' began to be translated into all languages and circulated worldwide.

The dawning of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a new era of liberty, and freedom of thought. The sacred Volume, which had been confined and kept covered in dead languages, began to be scattered by the millions, and in every nation and language. The British and Foreign Bible Society was established in 1803; the New York Bible Society in 1804; the Berlin-Prussian Bible Society in 1805; the Philadelphia Bible Society in 1808; and the American Bible Society in 1817. During the nineteenth century these societies accomplished a remarkable work. In 1861 their reports showed that the Gospel had been published in every language that was then known—though not all of earth's millions had received it. We believe that the Bible Societies' accomplishments fulfilled the conditions of the text (Matt. 24:14), for the Gospel of the kingdom was published and made available to every nation of the earth. It was to be, and

has been, a witness and a proclamation to the nations. And now the 'end' has come. The Master explained that "the harvest is the end of the world [age]." (Matt. 13:39) We see, then, that the witness given by the Gospel was not for the conversion of the world, but merely preparatory for the great harvest work which is taking place in this end of the age.

However, the fact that the witness which was to be given to all nations has already been accomplished does not in any way work contrary to the fact that the present mission of the church is still that of being God's witness to the world. While this work of witnessing may be considered as secondary when compared to the chief mission of the church to develop in herself every grace, yet it is important—so important, that the Master said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (John 18:37) Surely, all who have the spirit of the Master will also go out into the world and bear witness to the truth. In the Book of Revelation, even one of the means of identifying the great "Amen" is the succinct statement that he is "the faithful and true witness."—Rev. 3:14

When the 'witness' had been given to all nations, the 'end', which is the harvest, came. With the Chief Reaper then present, the cry went forth, "Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: . . . for the harvest of the earth is ripe." (Rev. 14:15) The 'sickle' which was to accomplish the harvest work, unmistakably is the truth—the harvest message. Hence, in order to accomplish the work of harvest, the mission of the church to be God's witness to the world became vitally important.

The true church has the spirit of the Master, who said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34) With this attitude of heart, the church at this end of the age engaged in the harvest work, which work they are expected not only to begin, but also to finish. 'Thrust in thy sickle'—proclaim or herald forth the present

truth message—is the cry to the Chief Reaper and also to the fellow-workers in the harvest time.

The effect of present truth as the reapers witness to it, is to “gather” the saints unto the LORD. (Ps. 50:5) Those who are in the proper attitude of mind and heart receive the truth with avidity, and joyfully desire to enter “in at the strait gate.” (Matt. 7:13-15) As they enter in at the ‘strait gate’ of consecration to the LORD, they find that the “way, which leadeth unto life,” is “narrow.” It is ‘narrow’ because it is a way of sacrifice. Those who have been reaped or gathered unto the LORD are, in turn, commissioned to join in the harvest work and to bear witness to the truth.

“When he [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” (John 16:8) This work of reproof, or convincing the world, is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. However, in that the world does not have God’s Holy Spirit, we conclude that the Holy Spirit must accomplish this work in a reflex manner. We understand that it is God’s Holy Spirit operating in his church which shines forth upon the darkness of the world. So then, as the church bears witness to the truth—as they let their light shine—as they live holy and godly lives, they are accomplishing a secondary mission which is that of reproof ‘the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’.

KINGS AND PRIESTS

In that the church is to be made “kings and priests unto God and his Father [the Father of Jesus Christ, vs. 5]” (Rev. 1:6), it is befitting, indeed, that she should be thoroughly prepared to discharge the duties of the office which she will hold. She will not take the office of “kings and priests” until after she will have been raised in the “first resurrection”—when “the second death” will have no power over her. The term of her office will last “a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

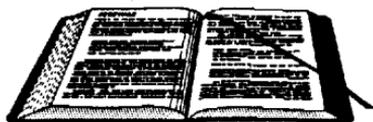
How does the church prepare to be the kings of the next age? Certainly not by trying to 'reign' as kings at the present time. The apostle, writing to the Corinthian brethren, said, "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us." (I Cor. 4:8) But he was merely reproving them ironically for endeavoring to assume a kingly office, whereas they should have been sacrificing, as was the apostle. Before the church can rule the world as 'kings' in the next age, they must first learn to rule their own "spirit." (Prov. 16:32) They must bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—II Cor. 10:5

Apparently the LORD also judges the church by her faithfulness in the use of the 'talents' that each possesses. In the parable of the talents this lesson is emphasized, for only those servants who had made good use of their talents—natural gifts or abilities—received the words of commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt. 25:21,23) So we see, then, that the LORD prepares the rulers and kings of the next age by training them to be faithful rulers over 'a few things' at the present time.

The church must also prepare to be the priests of the next age. They do this by becoming sacrificing under-priests in this present Gospel Age. This was all beautifully pictured in the Tabernacle arrangement of the Israelites. We understand that in that arrangement the Aaronic priesthood typified chiefly the humiliation and sufferings of the Christ. The sacrifice of the bullock and the LORD's goat—which respectively represent Jesus, the perfect man; and the church, the sacrificing followers of the Lord—constitute the sin-offering. (Lev. 16:11,15) The lesson to be gained from this type is that while the LORD's goat—illustrating the church—as part of the sin-offering, is filling up "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," they are also preparing to be the priests of the next age.—Col. 1:24

The priesthood of the next age is typified by Melchisedec, who was “king of Salem [city of peace], priest of the Most High God.” (Heb. 7:1) Having been recipients of the LORD’s goodness and mercy, the royal priesthood of the next age will extend mercy to the people. Once in glory, they will no longer be called upon to sacrifice on their own account. Rather, as shown in the sacrifices subsequent to the Day of Atonement, the people of the next age will present offerings and sacrifices to the royal priesthood.

As we review the mission of the church, we see how wonderfully the LORD has provided for her every need. Even the opposition of all the enemies of God could not thwart his glorious mission for the church; for our God is an infinite Sovereign, who causes even the wrath of man to praise him. As we are blessed with the understanding of these things, how can we help but sing, “Great and marvelous are thy works, LORD God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”—Rev. 15:3 ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 6—“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”—1 Peter 4:16 (Z. '96-166 Hymn 200)

APRIL 13—“Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”—John 6:53 (Z. '99-51 Hymn 190)

APRIL 20—“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”—Luke 16:10 (Z. '03-407 Hymn 134)

APRIL 27—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Philippians 2:5 (Z. '02-265 Hymn 136)



WHAT A SAVIOUR!

"MAN OF SORROWS!" WHAT A NAME FOR THE SON OF GOD WHO CAME
RUINED SINNERS TO RECLAIM! HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOUR!
BEARING SHAME AND SCOFFING RUDE, IN MY PLACE CONDEMNED HE
STOOD.

SEALED MY PARDON WITH HIS BLOOD; HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOUR!
GUILTY, VILE, AND HELPLESS, WE; SPOTLESS LAMB OF GOD WAS HE.

"FULL ATONEMENT!" CAN IT BE? HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOUR!
LIFTED UP WAS HE TO DIE, "IT IS FINISHED," WAS HIS CRY.

NOW IN HEAVEN EXALTED HIGH, HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOR!
WHEN HE COMES, OUR GLORIOUS KING, ALL HIS RANSOMED HOME TO
BRING

THEN ANEW THIS SONG WE'LL SING: HALLELUJAH! WHAT A SAVIOUR!

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDY LESSONS

LESSON FOR APRIL 2

Building Up the Body

KEY VERSE: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."—I Corinthians 12:7

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 12:4-20,26

WHEN THE HOLY Spirit came upon the disciples of the Early Church, it resulted in giving inspiration to the 'twelve apostles of the Lamb'. Through their inspired teachings other servants became qualified to minister to the church. Through their various capacities, the Holy Spirit of the truth was used for the building up of the entire New Creation class.

Paul explains that these "gifts" were provided "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:12,13) The church was baptized with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and that baptism carried with it certain miraculous 'gifts'—such as speak-

ing with tongues, the ability to perform miracles, etc. These gifts came principally upon the apostles, and could be imparted to others by the laying on of their hands. Except for the apostles, those receiving these gifts from God could not pass them on to others.

A useful purpose was served in the Early Church by these gifts. On the Day of Pentecost, the gift of tongues enabled the apostles to witness the truth concerning Jesus to Jews gathered at Jerusalem from all over the then-known world—Jews, many of whom may have understood only the language of the countries in which they were dwelling. The gift of tongues continued to serve a useful purpose until there were believers in each territory who knew the language there spoken. As the New Creation class spread out into the vari-

ous countries, and the church became established, the need for the gift of tongues no longer existed.

The ability to perform miracles was also a great aid in connection with the establishment of the Early Church. Those early believers were in a very hostile world. They were scorned and persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles, and the miracle-working power of the apostles was a source of encouragement to all the believers, confirming their faith that the cause in which they had enlisted was the LORD's, and that the great God of Israel would not allow it to fail. Miracles also served to witness to an unbelieving and gainsaying world. But when the church became better established, this gift also ceased to function.

Directing his words to the entire church throughout the Gospel Age, Paul wrote: "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."—I Cor. 12:27,28

After mentioning the various gifts which were beneficial

to the Early Church and later ceased, Paul concluded with advice as to how the Holy Spirit, and its fruits, would be the ultimate unifying influence, and it is still with the church to this day. He said, "Yet show I unto you a more excellent way." (I Cor. 12:31) This is the last verse of the chapter, and in the first verse of the next chapter, Paul begins to enlarge upon that 'more excellent way', which he reveals to be the way of love. Love is an 'excellent way' because it is the way of God, who so loved the world that he gave his Son to redeem mankind from sin and death. It is the way of Christ, whose love prompted him to lay down his life for all mankind.

If we are to remain in Christ and to be perfected as part of God's New Creation by the Holy Spirit of truth, the 'more excellent way' of love must become our way. We will be one with Jesus and one with the Father, as they are one. May the Holy Spirit of truth, by which the whole body of Christ is baptized, continue to work in us for the accomplishment of this divinely foreordained condition of eternal membership in God's New Creation! ■

Growing through Worship

KEY VERSE: "How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying."—I Corinthians 14:26

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 14:20-33

BY WAY OF commentary on this selection of Scripture, we quote from a book entitled, "*The New Creation*," which gives much good advice regarding the conduct and character of Bible studies.

"The LORD's injunction, through the apostle[s], respecting the assembling of his people, is in full accord with his own words, 'Where two or three of you are met in my name, there am I in the midst'. (Matt. 18:20) The object of these gatherings is clearly indicated; they are for mutual advancement in spiritual things —opportunities for provoking or inciting each other unto more and more love for the LORD and for each other, and to increased good works of every kind that would glorify our Father, that would bless the brotherhood, and that would do good unto all men as we have opportu-

nity. He who says, I love God, yet hateth his brother, knows not what he says, and deceives himself. (I John 4:20) Similarly mistaken, we believe, are those who say, 'I long to be with the LORD and to enjoy his blessing and fellowship', if they meantime neglect opportunities to meet with the brethren, and do not enjoy their company and fellowship.

"In the Early Church we have the example of the apostles as special teachers. We have the example of the elders, doing pastoral work, evangelistic work, and prophesying or public speaking; and from one illustration, given with particularity in I Corinthians 14, we may judge that each member of the church was encouraged by the apostles to stir up whatever talent and gift he might possess, to glorify the LORD and

to serve the brethren—thus to exercise himself and to grow strong in the LORD and in the truth, helping others and being helped in turn by others. This account of an ordinary church meeting in the apostle's day could not be followed fully and in detail today, because of the peculiar gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the Early Church temporarily for the convincing of outsiders, as well as for personal encouragement at a time when, without these gifts, it would have been impossible for any of the number to be edified or profited to any extent. We can draw from this early custom, approved by the apostle, certain valuable and helpful lessons, which can be appreciated by the little companies of the LORD's people everywhere. . . .

"The chief lesson is that of mutual helpfulness, 'building one another up in the most holy faith'. It was not the custom for one or even several of the elders to preach regularly, nor to do, or attempt to do, all the edifying or building up. It was the custom for each member to do his part, the parts of

the elders being more important according to their abilities and gifts; and we can see that this would be a very helpful arrangement and bring a blessing not only to those who heard, but also to all participating. And who does not know that even . . . the most illiterate person may, if his heart be full of love for the LORD and devotion to him, communicate thoughts which will be precious to all who may hear.

The class of meetings here described by the apostle evidently was a sample of the majority of meetings held by the church. The account shows that it was a mixed meeting, at which, . . . one might exhort, another might expound, another might offer prayer, another propose a hymn, another read a poem, . . . in harmony with the topic of the meeting; another might quote some Scriptures bearing on the topic under discussion, and thus the LORD might use each and all of these members of the church in mutual edification, mutual upbuilding."—*Excerpts from pages 309-313* ■

FOR MORE ON this subject, we recommend the book, "The New Creation," which can be obtained for \$3.00 per copy, by writing Dawn Publications, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

Becoming a Resurrection People

KEY VERSE: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the LORD."—I Corinthians 15:58

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:1-11; I Corinthians 15:12,17,56-58

IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE that there should have been some in the church at Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection, but apparently it was so. And it is this that forms the background for Paul's masterful presentation of this basic teaching of Christianity as we find it in I Corinthians 15. "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" he asks.—vs. 12

God's holy prophets taught the resurrection, yet the Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not accept this teaching. Perhaps some of these, attracted by the moral and ethical teachings of Christ, had feigned belief in him, and had associated themselves with the Corinthian brethren, yet had brought their unbelief into the church.

Paul's reasoning on the issue was logical and to the

point. If there is no resurrection of the dead, he argued, it would mean that Christ is not risen. (vs. 13) If this be true, he added, "Your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."—vss. 17-20

It was after Peter preached his wonderful sermon on restitution that the "priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Acts 3:19-21; 4:1,2) The priests and captain [*Margin, ruler*] of the temple properly believed in the resurrection, but they were opposed to the

idea that it would be through Christ. However, as the Scriptures clearly teach, this is God's arrangement for fulfilling his promises to restore the dead to life. Because Jesus took the sinner's place in death, he now possesses "the keys of hell and of death."—Rev. 1: 18

Paul says that Jesus became the 'firstfruits' of them that slept. This implies afterfruits; so he adds, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (vss. 20-23) The 'firstfruits' of the resurrection include the body members of Christ, for they share in his resurrection. (Rom. 6:5; Col. 3:1-4; James 1:18; Rev. 14:4) The use of the word 'firstfruits' is based upon God's typical dealings with Israel, and Jesus was the "first of the firstfruits."—Exod. 34:26

After the firstfruits, there is the resurrection of those who will become Christ's during his Second Presence. The word 'coming' in verse 23, obscures the meaning of Paul's explanation. In the Greek text it is *parousia*, meaning 'presence'. The pe-

riod of Christ's presence to which Paul refers is Christ's thousand-year kingdom. "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."—vss. 24,25

In the resurrection, Paul explains, some will be given "celestial [or, heavenly] bodies"; while others will have "terrestrial [or human] bodies." (vss. 39-42) "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," writes Paul. (vs. 50) This refers to those who inherit the rulership of the kingdom. All the subjects of the kingdom will be 'flesh and blood', or humans. These will be raised from the dead during the period of the kingdom.

But the consummation of the divine plan must wait until all of the 'firstfruits' class have been exalted to glory. Then the promises of 'restitution' will begin to be fulfilled. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?" (vss. 54,55) "He will swallow up death in victory." (Isa. 25:8) "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death."—Hos. 13:14 ■

Exercising Christian Freedom

KEY VERSE: "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak."—I Corinthians 8:9

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: I Corinthians 8:1-13

IT SEEMS EVIDENT that liberty in Christ is something quite apart from the ordinary human concept of liberty. When Jesus said to those who believed on him, that they would know the truth and that the truth would make them free, they replied, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" Jesus' answer to this question was, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:32-36) The thought here is clear. Our liberty in Christ is freedom from control by the great taskmaster, Sin. This taskmaster is referred to in Romans 6:6,7 as the "body of sin" which is to be destroyed as a result of Christ's crucifixion, and our

crucifixion with Christ. Paul explains that being crucified with Christ means that we are "dead," and those who are thus dead, he says, are "freed [*Margin*, 'justified'] from sin." In verse 12 Paul admonishes, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

To be free from the taskmaster, Sin, does not mean that sin has been destroyed in our mortal body. It simply means that we have been made free from the penalty of sin, which is death. It means that by divine grace we are not condemned because of our unwilling imperfections so long as we bend every effort to keep the body under and bring it into subjection to righteousness. We are not to continue willingly in sin "that grace [forgiveness for those sins] may abound." (Rom. 6:1) Indeed, should we take this attitude of willfulness, grace

through Christ would cease to abound. We have not been made free from the struggle against sin.

Jesus said that if we continue in his Word, we will be his disciples, will know the truth, and the truth shall make us free. The words of Jesus, his commandments which outline the will of God for his people, make up this perfect law, and it is obedience to this law which makes us free from the law of sin and death—hence it is the law of liberty. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."—Rom. 8:1

Our text deals with an excellent example of self-sacrifice in the restraint of liberty. In this case the liberty referred to is freedom from the power of superstition, a freedom that is gained through knowledge—a knowledge that while there are many heathen gods to which idols are ascribed and worshiped, actually there is but the one true and living God. This being so, the offering of meat to a lifeless idol, which represents a nonexistent god, in no way affects the meat, so no harm, morally or otherwise, can come from eating such meat.

But Paul pointed out that the liberty of action resulting

from knowledge should not be used if its use would cause a weaker brother to stumble. The lesson is that there are conditions under which it is best voluntarily to refrain from doing what would be the most pleasing to ourselves, even though it would be right, in order to be of more service to others. This simply means that the liberty of action which we attain through a knowledge of the truth should not be considered more important than the spiritual welfare of our brethren. We cannot insist on exercising our own liberty—regardless of the effect it may have upon others—and still be pleasing to the LORD.

Liberty in Christ is a freedom from the condemnation of sin based upon believing in Christ and obeying his commandments, of which love is the prime factor. Its emphasis is not on liberty of action. Indeed, the Christian's personal liberties are often curtailed by the law of love, for it is a daily laying down and giving up, a continual foregoing of our own preferences so that others might be blessed. Those who have taken the Master's yoke have no liberty to go in any direction other than the way in which he went, and the way in which he leads us. ■

Sharing One Another's Pain

KEY VERSE: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—II Corinthians 1:3,4

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: II Corinthians 1:3-14

IN THIS LETTER to the brethren in the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul confessed how much their prayers had helped him to endure the afflictions which attended him on his ministry in Asia. He recognized that they had been used by 'the God of all comfort' as his ministers of consolation. Other Scriptures inform us that giving comfort is a commission incumbent upon all of those who have received the Holy Spirit.

A prophecy bearing on this point in the Book of Isaiah reads: "The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the accept-

able year of the LORD, and the Day of Vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." (Isa. 61:1,2) Jesus applied this prophecy to his own ministry as it was directed by the Holy Spirit of God. And likewise it applies to all who share in his ministry.

Isaiah 61:3 mentions an aspect of service commissioned by the Holy Spirit as the comforting of those in Zion who mourn, "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified." 'Zion' is one of the symbolic names which the Scriptures give to the spiritual phase of Christ's kingdom, and it often applies to the LORD's people who are now being prepared for the kingdom. These are the Zion class. The way of sacrifice in which they walk is a narrow, difficult one. Many, at times,

become temporarily discouraged, and need to be comforted; and everyone in the body is commissioned by the Holy Spirit to watch for those who need special help, and to give them all the assistance possible.

We find examples of this in the New Testament. In Galatians 6:9 we read, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Hebrews 12:3 says, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." And then we have that timely admonition by James, an 'anointing' text, admonishing us to comfort those in Zion who mourn: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the LORD: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick [Greek, 'wearied'], and the LORD shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."—James 5:14, 15

James says that the LORD shall 'raise him up'. Isaiah states that those who are given the 'oil of joy for mourning, the garment of

praise for the spirit of heaviness', shall be called 'trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD'. In other words, we are commissioned to do all we can to assist those who mourn, who are weary in well-doing, or in any way are spiritually sick. And where the heart is right the LORD will give strength so that the 'lame' will not be turned out of the way but will remain 'the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified'.

The LORD assures his people of his help and comfort during this time when they are being prepared for kingdom glory. No wonder the apostle said that the 'oil' which anointed Jesus to his high position in the kingdom was the "oil of gladness"! (Heb. 1:9) Since we share in the same anointing, it will be gladness for us also—joy unspeakable—as we participate with our Lord in wiping tears from the faces of all who mourn, by destroying the cause of their mourning; that is, by destroying sin and death, and all the evils which, throughout the ages, have continued to plague a sin-sick and dying race. What a comfort we find in this glorious prospect! ■

“The Intents of the Heart”

“The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”

—Hebrews 4:12,13

THE SCRIPTURES MAKE it very clear that the great God of the universe, our Heavenly Father, is able to know our every thought and motive, that there is nothing which can be hidden from him. Even without the Bible to confirm it, reason alone would tell us that the Creator of that marvelous mechanism which we call the brain would be able to read the thoughts which it records, and understand thoroughly just what motives inspire those thoughts.

We are unable to know what is in the mind of another except as it is revealed by word or deed. Much less are we able to know the motives which prompt another to speak or act as he does. In general we can at best gain only a superficial understanding of others, as we note what they say and do. Because of this limitation, fallen humanity has passed many wrong judgments, which, in turn, have led to much that has been unkind and frequently unjust.

When Samuel was sent by the LORD to anoint a king for Israel to take the place of Saul, he was reminded as he was making the selection from among the sons of Jesse that he was not to be guided by outward appearance, for the LORD—who would indicate his choice—looked upon the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7) David was the LORD's choice, a man who at the time was considered the least likely prospect of all the sons of Jesse. (vs. 15-22) But the LORD knew David's heart. It was this knowledge of David's true heart loyalty that caused the LORD later to be merciful to him when, through the weakness of the flesh, he committed gross sins.

We should never overlook the fact that all our thoughts and motives are 'naked' before the LORD, that there is nothing we can do to hide them from him. The realization of this will, on the one hand, help us to scrutinize our thoughts and motives very carefully; and, at the same time, be an encouragement as we realize that our mistakes and failures are not of the heart, and that He with whom we have to do knows this, and is dealing with us accordingly.

The encouraging aspect of this is mentioned particularly by Paul in the verses following our text. He writes, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. 4:14-16

From God's standpoint we can 'come boldly' to the throne of grace because we know that through the blood of his Son we can plead mercy and forgiveness for all our unwilling sins. From our own standpoint this bold approach to the throne of grace is possible if we know that our motives are pure in all we say and do.

Not only do we need to keep our motives unselfish and pure, but we also have a responsibility in training our desires in keeping with the expressed will of God as it is clearly set forth in his Word. Our text declares that God's Word is 'a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'.

It is not enough that we be sincere in what we say and do. Saul of Tarsus was sincere in persecuting the disciples of Jesus, but he was wrong. As we progress in the Christian way, various situations will arise in which we will need to take action. It would be quite possible to decide on a certain course which, according to our imperfect reasoning, would seem quite proper, but would it be pleasing to the LORD? Doubtless there are times in every Christian's life when the simple question, "What would the LORD have me do in this situation?" would suggest an outcome much more to the glory of the LORD.

Jesus is our true and perfect Exemplar. His heart was pure in the sight of his Heavenly Father, and his perfect humanity responded with ready obedience to every holy impulse of his heart. His thoughts were 'naked'—completely uncovered—before his Heavenly Father, and he was glad to have it that way. Prophetically Jesus is represented as saying in prayer to his Father, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest."—Ps. 40:9

Here Jesus particularly mentions his faithfulness in bearing witness to the kingdom message, and through this message declaring the 'righteousness' of his Heavenly Father. Jesus knew that he had been faithful in this service. He realized that his Heavenly Father also knew this. "Thou knowest," he said to Jehovah. Let us strive more earnestly that we may be this confident about ourselves.

In the light of what we have done today to preach 'righteousness in the great congregation', we can with confidence sincerely look up into the face of our Father in

heaven and say, "Thou knowest." He knows, of course, whether or not we acknowledge it. But if we do the very best we can we will be glad that he knows—glad because deep down in our hearts we are confident that we have done the very best we could. Then we can go to the LORD in prayer and say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts."—Ps. 139:23

When Jesus was on earth, he was able to read the thoughts and intents of the hearts of others. This in part was due to his perfection, but more particularly it was through the power of the Holy Spirit. He knew that Judas was plotting against him. He knew the thoughts and heart condition of Zacchaeus, referring to him as a "son of Abraham," and to Nathanael as an "Israelite indeed."—Luke 19:2-10; John 1:47

How much the apostles as a whole realized before Jesus' death and resurrection this miraculous power which their Master possessed is not clear; but Peter certainly became convinced of it, and so testified after Jesus was raised from the dead. This was when Jesus appeared to them early one morning on the shore of Galilee. The apostles had decided to return to their fishing business, and had been out in their boats with their nets all night, but had caught no fish.

In the morning they saw a 'stranger' on the shore, to whom, upon questioning, they confided their lack of success. The stranger suggested that they drop their net on the other side of the boat, which they did, and to their great surprise it was quickly filled with fish. A similar miracle had occurred when Jesus first called them to follow him, so they knew that this again was Jesus on the shore. Peter swam ashore in haste to meet and fellowship with the Master.

They ate a meal together there on the shore, and after that Jesus entered into a very personal conversation with Peter. He "saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter's reply was, "Yea, Lord;

thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus asked the same question again, and received the same reassuring reply.

Again, the third time, Jesus asked, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" We read that then Peter was grieved, "and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." (John 21:1-17) What a wonderful confession of faith in the Master's ability! And Peter's realization that Jesus did know all things, and could read his heart, made him wonder why he had been asked the same question three times. Peter's confidence in the Master's ability to read his heart intentions, was based on experience. On the night before the crucifixion Peter had assured Jesus that even though others might forsake him, he would not, that he would gladly die for him. Peter sincerely meant this. But Jesus knew something which Peter did not as yet even suspect. He knew that when the test came, Peter would deny him.

That Jesus knew this in advance, and foretold it, evidently made a very vivid impression on Peter's mind. When Peter said to Jesus, that morning on the shore of Galilee, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," it seems reasonable to suppose that his mind was reverting to those experiences of the night before the crucifixion. Jesus had then demonstrated that he did know 'all things' insofar as Peter's thoughts and reactions were concerned. And Peter was assured that Jesus still knew every thought and intention of his heart.

Nor was Peter ashamed to have Jesus know what was in his heart. This was the important consideration for Peter. Previous to the crucifixion Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." In Gethsemane he commanded him to put up his sword. Jesus had thwarted Peter's efforts to save him from the hands of his enemies. Considering Peter's impetuous nature, this could easily have left a wound in his heart, perhaps even a trace of resentment. But not so.

By now Peter realized that he could hide nothing from his Lord and Master, hence his outburst, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Paraphrasing Peter's words: "You can look down into the deepest recesses of my heart. You know every motive and emotion that is there. Knowing this, you know that I love you more than I love life itself."

Yes, Jesus did know what was in Peter's heart, and he knows what is in our hearts. In the resurrection, Jesus was exalted to the divine nature and to the express image of the Heavenly Father's person! And it is as true of him as it is of Jehovah that all our thoughts, and the very intents of our hearts, are open and naked before him. In fact, he knows and understands us better than we do ourselves. This would be a terrifying thought if we did not know that he is sympathetic and compassionate, and understanding of our imperfect, fallen flesh.

On the Isle of Patmos the resurrected and glorified Jesus communicated with the Apostle John, presenting to him the marvelous visions recorded in the Book of Revelation. Notable among the truths conveyed to John are the messages to the 'seven churches' of Asia Minor, which are recorded in chapters two and three of the Book. These seven churches, we believe, are also symbolic of seven stages in the development of the professed Christian church throughout the Gospel Age.

However, it is also evident that many of the conditions described in these seven churches, and certainly the promises made to each of them, are true of all. One thing common with respect to all seven of these churches is Jesus' statement, "I know thy works." Whether it was the Early Church, or the church at this end of the age, it was, and is, true of Jesus.

To the first of the seven churches Jesus said, "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and

(Cont'd on Page 36)

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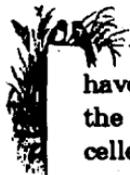
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Nashville WSM 650 7:45 p.m.

VIRGINIA

Richmond WGGM 820 7:45 a.m.

WASHINGTON

Spokane KAQQ 590 7:00 a.m.

... WORLDWIDE RADIO BROADCASTS

CANADA

ALBERTA

Banff CFHC 1340 11:45 a.m.
Brooks CIBQ 1340 8:00 a.m.
Canmore CFNC 1450 11:45 a.m.
Stettler CKFQ 1400 7:45 a.m.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Duncan CKAY 1500 9:00 a.m.
Duncan CKAY 1500 7:30 p.m.
Grand Forks
CKGF 1340 9:00 a.m.

Qualicum-Parksville

CHPQ 1370 9:30 p.m.

MANITOBA

Winnipeg CKJS 810 9:00 a.m.

ONTARIO

St. Thomas CHLO 1570 10:45 a.m.

SASKATCHEWAN

Rosetown CJYM 1330 9:45 a.m.
Weyburn CFSL 1190 8:45 a.m.
Estevan CJSL 1280 8:45 a.m.



Argentina (Spanish)

Buenos Aires (Sat.) fm Malvinas
91.5 mHz 10:00 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.

British West Indies

Trinidad Radio Trinidad 610
10:30 p.m.

Chile (Spanish)

Talcahuano Radio Almirante Latarre

Costa Rica (Spanish)

San José Radio Sonorara
105.9 fm & 700 am 6:15 a.m.

Mexico (Spanish)

Culiacán Ranchera
XECQ 8:30 a.m.
Guadalajara XEWK 1130 8:30 a.m.
Monterrey XHSR fm 10:00 a.m.
Torreón KETB 1360 8:15 a.m.
Tuxtla Gutierrez
XEON 730 7:30 a.m.

Nigeria

Radio Africa (Thurs.) 7:45 p.m.

Panama (Spanish)

Panama City (Fri.)
HOQ 1250 6:15 p.m.

Peru (Spanish)

Trujillo 105.7 fm
9:30 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.

Philippines

Manila (Sat.) DZAM
1026kHz 7:15 p.m.

South Africa

Swaziland SWAZI
Commercial Radio 1400 am
Shrtwave 49m 6156 kHz 8:15 p.m.

Uruguay (Spanish)

Radio CX32 1170 kHz 9:00 a.m.

(Cont'd from Page 31)

how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars. And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted."—Rev. 2:3,4

To the angel of the church in Thyatira, the Lord said, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." (Rev. 2:19) These are wonderful commendations. He who knows everything about his people, who understands every innermost thought and intention, could say to these faithful brethren that they had increased in their works, charity, service, faith, and patience, and that the last was more than the first! How we long to be worthy of such a commendation as this! If we were enthusiastic at the beginning of our journey, why, with the faithful leadings of the Lord throughout our life, should we not have that love continually increase, filling and controlling us more and more completely as the days go by?

As we have noted, the promises given through the angels of the seven churches apply to true believers. To the angel of the church at Sardis, Jesus said, "I know thy works. . . . Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." (Rev. 3:1-4) As in the days of the Sardis Church, so now, it is only the few, a 'little flock' who keep their garments unspotted from the world. Are we among those so described? When today the Lord says, "I know thy works," does he see in us that purity of heart and life, that unselfish devotion to him and to his cause that keeps us completely separate from the world and the spirit of the world?

This is the Christian's earnest desire and goal. We want to be worthy of hearing the words, that we have not defiled our garments, and that we will walk with him in white, because this means that we will have attained that goal, and

are like our Lord, our Exemplar. We will receive "power over the nations," not just to rule them, but to bless them, even as our Lord received of his Father. (Rev. 2:26,27) Those who are faithful until death will be found worthy to be clothed in white raiment, and to have their names written in the Book of Life. They will experience the ineffable joy of hearing the Lord confess their names before his Father, and before his angels. (Rev. 3:5) As the poet wrote: "Oh, LORD, thy promised grace impart, and fill [our] consecrated heart[s]," that we may be found worthy to experience these ineffable joys, which are incomprehensible to the human mind!

To the church at Philadelphia, the Lord made the promise, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, . . . which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." (Rev. 3:11,12) We know that the New Jerusalem which will come down from God out of heaven will be prepared as a "bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:1-7) If we are to be part of that bride, we must be made ready, and remain faithful.—Rev. 19:7; 21:2,9,10

Now that we are at the end of the age when our Lord is again present with his people, we have heard him say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Rev. 3:20) We are rejoicing in this feast of present truth. It is through this feasting that we have learned to know Jesus so intimately. This makes us want more than ever to be overcomers, and to sit with our Lord on his throne, even as he is now set down with his Father in his throne.—vs. 21

Our prayer is that we will faithfully hear and obey and remain faithful unto death to 'what the Spirit saith unto the churches'. ■

“I Will . . . Sup with Him”

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”
—Revelation 3:20

THESE INTIMATE WORDS of the Master are addressed to the “church of the Laodiceans” (vs. 14), and they clearly apply to his followers at the end of the Gospel Age, the time of his Second Presence. The precious truth concerning Christ’s Second Presence is presented in the Scriptures in many and varied ways, for there is no one manner of expression, and no single symbolism, that could adequately convey to our finite minds all that is involved in the great *parousia* truth.

He comes as a “thief in the night” (I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10)—that is one way of expressing it—and from this symbolic language we gather the idea that only those who are awake and watching are aware of his return. But there is more than that to it—more than merely the fact that some know about his return, and some do not. The parable of the virgins reveals that when the Bridegroom returns, those who are ready go in with him to the marriage, while the foolish virgins who have no “oil” in their “vessels” have to remain outside in the darkness.—Matt. 25:1-13

Then there are the parables of the pounds and the talents, both teaching us that when the Lord returns there is a

reckoning with his servants, and the rewarding of those who have been faithful. Again, there is that prophecy of Paul's, which informs us that when the time came for the Lord to descend from heaven, the dead in Christ would rise first, and that those who were alive would remain for a time until they were 'caught up', or exalted to be with the Lord in the 'air', or spiritual phase of the kingdom.

It is to these that the Master addresses himself in the words of our text: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." This expression clearly indicates the fact of his presence, and at the same time emphasizes that the only ones who will appreciate this vital dispensational truth would be those who were willing, when they heard his knock, to open the doors of their hearts and allow the great fact of his presence to possess their lives. There have been many already throughout the period of his *parousia* who have learned of his return, yet have failed to appreciate the importance of this great truth because they have not invited the Master to come into their lives in the full sense of the word.

"IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE"

The construction of our text indicates that the terms 'knock' and 'voice' are synonymous in meaning—"I stand at the door and knock", 'if any man hear my voice'. This suggests that the knock by which the Master announces his presence is in reality his 'voice', and throughout the Scriptures a voice is used to symbolize a message. The Lord's voice is the Lord's message, or the truth which he desires to convey to his servants.

There are certain fundamental characteristics concerning the voice of God by which it can be identified throughout all the ages. For example, the Apostle Peter tells us that the "times of restitution" had been "spoken by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) This same message was featured in the Master's ministry. It enters into the ministry of the apostles, and is prominently set forth in the Book of Revelation.

The voice of the LORD also has dispensational aspects. When Noah, for example, heard his voice, it was a message pertaining to the coming Flood, with instructions concerning what Noah was to do about it.

Abraham heard the voice of God. To him it was a promise of coming blessing through his seed; and, of immediate concern, the call to leave his own people and his father's house, and go to a land which the LORD would show him.

At the burning bush Moses heard the voice of the LORD, and the message pertained to the deliverance of the Hebrew children from their bondage in Egypt. As with Moses, so also with both Noah and Abraham, while it must have been a wonderful experience to hear the voice of the LORD speaking to them, yet it was costly, for it changed the whole course of their lives.

Each of the holy prophets, in turn, heard the voice of God speaking to them. Isaiah, for example, heard the voice out of the temple which he saw in vision, and a question was asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah knew that this question was meant for him. It was the LORD knocking at the door of his heart, and he replied, "Here am I; send me."—Isa. 6:8

Saul of Tarsus heard the voice of the Lord, and in his case a human instrument was sent to deliver the message. To Ananias the Lord said, "Go thy way. . . . For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."—Acts 9:15,16

Isaiah was given an important message to deliver to the LORD's people, and Paul was made a special apostle to the Gentiles. Thus in the case of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and Paul, particular truths were given to each in keeping with what the LORD wanted each one of them to do for him. And this is particularly true of the LORD's people during the time of the Master's Second Presence.

The Old Testament illustrations, which we have used to show what is meant by the voice of the LORD, have to do with Jehovah. But the principle is the same when Christ is involved, as in our text. He stands at the door, not merely of individual hearts, but of the Laodicean church. His knocking at that door is a 'dispensational' knocking, an announcement of his Second Presence. The only ones who receive the blessing from this announcement are those who hear his voice, his message, and not only hear it but respond to it in full consecration to do whatever the Master's will might be for them at this time.

Whether it be Jehovah, or his beloved Son, who speaks, it is for the purpose of inviting those who hear to cooperate in the divine arrangements. It means that there is a work to be done which human ambassadors are given the privilege of doing. That is what the voice of the LORD meant to all his faithful servants of old, and it is what the voice of the Master means to us today.

SERVICE BASED ON KNOWLEDGE

It is well to remember that when the LORD invites cooperation in the work he is doing, he enlightens his servants as to what he wants done, and how to do it. Some would have us believe that many of the LORD's people have served him blindly, spending time and energy and talent in doing things which were not the LORD's work at all, and that the LORD blessed them simply because they supposed they were doing his will. Such a viewpoint puts the LORD in the position of not being able to enlighten his servants, and thus less able to carry on his work than are the children of this world.

The purpose of all revealed truth concerning the divine plan is that those to whom the light is given might be able to cooperate intelligently with the LORD. This is particularly true during the time of the Lord's Second Presence. His 'voice', or message, makes known marvelous things pertaining to the divine plan, not merely to thrill those thus enlightened, although it does result in great rejoicing of heart, but

in order also that they might become acceptable co-workers with the LORD in the work that pertains to the end of the age.

And how marvelous are the truths which the 'voice' has made known to the saints in this time of the Master's *parousia*! First let us consider the fundamental characteristics of the voice of the LORD that can be identified in practically every message of the LORD from the very beginning—the glorious hope of restitution for the world of mankind. This great hope of the world was largely lost sight of during the Dark Ages, but because the return of the Lord Jesus marked the beginning of a transition period into the restitution age, it was due time that this message again be brought to the fore and publicized by our Lord's witnesses.

In order for the saints to be able to announce the incoming age of restitution, it was essential that this precious doctrine be restored to them. Let us not think for a moment that because restitution is not for us, we should not concern ourselves with it. Rather, we should keep it in the forefront of our message. It is 'meat in due season' because the LORD wants it proclaimed to the world.

"The harvest is the end of the world [age]" (Matt. 13:39), declared Jesus in his explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares. The Master's Second Presence is also at the end of the age, and he is the Chief Reaper in the harvest work. Appropriately, therefore, his voice announced the time for the beginning of the harvest, and in connection with that vital truth, the call to "come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. 18:4) To open the door and let the Master come in when this feature of his voice is heard, implies obedience to the call to come out of Babylon. And how richly the LORD has blessed those who have obeyed that call!

THE TIME OF TROUBLE

One of the strongest evidences that those rejoicing in the knowledge of present truth have indeed heard the voice of the returned Lord, is the outstanding manner in which world events have verified that part of the message pertaining to the coming of a "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1) This feature of the LORD's message was revealed to his servants, and published world-wide for many years during which the wise of this world—particularly the outstanding churchmen of the time—were emphasizing that the world was fast being Christianized, and that an era of universal peace was dawning. They scoffed at the idea that their boasted civilization was about to be destroyed. In view of what has already occurred, what better proof could we have that the 'voice' which was heard was truly that of the Master!

There is still another aspect to the voice of the Lord at this time—the voice of present truth. It is that which relates to the Jewish people and Israel. How little evidence there was at the beginning of the harvest of what we have now seen occur in connection with these people and their Promised Land! Yet, the 'voice' made it clear that the time had come when these developments should be expected. This great truth was accepted and proclaimed by those who heard the knock of the Master's Second Presence, and now their faith in what they heard and proclaimed has been vindicated.

"AND I . . . WILL SUP WITH HIM"

The Master promised that he would come in and sup with those who, when hearing his voice, opened their hearts to him. This language is similar to that contained in another promise he made. It is recorded in Luke 12:37,42. Here the Lord says that when he returned he would serve his people with "meat in due season," using a special steward of his own appointment to do this. (Matt. 24:45-47) There is, of course, a variation of thought in the two illustrations, for in one he sups with his people, and in the other he serves the

food to them. But in both illustrations the food undoubtedly is symbolic of the precious truths which are revealed to the LORD's people as a result of the Master's Second Presence. And how rich this portion of meat in due season has been, and how sweet the communion we have enjoyed with the Master as we have sat down to meat with him, and enjoyed his fellowship in the truth that has meant so much blessedness to the saints during this time of his *parousia*.—Dan. 12:10,12

The Master's promise recorded by Luke confirms the true meaning of our text by its reference to the Lord knocking when he returns. It reads, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." (Luke 12:35,36) It is those who 'open unto him immediately' when they hear the knock that are served with 'meat in due season'; and it is these also with whom the Lord sups, that is, who have the blessed privilege of communion with him.

"Let your loins be girded about," the Master admonished. The Apostle Peter picks up this illustration and enlarges upon it, saying, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 1:13) The 'revelation' of Jesus Christ here referred to is his *apokalupsis*, or 'disclosure', at his Second Presence. The Master discloses his presence to his faithful followers before his revelation to the world. He stands at the door and knocks for the very purpose of disclosing to those in the household that he has returned and is present, waiting to be admitted.

It is true, of course, that the Master revealed himself in glory to the risen saints when he returned, and in this full sense of the word his *apokalupsis* to the saints this side of the veil has not taken place, but he has, nevertheless, disclosed his presence to them. Throughout the entire harvest

period he has been standing at the door knocking, and those who have had hearing ears have recognized his voice, have opened to him, and together with him they have been enjoying the great feast of truth which has been spread before them.

What grace, what favor this has been! Nor tongue nor pen can describe the joy it has brought to all those who have responded to the Master's voice. Their entire outlook on life has been changed. Their questions have all been answered, and their doubts and their fears removed. May those of us who have experienced this marvelous grace of the Lord never lose sight of the importance of what it means in our lives. May the hearing of the voice of our present Lord never become a commonplace experience. May we never fail to realize how highly favored we have been above the world.

If we are losing our keen appreciation of the Master's 'voice'—the voice of present truth—we should consider for a moment what life would be like in this fear-filled and maniacal world of today if we knew nothing at all about the divine plan of the ages. How dark and uncertain everything then would be! Indeed, life would have little meaning, and the necessary daily humdrum to eke out an existence would seem empty and without purpose. It is the truth—the truth of the Master's presence—that gives the enlightened Christian of today a real hope and a noble purpose in life.

The rich feast of pure truth enjoyed by those who have responded to the Master's voice comprises not alone the dispensational features of the divine plan which pertain particularly to this end of the Gospel Age, but to the whole plan of God; for, in the light of the Lord's Second Presence, that plan has been clarified as never before.

The true nature and purpose of the creation of the earth and of man, has been made plain.

What constitutes the penalty for sin has been clarified, and the traditional theory of torment exposed for the blasphemy that it is.

Real meaning has been given to God's dealing with Abraham and his natural descendants, and the oath-bound covenant made with him revealed to contain an epitome of God's eternal purpose to bless all the families of the earth.

We have learned the purpose of God in entering into the Law Covenant with the nation of Israel—that it was to serve as a “schoolmaster” to reveal the need of the redemptive work of Christ.—Gal. 3:24

We have come to understand clearly why Jesus died, and just how his death provides for the release of all mankind from the great prison-house of death. (Isa. 42:7; 61:1-3) And contrast the beauty and simplicity of this true doctrine of the ransom with the grotesque theory of the Dark Ages, to the effect that Jesus was God incarnate in flesh, and that either the God of the universe was dead for three days, or else Jesus' death on the cross was a mere sham, that he did not die at all.

And how wonderful is the doctrine of the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14) Before we heard the voice of the Master announcing the fact of his Second Presence, our conception of the church's heavenly reward was very vague indeed. With most people in the churches of today, heaven is looked upon as a place to go when one dies, rather than to a hell of fire—a sort of last resort when it is impossible to remain here any longer. But how different is the true Scriptural teaching on this subject, and how we should rejoice in our glorious hope of joint-heirship with Christ and the earnestly-looked-for privilege of sharing with him in the work of blessing all the families of the earth!

The truth concerning the true identity of the Holy Spirit, and how it comes into our lives to control and bless us as we endeavor to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, has also

been made plain. How satisfying it is to know the meaning of such expressions as “baptized” by the Spirit, “begotten” of the Spirit, “born” of the Spirit, “sealed” by the Spirit, and “anointed” by the Spirit! The best way to discover how we have been blessed with a knowledge of this precious truth is to try to explain it to someone whom the LORD has not favored with a hearing ear. That will help us to realize how dense is the darkness of the world.

And how grand it is to know that the plan of God has not failed, simply because the world has not yet been converted. It is worth a great deal to understand this truth today—this day when the whole world is fast becoming more deeply engrossed in pleasure, sin, and carnality. The lack of this knowledge is causing many to lose their faith because they recognize the failure of the churches, and they take this to mean that there is no real foundation to the claims of Christianity. But to us who have heard the voice of the Master, this situation but helps to confirm our faith in the outworking of the divine plan, and particularly does it help to substantiate our confidence in the fact of our Lord’s Second Presence; for it was he himself who asked, prophetically, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”—Luke 18:8

So we might continue recalling one point of truth after another which has been clarified through the light shed upon the Word as a result of the Master’s Second Presence. How refreshing and soul-satisfying it has been to have these precious morsels of spiritual food spread upon the banquet table and to have the privilege of sitting at this table with the Master while he sups with us and we with him!

But let us not think that this feast is in itself the Lord’s objective in allowing us to hear his voice. It is not. It is but the preparation for a work he wants us to do—a future work, as well as a present work—and we will prove worthy of joining in the future work by faithfulness in performing the service assigned to us now. And what is that service? It is

that of being his ambassadors, his witnesses. To use another scriptural illustration, we at this end of the age are the 'feet' members of the body of Christ, and the prophet declares, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"—Isa. 52:7

Our appreciation of the banquet of truth will increase in proportion to our faithfulness in making known the glad tidings to others. So let us be faithful! Let us spurn the cold indifference of the world, and the opposition of churchianity, and fulfill faithfully our destiny as "witnesses of Jesus, and for the Word of God." (Rev. 20:4) In this way we will be copies of our Lord Jesus Christ, who said to a Roman governor, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."—John 18:37

It is not without deep significance that immediately following the Master's assertion, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock," he should say to those who hear his voice and open unto him, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21) It is this that the Spirit is saying to the LORD's consecrated people today. Let us keep our ears attuned to his voice, and our hearts devoted entirely to the doing of his will, faithfully, even unto death! ■

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian courses. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to the families and friends in the loss of these dear ones. We appreciate information concerning any brethren to be included in this list.

Sister Margaret Watson Kiddoo, Los Angeles, CA—February 2. Age, 93.

Brother Joseph B. Johnson, Victoria, B.C.—February 4. Age, 81.

Sister Jean Overton, Indiana—February 8. Age, 69.

**“If Christ
Be Not
Risen”**

*“Now is Christ risen from the dead,
and become the firstfruits of
them that slept.”*

—I Corinthians 15:20

THIS MONTH THE Christian world will again commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. In our text the Apostle Paul informs us that in his resurrection Jesus became the ‘firstfruits’ of them that ‘slept’ in death. In commemorating the resurrection of Jesus, we are reminded of the fact that the Christian hope of life beyond the grave is based upon the promises of God to restore the dead to life. We are also reminded that the Christian religion is the only one which does teach the resurrection. Necessarily this is the case and for the very obvious reason that no other religion admits the reality of death. All other religions claim that there is no death. Certainly, if there is no death there can be no resurrection of the dead. The vast majority of those who profess faith in the Christian religions, however, do not believe in the reality of death. Like the heathen, they insist that death is merely the gateway into another form, or cycle, of life.

But this philosophy is not in agreement with the writings of the Apostle Paul. He wrote, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” (I Cor. 15:17,18)

The word 'perish' is a very strong one. The Greek word from which it is translated means 'to destroy fully'. That which is destroyed fully is no longer in existence. Such is the state of the dead, and such would continue to be the state of the dead unless there is to be a resurrection. No wonder the Apostle Paul wrote, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God."—I Cor. 15:14,15

"Your faith is vain," wrote Paul, if "there be no resurrection of the dead." Have we analyzed the desolating implications of this statement? A vain faith would be an empty, useless faith—a faith that would have no foundation, nothing to justify it. It would be like having faith that we could be cast into the depth of the sea without being drowned, or be pierced through the heart with a knife without being injured. "The just shall live by faith," the Bible tells us, but who could live by a 'vain' faith? (Heb. 10:38) There would be no life-giving virtues in a vain faith.

The Christian's faith is based upon the promises of God, but of what value are those promises if there is to be no resurrection of the dead? Jesus told the Sadducees that the resurrection of the dead was implied when God identified himself to Moses at the burning bush as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," for, Jesus explained, "he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." (Exod. 3:6; Luke 20:37,38) Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, yea, the LORD's people in every age, 'live unto him', even in death, not because there is no death, but because there is to be a resurrection of the dead.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets believed that there would be a resurrection of the dead. They worshiped and served Jehovah because they had confidence in his promises that in his own due time he would 'bless all the families of the earth' by restoring them to life, and giving them an opportunity to live forever on a perfected earth. It was their faith in God and in these promises that gave them

the courage and strength to endure “cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”—Heb. 11:36-40

These suffering but faithful servants of God did not receive the fulfillment of the promises God made to them. They did not expect to receive them in this life. They endured, not for present advantage, but for a future reward. They suffered and died, refusing to accept deliverance at the hands of their enemies, “that they might obtain a better resurrection.” (vs. 35) But how vain all this suffering would have been ‘if there be no resurrection of the dead’! What a mockery God would thus have made of their faith! How utterly useless their faith would have been!

Think of David’s position: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” (Ps. 23:4) David could say this because he had faith that no matter what happened then, eventually he would “dwell in the house of the LORD forever”—that wonderful ‘house’ in which Jesus said later, there were “many mansions.” (Ps. 23:6; John 14:2) David expected to be resurrected from the dead and dwell in God’s earthly ‘mansion’. But David’s faith and faithfulness would have been in ‘vain’ if there were no resurrection of the dead.

Take the case of the three young Hebrews whom Nebuchadnezzar threatened to cast into a “burning fiery furnace” if they refused to bow down and worship the image which he had set up. Their defiant reply to the king was, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the

burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."—Dan. 3:17, 18

God 'will deliver us out of thine hand, O king'. The three Hebrews were not sure just how their God, Jehovah, would do this. But they had faith to believe that he was abundantly able to fulfill all his good promises, and would do so. Knowing this, they were willing to leave themselves in his hands regardless of the immediate outcome of their defiance to the king. Why? Because they believed that if it was the will of their God for them to perish in the flames of the fiery furnace, they would be brought forth from death in that 'better resurrection' of promise. But what if there be no resurrection of the dead? Then their faith also was vain.

THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM

In Jesus, who in the resurrection became the 'firstfruits of them that slept', we have the most wonderful of all examples of a genuine, strength-providing, living faith in the resurrection of the dead. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [death]" was the expression of his faith that the Heavenly Father would raise him from the dead. "Thou wilt show me the path of life," continues the prophecy concerning Jesus, "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."—Ps. 16:10, 11

In Hebrews 12:2 the Apostle Paul writes concerning Jesus, that for the "joy that was set before him" he "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Thus Paul confirms the fulfillment of Psalm 16:11, that Jesus was shown the "path of life," and that in the resurrection he was highly exalted to the right hand of the throne of God, where, in the presence of his loving Heavenly Father, there would be joy, or pleasures, forever. For Jesus, even as for all his footstep followers, the path of life is the "narrow way" that "leadeth unto life." (Matt. 7:14) Jesus was not only shown this way, but was

given strength to walk therein—with no small part of that strength stemming from his faith in the promises of his God not to leave his soul in hell, but to restore him to life in the resurrection.

But think of the tragedy of a faith like that, had it been a vain faith! Hanging on the cross, Jesus said with strong faith, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit [my life]." (Luke 23:46) Jesus committed his life to his God with the faith that it would be restored to him in the resurrection. Nor was Jesus' faith vain, for we have the blessed assurance that "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."—I Cor. 15:20

PRECIOUS PROMISES

In the upper room the night before Jesus was crucified, his disciples were saddened by the remarks he made which they properly understood to mean that he expected to leave them. Then Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1-3

"Ye believe in God, believe also in me," said Jesus. How misplaced their faith in Jesus would have been, and in the Father also, "if so be that the dead rise not." "I go to prepare a place for you." Paraphrasing his words, we could hear Jesus say: "Yes, I am going away, but it is for your sake that I go. After I have prepared a place for you, I will return. Then I will take you to myself, and you can be with me." But how vain would have been this promise if Jesus had not been raised from the dead. How could a dead Savior go away to prepare a place for his disciples? And how could he return and receive them to himself, if his soul, his life, had been left in hell, in death?

"These things I have spoken unto you," Jesus said to his disciples, "that in me ye might have peace." (John 16:33) But how shallow would have been this peace had the promises Jesus made to his disciples all been voided by his remaining in the tomb! Jesus knew that his followers, his disciples, would have tribulation in the world. Jesus himself had tribulation in the world. The religious world was even then about to crucify him. "But be of good cheer," he said, "I have overcome the world."

Jesus had turned his back upon the world and all that the world had to offer, because he believed the promises of his Heavenly Father to raise him from the dead and to exalt him to his own right hand. Because of these promises he had sacrificed all things earthly, and had laid up for himself treasures in heaven. But these treasures would be of no more value than empty bubbles should he not be raised from the dead. Jesus asked the question as to what it would profit a man to gain the whole world, yet lose his own soul or life. (Matt. 16:26) But it would be even a greater tragedy to give up the world, sacrificing everything in the service of God, and then lose life besides, because of not being raised from the dead. Paul reached the proper conclusion when he wrote, "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die"—that is, let us get out of life what we can, "if the dead rise not." —I Cor. 15:32

Why should we suffer persecution and tribulation in the world by being faithful to the LORD and to the truth if there is to be no resurrection of the dead? Instead of being of 'good cheer' in the world despite its opposition, we would be, as Paul expressed it "false witnesses of God," and "of all men most miserable." (I Cor. 15:15,19) But now IS Christ risen from the dead." (vs. 20) This is the great fact that transforms what otherwise would be a vain faith, into a blessed and comforting assurance that gives us hope—not in this life of vanity, but in that which is to come—a faith that enables us

to 'see' the invisible things of God, the things which are truly important, weighty, and enduring.

TRIALS WORTHWHILE

Once again, this April, we are reminded that Christ IS risen from the dead. Indeed, how could we ever forget that this is true? We do not forget! Every precious promise of God is made sure by the fact that Jesus became the 'firstfruits of them that slept'. If this is not true, "what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" (vs. 29) "Know ye not," Paul wrote, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."—Rom. 6:3-5

We are invited to suffer and die with Jesus that we might live and reign with him. Accepting this invitation, we are 'buried' with him, in faith believing that we will be resurrected to live with him. But how could this be if Jesus himself was not raised from the dead? Not only so, but being co-sacrificers with Jesus prepares us to share with him in the great future work of blessing the entire dead world of mankind. Our death baptism is a baptism which will accrue to the benefit of the dead. As Paul explained, we are being 'baptized for the dead'. But why should we be baptized with Jesus, suffering and dying as he did, and on behalf of the dead world, if the dead rise not at all? Obviously, we would be wasting our time, and worse.

"Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" Paul asked, "if the dead rise not at all?" (vss. 29,30) To Paul, practically 'every hour' was one of danger and threat so far as his flesh was concerned. All of this *could* have been avoided, in fact *would* have been avoided, but for the glorious 'vision' of truth given to Paul on the Damascus road, assuring him that

Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead. "He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time," Paul testified. (I Cor. 15:8) He knew then, and more clearly as the truth continued to unfold to him, that because Jesus was raised from the dead, all those who suffered and died with him would also be raised from the dead. This being true, it was worthwhile—yes, a thousand times worthwhile—to 'stand in jeopardy every hour'.

The death of the flesh meant little or nothing to Paul since he was assured that in the resurrection he would receive divine life and be with Jesus in the place which he went away to prepare. Later in his life, being warned by the Holy Spirit that bonds and imprisonment awaited him in Jerusalem, the brethren, with tears, endeavored to dissuade Paul from going into this danger spot. In reply he said, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts 21:13

Paul was willing and ready to suffer and to die at Jerusalem because he had absolute confidence in the promises of God to resurrect the dead—to raise up the little flock in the first resurrection to life, and to reign with Christ; and to restore the world to life in the general resurrection which, as Martha testified, would take place in the "last day."—John 11:24

Paul was particularly energized by the promises pertaining to the first resurrection to the divine nature. To have part in this would be to share in Christ's resurrection—a glorious hope indeed. Nothing in the present life could compare with the fulfillment of this hope. He was willing to suffer, and did suffer the loss of all things, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."—Phil. 3:8,10,11

Paul knew that the promises of the resurrection were sure. He knew this because Jesus had been raised from the dead, and had become the firstfruits of them that slept. This assurance was not only for the followers of Jesus, but for the world as well. As Paul said to the Athenians on Mars' Hill, God has given assurance unto all in that he has raised Jesus from the dead. (Acts 17:31) Few of the Athenians believed what Paul said concerning the resurrection of the dead. "Some mocked," we read, "and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." (Acts 17:32) Millions in the professed Christian world today are like those Athenians. They take part in the Easter celebrations, but are quite willing to wait for another year to hear again of the resurrection.

But it was not so with Paul. It is not so with the true disciples of Christ today. Christ IS risen from the dead, and both the church and the world are to be raised from the dead. This brings every trying experience of life into proper perspective, and gives us a true sense of values when estimating the worth of the trivial earthly things which we have the privilege of sacrificing in the LORD's service. It helps us to realize that even the most severe trials of life are but 'light afflictions' and of momentary duration, compared with the "eternal weight of glory" which will be ours in the 'first resurrection' if we continue faithfully to lay down our lives in the service of our God.—II Cor. 4:17

From the prison in Rome, and in the shadow of the executioner's axe, Paul wrote to Timothy, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." (II Tim. 2:11,12) Yes, it was a faithful saying that those who died with Jesus would live with him. It is a faithful saying because it is the promise of God, and as Jeremiah wrote, addressing Jehovah, "Great is thy faithfulness." (Lam. 3:23) We can depend upon the LORD. He never changes. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," even as it is written of Jesus.—Heb. 13:8

Jesus trusted the Heavenly Father. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," he said. His faith was not in vain. Jesus was raised from the dead. And if we needed more than the promises of God to give us assurance, we have this miracle of miracles as a further testimony of his faithfulness. Thus every faithful saying of our Heavenly Father assuring us of divine life with Jesus is made doubly sure by the fact that the Creator's mighty power was exercised "when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."—Eph. 1:20-23

"How say some among you," Paul asked the brethren at Corinth, "that there is no resurrection of the dead?" (I Cor. 15:12) How could anyone hold a view like this since Christ was raised from the dead. Yes, Christ IS raised from the dead. Therefore, our faith is not vain; nor is our preaching vain. In testifying that God raised Jesus from the dead we are not 'false witnesses'. Since Christ was raised from the dead, we are not in our sins, for he was raised for our justification. Throughout the age, those who fell asleep in Christ did not perish. Those who die in Christ now do not perish, but in their resurrection, which takes place instantly, they are changed into the divine nature, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."—I Cor. 15:51,52

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, as soon as all his body members have proved faithful unto death and have been exalted to glory and immortality, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (vss. 54,55) The saying of the prophets, and of Jesus, and the apostles, that there will be, as Peter stated it, "times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:19-21), in which

mankind will be resurrected from the dead, is also 'faithful' because God hath spoken it. It is his promise, his saying, and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus.

Since our faith and our preaching would be 'vain' were it not that Jesus had been raised from the dead, think of what the fact that he has been raised should mean in our Christian lives! Has this great truth actually revolutionized our lives? We are walking in newness of life, being baptized into his death! Old things have passed away, and all things have become new! 'Now IS Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept'. ■

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On Sunday, April 16th, "Frank and Ernest" will discuss the topic, "Salvation." Free circulars are available which announce this program, and you are invited to send for as many as you can use. Address your request to:

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TALKING THINGS OVER

General Convention Bulletin

JULY 29-AUGUST 3, 1995
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

THE 1995 GENERAL CONVENTION will be held in exceptional college facilities in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The auditorium has a beautiful pipe organ, the cafeteria is newly refurbished, and there is less walking between auditorium, cafeteria, and the sleeping rooms than ever before. Here are the prices:

| | Ages 18 and up | 13-17 | 6-12 |
|---|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Breakfast | \$ 4.25 | \$ 3.40 | \$2.10 |
| Lunch | 5.75* | 4.60* | 2.90 |
| Dinner | <u>7.00*</u> | <u>5.60*</u> | <u>3.50</u> |
| Total, three meals | \$17.00 | \$13.60 | \$8.50 |
| Lodging (per night) | | | |
| double, shared bath | \$18.00 | \$14.40 | \$ 9.00 |
| double, private bath | 20.00 | 16.00 | 10.00 |
| single, shared bath | 23.00 | 18.40 | 11.50 |
| single, private bath# | 31.00 | -N/A- | -N/A- |
| PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals | | | |
| double, shared bath | \$184 | \$147 | \$ 92 |
| double, private bath | 198 | 158 | 99 |
| single, shared bath | 219 | 175 | 110 |
| single, private bath# | 275 | -N/A- | -N/A- |
| * Increase these prices by \$3.50 if not staying at the college (to pay the facility fee included in the lodging prices). | | | |
| # Available only to those staying on the third floor. | | | |

PREVIEW OF 1995 GENERAL CONVENTION

The time is rapidly approaching when many brethren will assemble to enjoy the blessings of the 1995 General Convention. It will be held this year at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, from July 29-August 3.

A **Reservation Form** for accommodations and meals will be found on the page following this one. Many who have visited Calvin College in the past, and more recently, advise us that the accommodations there will make excellent provisions for our convention.

The LORD is good to his people; let us pray that as many as possible make plans to attend, to enjoy the spiritual food with which we will be provided during these six days of association under the hallowed influence of the Heavenly Father and his Word.

The theme text selected by the Convention Committee is Colossians 1:23: "*Continue in the faith . . . not moved away from the hope of the Gospel*"—advice which becomes more important as the years pass. The events we see occurring in the world are undeniable evidence of the passage of time, and of the nearness of the end of this present evil world.

We do not wish to have, as a result of the stresses and strains of life in this progressively chaotic world, the tendency to overlook the fact that the richest blessings we enjoy are indeed the spiritual ones, provided for us by the LORD through the knowledge of his great divine plan of the ages. Appreciation for this wonderful Gospel of salvation will be a background theme of this convention. And in this faith we long to remain steadfast, never to be 'moved away', but to be "grounded and settled." It is the Convention Committee's desire that time spent in fellowship at Grand Rapids will increase our faith and hope—making us more aware how commonplace life would be without our rare privileges of fellowship in the faith. ■

General Convention Registration
 1425 Lachman Lane — Pac. Palisades, CA 90272

| | Breakfst | Lunch | Dinner | Lodging |
|----------------------|----------|-------|--------|---------|
| Friday, July 28, '95 | | | | |
| Saturday, 29th | | | | |
| Sunday, 30th | | | | |
| Monday, 31st | | | | |
| Tuesday, Aug. 1st | | | | |
| Wednesday, 2nd | | | | |
| Thursday, 3rd | | | | |

OR check here for package: 7 nights, 18 meals

Select one: private bath -or- shared bath

Names (and ages if under 18) (also Ecclesia name)

Address:

Telephone number [evenings]: area code ()

How many flights of steps can you walk (0, 1, or 2):

Check here if you would like to have a roommate.

Give us your flight information if you want to be picked up:

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M.J. Balko
St. Petersburg, FL April 9

R. Goodman
Louisville, AL April 9

R. Gorecki
Detroit, MI April 7-9
Pittsburgh, PA 23

D. Holliday
New York, NY April 2-4
Buffalo, NY 5
Detroit, MI 7-9

J.B. Brown
Boise, ID April 28-30

S.R. Jeuck
Detroit, MI April 7-9

E.F. Lankford
Detroit, MI April 7-9
Boise, ID 28,30

G.H. Passios
Middletown, NY April 23

J.R. Shahan
Claymont, DE April 23

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

GROTON/NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 2—Groton Municipal Building, 295 Meridian St., Groton, CT. For information contact: Mark Grillo, 24-B Oxford Drive, Norwich, CT 06360
Phone: (203) 887-0706
NEW YORK, NY, April 2—Ramada Inn, Two Bridges Road, and Exit 52, Route 80, Fairfield, NJ. Contact Mrs. Ann-Truth Lange, 76 Longview Ave., White Plains, NY 10605 **by March 20** if you plan to have lunch at the

convention, and let her know how many will be in your group.
Phone: (914) 948-5428
ALBUQUERQUE PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 7, 8, 9—For information and reservations, contact Sister Roberta H. Buss, Albuquerque Bible Students, P.O. Box 9172, Albuquerque, NM 87119
Phone: (506) 877-2866
DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 7-9—14500 12 Mile Road, Warren, MI. For information and reservations,

contact: Walter Blicharz, 19146 Bedford Road, Beverly Hills, MI 48025

Phone: (810) 642-1553

LOS ANGELES, CA, April 23—Burbank Auditorium, 248 E. Olive Ave. For information, contact: Robert Wagoner, 901 N. Westwood, Santa Ana 92703

Phone: (714) 542-8466

PITTSBURGH, PA, April 23—Parkway Center Inn, 875 Greentree Road, Pittsburgh. Contact: Charles Martig, 94 S. Harrison St., Pittsburgh 15202

Phone: (412) 734-9269

BOISE, ID CONVENTION, April 28, 29, 30—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street. For reservations, please contact: Mrs. Donna Allers, 2438 Bruins Circle, Boise 83704, by April 12th.

Phone: (208) 375-6873

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, April 30—Masonic Hall, South Olds Blvd. and Queen Anne Blvd., Levittown, PA. For information contact: Mrs. Ruth Eldridge, 37 Falcon Rd., Levittown, PA 19056

Phone: (215) 949-0652

GARY AREA BIBLE STUDENTS, May 7—The SPA Banquet Center, 333 North Mineral Springs Rd., Porter, Indiana 46304. Contact: Mr. John Ulicni, 6703 Tyler St., Merrillville, IN 46410 for further information.

Phone: (219) 769-5647

ASILOMAR CONVENTION, May 26-29—Pacific Grove, CA. For reservations, contact: Mr. Tom Marshall, 1089 Bluebell Dr., #1108, Livermore, CA 94550 *before April 24th, the cut-off*

date.

Phone: (510) 443-0567

LOUISVILLE, AL, May 27, 28—5th Annual Convention. May 27 will be at Blue Springs State Park, Hwy. 10; May 28 will be at Deloney's Restaurant, Hwy. 231 No., Ozark, AL. For motel and other information, contact: Virgil Strickland, Rt. 1, Box 1, Louisville 36048

Phone: (334) 266-5454

WATERBURY, CT, June 3, 4—The Litchfield Firehouse, Litchfield, CT. For programs and directions, contact: Mrs. Anthony Tsimonis, Sec'y., c/o Associated Bible Students, P.O. Box 1494, Waterbury 06721-1494

GREECE AND THE SEVEN CHURCHES CONVENTION, June 5-19—Contact: Mrs. Mary Mali, 638 Pequot Avenue, New London, CT 06320

Phone: (203) 447-2872

ALLENTOWN, PA, June 9, 10, 11—Moravian College Bethlehem, PA. Contact: Mrs. Margaret Young, P.O. Box 1672, Allentown 18105

Phone: (610) 867-5418

PORTLAND, OR, June 23-26—Collins Retreat Center, 32867 SE Highway 211, between Sandy & Eagle Creek, OR 97022. Phone: (503) 637-6411. For information, contact: Mrs. Carlton Chandler, Sec'y, 12215 SE 106 Ave., Portland 97266

Phone: (503) 698-5940

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 29-August 3—Grand Rapids, MI. See pages 60-62, for rates and a Registration Form. ■