

The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence

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The DAWN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Saved by the Blood 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Two Great Commandments 16

Exercising unto Godliness 18

Giving to Others 20

One in Christ Jesus 22

Waiting for God's Kingdom 24

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Ransom and Sin Offering 26

The Profitable Word 42

The Reward of Service 50

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 62

TALKING THINGS OVER

General Convention Bulletin 59

OBITUARIES 41

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

Saved by the Blood

*“They’re to take
some of the blood
and put it on the
two doorposts and
on the lintel of
the houses where
they eat the
[Passover] lamb.”*

—Exodus 12:7,

*International
Standard Version*

As we enter the spring months of March and April, Christian people from all parts of the world will gather together to give special remembrance to the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. About the same time, Jewish people will also gather to celebrate the Feast

of Passover.

Each group uses its calendars and long-held traditions to determine the exact time to celebrate these religious occasions. Sometimes, these events may be separated by a few days and, at other times, by several weeks. According to the scriptural record, Israel’s Passover lamb was slain on the 14th day of their month, Abib, later called Nisan. (Deut. 16:1; Neh. 2:1) This corresponds to our months March or April, depending on the year.

Although Christians and Jews both celebrate these important events at this time of year, few

discern the true meaning and significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, who died as the Savior of the sin-sick human creation. Few also discern the full meaning of the Jews' Passover. The Apostle Peter explained that most are blinded to an appreciation of the deep things of God. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. ... But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."—II Pet. 1:3,9

God's Instructions

At the time our featured scripture was recorded, the nation of Israel was being held captive in Egypt. When the proper time came, God instructed the Israelites to apply the blood of the slain Passover lamb on the "side posts and on the upper door post of the houses." They were also instructed to roast the lamb and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. (Exod. 12:8) The context of this text also provides other important details and perspectives in connection with God's special instructions to the Israelites.

We read, "The LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next

unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.”—Exod. 12:1-6

The Slain Lamb

These explicit directions contain a great amount of significant symbolism. For example, the reference to the “land of Egypt” points to Satan’s present dominion over the earth and its people. “In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

The “beginning of months” is the basis for calculating the exact day the Passover was to be celebrated. The new moon nearest to the spring equinox marked the beginning of the first Jewish month, Abib. The sacrificial lamb was to be selected on the “tenth day” of the first month. This pointed forward to Jesus’ future arrival at Jerusalem as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” and in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy. (Matt. 21:1-9; John 1:29; Zech. 9:9) Noting further the account in Exodus chapter 12, the lamb was to be a year-old male and without blemish. This illustrated Jesus’ perfection as the future unblemished “Lamb of God.” (I Pet. 1:19) The Passover lamb was then slain on the “fourteenth day of the same month” and eaten that night. The Passover feast,

also called the “feast of unleavened bread,” began the next day and lasted for seven days.—Exod. 12:15-17

Firstborn—Under the Blood

Further to these directions, we read, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”—Exod. 12:12-14

In these scriptures, reference is made to passing through the land of Egypt at “night.” This pictures the dark night of sin and death through which the people of God have been passing since Pentecost. (Col. 1:13; I Pet. 2:9) The “firstborn” picture the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” These are under the lamb’s blood and are striving to have a share in the heavenly phase of Christ’s kingdom.—Heb. 12:23

The firstborn of Israel were later exchanged for the whole tribe of Levi, which was counted as belonging to God. “The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the

day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD.”—Num. 3:11-13

A Memorial or Remembrance

Blood symbolizes life, and when the Passover lamb was slain, it represented sacrificed life. (Lev. 17:11) The blood of the sacrificed lamb was then used in accordance with the divine will to represent the precious blood of our Lord Jesus that would be applied on behalf of the sin-sick human family many centuries later. Our Lord’s sacrificial blood is the only means whereby we may be saved from the sentence of death that was placed upon Adam and Eve because of their disobedience to the law of God.—I Pet. 1:18,19; Rev. 1:5

God instructed the people of Israel to remember the specific time of this event, and to observe it each year as a remembrance. He said, “This day shall be unto you for a memorial.” (Exod. 12:14) This serves to illustrate the greater Memorial that Jesus instituted when he and his disciples were gathered together in the upper room. At that time, he asked them to partake of the loaf, which he said represented his body, and the cup, which showed his sacrificial blood. He then said to them, “This do in remembrance of me.” (I Cor. 11:23-26) He would die a few hours later for the sins of the world.

Quoting Luke’s account, we read: “[Jesus] took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave unto [his disciples], saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. And the cup in like manner after

supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you.”—
Luke 22:19,20, *Revised Version*

The Plagues

When God’s time clock of the ages struck, it marked the time for the Israelites’ release from Egyptian bondage. Their long-sought deliverance had arrived. However, Pharaoh and his taskmasters were not willing to set them free. They refused to let the Israelites go forth to the promised land of Canaan. One after another the Lord sent various plagues upon the people of Egypt, but gave them relief when their Pharaoh sought mercy and made promises that he had no intention of keeping. See Exodus chapters 7-10.

Finally, God’s servant Moses announced a tenth and final plague. A great calamity would be inflicted upon the firstborn in every family of Egypt, and they would all die in one night. In the homes of the humblest peasants, as well as in the palace of the Pharaoh, great mourning would take place throughout Egypt, and they would be glad to let the Israelites go.—Exod. 11:1-8

True to Moses’ announcement, “It came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and

get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.”—Exod. 12:29-33

Prepared for a Journey

It is noted in Exodus chapters 7-10 that the first three plagues were common to all in the land of Egypt, including the district in which the Israelites lived. However, the next six plagues affected only the districts occupied by the Egyptians. The tenth and last plague was declared to be common to the entire land of Egypt, including the part apportioned to the Israelites, who were under the blood.

However, the children of Israel had been instructed to show their faith and obedience to the will of God by providing a sacrificial lamb whose blood was to be sprinkled upon the sides and lintels of their doorways, and its flesh eaten in the same night, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They had full faith that, because of the lamb's blood upon the doorposts and lintels of their homes, by remaining “under the blood” they would not share in the calamity when God would smite the firstborn of Egypt with death. Those who ate of the lamb waited with staff in hand and girded for the journey, expecting that God would make the Egyptians willing to let them go.—Exod. 12:7-13

Features of the Law

The Israelites were commanded to remember and celebrate each year this Passover feast that was

given to them by God through Moses. It was one of their greatest national memorials, and it is still celebrated by Jews in all parts of the world as an indication of their measure of respect for the meaning of this ancient custom.

The many features of the Mosaic Law were divinely designed to foreshadow various blessings that would be poured upon all the families of the earth in God's due time, and in the proper order. In the case of the Passover celebration, the death of the lamb foreshadowed the death of Jesus as a perfect man. The sprinkling of the lamb's blood symbolized the imputation of the merit of Jesus' ransom sacrifice to the passed-over class during this nighttime of sin and death. As was the case with the Israelites, it is this "firstborn" class who first benefit from the shed blood of the lamb. (I John 1:7; Eph. 1:3-7) Blessed are those whose eyes of faith see that Jesus was indeed the Lamb of God. By means of the blood of Jesus, the cancellation of Adamic sin was made possible by the payment of Adam's penalty, a penalty wherein the whole world lost the favor of God and came under the divine sentence of death.

It was necessary that before this curse of death and its accompanying pangs of sorrow and pain could be lifted, a satisfaction of justice be provided. As the Scriptures declare: "Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."—Rom. 5:18

The Firstfruits

As he was moved by the Holy Spirit of God, John the Revelator wrote, "I looked, and behold, the Lamb

was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.”
—Rev. 14:1-4, *New American Standard Bible*

These inspired words of God point to the glorified Christ, head and body, as the “first fruits to God and to the Lamb.” This implies that there will also be “after fruits” in the ultimate plan and purpose of our loving Heavenly Father. This is indeed so. It was God’s purpose to save all of the children of Israel, not just the firstborn. As a nation, they represented the entire human family, who will be given an opportunity to come into harmony with God and be granted eternal life in the future land of promise—the restored perfect earth.

Thus was the whole nation of Israel miraculously delivered by the Lord through Moses. They were led by him on a pathway across the channel of the Red Sea that had been especially prepared for them by divine power that controlled the winds and the tides. (Exod. 14:21-30) Not one Israelite

was left behind. This wonderful event illustrates the ultimate deliverance of the whole world from the power of Satan. All will be given the opportunity to come into accord with the righteous laws that will be established under the administration of Christ's future reign over the earth. Truly, we can echo the words that the Apostle Paul wrote when he said Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:6

Two Fulfillments

Deliverance from death depended upon the first-born children of Israel remaining under the lamb's blood when God's death angel passed them by. They were the only ones who were under the blood and who were subject to death. They were all delivered that night as shown in the Passover picture. As such, the firstborn of Israel were the immediate beneficiaries of the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb.

During this present Christian age, Jesus' foot-step followers are also under the blood. They have accepted the merit of Jesus' blood and are under its protection. (I John 1:7) They have been called in advance of the world. They have had the eyes of their understanding opened to a realization of their condition of sin and bondage and their need of deliverance. (Eph. 1:18) They have responded to the marvelous grace of God and have presented their lives to him in full consecration. (Rom. 12:1) Because of their faith in the shed blood of the "Lamb of God," they have fellowship with "the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."—I John 1:3

The Apostle Paul explains that consecration during the present age signifies baptism into Jesus' death.

“Know ye not, 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

It is a matter of utmost importance that those who have given their lives to God continue to abide under the precious blood of sprinkling. For any to go out from this condition of grace would imply a disregard for the mercy of our loving Heavenly Father. It would signify that they do not appreciate his goodness, or their share in the saving power of Jesus’ blood. “If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”—Heb. 10:26

Deliverance of the Entire World

Members of the “church of the firstborn” have received the merit of Jesus’ blood in advance of the world. Christ entered “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Heb. 9:24) When the church is complete, the merit, or value, of our Savior’s blood will become available for the entire human family. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”—John 10:14-16

The second great benefit that occurred in the land of Egypt was the deliverance of the entire nation of Israel when they were led by Moses across the Red Sea. This remarkable event pictures the ultimate recovery of the whole human creation from the bondage of sin and death. The promised blessings will be available to the world under the establishment of Christ's kingdom and by the terms of the New Covenant. (Jer. 31:31-34) At that time, all who desire to follow righteousness and obey the greater Moses—our Lord Jesus—will be granted life rights that were lost because of Adamic sin.—Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:20-25

The long night of sin and death will have passed, and the glorious morning of deliverance will have come. (Ps. 30:5) The Christ, head and body, will lead forth and deliver all Israel, all the people of God. At that time, all shall know and be glad to reverence, honor, and obey the will of God.—Acts 15:16,17; Rom. 11:26-36

Christ Our Passover

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth, he told them, "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—I Cor. 5:7,8, *English Standard Version*

In this scripture, the apostle was addressing the "church of the firstborn" whose names are written in heaven. (Heb. 12:23) He was admonishing them to cleanse themselves from all sin and unrighteousness

as represented by the leaven of malice and wickedness. They were instead to seek righteousness and truth, as illustrated by partaking of the unleavened bread.

By eating the symbolic lamb, we appropriate Christ's merit to ourselves. We also "put on" Christ to the extent of our ability, by which we are transformed into his glorious image and character. (Rom. 12:2; 13:14; Gal. 3:27) We feed upon him even as the Jews fed upon the Passover lamb. The bitter herbs, which aided and whetted the Israelites' literal appetites, were an illustration of our bitter experiences and trials. These are provided for us to help wean our affections from earthly things, and they give us an increasing appetite to feed upon the lamb and the unleavened bread of truth.

In the world, we have "no continuing city." Instead, as strangers and travelers, we go with staff in hand and girded for the journey to heavenly Canaan. (Heb. 13:14; I Pet. 2:11) All of the glorious blessings that our loving Heavenly Father has in reservation for the church of the firstborn will be given to those who have faithfully accepted the "Lamb of God" and the merit of his saving blood.—Eph. 1:3-7

Let Us Keep the Feast

Soon, many will gather together once again to observe the Memorial of Jesus' death as the great Passover lamb. As we keep the feast again this year, let us rejoice in the precious blood of Jesus that was shed on our behalf and that will be testified to the world in due time. "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the

everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—Heb. 13:20,21, *New King James Version* ■

The Ransom Sacrifice

*When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.
—The Call of the Bride*

2026 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Tuesday, March 31.

DVD versions of the Memorial Service can be ordered free of charge. Please send your request to:

Dawn Bible Students Association
PO Box 521167
Longwood, FL 32752-1167

Please place your order by March 10.

Two Great Commandments

Key Verse: *“One of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?”*
—**Mark 12:28**

Selected Scripture:
Mark 12:28-34

Leading up to today’s lesson, Jesus was confronted in the Temple court by the chief priests and elders, who questioned by what authority he was preaching. (Mark 11:27,28) In response, Jesus gave them the parable of the wicked husbandmen, in which wicked caretakers killed the landowner’s son. Through the parable, Jesus clearly identified the Jewish religious leaders as the ones who would kill God’s Son, in order to keep their power and authority over the people.

Jesus responded, as recorded in the Matthew account, “The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”—Matt. 21:43

Angered by this, the Pharisees and other leaders of the Jews attempted to entrap Jesus with various questions. The Pharisees asked if it is lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, to which the Master answered, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Mark 12:13-17) The Sadducees then asked Jesus which of seven brothers who had married the same woman would be her husband in his kingdom. Because of their

disbelief in the resurrection of the dead, Jesus answered, saying, “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?”—vs. 24

Impressed by Jesus’ answers, a “scribe” asked the question recorded in our Key Verse, perhaps in all sincerity. “Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” (Mark 12:29,30) How wonderfully comprehensive is this statement Jesus made, quoted directly from Deuteronomy 6:4,5.

Jesus went beyond the question of the scribe, declaring that a Second Commandment stands related to the First, namely, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Mark 12:31) Here again, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament. (Lev. 19:18) How much is stated in very few words. The Bible reveals a God of mercy, compassion, and love, as manifested by his provisions for the welfare of his creatures. God’s Word also admonishes his creatures to love in return, presenting a high standard of dealing with our Creator as well as our fellow man.

This Law of God has yet to be understood in its fullest sense. A limited approach to this standard might be found in the writings of Confucius, to the effect that one should not do to others what he would not have others do to him. What a contrast, though, we see when comparing this to the Scriptures! One is merely a negative statement; the other is a positive one: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

How beautiful the world would be if people were able and willing to live up to these two grand laws. Each one would love the Heavenly Father with all his heart and soul. All would love their neighbors as themselves, seeking to serve them as they might have opportunity. Thank God, this is what we are assured the world will yet be, when the Messianic kingdom is established. ■

Exercising unto Godliness

Key Verses:
***“Exercise thyself
rather unto
godliness. For
bodily exercise
profiteth little: but
godliness is
profitable unto all
things, having
promise of the life
that now is, and of
that which is
to come.”***
—I Timothy 4:7,8

Selected Scripture:
I Timothy 4:7-16

In nature, Paul’s encouragement of Timothy can be applied to each member of the church.

In our Key Verses, Paul encourages Timothy to consider the contrast between bodily exercise and godliness. The *New International Version* reads, “Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.” Many studies have shown the psychological benefits of exercise, including decreased symptoms of both depression and anxiety, reduced stress levels, and

In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, the apostle calls him “my own son in the faith.” (I Tim. 1:1,2) There is evidence that Timothy lacked confidence when Paul first called him to enter the ministry. The apostle subsequently reminded him of the faith demonstrated by his mother and grandmother, and that he not submit to the “spirit of fear.” (II Tim. 1:5-7) In our Selected Scripture, the apostle exhorts Timothy, “Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young.” (I Tim. 4:12, *International Standard Version*) Though personal in

increased self-esteem and confidence. Elsewhere the apostle states that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit given by God and purchased with the precious blood of Christ. We should therefore glorify God by keeping ourselves fit for his service.—I Cor. 6:19,20

Having acknowledged the practical value of physical exercise, Paul immediately stresses the superiority of exercising “unto godliness.” He reminds Timothy of his pastoral obligations, not because he has forgotten or neglected to do them, but to encourage him to continue in this way. He tells Timothy to instruct the church to refuse and reject all profane and mythical teachings and exhort to the exercise of true godliness. He is to encourage the brethren to acknowledge God’s faithfulness and see the acceptableness of the divine message. Timothy is to remind believers of the privilege of laboring and suffering reproach for the sake of Christ. He is to teach them to “trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men.”—I Tim. 4:7-10

Paul tells the youthful Timothy to “be an example of the believers.” (vs. 12) His words, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity are to be an example, not merely in public speaking, but also in his daily affairs of life. Such an example must begin inwardly, in his heart and mind. Then the inner graces of his Christian character are to be manifested outwardly in his speech, conduct, and actions. Paul concludes his exhortation to Timothy, saying “Till I come, give attendance to reading, ... to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, ... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.”—vss. 13-15

The calling and faithfulness of every Christian rests on the principles of “righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. 4:24) Believers are summoned to reflect God’s character: “As he which called you is holy, be ye yourselves holy in all manner of living.”—I Pet. 1:15, *Revised Version* ■

Giving to Others

Key Verse: “*For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*”
—Deuteronomy 15:11

Selected Scripture:
Deuteronomy 15:4-11
preserve us alive, as we are this day.”—Deut. 6:24,
English Standard Version

The book of Deuteronomy has been described as a summary of the whole law of God. Nearly the entire book reiterates the commandments and instructions that God had delivered to the Israelites through Moses. God gave his law to Israel as instructions that they were to follow. The following words of Moses show us that God’s law is a field guide, as it were, to how life should be lived. “The LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might

It is against this backdrop of God’s goodness that he tells Israel, through Moses, that poverty need never exist in Israel if the people obey his commands. Our lesson is situated in a section of Deuteronomy focused on various instructions regarding worship. The previous chapter separates animals into clean and unclean and provides instructions on the giving of tithes. The following chapter discusses the Passover feast and other festivals within the Israelites’ worship calendar.

Deuteronomy 15 can be seen as a foreshadowing of God's words found later in Isaiah 58:6,7, *New King James Version*, where he states what he requires from worship: "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Our lesson outlines the way in which the Israelites were to live their lives in worship towards God. They were to observe the sabbatical year every seventh year, at which time debts were to be forgiven. (Deut. 15:1-3) They were to open their hearts and hands to those in need, providing whatever they might lack. (vss. 7-10) There were to be no stipulations. If there was a need, it was to be met. There would be no poor among them if they would keep the commands of God faithfully.

In the Old Testament the Lord distinctly set before the Israelites earthly prosperity as a reward for obedience and loyalty to him and his laws. This has been a stumbling-block to those who do not recognize the fact of the dispensational change that took place as a result of Jesus' ministry. Many have mistakenly applied the promise of prosperity to the Christian, and this error has resulted in confusion of mind.

Earthly prosperity in the present age is not promised to faithful Christians. Therefore, let us exercise the law of love toward others as instructed by the Apostle John: "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
—I John 3:16-18, *New International Version* ■

One in Christ Jesus

Key Verse: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”*
—Galatians 3:28

Selected Scripture:
Galatians 3:24-29

Covenant arrangement should have realized: “The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”—Gal. 3:24,25

Today’s Key Verse is Paul’s declaration that all distinctions formerly existing under the Mosaic Law were now eliminated, since Jesus had died as the ransom price “for all.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) As a result, all who had “ears to hear” could come into Christ. (Mark 4:9) The Christian’s standing in God’s sight was now as a New Creature. “Old things are passed away; behold all things have become new.” (II Cor. 5:17) The Gospel was free to all, and an individual’s position in God’s sight would be as a member of Christ: “If you belong to Christ, then you are indeed true descendants of Abraham, and are heirs in fulfilment of the promise.”—

Gal. 3:29, *Weymouth New Testament*

The Jews were not to think that the favor granted to their nation in the past would provide preferential positions in the Christian brotherhood. Likewise, the Gentiles were not to think that because the Jews, as a nation, had been cut off from previous favor under the Law Covenant, they would be disfavored as individuals in the eyes of the Lord. Both were to know that God would henceforth ignore their natural differences of ethnicity and reward each, whether Jew or Gentile, according to his or her faithfulness as a member of the one “body of Christ.”—I Cor. 12:12,13

The practice of having bond-servants was a regulated institution in Israel and was still practiced in Paul’s day. He does not say that a servant who becomes a member of the body of Christ is free to disregard the wishes of his master. Rather, he says the Lord is able to bless the bond-servant as though he was a “freeman” in Christ. (I Cor. 7:21,22) In some respects, the servant position would be more favorable to the attainment of the humility of character necessary to obtain a share in the heavenly kingdom than the position of a master. Regardless, however, the bond-servant was to know that the Lord did not take notice of his earthly position as respects his heavenly hope.

While Jewish women often enjoyed more liberty than those of other ancient cultures, Israel’s patriarchal laws limited them primarily to the domestic sphere, responsible for nurturing and home life. The priesthood excluded them, and with a few notable exceptions, they had limited Temple access. Paul now proclaims these patriarchal laws no longer apply to “children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”—Gal. 3:26

We rejoice to have the privilege of sharing the Gospel with all. Let us be faithful to Jesus’ great commission to proclaim the “gospel of the kingdom” as a witness in all the world.—Matt. 24:14



Waiting for God's Kingdom

Key Verse: *“Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”*
—Isaiah 2:3

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 2:2-4

The blessing of the entire human race is the central theme of the Bible. No one ever born will be denied the opportunity of experiencing the blessed results of God's kingdom. God first declared this through his promise to Abraham: “By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; ... And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”
—Gen. 22:16-18

Our Key Verse speaks prophetically of God's promised kingdom, the laws of which will go “out of Zion.” In the Old Testament, Mount Zion was in Jerusalem and was recognized as Israel's seat of government. The New Testament contrasts this with symbolic spiritual Zion. Here, followers of Christ are spoken of as coming

to the “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” signifying the fulfillment of the Zion prophecy of Isaiah. (Heb. 12:22-24) Apostle Peter also uses the Zion imagery to describe footstep followers of Christ as living stones, built into a spiritual temple, with Christ as the cornerstone, laid in Zion. Thus, Peter connects Old Testament Zion to the New Testament church.—I Pet. 2:4-6

Jesus preached God’s kingdom to all who had an ear to hear. (Mark 1:14; Luke 4:43) To these, he also extended this invitation: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Within just a few years following his resurrection from death, the Gospel message had begun to spread to all nations. (Acts 1:8) It was especially made manifest to those who desired to become part of the Zion class, to whom these words apply: “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”—II Tim. 2:11,12

This Gospel has now been preached for two thousand years, but the Zion class is not yet complete. The standard is high and unappealing to most. Jesus declared, “many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matt. 22:14) Thus the world continues to wait for God’s kingdom. It will surely come, however, as Jesus spoke in his model prayer.—Matt. 6:10

We conclude our lesson with these words from John’s vision: “I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. They were holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on the land, on the sea, or on any tree. I saw another angel coming from the east having the seal of the living God. He cried, ... Don’t harm the land, the sea, or the trees until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads. I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000.”—Rev. 7:1-4, *International Standard Version* ■

Ransom and Sin Offering

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

—*I Timothy 2:5,6*

The word “ransom” in our opening text is translated from the Greek *antilutron*, which signifies a corresponding or equivalent price—specifically, a price of redemption. This definition enables us to appreciate that the whole race of mankind has been dying because of Adam’s sin and is in need of redemption. It also teaches us that through the righteousness of “the man Christ Jesus,” who was “separate from sinners,” all mankind will be redeemed and raised from the tomb.—Heb. 7:26; John 5:28,29; I Cor. 15:21,22

If the providing of a ransom for Father Adam and his offspring was the entire scope of God’s plan, however, a few problems would exist. First, because there is “no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave,” there is no change in fallen humanity’s character in death. (Eccles. 9:10) Therefore, when awakened, mankind would

still be in a sinful state and thus condemned to death again. Paul wrote, “It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of the living God.”—Heb. 10:31

Secondly, had the perfect man Jesus died without some provision being made of a future existence, he would have given his life for mankind but would forever have ceased to exist. Such would prove to be an impossible situation. Christ was obedient, unlike Adam, who because of sin forfeited his life. The righteous Son of God, however, voluntarily gave up his human life rights to purchase Adam and the fallen race. Under such circumstances, Jesus would have in effect lost his life forever while he fully did the will of God in every particular.

Thirdly, if Jesus were not to receive some form of future life for his obedience in willingly giving of his human existence, there would be nobody available to apply the value, or merit, of his sacrifice to release mankind from Adamic condemnation. By dying to the earthly nature Jesus, and subsequently the church, attain the divine nature and the priestly office of Messiah, the Christ class. (I Cor. 12:12-14,27) The doctrine of the sin offering addresses these and other related issues because it is God’s plan that all vestiges of sin in mankind will be destroyed as a result of the process of restitution.—Isa. 35:8-10; Acts 3:20,21

Jesus’ Offering for Sin

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus furnished the ransom price as the “Lamb of God” by his death as a perfect man. (John 1:29; Isa 53:7) In addition, the Bible tells us that by faithfully offering himself daily in sacrifice and service, and

by his sufferings for three and one-half years, he qualified himself to be a sympathetic high priest, “after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 6:20) Thus, in addition to providing the ransom price for Adam and his race, Jesus will effect the complete restoration of all that was lost and bring mankind back to human perfection.

Here are two scriptures affirming that, in addition to the ransom, the above-described “offering for sin” by Jesus for three and one-half years is a vital part of the means by which the full recovery and restoration of mankind will come to pass during Christ’s glorious kingdom reign. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect [complete], he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 5:8-10) Isaiah, speaking prophetically concerning Christ, wrote this: “It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” —Isa. 53:10

An Important Distinction

Here we should note the following distinction between the ransom and the sin offering, as they apply to Jesus. A period of suffering and sacrifice was not required by God for Jesus to provide the ransom price. The ransom simply required death as a perfect human being—a perfect life given for the perfect life of Adam that was forfeited.

At the age of thirty, Jesus presented himself on the banks of the Jordan to give his perfect humanity for Father Adam, symbolized by his water baptism. At that moment, had it been God's will, or any time thereafter, Jesus could have died as the ransom—a corresponding price—as long as he maintained his human perfection. He was the only human being who could do this, because all other individuals were imperfect. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Neither the church, nor anyone else, could have any part in providing the ransom price.

Sharing in Jesus' Sacrifice

In the Atonement Day sin offering of Israel, described in Leviticus chapter 16, both a "bullock of the sin offering" and a "goat of the sin offering" were sacrificed. (vss. 11,15) In this same chapter, verses 3 and 6 indicate that the bullock came from Aaron's own herd, whereas in verse 5, it states that the two goats, only one of which was sacrificed as a sin offering, were taken from the "congregation" of Israel.

The different origins of these animals indicate they both could not have pictured Jesus. Additionally, Christ could not be offered twice, once as the bullock and again as the Lord's goat. Thus we believe that the bullock, belonging to the high priest, was a fitting representation of the man Jesus during the three and one-half years of his sacrificial earthly ministry. His being undefiled and separate from sinners would not be equated as coming from the "congregation," picturing the sinful world of mankind, as was true in the case of the Lord's goat.

The bullock for the sin offering was for Aaron and "his house," which represents the spirit begotten of the present age, whereas the Lord's goat for the sin offering was "for the people," picturing the world of mankind. (Lev. 16:11,15) The fact that the bullock was offered first, then the Lord's goat, fittingly shows that atonement and its benefits to the church are accomplished in advance of those to the world of mankind.

Here we ask a vital question: Keeping in mind that only Jesus could provide the ransom, does the church, in its present imperfect condition, have anything acceptable to offer in fulfillment of the Lord's goat picture? In prophetic language, Isaiah wrote: "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isa. 61:10) It is absolutely true that we are all presently tainted by sin and unrighteousness. However, consecrated believers who have been justified by faith in the covering "robe" of Jesus' righteousness are no longer viewed by God as sinners but rather as New Creatures in Christ.—II Cor. 5:17

We note the following additional scriptures: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. ... For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

... Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."—Rom. 8:1-4,33

In harmony with the foregoing, as Christians, it is not our sinful nature that is pictured as being offered, but rather those perfect human life rights which are now imputed to us by faith in Jesus' meritorious sacrifice. Having given up that prospective life of human perfection in the coming earthly kingdom, we can now offer it as a sacrifice, "acceptable unto God" through Christ. (Rom. 12:1) As Paul further states, we are now of those who "seek for glory and honour and immortality."—Rom. 2:7

When the mother of James and John desired that they be at the places of chief favor in the kingdom, Jesus indicated they would be baptized into his death baptism; they would also partake of his suffering and ignominy associated with his life that was poured out. Jesus said to James and John, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" When they answered affirmatively, Jesus said, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." (Matt. 20:22,23) Each member of the church is to share in some way Jesus' experiences of suffering, sacrifice, and service, that they, like him, may develop the necessary character qualities to be part of the "royal priesthood."—I Pet. 2:9

"Without the Camp"

The Apostle Paul made specific reference to many features of the Law Covenant arrangement. In one of these, the apostle connects both Jesus and the church to one of the activities that took place on Israel's Day of Atonement (Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) —specifically, regarding the bullock and the Lord’s goat both being burned “without the camp” of Israel. (Lev. 16:27) We believe Paul’s words indicate that both Jesus and the church are shown in the sin offering picture. He states: “The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”—Heb.13:11-14

We note that in the foregoing quote, the word “bodies” in verse 11 is, in the Greek, denoted specifically in plural form. This is in harmony with the thought that more than one animal, the bullock and the Lord’s goat, are being referred to by the Apostle Paul. He affirms that both bodies, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary by the high priest “for sin,” were burned “without the camp.” Applying the picture, Paul then says that Jesus “suffered without the gate.” Indeed, he suffered not only outside the gate of Jerusalem, but also outside the favor of the social and religious systems of the time. Paul concludes by then encouraging the church to do likewise in “bearing his reproach.”

In all of this, we should note that the two animals, bullock and goat, constituted the one complete offering made by the high priest. The blood of this all-inclusive offering effected the one atonement for Aaron, his house, and all the people, as explained in Leviticus 16:17,27,30,34.

The Oneness of Christ

Paul wrote: “As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also, is Christ.” “Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” (I Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:11) The church, as members of Christ’s body, is accepted as part of his own sacrifice. We again stress, however, that it was Christ’s merit alone that gave the church a standing. Thus, in reality, the blood of Lord’s goat, as represented in the church, belongs to Christ, and he has been offering the church, his body, as a part of his own sacrifice. His sacrifice alone makes theirs acceptable. Paul states that God “hath made us accepted in the beloved.”—Eph. 1:6

We reference these additional texts to emphasize that the present righteousness of the church has only been made possible through Christ Jesus. “For him who knew no sin, he made a sin offering on our behalf, that we might become God’s righteousness in him.” “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: ... Not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ.”—II Cor. 5:21, *The Emphatic Diaglott*; Phil. 3:8,9

Further Testimony

The Apostle Paul testifies in another place: “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (Rom.15:16) Paul here indicates that the church’s offering is

being made acceptable through sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Most assuredly, the Holy Spirit guides and assists the church in its daily work of sacrifice and service.

We recall, too, the promise that through Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The apostle identifies Christ as that seed. He then adds these words: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:8,16,28,29) As part of the spiritual seed of Abraham, the church will share in blessing all the families of the earth. There could be no greater work than assisting in the removal of the vestiges of sin in mankind as they progress towards perfection in the kingdom.

The world of mankind will have Christ as its mediator during the kingdom period. (I Tim. 2:5,6) As members of the Lord's body, the church will be uniquely qualified to assist in bringing the people up the highway of holiness. The experiences we will have had during our own Christian walk will equip us for this task in the kingdom. On the one hand, we will have had to deal with our own struggles and weaknesses. Being acquainted with the requirements of God, we will be able to help educate humanity as to the requirements of divine law. At the same time, we can be merciful and sympathetic in recognizing that perfection of heart and mind by the world will not be instantaneous, but a gradual process throughout the earthly kingdom.

Another view of our subject is pictured in the concept of first fruits. Revelation 14:4 states, concerning the glorified church: "These are they which

were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”

In the ceremonies of Israel, the firstfruits of their spring grain harvest were offered to God. This consisted of two offerings. (Lev. 23:10-18) The first offering mentioned in this account, made on the 16th day of the month Abib, was the waving of a barley sheaf. This pointed to Jesus, the firstfruits of the resurrection, whom God raised from the dead on exactly the same day, Jewish reckoning. Returning to the Leviticus account, fifty days after the waving of the sheaf of the firstfruits of the barley harvest, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were presented as a wave offering. In fulfillment, the church also was symbolically offered as a firstfruits class on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days following the resurrection of Jesus.—Acts 2:1-4

Following Jesus' Example

We follow Jesus' example and should rejoice in the privilege of suffering for his cause. We do this bearing in mind the ultimate goal is to help eradicate sin as part of the priestly and mediatorial work of the kingdom. This will be the blessed privilege of those who are part of the “firstfruits” of the resurrection. (I Cor. 15:22,23) If such was not the case, there would be little meaning to the Apostle Paul's words concerning himself and by extension applying to all the church: “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?”—I Cor. 15:29,30

If we are faithful to our calling, we shall help to offer the benefits of Jesus' death as mankind's Redeemer to the entire world. Then, the "Spirit and the bride" will say to the people, "Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:17

The footstep followers of Jesus have many opportunities for sacrifice, suffering, and service. This implies that it was the divine intention to give the church a share in the experiences that would enable them to be "priests of God and of Christ" during his kingdom reign. (Rev. 20:6) As part of this, the laying down of our lives on behalf of our brethren in the service of the Truth will do much to prove the sincerity of the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice.—Rom. 12:1

Our Lord credits faithfulness in bearing reproach, suffering, serving, and everything else connected with our sacrifice as part of his afflictions. This is the case, provided such experiences are the result of our voluntary activity in his name and in the furtherance of his cause. As the psalmist wrote, none of us "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." (Ps. 49:7) However, we can, and we must in order to be faithful, be heartily engaged in sacrifice and service, even to the extent of suffering "for righteousness' sake." (Matt. 5:10) If we do so, as Peter said, "Happy are ye!" (I Pet. 3:14) Why are we happy? We are happy because we are being trained for the great future work of assisting mankind back to perfection and favor with God.

Concluding Observations

In summary, the ransom price was provided by Jesus alone to effect mankind's redemption from Adamic sin. This he did by dying as a perfect human being, thus purchasing Adam and the entire race that was condemned through his sin. The sin offering is the process by which actual atonement will be achieved for mankind.

Christ is composed of not one, but many members. Once complete, the Christ class, Head and body, will comprise the seed of promise and the great Melchisedec high priest. Their sufferings, sacrifice, and service in this life qualify them to engage in the glorious work of reconciling man back to God. How thankful we should be for the divine provision which has permitted the church to become part of this most glorious arrangement. Obadiah 1:21 states the matter succinctly: "Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion." If faithful, we will be a part of that class.—Heb. 12:22,23; Rev. 14:1-4 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Helena Malinowski, Grand Rapids, MI—
January 25. Age, 99

Sister Jean Orr, Salem, SC—January 29. Age, 85

The Profitable Word

“All Scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”—

*II Timothy 3:16,17,
The Emphatic
Diaglott*

Our opening text was written near the end of the Apostle Paul’s life. At that time, the Holy Scriptures consisted mostly of the Old Testament record, with only portions of the New Testament having yet been written. It is the Old Testament part of the Bible to which Jesus referred when he said, “thy word is truth”; and of which Peter spoke, saying, “the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy

Spirit.” (John 17:17; II Pet. 1:21) Today we also have the words of Jesus, the writers of the Gospels, and the Apostles as provided in the New Testament.

To sincere students of the Bible, it is not necessary to prove that these records make up the Holy Word of God. We have the witness in ourselves that this is so.

As Paul says, quoting from Moses, “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.” (Rom. 10:8; Deut. 30:14) We realize the power of the Word of Truth in our hearts. It is the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”—Rom. 1:16

The Indestructible Word

In its completed form, the Bible is one of the oldest books in existence. It has outlived the storms of the last two thousand years. Concerted efforts have been made to do away with it. In some countries, for centuries it was a crime to possess a copy. Today, however, the world is filled with copies of this book. In A.D. 1800 it is estimated that there were between four and six million Bibles in circulation in 30 languages. Eighty years later, in A.D. 1880, there were roughly 165 million copies in 250 languages. Today, the complete Bible is available in more than 700 languages, with some portions available in over 3,000 languages. Hundreds of millions are currently in circulation, and historically, it is estimated that this number has been in the billions. It is therefore quite evident that the Bible’s divine author has also been its preserver.

Many people believe that there is an all-wise Creator overruling all things, admitting to such wisdom and design in all they see around them in the realm of earth and in the heavens. The Bible reveals that there is equal wisdom and design in the moral and spiritual realm. God has an equally wise purpose in connection with the moral government of the world. In his Word he has satisfied our reason and our desire to know something of himself and his plan—something of whence we came,

why we are here, and what lies beyond. The Bible tells of man's original perfection; of his fall into sin and the penalty of death that passed upon all men; of the coming of the Redeemer; the call of the church; and the restitution of all things that will bless all the families of the earth.—Gen. 1:27; Rom. 5:12; Matt. 1:21; Eph. 4:1-4; Acts 3:20-25

There are many wonders in nature that are not seen by the casual observer, or even by the natural eye unaided, but need the telescope or the microscope for their discernment. Thus it is also with the Word of God and the things of the spiritual realm with which it deals. Many of these beauties are not discerned by the eye of the natural man, but need the illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit to see them and to be blessed by them. (John 16:13; I Cor. 2:9,10,14) Concerning the many unbelievers of his day, we note these words of Paul, paraphrasing: "When the majority hear the Word of God read to them, there is a veil upon the heart, so that its real significance is not discerned. But when the heart turns to the Lord in full dedication, the veil is taken away and one sees out of obscurity and out of darkness, and beholds as in a mirror the glory of the Lord."—II Cor. 3:14-18

In our opening text, Paul says the Scriptures are not only divinely inspired, but they are profitable. They are our daily bread; the light that shows us the path of life; the revelation that tells us about our Father in heaven and his only begotten Son, our Redeemer, "whom having not seen, ye love." (Matt. 6:11; John 3:16; 8:12; I Pet. 1:8) If obedient to their teachings we shall be sanctified thereby, and thus we will be prepared for an inheritance

among all those who are sanctified. (John 17:17; Acts 20:32) Hence, the Word of God is indeed profitable, yea, indispensable—a precious gift to the children of God from their Heavenly Father.

Profitable in Four Ways

In his words to Timothy, Paul speaks of the profitability of the Word of God in four ways: teaching, conviction, correction, and discipline in righteousness. Teaching, or doctrine, has to do with the understanding of the fundamental truths of God's plan. "If any man will do his [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17) The doctrine of God is important, as shown by the following scriptures: I Timothy 4:16; 6:3; II Timothy 3:10; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1,7,10; and II John 1:9 As bones are to the human body, giving it structure and stability, so doctrine is to the functioning of the church, the body of Christ. Without doctrine we would lack the superstructure of faith necessary to know and to do God's will.

Conviction

The term "conviction," as shown in the *Diaglott* translation, can also be stated as "proof." While journeying through the wilderness of "this present evil world," the Lord's people need a sure, infallible, guide or standard. (Gal. 1:4) This is especially necessary today in view of the confusion of conflicting beliefs pervading the religious systems. If we are told that a piece of cloth is eighteen inches wide, we can only have conviction of this by using a measuring rod. If a wall is said to be perpendicular, our eye is not accurate enough to be certain that this is true, so we need to prove it by using a plumb line. In like manner, the divine measuring rod, the Bible, has

been provided to prove the correctness or falsity of whatever may be presented to us as truth. By it we can have conviction as to what is in harmony or out of harmony with the Holy Word.

The Word of God deals with many things beyond the limits of man's present experience, as well as with things on the human plane with which few are familiar. Therefore, our own judgment is inadequate as a guide in connection with these matters. We may come to one conclusion concerning an item of what is presented as truth, whereas someone else may come to a much different conclusion. Consequently, the Lord has provided an infallible guide for his children through his Word. By it we may "try the spirits"—the teachings that may be presented to us—searching the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so. This was the course of the Bereans of old. (I John 4:1; Acts 17:10,11) So far from finding fault with such an attitude, Paul always approved it. By thus realizing that the Word of God is profitable for proof and conviction, and using it to that end, our faith does not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."—I Cor. 2:5

Correction

The Word of God is profitable for correction. All need correction both as to faith and conduct. We therefore come to the Word for the correction of our faith; for our understanding of the divine purposes to be amplified; for our conduct, manners, and beliefs all to be ordered according to his will. To neglect doing so, we may get into a condition where we will not receive correction, but take offense when it is kindly given. This is a dangerous

condition. The scribes and Pharisees would not receive the correction given by Jesus, and hence greatly increased their responsibility before God. Such an attitude indicates pride in the heart.

The Lord cannot deal with us unless we are willing to humbly receive correction and to use his Word to this end. Paul suggests that if we have received correction from our natural fathers, how much more should we be willing to be corrected by our Heavenly Father. (Heb. 12:5-11) The apostle also states, “If we would judge ourselves [according to the Word of Truth], we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (I Cor. 11:31,32) The wise man Solomon wrote, “He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth.”—Prov. 10:17

Discipline in Righteousness

The word “discipline” in our text suggests the thoughts of instruction, education, and training. Toward what righteousness are we to be instructed? Some go about to “establish their own righteousness.” (Rom. 10:3) However, the Word of God is profitable because it instructs us that this is not the kind of righteousness that has divine approval. When we speak of Christ’s righteousness, we refer to the merit of his sacrifice imputed to us by faith, enabling us to be counted righteous, justified in the sight of God. (Phil. 3:9; Rom. 5:1) Even this, however, does not fully describe the righteousness to which the apostle makes reference.

Paul is here speaking of the “man of God” whom he desires to be “thoroughly fitted for every good

work.” Such are already enjoying the benefits of Christ’s righteousness. We would understand the reference to be to the great principles of God’s law and his divine government. These are the great principles that govern God’s dealings, and hence the perfections of the divine character that we desire to copy.

The Word of God is represented as a mirror. We behold in this mirror the glory of the Lord—his wisdom, justice, love, and power, as they are revealed in his great plan of salvation. As we seek to copy these glorious perfections, we are transformed into the same image, becoming in character more like our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus. —II Cor. 3:18

Character—Express Image

The word “character” has been brought into the English language from the Greek. The Greek word is *charakter*. At first it was the name of the sculptor’s tool. Later the finished work of the sculptor came to be called a *charakter*—that is, the ideal toward which he had been working. The word is used but once in the New Testament, in Hebrews 1:3. Here it is translated “express image,” or “exact impress” [*Diaglott*], and applies to our Lord Jesus since his resurrection. He is now the “exact impress” of the Father’s person.

We are called to be “like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) What a hope has been set before us! How profitable and all-important is the Word of God, that we might be instructed in righteousness and in the great principles that compose the divine character.

Thoroughly Furnished

Under the present imperfect arrangements, many go out into the world who by no means are thoroughly furnished for a calling in life. Many, too, enter Christian ministry, not merely poorly equipped for their work, but quite ignorant of the message they should preach as the ministers of Christ.

Before beginning the great work of the Messianic kingdom, consecrated believers are being thoroughly fitted and prepared for their part in that gracious work of blessing and restoring mankind. During the present life, the least the Lord's servants can do is to seek to be thoroughly furnished for our work now and in the future, as faithful "stewards of the mysteries of God."—I Cor. 4:1,2

We are exhorted to be "complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work." The Word of God needs to be considered carefully in order to ascertain the kind of good works required of us. If we do this, we find that our present work is not one of reforming or converting the world. As a faithful Bible Student wrote many years ago, "The present mission of the church is the perfection of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God's witness to the world; and to prepare to be kings and priests in the next age."

God has provided his Word that we might be fully equipped with all the information we need—light, guidance, strength, encouragement—to be faithful, even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) Let us never allow anything to obscure or cause us to overlook the value and profitableness of the Word of God, given by inspiration that we may be "complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work." ■

The Reward of Service

*“The Son of man
came not to be
ministered unto,
but to minister,
and to give his life
a ransom for
many.”*
—*Mark 10:45*

It was nearing the close of Jesus’ ministry. For more than three years the Master had been calling his disciples and instructing them. They had come to recognize him as the Messiah, the heir of all God’s promises, the one

through whom the Messianic kingdom would be set up, which would bless all the families of mankind—the dead as well as the living.—Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8

The Master had particularly assured them that, if faithful, they should sit with him on his throne. (Matt. 19:28) However, he had not told them that his kingdom would be a spiritual one, and that they would need the “change” of the “first resurrection” before they could be sharers of it. (I Cor. 15:51,52; Rev. 20:6) He had not yet made clear to them the fact that a whole age would intervene before they would be sharers in the kingdom, and the kingdom itself be established among men. Yet he had hinted all this.

He had said, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when that one, the spirit of truth, is come, ... it shall declare unto you the things that are to come.”—John 16:12,13, *Revised Version Improved and Corrected*

Jesus did, however, begin to break to the disciples a part of the news necessary for them to know and appreciate, lest they should be entirely overwhelmed and discouraged. He told them that he was going up to Jerusalem; he would suffer many things, and be killed. Peter, always courageous, this time brought upon himself a severe rebuke. He attempted to correct the Master, saying, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” Peter believed that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel and that he was about to set up his kingdom. It was inconceivable to him that the Lord would be killed. However, Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”—Matt. 16:21-23

In this same lesson, Jesus also included the statement that he would “be raised again the third day.” (vs. 21) However, because the disciples could not grasp the thought that Jesus would die, these added words must also have seemed to them like a “dark saying” of the Master which seemed so mysterious. They perhaps remembered also Jesus’ words on another occasion, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” (John 6:53) This was another difficult statement that they could not understand.

There were many occasions when the disciples could not comprehend the meaning of the Master’s

words; they often seemed so different from what they had been expecting. To their credit, they had sufficient faith to continue to follow Jesus, but how could they understand the words which he spoke? Not until after Pentecost did they get the full grasp of the situation and of what Jesus had told them. (Acts 2:1-4) There the Holy Spirit began to make plain the divine arrangement—that the sufferings of Christ, including his body members, the church, must come first before the glories of the kingdom would be revealed and the blessings to the world begin.—I Pet. 1:11

On Right Hand and Left

Another of the Gospels tells us that the mother of James and John came with them and voiced their plea: “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” (Matt. 20:20,21) They believed that the time for distributing the honors of the kingdom was very near at hand. We need not assume that these two dear disciples sought positions closest to the Master merely for ambition’s sake. Rather, we believe that they loved the Lord very dearly and therefore thought that they could appreciate a nearness to him more than perhaps some of the other disciples. Indeed, they were permitted to come nearer than the majority of the twelve. On several special occasions the Lord took with him the same James and John, as well as Peter. They were with him in the holy mount, at the awakening of Jairus’ daughter, and in Gethsemane’s garden. (Matt. 17:1-5; Luke 8:41,42,49-56; Mark 14:32-34) They were loyal disciples whom the Lord greatly loved.

Let us mark carefully the words of Jesus. He declared that while there would be places of prominence in his kingdom, they would not be distributed by himself, but by the Father. He said, “to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”—Matt. 20:23

The Father stands as the representative of absolute justice and righteousness. Positions in the heavenly phase of the Millennial kingdom, whatever form they may take, are not to be given on the score of mere favoritism, but on the basis of faithfulness and qualification, and all will be by grace. (Eph. 2:8) The Lord Jesus himself will have the highest place, because he is worthy. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (Rev. 5:12) Indeed, the Father has given our Lord honor and great glory, exalting him to his own right hand. The climax of his kingdom glory will come when the church, the body of Christ, shall have been completed and all the “called, and chosen, and faithful” have received the promised “crown of life.”—Rev. 17:14; 2:10

What Kingdom Is Meant

For many centuries confusion has prevailed among Christian people respecting the kingdom of Messiah so frequently mentioned by Jesus and the apostles. There was, however, no confusion at first, nor for nearly two hundred years after Jesus' day. The Early Church understood very well the promise that Messiah would come a second time. He would receive the church to glory with himself and establish the

kingdom of divine power for the rule of the world and the subjugation of all things to the will of God; and they knew that this Messianic kingdom would require a thousand years to fulfill its mission.—John 14:2,3; Matt. 25:31; Rev. 20:6

However, by and by a theory sprang up to the effect that the church on earth was to be organized as Messiah's kingdom and was to conquer the world before Jesus' Second Coming. This unscriptural view changed the whole course of church history. No longer was the preaching of the Gospel with a view to calling out and perfecting a "little flock," who would have a hearing ear and an appreciative heart, to make these ready for kingdom honor and glory. (Luke 12:32) Rather, the course changed dramatically. Thereafter the endeavor was to grasp civil power. Intrigues began, false claims were asserted, and the endeavor was made to obtain control of kings and nations. Persecutions were used; and as much as possible civil rulers were induced and threatened, in order that worldwide dominion by the church might be established.

For a time, these endeavors flourished; but since the beginning of the nineteenth century the thought of ecclesiastical dominion of the earth has mostly disappeared. In the resulting confusion, many have lost all faith in the Messianic kingdom, and few are looking for it at Christ's Second Coming. In perplexity, some discuss a spiritual kingdom as merely dwelling in the hearts of believers. Others believe that Christ's kingdom is now represented in the great governments of the world. Yet, these are further confused when considering why certain portions of Messiah's kingdom have built great

armies to potentially war against or destroy other portions of the same kingdom.

The result of all this confusion has been that to many professed Christian people, the teachings of the Bible simply do not seem consistent or logical. Otherwise, they would see that James, John, and the other apostles could not sit upon “twelve thrones” without there being a ruling kingdom. (Matt. 19:28) They would also see that the kingdom must yet be future, in harmony with the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) As we seek to know and understand more of God’s plan of salvation, we must study the Bible reverently and “search the scriptures” daily. (John 5:39; Acts 17:11) In doing so, we will receive great blessings and perceive that Messiah’s glorious kingdom, though not yet established in the earth, is “near, even at the doors.”—Matt. 24:33

“Are Ye Able?”

To the two dear disciples and their mother, who requested for them places of special nearness to the Master in the kingdom, Jesus made known the fact that any position in the heavenly kingdom would require the fulfillment of certain conditions. It was not enough that they had been called to discipleship. It was not enough that they had surrendered all to follow the Lord; that they had been with him, had learned his teachings and had assented to them. There must be something more; else they might not enter into the spiritual phase of the kingdom.

These conditions the Master declared, saying, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and

to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Matt. 20:22) What did he mean? What was the import of "the cup" and "the baptism" Jesus referred to, which he said not only applied to himself but also to those who would be his faithful followers?

We reply that Jesus' "cup" was the one to which he elsewhere referred, saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11) In the divine arrangement God had already marked out that whoever would be entrusted with the Messianic kingdom glory, honor, and power for the blessing of the world, must first demonstrate faithfulness worthy of that honor and glory. In the case of Jesus himself the cup meant all those experiences of service, ignominy, shame, sacrifice, and suffering, all of which he faithfully endured during the three and one-half years of his earthly ministry, and which he fully accomplished at Calvary when he cried, "It is finished."—John 19:30

As disciples of Christ, we must follow the example he laid out for us as we go through similar experiences as he did. We will only be successful in attaining to joint-heirship with the Master in his kingdom glory, honor and power, if we first of all demonstrate loyalty and faithfulness with respect to suffering, sacrifice, and service, as we walk in his footsteps.—Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12

When Jesus spoke of the "baptism that I am baptized with," he was referring to his baptism unto sacrificial death. He spoke again of this a short time later, saying, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened [pressed] till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50) The Master's water baptism at the beginning of his ministry was merely a symbol

of his true baptism. His going down into the water, his burial in it, and his rising up from it represented his going down into sacrificial death and his resurrection therefrom. His real baptism into death progressed for three and a half years, from Jordan to Calvary. When he cried on the cross, "It is finished," he meant that his baptism unto death was completed. He was raised up out of that death-baptism condition on the third day by the Father's mighty power, to his right hand, which position he will always occupy.—Eph. 1:19-22; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:1-3

"We Are Able"

In the account of this incident the disciples answered Jesus, "we are able"—that is, they were willing to undertake to drink of the Master's cup and partake of his baptism. (Matt. 20:22) They did not know clearly what all this meant; but they were able and willing to do anything that Jesus would command. Thus it must be with all who, like those faithful disciples, shall be "more than conquerors" and share with the Redeemer in the glory, honor and immortality promised to his "body" members, the church.—Rom. 8:37; 2:7; I Cor. 12:27

In the account under consideration, Jesus replied to the disciples, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." (Matt. 20:23) That is to say, willingness on their part is all that the Lord could reasonably require of his disciples. None of us has the power and ability that Jesus possessed. We are sinners by nature. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." (Heb. 7:26) We can merely, therefore, commit our will to do right. The Lord must take us under his

care and into his school of affliction and experience. He will then give us the lessons necessary to prove our loyalty and faithfulness, even unto death. How gracious it is that because of our weakness as members of the fallen race, God has provided for us in the Savior a “merciful and faithful high priest.” (Heb. 2:17) Thus only through Jesus may we hope to attain to the heavenly kingdom.

Chief Servant—Most Honored

The other apostles were indignant that James and John, together with their mother, should have made such a request. (Matt. 20:24) However, the incident afforded Jesus opportunity for laying down the guidelines which must govern what will constitute greatness in the Messianic kingdom. Whoever will serve others most, with humility and love, will thereby be demonstrating to God a greater fitness for a higher place. (Gal. 5:13) This is different, as Jesus says, from the ordinary course of affairs, where lordship typically does not include serving others, but being served.—Luke 22:25,26

The rule of the kingdom will be that the one who serves most will have the highest honor. Jesus himself is preeminently a servant above all others. Thus his position is the highest in the kingdom by divine appointment, and others will range next to him in proportion as they have his spirit of love, service, obedience, and loyalty. To his followers, the Master said, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”—John 12:26 ■

Talking Things Over

General Convention Bulletin

July 11-16, 2026—Olympia, Washington

Preparations continue to be made for this year's General Convention, which will be held at the beautiful facilities of The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, on the dates noted above. **Please note the earlier dates.**

Various room options are available on campus in traditional dormitories (Dorms) as well as apartments (Apts). The convention committee is pleased to announce that there will be no price increase from last year for those who take the double occupancy package price option, and a small reduction in price to those taking the single occupancy (limited availability) package price option.

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

In addition to a discourse on the theme text, I Timothy 4:12 (*The Emphatic Diaglott*), the convention program will include a discussion of the topic "Then Cometh the End," taken from I Corinthians 15:24-26. Short talks will be presented on "Ask, Seek, and Knock," centered on Jesus' words

in Matthew 7:7-11. A two-person dialogue will also be presented on the subject “The Two Resurrections,” based on Acts 24:15. A Baptismal service is also planned for anyone desiring to give witness to their consecration by water immersion.

A pricing table and registration form is provided immediately following this announcement. We encourage you to register early and also to pass this information along to others in your area. Advance payment is not required. If you do pay in advance it will be refunded in full if you determine later that you are unable to attend. We look forward to the prospect of seeing many of our brethren once again and encourage each of you to start planning now to attend this year’s General Convention. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$13.00	\$12.00
Lunch		15.00	14.00
Dinner		16.00	15.00
Total, three meals		\$44.00	\$41.00
Lodging (per night)			
dbl occ (DORMS or APTS)		\$45.00	\$40.00
single occ (DORMS)		\$60.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
dbl occ (DORMS or APTS)		\$445*	\$410*
single occ (DORMS)		\$535*	n/a

*If no breakfasts, deduct—\$40

***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group.

NOTE: A Convention Fee of \$15.00 per person, regardless of age, length of stay, or lodging and meal arrangements, will be added to your invoice to help offset convention expenses unrelated to lodging and meals.

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

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

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 10, 2026				
Saturday, 11th				
Sunday, 12th				
Monday, 13th				
Tuesday, 14th				
Wednesday, 15th				
Thursday, 16th				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts)

Check: double occupancy single occupancy
 interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

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

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

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

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