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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Turmoil in the Mideast 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

The Christ Hymn 16

Heavenly Worship 18

Thankful Worship 20

All Things New 22

Tree of Life 24

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Searching the Scriptures—Part 17

Resting in Christ 26

The Deep Things of God 40

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 15

ENCOURAGING LETTERS 51

TALKING THINGS OVER

General Convention Bulletin 53

General Convention Program 56

OBITUARIES 62

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

Turmoil in the Mideast

***“Men’s hearts
failing them for
fear, and for
looking after those
things which are
coming on the
earth: for the
powers of heaven
shall be shaken.”***

—Luke 21:26

THESE PROPHETIC WORDS, which mark the closing features of this present Gospel Age, were spoken by our Lord Jesus to his followers when his earthly ministry was coming to a close. He would soon give his life as a sacrifice for the poor sin-sick human family that would be manifest to all during his future kingdom over the earth.

HEARTS OF FEAR

As we contemplate the Master’s predictions, we see evidence in every quarter of earth’s present social, financial, political, and ecclesiastical systems that we are now living in this foretold time. An awakening world of discontents has created a rising tide of violence, evil, and corruption that has become commonplace. The hearts of the world’s statesmen and religious leaders are failing them for fear as they consider a bleak and uncertain

future and seek answers to the multitude of perplexing problems that confront them. As the Prophet Ezekiel had written many centuries ago, “All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.”—Ezek. 7:17

ONE SMALL SPARK

In the closing weeks of December, 2010, a relatively insignificant event touched off the present Mideast crisis, and it became fully ignited during the first weeks of the new year 2011. The incident took place in an unlikely small Tunisian town called Sidi Bouzid. This is a dusty, provincial community in the remote interior of Tunisia where groups of young unemployed men loiter on the sidewalks and in cafes. It is far from the glittering coastal resort towns located along the Mediterranean Sea that attract large numbers of tourists every year. It is also several hours drive by car from the nation’s capital city, Tunis.

It was in Sidi Bouzid that a young street vendor named Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire to protest the confiscation of his fruit and vegetable cart because he had not obtained a permit to sell his produce. He also suffered harassment and humiliation at the hands of the local municipal officials when he had gone to retrieve his wares. He died a few days later from the extensive burns that he had suffered.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Except for the meager protests of a few close friends whose outrage was quickly crushed by the Tunisian state police, Mohamed Bouazizi’s self-immolation and subsequent death might have gone

unnoticed as the very epicenter of a social quake that would soon rock the entire Arab world. However, the incident soon sparked deadly demonstrations and riots throughout Tunisia's interior, and then spread to the capital city, Tunis. Large numbers of youth protested the many unresolved social and political issues. The government's violent crack-down, which was broadcast through the social media, only served to fuel further public outrage. The intensified anger and violence of the uprising led to the ultimate collapse of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's regime, and forced him to step down on January 14, 2011, after 23 years as one of the Arab world's strongest autocrats.

THE WIDENING CONFLICT

The spark that was touched off in Tunisia inspired and galvanized countless numbers of people to protest unresolved issues in other regimes, and they quickly turned their attention to Egypt and the Mubarak regime. Egypt is the region's largest and most important state, and its government was considered to be stable and firmly entrenched. The Suez Canal is located within its borders, one of the world's most important waterways. It was also a major ally of the United States and had kept the peace with its neighbor Israel during the past thirty years.

The Egyptian revolt began in the city of El Mahalla El Kubba where labor unrest had long been prevalent in the pollution-ridden textile industry. The local shops sell their merchandise, including brightly colored blankets and quilts, bolts of striped cloth, wedding dresses, and other products that

are produced in the city's mills and factories. The movement's leaders also had a previous history of resisting harassment and enduring time in the local jails. They had called for improved living standards when violence erupted in the area in 2008.

NEW DEMANDS

Now the protestors were demanding change, and a significant incident to the ruling regime's symbol of power took place when a giant portrait of President Mubarak was torn down and stomped on in the central square of the city. This was an unheard of event because respect for the ruling leader of the country is enforced by a widespread security network. However, this uprising was the first to break the barrier of fear that was prevalent all over Egypt, and the country would never be the same again. Although the more established opposition groups moved cautiously in the wake of the recent Tunisian revolt, the youth movement urged the residents of Cairo to gather in the streets. Thus the revolt was centered in Tahrir Square, where thousands of people gathered to demand the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak, who was forced to resign after only 18 days. He had been Egypt's leader for thirty years. The success of this revolt began a far-reaching and growing movement of protest that quickly spread to Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan and other nations beyond.

YOUTH AND TECHNOLOGY

Analysts and news reporters point out that the violent tensions that have been let loose in the Middle East encompass two very powerful forces

that will inevitably spread to other nations in the region, and are unlikely to disappear before accomplishing their ultimate goal of removing the long-entrenched and corrupt power regimes. These two powerful forces are youth and technology.

Youth is one of the underlying forces in the crisis that focuses on the growing number of people under 30 years of age. This group now represents 60% of the population in some of the main areas of conflict, and these young people have aspirations that they want to have fulfilled. However, these demands are readily dismissed by the regimes as being a product of Western interference and greed. This huge mass of protesting youth now poses a growing and very serious threat to the stability of all the Middle Eastern regimes as well as to the United States and other Western powers. The protestors demand to be treated like equal citizens within their respective societies and not as mere subjects.

SURVEY RESULTS

In a recent survey of Middle Eastern youth, it was learned that the fundamental concerns of the young people throughout the area were the need for well-paying jobs, the desire to have a well-run modern society and the ability to live in freedom from oppression and want. Without economic growth and the means to fuel that growth, young men especially are denied the ability to obtain gainful employment and to realize a sense of dignity. In the Middle Eastern countries where the growth in youth population is said to be the largest of any area of the world, the lack of these basic desires has been a factor and will lead to further discontent. The

survey noted that from 1970 to 2007, 80% of all outbreaks of conflict occurred in regions where 60% or more of the population was younger than 30 years of age.

Journalists, politicians, and scholars have all noted the Middle East's youth problem, but the region's governments have done little to address it. It is estimated that unemployment within this vast and growing segment of the population remains at close to 25%. The oil boom has helped some countries pay their people in various ways, but more than half of those who live in the Middle East are in lands that do not produce oil. Moreover, oil has proven to be a curse even in the rich countries where armies of foreigners do all the work and where regimes continue to offer their people little as long as they obey their rules. In light of recent developments, Kuwait and Bahrain have both decided to give all of their citizens bonuses this year (\$3,000 in Kuwait, \$2,700 in Bahrain). However, these payments are a reminder that in the Middle East, there are two modes of control: mass repression and mass bribery.

TECHNOLOGY

Across the Arab world, people living under the thumb of repressive leaders are rising up against the rulers who once seemed omnipotent. They are using the Internet to network and to spread the word. They are watching themselves on satellite television, and are drawing strength from the energy shown by the young people who have been discarded and dismissed by their governments. It is a contagious spirit.

This is a population that is increasingly aware, informed, and connected. Technology based on satellite television, computers, mobile phones, and the Internet has played a powerful role in informing, educating, and connecting especially the young people throughout the Middle East. Such technological advances serve to empower individuals, while at the same time disarming the state. In former times, information technology favored those who were in power. For example, revolutionaries tried to take over the radio stations back in the 1930s in an effort to thwart the government propaganda that was broadcast to the public. Today's technologies are networks in which everyone is connected but no one is in control. This is a powerful tool that may be used against anyone who attempts to suppress information.

LIBYA

The revolt in Libya was inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, and began as a series of protests and confrontations against the government and its de facto leader Muammar al-Gaddafi. Protests were centered in Libya's two largest cities, the capital of Tripoli in the west and Benghazi in the east. The unrest quickly spread to other parts of the country where demonstrators, with some help from local police and defecting military units have taken control.

Muammar al-Gaddafi has ruled Libya since overthrowing the monarchy in 1969, which makes him the world's longest ruling non-royal head of state. His government reacted with extreme force against the protestors by sending elite troops and

mercenaries to curb the conflict. At the time of this writing, the Libyan Air Force has been sent to attack civilians. This marks the government's crack-down as the bloodiest conflict in recent history, and has drawn international condemnation against Libya. Several Libyan officials have stepped down while others have distanced themselves from Gaddafi, accusing him of genocide and crimes against humanity in his attacks against his own people.

At this time, Muammar Gaddafi and his supporters are in two principal fortified compounds in Tripoli, the capital city of Libya. Government mercenaries are on patrol to shoot anyone who is found on the streets, and witnesses say that bodies are scattered throughout the city. In a recent speech Gaddafi's son said that he and his father "will fight until the last drop of blood." There are reports of ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity committed by government forces against peaceful protesters. It is apparent that Gaddafi is not going to relinquish his position of power over Libya without using every means at his disposal to maintain it, even to the point of massacring his own people.

WINDS OF CHANGE

Only a few weeks after the world watched Tunisia celebrate the collapse of the country's strong-armed ruler, the scene in Cairo and the end of President Hosni Mubarak was an even greater display of the youth-driven revolt. This has raised serious questions concerning the long-term stability of other Western-allied regimes across the Middle East. At the time of this writing, reverberations are already being felt in significant ways.

The impact has already been noted in reforms that are now forthcoming. In Saudi Arabia, another traditional cornerstone of United States interests in the Mideast, opposition activists sent a letter to King Abdullah, who had been one of Mubarak's staunchest supporters before his forced resignation. The letter asked the Saudi king for the right to form a new political party. This was a direct challenge to the absolute power of the ruling dynasty.

Jordan's new Prime Minister, Marouf Bakhit, promised to continue the political reforms demanded by protestors who had forced King Abdullah II to reshuffle his cabinet. In Yemen, another key United States ally for more than three decades, President Ali Abdullah Saleh was forced to bow to protestors' demands, and announced that he would not seek reelection in 2013, nor would he attempt to pass power on to his son.

Pressure is also mounting in the Gulf kingdom of Bahrain, home to the United States Navy's 5th Fleet. This is the most politically divided country in the region where Shiites face allegedly second-class status under continuing Sunni rulership. In the summer of 2010, the nation was torn by clashes and riots after a wave of arrests against perceived Shiite dissidents. In light of Mubarak's resignation, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa granted each Bahraini family the equivalent of approximately \$2,700 in a bid to calm tensions.

Kuwait is another ally with key United States military bases and is an important way station for the United States military withdrawal from Iraq. It is another Gulf nation with serious political opposition, and has outlawed all gatherings, rallies and

marches after Friday prayers. The country's citizens were told that everybody should put the interests of the homeland above all other considerations. This indicates how close any unrest in the region comes to United States military and political bulwarks, and is also seen as a critical front-line alignment against Iran.

THE MIDEAST'S FUTURE

The Middle East is facing an uncertain future, with the possibility of further revolution and anarchy. Governments across the region are scrambling to address long-standing political concessions for their people, giving out financial benefits and deploying riot police in an attempt to ease further instability and uncertainty. Protestors from Morocco to Iran are setting aside the traditional religious and geopolitical differences that may divide them, in order to confront what is seen as a common enemy of the people. Their unresolved issues include widespread corruption, police violence, political repression, and the vast gaps in the distribution of wealth. Stability cannot be realized until these issues are addressed and acted upon. At the time of this writing, it is too early to predict the outcome of these revolts and others that will no doubt follow.

ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS

With the recent violent protest movements in the Middle East, the nation of Israel is being increasingly surrounded by hostile neighbors, and there is growing fear that the toppled regimes may ultimately be dominated by Islamic extremists groups.

The long-held peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan are now uncertain, and many are asking

whether there will ever be a degree of stability that would be acceptable to Israel's security. They envision Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, even if it remains a minority party, as pressing for closer ties and cooperation with the Palestinians and Hamas, which is the Palestinian branch of the Brotherhood.

Any new form of government in Egypt is likely to have a more open policy toward the Palestinian cause with promises of economic and other kinds of aid. As of this writing, Egypt has already reopened its border crossing with the Hamas dominated Gaza region, and the Egyptian army is now allowing Iran's warships to pass through the Suez Canal. This is viewed by Israel as a direct provocation which has not been seen since the Iranian revolution in 1979, when the Shah's monarchy was overthrown and replaced by the Islamic Republic of Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini.

Not having solved the Israeli-Palestinian issue will no doubt complicate relations between the newly emerging Arab governments and their peoples on one side, and the Western nations hope for stability on the other. Israel fears that their country will be encircled by Islamic extremists supported by Iran. They also fear that Israel's partners in checking Iran's nuclear ambitions are also being threatened. Most of Israel's people prefer a Gaza that is dependent on Egypt, rather than on Iran.

TAKING CRAFTY COUNSEL

The Scriptures speak of the time when Israel's neighbors will take "crafty counsel" and resolve with one consent to destroy it as a nation. "Lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate

thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee.”—Ps. 83:2-5

God’s Prophet Jeremiah also pointed to the time when the nation of Israel would stand alone because all of her allies have abandoned her. “She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.”—Lam. 1:2

A BURDENSOME STONE

We learn from the Scriptures that Israel’s enemies will take counsel in an attempt to destroy her as a nation, but that they will not succeed in their determination to do so. Speaking through the Prophet Zechariah, God said, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”—Zech. 12:2,3

The prophet assures that God’s providence will surely be with Israel. We read, “I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be

cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”—Zech. 14:2,3

GOD'S POWER TO BE MANIFEST

It was long ago prophesied that the nation of Israel would be threatened with hostile neighbors at the end of this present Gospel Age, and with no one to lend her support. However, our loving Heavenly Father will manifest his mighty power against those people that take counsel to destroy the nation of Israel.

There is increasing evidence that we are now living in the final years of this present Gospel Age. As we look into the future, we may do so with full assurance of faith that God will save the nation of Israel from destruction and total annihilation at the hands of its enemies. Their deliverance will open the eyes of Israel's blinded people as well as the world of mankind.

“Thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”—Jer. 30:5-7 ■

“With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

—Isaiah 26:9

“The original plan of God was to have a perfect, beautiful earth, comfortably filled with perfect, beautiful human beings. . . . This will indeed come to pass, despite Satan’s interference, and the intervening 6,000 years of the permission of evil. In Revelation, the closing book of the Bible, we see that God’s purposes will be certainly accomplished by the end of the kingdom age. The lesson of good and evil will have been learned, Satan destroyed and all who keep the righteous commandments of God will have the right “to eat the fruit from the tree of life,” and live forever. The curse of death will be forever removed.—Rev. 21:4; 22:3,14,17

—The Golden Thread



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 5—“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”—Romans 8:13 (Z. ’03-172 Hymn 44)

MAY 12—“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—II Corinthians 7:1 (Z. ’03-408 Hymn 247A)

MAY 19—“We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”—Romans 15:1 (Z. ’97-75 Hymn 154)

MAY 26—“Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.”—I Corinthians 8:1 (Z. ’97-277 Hymn 238)

The Christ Hymn

Key Verse: “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*”
—*Philippians 2:5*

Selected Scripture:
Philippians 2:1-11

of unity and humility that would epitomize mature Christian character development. “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”—Phil. 2:2-4

In our Key Verse—‘Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’—Paul sets forth, as an example for emulation, the Lord Jesus Christ who came to earth to do the Father’s will. This attitude should be uppermost in the minds of all believers who are seeking to walk in the Master’s footsteps.

Paul then briefly sums up the Lord’s humility and subsequent exaltation to the divine nature after he laid down his life in sacrifice to redeem Adam and the entire human race. Prior to his becoming flesh, Jesus was a spirit being and, along with Lucifer, was in a high and glorious condition; but, unlike Lucifer who had ambition and desired to be like God (Isa. 14:12-14), the Lord

THAT THE CHURCH AT

Philippi was noteworthy in many respects can be discerned by the Apostle Paul’s commendatory words in his epistle to the saints in this locale. Nevertheless, he exhorted the brethren to always manifest a spirit

never allowed such wicked thoughts to enter his mind. Speaking of Jesus, we read “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.”—Phil. 2:6-9, *New American Standard Bible*

This glorious exaltation of the Lord, following his resurrection from the tomb and receipt of immortality and the Divine nature, merited acclaim by all the angelic hosts in heaven who proclaimed how worthy the Lamb of God was to receive such honor.—Rev. 5:12

As a result of our Lord’s faithfulness, humility, and obedience to the Heavenly Father, Christ has become the head of the Seed of Abraham which is to bless all the families of the earth when the kingdom of righteousness is established. “I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:6-8)

It will be during that future kingdom that there will be a radical change from the present conditions that prevail on the earth on account of sin. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:10,11

An important lesson Paul sets forth in this epistle is the need for humility on the part of all those who entertain the hope of being associated with the Master in bringing to fruition world-wide blessings to the human family, when the body of Christ is complete. ■

Heavenly Worship

Key Verse:
***“Immediately I was
in the spirit: and,
behold, a throne
was set in heaven,
and one sat on the
throne.”
—Revelation 4:2***

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 4

THE HIGHLY SYMBOLIC
nature of Revelation has proven challenging to understand. There are, however, portions of this final book of the Bible that appear to be easier to comprehend than others, and among commentators there is a greater sense of unanimity as to what they may signify. “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first

voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”—Rev. 4:1

Our Key Verse indicates that the Apostle John, who penned the words found in Revelation, was ‘in the spirit’ and described the things he saw. Since it would not be possible for any human with flesh and blood to actually enter the presence of God, it is likely that John received a vision depicting the Eternal sitting upon a heavenly throne.

The Heavenly Father’s appearance is described as being like “a jasper and a sardine stone.” These precious gems may well symbolize some of God’s glorious character attributes, while the “rainbow round about the throne” is reminiscent of the rainbow covenant following the flood during Noah’s day. (Rev. 4:3; Gen. 9:12-17) Thus, in the Revelation account, this depiction may

picture the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant whereby all humanity will be blessed by a new and righteous social order which will be established on earth. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. 3:13) In the lesson under consideration, John also describes other heavenly scenes he viewed in the vicinity of God's throne.—Rev. 4:4-8

Concerning the four beasts (living creatures—*Weymouth Translation*), a clue as to what they might picture may be found elsewhere in the Bible. (Ezek. 1:10) They appear to represent God's attributes of justice represented by a lion, power depicted as a calf (ox in Ezekiel), love pictured by the face of a man, and, finally, wisdom as suggested by an eagle.

Various suggestions have been put forward for the identity of the twenty-four elders. These elders appear to be symbolic and somehow directly connected with the Creator. One suggestion as to what the twenty-four elders represent might be that they are the prophetic testimony which God gave in scripture as the surety that everything foretold will be fulfilled exactly as promised. This thought seems to harmonize with the closing benediction of this chapter. "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou has created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Rev. 4:10,11

God is described as being from everlasting to everlasting. "LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. . . . even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Ps. 90:1,2) It seems reasonable to conclude that the Father has always occupied the throne of supreme universal authority, even before the creation of any intelligent beings, either spiritual or earthly. ■

Thankful Worship

Key Verse: “[A great multitude] cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”
—*Revelation 7:10*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 7:9-17

a great storm of trouble that is being restrained from coming upon the present social order until all the faithful of the church of Christ is complete.—chap. 7:1-3

The total number that comprises the body of Christ will be one hundred and forty-four thousand. “I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” (vss. 4-8) Following mention of this class, a description is given concerning a “great multitude,” or a different category of individuals, that stand “before the throne, and before the Lamb.”—vs. 9

In our Key Verse, the ‘great multitude’ acknowledges that their salvation is attributable to the Heavenly Father, as well as Jesus Christ.

The identity of this class is dealt with in scripture

AS AN END-TIME PROPHECY, this chapter describes some of the closing scenes of this Gospel Age preparatory to the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom when the saintly followers of Christ will be associated with him in blessing the human family.—Rev. 20:6

A vision concerning four angels standing at the “four corners of the earth” holding back the “four winds” suggests

after the completion of the one hundred forty-four thousand members of Christ's church. "One of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."—vss. 13-15

This great multitude is a secondary class that attains a spiritual resurrection after the body of Christ is completed. In all likelihood, they were not as zealous as the little flock in fulfilling the terms of discipleship. It is for this reason that they have to experience tribulation, and must wash their robes before receiving salvation.

Another point for consideration relates to service on Christ's throne. We read, "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." (chap. 3:21) The promise of sitting on Christ's throne is reserved for the church, whereas the great multitude will not be on the throne but will render service before the throne.

The portion of the great multitude is mentioned in Revelation again in a later chapter. "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.—chap. 19:6,7

It is cause for rejoicing that this group of Christians can render praises to the Creator even though they will not be a part of the church. How merciful is our God! ■

All Things New

Key Verse: *“He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”*
—*Revelation 21:5*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 21

for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:1-4

The ‘new heaven’ is symbolic of the spiritual rulership operative during the Messianic Kingdom under the glorified Christ Jesus and his church—“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” (Matt. 25:31) It will replace the present ecclesiastical dominion and its attendant system of false worship which has been promoted by Satan, who is the god of this world. (II Cor. 4:4) The ‘new earth’

THIS PORTION OF JOHN’S

vision depicts conditions in existence after the close of the Gospel Age, when Satan will be bound. “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned

refers to a new social order in which mankind will practice righteousness and live in harmony with his neighbor. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isa. 26:9) “They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.” (Jer. 31:34) The ‘sea’ is also a symbolic term that pictures the masses of people who are not under governmental or religious restraints, but have anarchistic tendencies. “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” (Isa. 57:20) There will be no more ‘sea.’

Our Key Verse refers to the regeneration of as many of the human family as would be willing to receive the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice and ultimately attain everlasting life in a perfect physical environment on this planet.

The glorious heavenly city—the New Jerusalem—seen by John in the vision, describes Christ and his bride. The many descriptive places connected with this magnificent arrangement are beyond our ability to fully appreciate and understand. Nevertheless, we are assured that God’s eternal purpose will be fulfilled as a result of the faithfulness of Christ and his body members during their respective earthly sojourns.—Rev. 21:9-23

The closing portion of this chapter underscores the blessedness of the perfect harmony that will then exist throughout the universe, when God’s will shall be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. (Matt. 6:10) “The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.” (Rev. 21:24-26) What a time that will be when the Heavenly Father and his Son, Jesus Christ will receive unending praise from all creation! ■

Tree of Life

Key Verses: *“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*
—**Revelation 22:2**

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 22

elsewhere in scripture, the intent of this verse may relate to the invaluable instruction in righteousness provided by the glorified church under Christ for the benefit of the world of mankind.

“There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun;

WHEN GOD’S KINGDOM IS established, mankind will experience the life-sustaining and peaceful conditions that once existed in Eden before sin, sickness, and death entered the world. A pure message of truth depicted under the symbol “water of life” will be employed to help nourish the human family back into divine favor when Satan’s evil influence is restrained.—Rev. 22:1

In our Key Verse, we learn that the ‘leaves’ from the ‘tree of life’ will provide ‘healing’ for the nations. Based upon the usage of ‘trees’ and ‘leaves’

for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”—vss. 3-5

The foregoing speaks of the future glorious conditions that will exist when Satan is bound. Contrary to claims that God’s kingdom was established at Pentecost and has since been conquering the world, we still pray for the time when there will be peace on earth and good will toward men.—Luke 2:14

The Master speaks to all his faithful servants who are attentive to his words during this present Gospel Age to assure them that no matter how long the seeming delay has been for this kingdom to commence, these promises must come to pass.—Rev. 22:6

Further corroboration as to the time setting discussed in our lesson is provided as follows. “The Spirit and the bride say, 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.” (vs. 17) There will be no ‘bride’ until the glorified, completed church is united with Christ Jesus. Additionally, there are some connections concerning the river of the water of life flowing to the world of mankind through the church during the Millennial morning pictured in the Old Testament. “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”—Ps. 46:3,4; Ezek. 47:1-12

The consecrated followers of Jesus presently are being prepared for the great future work of helping to bring about restitution blessings that will flow to all the families of the earth. (Acts 3:19-21) The closing portion of Revelation 22 underscores the blessedness of the perfect harmony that will then exist throughout the universe, when God’s will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. (Matt. 6:10) What a glorious time that will be when the Heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, will receive unending praise and honor from all creation!—Rev. 21:24-27 ■

Resting in Christ

***“He that is entered
into his rest, he
also hath ceased
from his own
works, as God did
from his.”
—Hebrews 4:10***

GOD’S ‘REST’ REFERRED

to in our text is mentioned in Genesis 2:2, which reads, “On the seventh [sixth, *J. B. Rotherham Translation*] day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.” We are not to suppose from this that God rested because he had become weary. The thought is that he desisted from his work. Notice the words of the Prophet Isaiah: “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”—Isa. 40:28

The thought of resting from labor on the seventh day was continued when the LORD gave his Law to the Israelites following their exodus from Egypt. The Sabbath commandment was, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant,

nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”—Exod. 20:8-11

As time went on, religious services were instituted on the Sabbath Day, but this was not a part of God’s original arrangement. The thought of rest was the sole design of the Creator pertaining to this day which he had hallowed. There was a divine purpose behind this which is clearly set forth in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul. Our text pinpoints this purpose, and it is amplified in the context.—Heb. 4:1-11

Paul wrote, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached [to them] did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” (vss. 1,2) Here, the admonition to spiritual Israelites of the present age is that they should be very watchful lest they do not live up fully to the conditions attached to the promises which God has made to them—promises which, when they reach their complete fulfillment in the kingdom, will assure us a position of complete ‘rest’ beyond the veil.

While the Israelites were not of the ‘house of sons’ in the divine arrangement, as servants they were given the opportunity also of resting in the promises of God. The reason most of them failed was their lack of faith both in God and in his promises. Paul explains that the ‘gospel’ was preached to them, as well as to us. The special reference here

seems to be to the assurance given them by God that they would be delivered from Egyptian bondage and led into the land of promise.

Paul continues his explanation of the Sabbath type: "We which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works." (Heb. 4:3,4) 'The works were finished from the foundation of the world'—not only had the earth been brought to a suitable condition to be habitable by man, but in his foreknowledge the Creator knew that his human creation would disobey his law and come under sentence of death. Because of this, the plan, or works, for his recovery from death through Christ the Redeemer was also formed.

The Israelites were used by the Lord to picture this glorious future deliverance. First, they were delivered from Egyptian bondage under the leadership of Moses—a type of Christ. Their rest in the Lord in these circumstances was dependent upon their faith and trust in Moses. The majority of them failed to enter into this rest which had been provided, and died in the wilderness. Later, the remaining ones had the opportunity of entering into the rest and security of the promised land under Joshua. Here also, through lack of faith, the majority of them failed. Paul wrote, "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief." (vs. 6) Here the reference

seems to relate particularly to those who, through unbelief, died in the wilderness.

ANOTHER DAY

Paul continues, “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus [*Joshua, Marginal Translation*] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” (vss. 7-9) Thus does the apostle take us forward from the experiences of God’s typical people to the glorious ‘day’ of rest which the spiritual Israelites of the Gospel Age are enjoying, conditional upon their faith.

This brings us to our text: ‘He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.’ As we have noted, God did not rest because he was weary. He completed his plan for human recovery from sin and death—a plan that was to be carried out by his beloved Son, the *Logos*, who later became Jesus Christ. God was so confident in the ability and faithfulness of his beloved Son that his position in the matter is described as a ‘rest.’

Since we have the opportunity of enjoying this rest of the Creator, the thought clearly is that we also should put our full confidence in Jesus and in his ability and willingness to fulfill all God’s good promises to us. What a blessed rest this should be, and what peace of mind and of heart it should afford us as we look unto Jesus, the “author and finisher of our faith.”—Heb. 12:2

OUR WORKS

Within the framework of this lesson, we might think of our own works as all those efforts which in the past we have put forth in order to gain the favor of God and thus to be assured of salvation. The Jewish people of Jesus' day, who were under bondage to the Law, were invited by Jesus to come to him and find rest. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—Matt. 11:28-30

Through the Law Covenant, God had offered the nation of Israel an opportunity, by obedience to its terms, to gain many rich blessings as his people. Doubtless, many of them sincerely tried, but they learned that that which was to give blessings was found instead to be a curse. This was not because the Law itself was imperfect, but because of the inherited imperfections of those who tried to keep it. Writing of his own experiences and the experiences of other Jews formerly under the Law who had since found rest in Christ, Paul said, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were [made manifest] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."—Rom. 7:5

How greatly Paul rejoiced to be free from this burdensome yoke of the Law and to realize that through Christ he had found rest for his soul. He wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1)

The Creator knew that all mankind would be lost under sin, but he also knew that he could trust the plan of redemption to the hands of his Son. Paul enjoyed this same rest in the finished work of Christ, as did all the believing Jews of that time who had been held in bondage by their futile efforts to gain blessings by keeping the Law.

NOT IDLE

Resting in the finished work of Christ does not by any means imply listlessness, or idleness, in the doing of the Heavenly Father's will. Paul admonished that we should work out our own salvation "with fear and trembling," and adds that it is God who works in us to do his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:12,13) Yes, there is much 'work' that we are to do. We are to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, "rightly dividing the word of truth."—II Tim. 2:15

If we humbly search the 'word of truth' in order to rightly apply its principles in our lives, we will be workmen pleasing to the Lord. This will be a lifetime effort. The pathway of the just is as a shining light which shines more and more until the perfect day. By diligence and humility in prayer and study, we will continue to experience an ever clearer understanding of the Father's will for us, and our comprehension of his plan of the ages for the blessing of all mankind will become increasingly clear.

As we work out our own salvation through study, prayer, and application, it should not be with a sense of bondage, or frustration. If we have the right spirit we will endeavor to (Continued on page 35)

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(Continued from page 31) do all we can in obedience to the Father's will. We will do it in the spirit of restfulness and assurance that our acceptableness to God is not based upon our own efforts but in the finished work of Christ. Our efforts are designed to demonstrate our heart condition of supreme loyalty to God under all circumstances.

The Master's 'burden is light' because he makes it possible for us to bear it. Paul quotes the Lord as having said to him, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." (II Cor. 12:9) The assurance of this strength, received upon the basis of our faith, enables us to realize that nothing can hinder our complete victory in Christ. Thus we rest in him.

Consider the many assurances Paul gives us in the 8th chapter of Romans: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11) Consider the great power that was required to raise Jesus from the dead. Here we have the assurance that this same power is available to work in and for us.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (vs. 14) If we are humbly following the will of God as outlined in his inspired Word, then we are being led by his Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit leads in difficult paths. The way may not be strewn with roses but, if it is God's way, outlined by his Word, we know that we are his children, and we know that he loves and cares for his children. How sweet is the rest this provides.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children,

then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:16,17) Peter wrote that, through the prophets, the Spirit testified beforehand concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. (I Pet. 1:11) If we have the privilege of suffering with Christ, it means that we are indeed the sons of God and participating in that aspect of the plan of God foretold by the Spirit through the prophets. This means that we are walking in a narrow and difficult way, but always with the assurance from the great burden-bearer, Christ Jesus, that we will not be tried above our ability to bear. Thus we rest in him.

HOPE OF GLORY

“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Rom. 8:18) Of Jesus it is written 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.” (Heb. 12:2) We have a joy set before us also. It is the hope of glory described by Paul in Romans 5:2 as “the glory of God.” It is this hope that helps to lighten the burden of the narrow way and enables us to rest the more fully in Jesus.

“We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24) Not until we have worked out our own salvation completely, and have been exalted to glory with Jesus, will hope give way to reality. For now, our faith enables us to see the otherwise unseen things, and this vision of faith is one

of our greatest sources of strength as we continue to rest in the finished work of Christ.

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) What could give us a greater rest in Christ than to have faith to believe that all our experiences are working ‘together for good’ to us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus? This indicates how fully we are in the love and care of the Lord. This blessed relationship is due to the fact that, as consecrated believers, we have entered into Christ’s rest, having ceased from our own ineffectual works of self-righteousness. Truly this is a blessed rest.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (vss. 31,32) What a blessed assurance this is that our needs as New Creatures, including the need for the robe of Christ’s righteousness, are all provided through Christ, to whom the Creator has assigned the great work of redemption and recovery from sin. We could perhaps condemn ourselves for the imperfections which we know that we have, and certainly others may indeed condemn us. However, no one, not even ourselves, can properly lay any damaging charge against us as long as we are resting in Christ and the precious blood of the atonement.

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God,

who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom. 8:33,34) Here again, we are provided with a firm foundation for our faith in the finished work of Christ. We know that we must continue to struggle against the imperfections of the flesh, but we know also that we do this under the covering of the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Therefore, we have the continual assurance of divine approval because we have ceased from our own works as God did from his. We are putting our full trust in the provisions of atonement made available through Christ.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (vss. 35-37) Satan and his cohorts will do all in their power to separate us from the love of God, but we have the assurance that greater is he who is for us than all they who be against us. In this blessed assurance, we rest although we be ‘killed all the day long’ and ‘are counted as sheep for the slaughter.’

We cannot be conquerors in our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness, but we can be conquerors through him that loved us. Knowing this, we can go forth without hesitation, regardless of how threatening the way before us might appear to be. To do this requires faith. The ancient Israelites failed to enter into rest because they lacked the necessary faith. Let it not be so with us, and it will not be so if we continue to look to the Lord for guidance and strength.

That guidance is already provided in his precious Word. Let us lay hold firmly upon it and be alert to its every indication of the Lord's will, for "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (vss. 38,39) What a blessed unity with God and with Christ is here assured. It is a unity indeed that is essential if we are to maintain our rest in Christ throughout all the storms of life. It is through our faith that we are persuaded of this blessed relationship with the Father and with his Son. May our faith ever remain steadfast as an anchor to the soul "which entereth into that within the veil."—Heb. 6:19

THE FUTURE REST

Our rest in Christ while we are still in the flesh depends upon our faith in the promised glory to follow the present suffering of the narrow way. If faithful unto death, we will, beyond the veil, enter even more fully into the rest that has been provided through Christ. However, then, even as now, this will not mean idleness, but a complete and perfect cooperation with Christ in the glorious work of the kingdom, and with the full assurance that the divine plan through him cannot, and will not, fail. ■

"I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in Him will I trust."

—*Psalms 91:2*

The Deep Things of God

*“Eye hath not seen,
nor ear heard,
neither have
entered into the
heart of man, the
things which God
hath prepared for
them that love him.*

*But God hath
revealed them unto
us by his Spirit:
for the Spirit
searcheth all
things, yea, the
deep things of God.”*

*—I Corinthians
2:9,10*

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE

Apostle Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as the holy power of God. He explains that its revealing power operates for the benefit of the Lord's people during the present Gospel Age largely through the written Word of God. It is referred to by Jesus as “the Spirit of truth.” (John 16:13) Only those whose hearts are surrendered to the will of God and whose lives are dedicated to knowing and doing God's will as revealed

through his Word are capable of understanding its message to them. They are able to appreciate it to the extent that they are inspired by it to lay down their lives in sacrifice for the divine cause. These know and, as Paul says, “speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God

ordained before the world unto our glory”—to show us the path to glory.—I Cor. 2:7

While these hidden things of God are referred to as a ‘mystery,’ they are mysterious only to those who are not dedicated to following in the Master’s footsteps and are not walking in the “path of the just [which] is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. 4:18) To these ‘the deep things of God’ are gloriously simple and understandable, regardless of the degree of their education. The understanding of the plans and purposes of God is attainable by all whom the Lord has called. These are called according to his purpose, and invited to participate in his great program for the recovery of the human race from sin and death.

THE THINGS PREPARED

Paul tells us that the natural ‘eye’ and the natural ‘ear’ cannot appreciate the things which God ‘has prepared for them that love him.’ He then explains that these things are revealed to us by the Spirit—that revealing power of God that ‘searcheth all things, yea, [even] the deep things of God.’ This indicates that the deep things of God are in a very large sense an understanding and appreciation of the things which God has prepared for us as the footstep followers of the Master.

What has God prepared for his loved ones of this Gospel Age? The Scriptures reveal the answer to this question to the full extent it is possible for our finite minds to comprehend. However, in approaching the subject it is well to remember Paul’s statement that “now we see through a glass, darkly; but

then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” by the Lord.—I Cor. 13:12

In a reference to one of the things which God has prepared for those who love him, the Apostle John wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”—I John 3:1-3

We are thus reminded of the limitations of our understanding while still in the flesh. The promise is clear that as sons of God we will be made like the glorified Jesus, but it does not clearly appear what is involved in this. The reason for this is that Jesus is now a divine being, and we do not understand fully what a divine being is like. Therefore, this full depth of knowledge has not yet appeared to us, and will not until we are actually made like him in the “first resurrection.”—Rev. 20:6

A PLACE PREPARED

Another precious promise pertaining to the things which God prepared in his plan for those who love him assures us, “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 to 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

We are here confronted with an incomprehensible thought so far as human perception is concerned. Jesus takes us one step further than the Apostle John, however, for from his words we know that we will not only be like him, but will also be with him in a place which he went away to prepare. We know that in the universe there is a mansion for the angels, and there is an earthly mansion for God’s human creation. We know a great deal about this earthly mansion but, as for the others, our knowledge is very limited. Especially is this true of the ‘place’ which Jesus said he would have ready when he returned to receive his bride unto himself.

THE KING’S DAUGHTER

In Psalm 45:13-15, the glorified church which will be the “bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. 21:9), is referred to as the “king’s daughter.” The king is the great Jehovah, our Heavenly Father. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within [in character]: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace.”

What a glorious prospect is here symbolically described. No words known to our human minds could describe in detail just how wonderful this aspect of the things ‘prepared’ really is. We rejoice in such a hope, and praise God for the love which provided it. We are fortunate, indeed, if we have

entered into “this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”—Rom. 5:2

THE DIVINE NATURE

The Apostle Peter wrote of the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God whereby we are made “partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) Here we are reminded that the promises of God are designed to prepare us to receive that which they assure us will be ours if we are faithful unto death. We ask, though, what is the divine nature? It is God’s nature—immortality. It is the highest of all natures in the universe, and God has designed that he will share it with his sons, beginning with Jesus and including all his faithful followers.

One of the conditions associated with the promises of God, pertaining to the bestowal of the divine nature, is the willingness to lay down one’s life in sacrificial service. This requirement is part of the outworking of the Creator’s grand design for the recovery of the human race from sin and death. Jesus’ faithfulness in sacrifice is portrayed in Isaiah 53:12, where his personal reward is described, “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great.” The ‘great’ here referred to is his Heavenly Father, and when raised from the dead Jesus was exalted to the express image of his Father. “All power” was given to him “in heaven and in earth.”—Matt. 28:18

Continuing in Isaiah 53:12, the verse adds, “and he shall divide the spoil [the reward] with the strong.” Here we are informed that the reward Jesus received from the Heavenly Father he will share with the ‘strong.’ This is a reference to

those in the Gospel Age who are “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) These are the overcoming ones who have been blessed in following Jesus’ admonition to overcome the world.

To these, we find Jesus saying, “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) This is as though Jesus had in mind the promise made to him that he would be given a portion with the Great. He now was carrying out the remainder of that same promise that he would share this reward with the strong, the overcomers. This is another one of the blessed ‘things’ of our text which the Father has prepared for those who love him.

In view of these promises, how meaningful are Jesus’ words in his prayer shortly before he was crucified, “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”—John 17:22-26

THE WORLD TO BELIEVE

In praying for the oneness of his followers with himself and with the Father, Jesus added, "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:21) The full oneness of Christ and his followers will not be a reality until they are glorified together with him in that 'place' which he went away to prepare. We see from Jesus' statement relative to this that there is a glorious divine purpose involved in this high exaltation of the Christ, that purpose being the enlightenment and reconciliation of the world.

In other words, the call, preparation, and exaltation of the church to heavenly glory is not an end in itself. It is a part of the divine plan for the restoration of the human race to that oneness with the Creator which existed before our first parents fell into sin and death. The church is to live and reign with Christ in his kingdom. The purpose of this kingdom is to put down the enemies of God and to destroy death. When this is accomplished, and when all things are subdued unto the Father, "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."—I Cor. 15:24-28

Preeminently, then, the great thing which God prepared for the faithful followers of Jesus is the privilege and honor of cooperating with him in the divine plan for the blessing of all the families of earth, with restoration to perfect human life. This indeed is one of the 'deep things' of the Word of God. It is so deep that only very few of all the professed millions of Christians know anything about it. It is simply for those to whom God reveals the mysteries of the Truth.

The means for this future blessing of mankind is the long-promised kingdom. Over and over again the assurance is given to us that if we are faithful in suffering and dying with Jesus we will have the privilege of living and reigning with him. The resurrected Jesus said, “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”—Rev. 2:26,27

THE JUDGMENT WORK

The Scriptures also abound with assurances that the faithful followers of the Master—those who lay down their lives in the service of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren—will share in the future work of judging the world in righteousness. This is one of the various aspects of the kingdom work. Paul wrote, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?”—I Cor. 6:2

The apostles had given up their all to serve the Lord and were faithfully following in the Master’s footsteps. They went to Jesus on one occasion indicating their desire to know just what their reward would be. Peter served as spokesman, and said to Jesus, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” To this Jesus replied, “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”—Matt. 19:27,28

Note that this judgment scene takes place when the ‘Son of man’ sits on the ‘throne of his glory.’ This follows his coming in glory, and when he sits on the throne of his glory all his “holy angels” or messengers—the entire church—are there with him. (Matt. 25:31) In Matthew 19:28 quoted previously, the judgment of the ‘twelve tribes of Israel’ is mentioned. Jesus enlarges upon this in chapter 25:32 saying that “all nations” shall be gathered before him in judgment. The reference here is to the people of all nations.

What a blessed privilege it will be to participate in that future work of judgment and, in this way, join in extending the blessings of life to all who, during the testings of that time, prove worthy. How deep and glorious is this wonderful truth concerning the future inheritance of God’s New Creation.

AN OLD TESTAMENT PROMISE

Through the prophet Daniel, God assures us that “the saints”—the faithful followers of Jesus—shall share in the Messianic Kingdom rule. Daniel 7:18 reads, “The saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” In this same prophecy, we are assured that the saints shall also participate in the work of judging the world. We read, “Judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.”—vs. 22

A New Testament confirmation of this wonderful promise of kingship and judgeship prepared for the true followers of Jesus is found in Revelation. Daniel’s prophecy declares that ‘judgment was given

to the saints of the most High,' and in Revelation 20:4, we read, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." This reminds us of Jesus' promise to the disciples mentioned previously that they would sit upon thrones and that they would be judges.

Who are these so highly honored? They are the ones who are "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads." These are indeed the 'saints' of Daniel's prophecy, and they "lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

This work of judging and reigning with Christ cannot begin until these saints all die and are made alive in what is described in verse 6 as "the first resurrection." This verse declares that this class shall "be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." It will be at the close of this thousand-year reign of Christ and his church that Satan, having been bound for the thousand years, will be "loosed out of his prison" for a little season.—vs. 7

THE MELCHISEDEC PICTURE

The faithful overcomers of the present age will participate with Jesus during the Millennium in a priesthood typified by Melchisedec, who was both a priest and a king. As the promise states, 'They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign'—reigning priests as well as judges. As kings they will subdue all things unto the Father. As priests they will bless all who become willing and obedient at that time. As judges they will enlighten

and discipline the people to bring them into harmony with righteousness and with God. Isaiah wrote that when God's "judgments are [abroad] in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."—Isa. 26:9

How wonderful, indeed, are the things which God has prepared for those who love him, and who are called according to his promise. These, as our text so clearly indicates, are among the deep things of God. These treasures of Truth are designed by the Lord for our encouragement.

The purpose of these is that we may be able, through the incentive received from them, to endure the trials which the Father's love and wisdom may permit to come upon us as we walk the narrow way that leads to glory, honor, and immortality.

These deep things of God cannot be understood except by those to whom God reveals them by his Spirit. When thus revealed, as we have seen, they are found to be simple—not complex and beyond the grasp of all except the brilliant and educated. This is in keeping with God's arrangements for calling mostly the ordinary people of this world, and giving them the opportunity and ability to understand his plan for them. Let us thank him that he has called us and given us to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Let us be faithful to these glorious truths. ■

"We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."
—II Corinthians 5:1

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

MY SPIRITUAL HOME

DawnBible: I will be forever grateful to have found the Dawn. Because of them I have found like-minded Bible readers, the Bible Students. I am, finally, at my spiritual home with spiritual fellowship that brings me both peace and joy. Romans 8:35-39.

Thank you so very much. Jehovah's blessings be with you for this site and the information you allow us for free.—OK

GOD'S PROJECT

DawnBible: Glory be to the Lord our God, who has given grace and the heart to those of you who are behind this, God's project for our Godless times.

I pray that he would empower you to continue to be a blessing to us and the world. I appreciate the Lord's doing through you. God bless you.—MALAYSIA

LIFE AFTER DEATH

DawnBible: I enjoyed reading your article in a *Farmers Almanac* about

Life After Death. I would appreciate y'all mailing a copy of it to me. Thank you.—MS

LIFE AFTER DEATH

DawnBible: Saw your ad in the *Farmers Almanac*. I would like a free copy of your 32 page book on *Life After Death*. Thanks.—NC

UPHOLDING TRUTH

DawnBible: May I take the time to thank you for the books that I have recently received.

Also, may I take the time to thank you for the way that you uphold the Truth, as promulgated by our dear Pastor Russell.—GREAT BRITAIN

BEING A SHUT-IN

DawnBible: There are so many wonderful resources on here I don't know where to begin. It is a real banquet. Your site is really a great blessing from the good Lord. It has helped me so much being a shut-in.

May the dear Lord continue to bless your ministry.—OH

ENCOURAGING LETTERS—*cont'd.*

BIBLE STUDY

DawnBible: I am interested in all your booklets.

I've been a Christian for 63 years, and a deacon in my church, and have taught adult Bible Study since 1967.

Your booklets can help me.—TX

MAGNIFICENT BOOK

DawnBible: I am presently studying the book, *The Creator's Grand Design*. It is a really magnificent book!

It presents the Truth so clearly and beautifully, and at a wonderful price. Thank you for all that you do.—OH

TRUTH SETS YOU FREE

DawnBible: As an ex-Jehovah's Witness, I am delighted to know the Truth that sets you free!

Continue your work of proclaiming the Truth about God's kingdom. May Jehovah bless and guide you always.—FL

OPENING MINDS

DawnBible: I thank God for allowing me to hear his voice to get on the computer to search for an answer I needed.

I went to a few sites, but I was able to get what I needed here at the Dawn, and I do thank God once again for opening the minds and hearts of all. God bless you.—VA

THANK YOU

DawnBible: Thank you so much for all your kind devotion and generosity in providing the Word of God through your ministry. God bless you always.—Puerto Rico

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General Convention Bulletin

June 25-30, 2011

THE 2011 GENERAL CONVENTION will be upon us in only two months. If you haven't yet made plans to attend, now is the time to do so. We encourage as many as are able to join in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities are available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in their own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied. If a child is alone in a bedroom sharing the bathroom with other adults, the double occupancy rate will apply to all family members.

The convention program appears in this issue of *The Dawn*, on the pages following the General Convention registration form. Included on the program is a dialogue between two brethren on the subject, "Change in Our World," which we believe will be of special interest and an encouragement to the Lord's people as they view, and are touched by, the events of the time in which we are living.

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

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, June 24. There will be one shuttle bus leaving the college in the early morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 1. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$7.00	\$6.00
Lunch		8.00	7.00
Dinner		11.00	10.00
Total, three meals		\$26.00	\$23.00
Lodging (per night)			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$30.00	\$25.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$25.00	\$23.00
**single occ (LLC)		\$55.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$30.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$325*	\$290*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$195*	\$160*
**single occ (LLC)		\$460*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$235*	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—*\$35 **Air conditioned ***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group			

General Convention Registration

1425 Lachman Lane — Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

E-mail: Nekora@aol.com (310) 454-5248

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, June 24, 2011				
Saturday, 25th				
Sunday, 26th				
Monday, 27th				
Tuesday, 28th				
Wednesday, 29th				
Thursday, 30th				

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

Check: ☐ private bath **or** ☐ shared bath
☐ double occupancy ☐ single occupancy
☐ interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

Saturday, June 25

Chairman: Brian Montague, *Highland Park NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Orientation by College

10:00 **Welcome Address**

Michael J. Balko
Orlando FL

10:45 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Aaron Kuehmicheel
Chicago IL

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Ken Fernets
The Dawn

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Homer Montague
Highland Park NY

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Russ Marten
Chicago IL

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Hebrews 10:22-24: Let us . . .**

Draw Near: Tom Gilbert, *S. Wisconsin*

Hold Fast: Robert Brand, *San Diego CA*

Consider One Another:

Erwin Kalinski, *Chicago IL*

8:15 Songs in the Night

Sunday, June 26

Chairman: Michael Nekora, *Los Angeles CA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse James Parkinson
San Gabriel Valley CA

10:30 Intermission

11:15 **Theme Discourse—II Corinthians 4:8**
“Troubled, not distressed; perplexed, not
in despair.”
Bill Dutka, Detroit MI

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Mark Nemesh
Detroit MI

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Peter Karavas
Chicago IL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 **Change in Our World**
Len Griehs, *Delaware Valley PA*
Robert Goodman, *Orlando FL*

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **This Thing is From Me**
Norman Woodworth (1891-1976)

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Monday, June 27

Chairman: Peter Mora, *Vernon BC*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse

George Tabac
Chicago IL

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Leo Houlmont
Grand Rapids MI

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Mike Balko
Dawn Pilgrim

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Rick Sconyers
Orlando FL

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

O. B. Elbert
Delaware Valley PA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Is there spirit begettal in the churches?**

Yes

David Rice, *San Diego CA*

No

Robert Gorecki, *New York NY*

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders' Meeting

Tuesday, June 28

Chairman: Rick Suraci, *New Haven CT*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

Doug Rawson
San Francisco Bay Area CA

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Dan Wesol
Albuquerque NM

2:45 Intermission

3:15 **Principles, the Acts of the Apostles**

George Balko, Jr., *West Newton PA*
John Trzeciak, *Grand Rapids MI*

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Austin Williams
New York NY

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, June 29

Chairman: George Passios, *New York NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

10:30 Short Recess

10:45 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony Kent Humphreys
Phoenix AZ

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Mark Davis
Los Angeles CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **The Way of Holiness**
David Christiansen
Seattle WA

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, June 30

Chairman: David Blencowe, *Vernon BC*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Praise and Testimony Chris Kuenzli
Milwaukee WI

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Panel Discussion: First Resurrection**
Tim Thomassen, *Albuquerque NM*
Wade Austin, *Portland OR*
Randy Shahan, *New York NY*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Stephen Jeuck
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse Ray Luke
Jersey City NJ

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Allan Allers
Boise ID

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Closing Discourse** Ernie Kuenzli
Orlando FL

7:45 Melodies of Praise

8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. B. Alexander		B. Keith	
Chicago, IL	May 28-30	Los Angeles, CA	May 28-30
E. Byrd		T. Krupa	
West Newton, PA	May 1	Vancouver, BC	May 21,22
D. Christiansen		Los Angeles, CA	28-30
Jacksonville, FL	May 1	E. Kuenzli	
Chicago, IL	28-30	Jacksonville, FL	May 1
O. B. Elbert		P. Mora	
Vancouver, BC	May 21,22	Vancouver, BC	May 21,22
Chicago, IL	28-30	D. Rice	
R. Goodman		Agawam, MA	May 14,15
Los Angeles, CA	May 28-30	Los Angeles, CA	28-30
R. Gorecki		A. Williams	
Agawam, MA	May 14,15	Los Angeles, CA	May 28-30

*“By love serve one another.”
—Galatians 5:13*

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 Rosemary Hipp, Lake Charles, LA—March 28.

Sister Mildred Rigdon, Benton, AR—March 28.

CONVENTIONS

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

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 1—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073. Contact C. Hires. Phone: (904) 781-0506

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 1—Sewickley Grange Hall, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact L. Mlinek. Phone: (724) 689-8733

AGAWAM CONVENTION, May 14,15—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For room reservations and other information, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, May 21,22—Kennedy Seniors Rec Centre, 11760 88th Avenue, Delta, BC V4C 3C5. Contact B. A. Smith. Phone: (604) 882-0205

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 28-30—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. For accommodations, contact T. Filicky. Phone: (312) 566-9470. Other information, contact S. Morgenstern. Phone: (630) 561-4671

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 28-30—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Room reservations at Burbank Ramada Inn. Call (877) 361-2502 on or before May 13 for special rate. Mention group 73,188,493. Other information, contact R. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253

BUFFALO CONVENTION, June 4,5—Holiday Inn Buffalo-Intl. Airport location, 4600 Genesee Street, Buffalo, NY 14225. Contact R. Morin for reservations by May 8, 2011. Phone: (585) 322-3430

WATERBURY CONVENTION, June 4,5—Saturday in Morris, CT. Sunday at Litchfield Fire House Hall,

Litchfield, CT. Contact H. Tsimonis, P. O. Box 1494, Waterbury, CT. 06721-1494. Phone: (860) 567-0109

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 12—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA 19047. Phone: (215) 547-4100. Contact R. Eldridge, 37 Falcon Road, Levittown, PA 19056. Phone: (215) 949-0652

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 17-19—Ramada Inn Portland, 6221 NE 82nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97220. Mention Associated Bible Students of Portland for group rate. Deadline May 20. Contact S. Bicke'l Evans. Phone: (360) 750-7366

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, June 25-30—(See pp. 53-61, this issue)—University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Johnstown, PA. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1-3—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1, Station MPP, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, July 2-4—Alliant University, 10455 Pomerado Road, San Diego, CA 92131. For accommodations at Alliant University, or at nearby hotels, contact B. Bach, P. O. Box 323, Alpine, CA 91903-0323. Phone: (619) 445-4879

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 19-21—Emmanuel College Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: 2348033339949 or 2348082146621

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2-5—Seabeck Conference Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Room reservations, contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822. Other information, contact D. Christiansen. Phone: (360) 440-3283

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD —peculiarly “his workmanship;” that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people,” and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING, AND POLISHING of the consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God “tasted death for every man,” “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet. 1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting 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 the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35