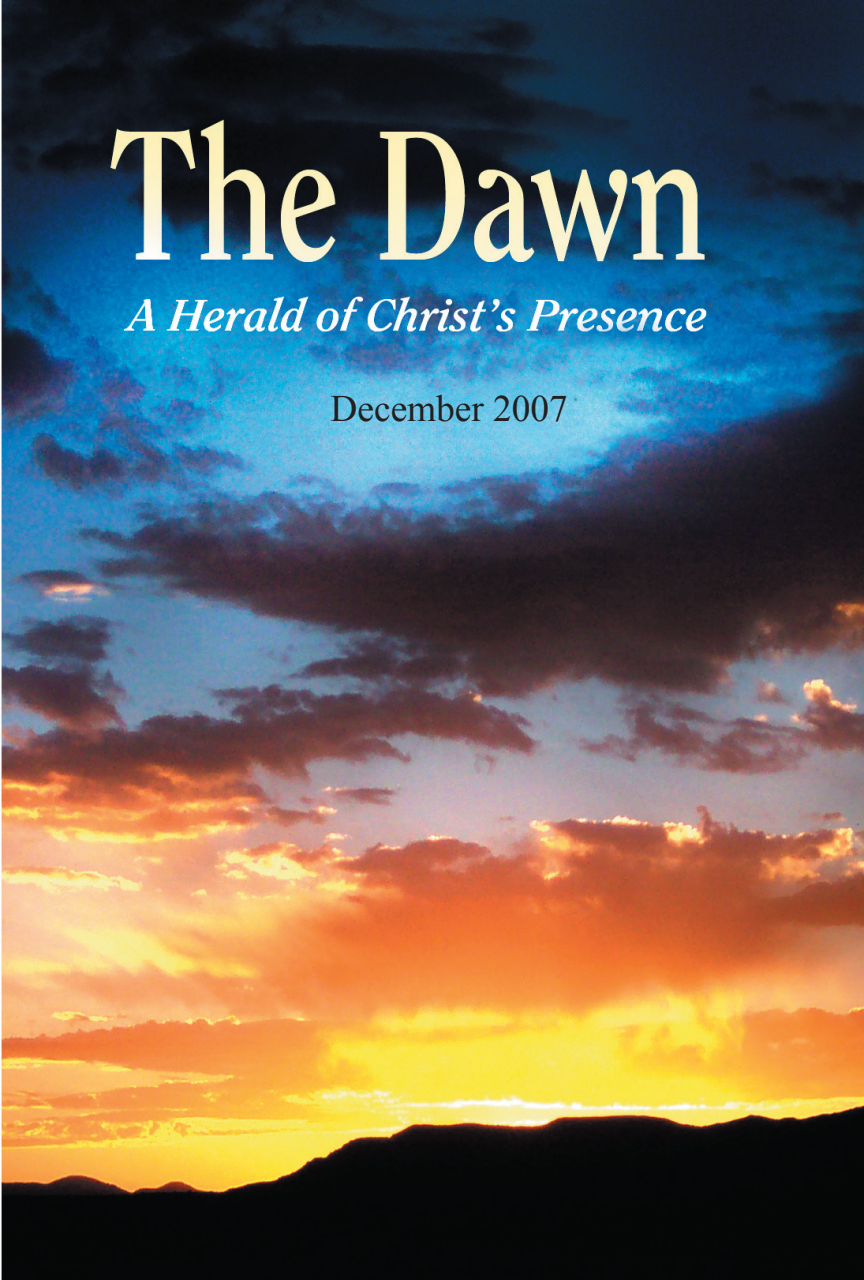


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Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus

*“She shall bring
forth a son, and
thou shalt call his
name JESUS: for
he shall save his
people from their
sins.”*

—*Matthew 1:21*

IN FULFILLMENT OF THIS

long-promised event concerning the birth of our dear Lord Jesus two thousand years ago, many Christian people throughout the world will once again celebrate God’s most wonderful gift to mankind on December 25th. Jesus had been born into the world to save the human family from the inherited ravages of sin and death, and the true meaning of his earthly ministry will be made plain to all men in God’s own time and manner.

THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The annual Christmas holiday is a very special and festive occasion in many ways, and there is a general feeling of joy and a deep sense of anticipation throughout the weeks leading up to Christmas Day. More than any other time of the year, men’s attention is directed toward thoughts of peace, love and goodwill toward others. It serves as a time to be reminded of the miraculous birth of our Savior,

his earthly ministry, sacrificial death on the cruel cross, and his ultimate resurrection as the firstborn from the dead. (Col. 1:18) His was the only perfect life that had ever been lived.—Heb. 7:26

There also may be a sense of nostalgia among some who recall the special day from their childhood, and recall with sweet memories a more secure time long past. The sobering reality, however, is that the spirit that once marked the Christmas season is now being ignored, and has largely given way to one of commercialism, stress, and anxiety. The spirit of our Lord that once prevailed has now been replaced by an indifferent and irreverent society marked by selfishness and pride.

In our modern world there is less interest and attention given to the true meaning of our Lord and Savior's humble birth amid a sin-sick and dying human family. The holiday season has thus become a hectic and busy time of the year in preparation for worldly pursuits and happiness. It is a time that is more and more being propelled by a sense of frenzied commotion and fanfare. Holiday shoppers are caught up in the last minute quest to find the perfect gift for someone special, as well as for others whose names may appear on a list of family and friends.

DECEMBER 25TH

A special day known as Christmas was set aside many centuries ago by Christian people who wanted to celebrate the birth of the Savior of the world. A great deal of attention was focused on the event and it became a sacred and festive religious holiday. Students of the Bible, however, point out the fact

that December 25th is not the exact day on which our Lord Jesus was actually born. Many scholars agree that the great event occurred during the autumn season of the year that corresponds to our month October.

The Scriptures do not specifically teach that we should celebrate Jesus' birth. Instead, we are instructed to remember our Savior's death which accomplished the redemption price for sin, thereby satisfying Divine justice. This is shown in the type where we read concerning the sacrificial lamb, "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. 12:14) At the institution of the last supper, Jesus, the antitypical Lamb of God, passed the emblems to his disciples which clearly represented his own sacrificed life. "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."—Luke 22:19,20

NO OTHER NAME

The name Jesus is defined as "Jehovah-saved" and no other name in the history of the world can ever claim such depth of meaning. It clearly points to the Master as the only one who could serve as the agency of our Heavenly Father in the ultimate effecting of mankind's salvation. The Scriptures clearly teach, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven

given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) The Apostle Paul wrote, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9) Our Lord paid the price for mankind’s sin, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”—Matt. 20:28

BELIEVING IN HIM

God’s Holy Word teaches us the importance and necessity to truly believe in the Master Teacher, and the merit of his ransom sacrifice on behalf of mankind. This point is stressed in John’s epistle, where he writes, “This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.” (I John 3:23) The only foundation for the world’s return to favor with the Heavenly Father is to have a true appreciation and understanding that Jesus alone paid the ransom price for sin. The purpose for which Jesus died was that the obedient of mankind would be given provision to be saved from sin and death.

THE CHRIST

Our Lord is often spoken of as Christ, or Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, which means the ‘anointed’ one, and is the counterpart of the Hebrew word Messiah of the Old Testament. Concerning this reference we read, “Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered

together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.”—Acts 4:25-27

The Apostle Paul also wrote, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 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. 2:9-11

SON OF THE HIGHEST

In Luke’s gospel record, he pointed out, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” (Luke 1:32) Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a descendant of David through Nathan (Luke 3:31), who was a brother to Solomon. (I Kings 1:10) Thus the earthly lineage of Jesus and the reference to the throne of David was through his mother. Jesus’ connection to the severed line of Solomon came through Joseph, his mother’s husband. (Matt. 1:16; Luke 2:4) We also note our Lord’s words as recorded by the revelator, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”—Rev. 22:16

THE STEM OF JESSE

Concerning Jesus’ connection to the throne of King David the Prophet Isaiah says, “There shall

come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” (Isa. 11:1) Jesse was David’s father, and is thus an important link in establishing our Lord’s earthly lineage. (I Sam. 17:17) Isaiah then says, “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (Isa. 11:2) The prophet’s account shows that the wonderful work of the future kingdom of truth and righteousness will be carried out by Jesus and his faithful church. “With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” (vss. 4,5) Isaiah makes the connection again to the throne of David when he says, “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.”—vs. 10

THE BRANCH

The Prophet Zechariah also identifies the Branch and says, “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.” (Zech. 3:8) The prophet describes the role that our Lord and his church will assume during the future time of Christ’s kingdom. The prophet stresses this point again when he writes, “Speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD

of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; . . . and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”—Zech. 6:12,13

Truly our Lord Jesus is the Son of the Highest and his faithfulness was demonstrated by laying down his perfect life in sacrifice for the human creation. Having been raised from death by the powerful hand of his loving Heavenly Father, he will exercise his right to bestow the benefits of the kingdom as the antitypical King David. He will be the root and source through which life rights will become available for the whole human family.

DAVID'S HEIR

God made a special promise to David, saying, “Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.”—II Sam. 7:16,17

When David died, the promise was passed on to his son Solomon. The Lord then spoke to Solomon and said, “If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.”—I Kings 9:4,5

SOLOMON'S DISOBEDIENCE

Solomon's obedience was required to fulfill the will of God. "If ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people."—vss. 6,7

The new king did not obey the commandments of God. "King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."—I Kings 11:1-3

We learn of Solomon's disobedient actions in the scriptural record. "The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded." (vss. 9,10) We next learn the consequences of his disobedience to the Heavenly Father where we read, "The LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my

statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.”—vs. 11

NATHAN FAVORED

The lineage from King David therefore passed through Nathan rather than Solomon. Jesus’ mother indicated that God had revealed to her certain facts concerning the reasons for this. (Luke 1:45) Solomon’s lineage was tainted with arrogance and disobedience, whereas our Lord Jesus was born from the less honored and more faithful line of Nathan. We learn this from the scriptural record. “Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.” (vss. 46-50) Mary’s statement shows her sense of humility in sharing in God’s wonderful works. She continues, “He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”—vss. 51-55

TIDINGS OF JOY

When the birth of Jesus had taken place, the angel of the Lord made the wonderful announcement. “There were in the same country shepherds abiding

in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. . . . And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:8-14

The humble surroundings of the baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger was a token of our loving Heavenly Father’s goodwill toward his sin-sick and dying human creation. Our Lord was destined to become mankind’s Savior, and he would be a great king to restore peace on the earth. The angels knew this and were glad.

A DARK WORLD

Although the heavenly hosts understood and appreciated the great event and the glad tidings that came to pass on that very special night long ago, the promises of peace were soon lost to a dark and sin-filled world. The world was about to enter its darkest period of history known as the Dark Ages. It has been two thousand years since the Prince of Peace was born, and even yet the prospect of peace between people and nations seems impossible and but a dream.

During this long period of time there has been a little flock of our Lord’s footstep followers who are striving to know and to do his will faithfully unto

death. When the work of calling this class has been completed and brought all together, they will then share with the Master Teacher during the time of his promised kingdom in which all the families of the earth will be given opportunity to walk the highway of holiness and peace. Not until that time will the words of the Prophet Isaiah come true, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:7

The prophet speaks concerning our Lord Jesus, and points to his role as the “arm” of God during his future kingdom rule over the nations. “Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”—Isa. 40:10,11

THE LORD IS NOT SLACK

The Apostle Peter commented upon the long-promised kingdom and wrote, “Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”—II Pet. 3:8,9

LASTING PEACE

The Christmas season is a time when many Christian people are once again reminded of God's promise—peace on earth and goodwill toward men. This year, again, we must acknowledge the fact that there is indeed no lasting peace anywhere on earth. We are living during a time of increasing lawlessness, and men's hatred toward their neighbors is being generated in many violent ways.

Although mankind continues to yearn for the spirit of goodwill, no nation or group of nations at the present time can establish peace in the world. This glorious condition cannot be attained without Divine intervention in the affairs of men. True peace will only be realized through our Lord Jesus' future kingdom of righteousness as the true Prince of Peace. Under that administration, all shall come to know and obey our loving Heavenly Father and learn of his marvelous and ultimate plans for blessing all the families of his human creation. During this holiday season may we continue to pray for that blessed time to soon come. ■

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Called to Believe

Key Verse: *“Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”*
—Luke 1:20

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:5-25

OUR LESSON DEALS WITH the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, during the reign of Herod the Great, the king of Judea. John’s father Zacharias, was a priest “of the course of Abia,” and his mother, “was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:5) Both of them, according to the account, led a proper life by following God’s commandments and trusting in him. They had continued in this life of devotion to

God, and were now well advanced in age and were childless, because Elisabeth was barren.—vss. 6,7

As Zacharias carried out his duties as a priest, he went to the Temple to burn incense when the people had gathered there to pray. “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” (vs. 11) Zacharias was full of fear when he saw the angel, but was comforted and assured by the angel’s words, “Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.” (vs. 13) The angel went on to explain that the child’s birth would bring joy to many people, and would be a cause of great gladness. He also explained that the child would be raised in a special manner, “and he shall be filled with

the Holy Spirit.” (vs. 15) His birth and subsequent life would help to restore harmony between Israel, and “the fathers,” representing the patriarchs. We realize that this pictures the world also coming into a condition of harmony and peace with God in his kingdom. This dear son would be a forerunner, or introducer, to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. John would “go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.” (vs. 17) He would have an uncompromising and fearless spirit, backed by the power of Divine truth.—I Kings 18:25-41; Mal. 4:5

The proclamation caught Zacharias by surprise as evidenced by his response. “Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” (Luke 1:18) These words led up to our Key Verse, in which Zacharias was told that he would not be able to speak again because of his unbelief until the events ‘shall be performed.’ (vs. 20) The angel Gabriel, who was one of the most honored angels, being inferior only to Michael, spoke these words. (Jude 9) He had often stood in the presence of God, and was sent by him to reveal the wonderful news to John.

When Zacharias departed from the Temple, he was met by a throng of people who had waited for him. As he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and was only able to beckon to them. They perceived from this “that he had seen a vision in the temple.” (Luke 1:22) Elisabeth did conceive, and would hide herself for five months, saying, “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.”—vs. 25

As in the cases of Sarah (Gen. 18:9-14), Hannah (I Sam. 1:5-27) and the Shunamite (II Kings 4:14-17), Divine power quickened the natural forces when they were dormant, inoperative, or suspended, to accomplish God’s will. As we recall the Lord’s words, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”—Luke 18:27 ■

Called to be a Vessel

Key Verse: “*Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*”
—**Luke 1:38**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:26-38

ONCE AGAIN THE ANGEL

Gabriel is used as a messenger from God to proclaim the means by which the Father’s will would be carried out respecting mankind. He appears to Mary, who was “a virgin espoused” (to take as a wife; married, *Webster’s Dictionary*) to Joseph. (Luke 1:27) In the Jewish custom, the espousal is the real marriage, accompanied by a definite contract which then became absolutely binding. When Mary received Gabriel’s salutation, “Hail, . . . the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (vs. 28), she was unsure of what it meant. He would reassure her saying, “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive, . . . and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.” (vss. 30,31) Jesus signifies Savior, or Liberator, “For he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matt 1:21

Mary was again troubled, and inquired of Gabriel how this could be so, “seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34) He would go on to explain that this child was to be specially begotten by Divine power, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, . . . therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (vs. 35) Mary was a sharer with Joseph when Jesus was born, though not when he was conceived. The

life principle by which Jesus was conceived came directly from the Heavenly Father. The fact that Mary was honored by the Lord above all other women in that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus according to the flesh, would prove her wonderful character and good heart condition. Mary was then full of the joy of the Lord, and an instrument in carrying out his plan.

Gabriel then tells Mary the wonderful news about her cousin Elisabeth who, as we recall, was “barren.” (vs. 7) She was now in her sixth month. This is an important fact because we will read later in the account that John was six months older than our Lord, and would begin to preach six months before our Lord became of age and would begin his own ministry. Before departing, the angel would then make a wonderful statement to Mary that certainly must have been a source of strength and encouragement to her. “With God nothing shall be impossible.” (vs. 37) The Lord Jesus used similar words in speaking to his disciples in the parable concerning the kingdom of God and the rich man. “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”—Matt. 19:23-26

We can further appreciate the character of Mary from the words of acceptance concerning God’s will for her in our Key Verse, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ She refers to herself as a handmaid, which shows that she was humbling herself before God, and desired to be used in his service. Look also at the expression of submission to God as spoken by David, “O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.” (Ps. 116:16) Christ Jesus is the promised seed from David’s house, and heir of his throne. A “chosen vessel” brings with it the thought of a person being the receiver, or repository, of some special favor or gift from God. (Acts 9:15) This is so evident in the account of the proclamation concerning the means by which the Son of God would come into the world, and Mary’s total acceptance of it. ■

Called to Proclaim

Key Verse: *“His mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.”*

—**Luke 1:64**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:57-80

FROM THE TIME WHEN

the promise of a son was given to Zacharias, until the fulfillment (Luke 1:64), he was unable to speak due to his doubt concerning God’s word as delivered by the angel. If his faith was to be tested, it must have been found to be strong, and was apparently assisted by the nine-month-long experience of being unable to talk. It certainly must have been difficult for him due to his office as a priest, and the years of providing service to the people in the Temple of the Lord.

Elisabeth had given birth to a son, who was provided to her in answer to prayer. It was a gift from God, in part due to their loving heart disposition. So it appears evident that the preparation for John’s ministry began before he was born, in the hearts of his parents. Friends, neighbors and relatives were gladdened by the event, realizing that “the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her.” (vs. 58) This rejoicing was also proclaimed by Gabriel, when he had spoken the words, “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord.”—vs. 15

In harmony with the message, John the Baptist was born. On the eighth day, he was circumcised and would be named. The relatives of the family urged them to use the name of his father, even calling him Zacharias, but it was not meant to be so. Mary answered the people

saying, "He shall be called John." (vs. 60) They would then appeal to Zacharias, "They made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John." (vss. 62,63) Immediately his mouth was opened, and he was able to speak. Again his faith had been helped. He had gained a victory over his doubts, and it culminated with the giving of the name that was desired by God for him. The name John has a beautiful meaning—"the favor of God." He has often been referred to as the forerunner of Christ, to prepare the way for his great work. That work would be to bring the knowledge of salvation to all of God's people. His mission was declared by Isaiah who referred to him as "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD."—Isa. 40:3-5

As a man, John was peculiar in that he had no other aim in life than to be God's messenger, to proclaim his anointed one, and to prepare the people for the difficult experiences which would come as a fulfillment of prophecy. Malachi had declared that these trials would come to them after the revealment of the Messiah, who would "sit as a refiner, . . . [to] purify the sons of Levi." (Mal. 3:3) It was for this reason that John in his ministry declared, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:2) "He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Luke 3:3) Repent, reform, and get ready for a share in that kingdom.

A further illustration of the importance of John's birth is found in the words spoken by Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Spirit, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people." (Luke 1:68) Praise is first given to God, thanking him for giving his great blessings, which would eventually deliver all of his people from sin and death. The first step towards Israel's deliverance had been taken. ■

Called to Rejoice

Key Verse: *“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*
—*Luke 2:11*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 2:1-20

me that is to be ruler in Israel.” (Mic. 5:2) The Heavenly Father chose this city because it was an honorable place, the ‘city of David,’ Israel’s beloved king. It was the chief city of Judea, as few children in all of Judea or in the entire world were born in a more humble place. Due to the crowded conditions caused by so many coming to pay their taxes, it came to pass that Jesus was born in a cattle stall. (Luke 2:1-5) From these simple conditions, this dear Son of God would go on to complete his mission as the world’s Saviour.

The birth of our Lord Jesus, to be properly understood, must be considered from the standpoint that it was a gift of God. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16) The whole world was loved by God, and has been provided for by the life and sacrifice of Jesus. Through the Father’s plan, this child was begotten by the Holy Spirit so that he could be free from sin and pay the price for

WHEN WE READ THESE

familiar verses they should gladden our hearts. The prophecy that had foretold the birth of a Messiah in the city of Bethlehem had now been fulfilled. “Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto

Adam and his race. He would make it possible for all that were lost to be redeemed. Eternal life, fellowship with God and his Son, and fellowship in all the rights on both the earthly and heavenly planes would be secured. As the effects, or results, of Adam's failure were inherited by those who came after him, so the results of Christ's obedient life will be shared by all who believe in him.

As we look at the message delivered by the angels to the shepherds abiding in the vicinity of Bethlehem, we should note that the announcement was sent to those who were humble and trustworthy. The message of good tidings was certainly an inspired one, and fully in harmony with the promise that God made to Abraham. (Gen. 28:14) Yet, although they were "keeping watch" and guarding their flocks, they "were sore afraid." (Luke 2:8,9) This shows that mankind generally does not view God as being gracious and loving. But the God of all grace is a God of love, and the "Father of mercies." (II Cor. 1:3) The angels told the shepherds to "Fear not," for a message of "good tidings of great joy" was being proclaimed to them. (Luke 2:10) The order of the message given on that night is important. First 'good tidings,' then 'great joy,' and then the crowning feature of it is that it is "to all people." The message declared that a Savior had been born—the anointed one, the Lord. The Father was careful to declare that he was sending his only begotten Son, which would be of great cost to be man's Redeemer, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth."—Rom. 3:26

We have a kind of grand chorus, or angelic response, to the message that the angel had already given. A heavenly host sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14) This was a declaration of the wonderful character and power of God concerning the work by which this babe just born would bring glory and honor to his Father everlastingly. ■

Called to Witness

Key Verse: *“Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.”*
—**Luke 2:34**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 2:22-38

THESE VERSES REMIND US

of the Heavenly Father's great care in preparing those who would be his chosen instruments. As following the Law, all of the firstborn are represented as belonging to the LORD, to be devoted to God and his service. (Lev. 12:1-4; Luke 2:21) Although the firstborn of the entire nation were passed over at their deliverance from Egypt (Exod. 12:31,32), they had been exchanged for the one tribe of

Levi, which was especially dedicated to God's service. (Num. 3:12,13) The same principle is represented in respect to the firstborn of each mother. It was to be devoted especially to God and his service.

Similarly, the elect church is pictured here also: they are referred to as the “church of the firstborn.” (Heb. 12:23) They have their lives dedicated to God when they make a full consecration to him and then, having that consecration accepted, go on to strive to make their “calling and election sure.” (II Peter 1:10) As New Creatures in Christ Jesus and begotten of God, they have been called out from the world that they might be developed for God's purposes. James tells us that these are “a kind of firstfruits of his [God's] creatures.” (James 1:18) The implication is that after the church has been gathered to

heavenly glory by the power of the first resurrection; the kingdom to be established will bring blessings to all the families of the earth. All people will then have the opportunity of becoming sons of God on earth by the restitution of all things.—Acts 3:19-21

At the time of his consecration ceremony at the Temple, an aged prophet came forward, took the babe in his arms and praised God. Simeon was one of the kind of characters to whom God reveals his Truth, a just and devout man. By some manner, God revealed to him that the accomplishment of the gracious promises made to Abraham was at hand, and that he would not die until he had seen the deliverance of Israel. Under Divine inspiration, Simeon declared this child to be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” (Luke 2:32) John also pointed to him as “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—John 1:9

Simeon, addressing Mary, then prophetically declared that the child was ‘set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.’ It should remind us of the words of Apostle Paul, that our Lord is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” to many in Israel. (I Pet. 2:8) The world has witnessed the fall of Israel from Divine favor, and the hard experiences that have occurred because of their rejection of Christ. The prophetess Anna, a devout and faithful servant of God, also recognized and pointed out the infant Redeemer. She spoke “to all them that looked for redemption [who were looking for deliverance] in Jerusalem.”—Luke 2:38

As Simeon and Anna were in their day, we are also witnesses of the events that have taken place. Israel is once again a nation, and one day they will turn away from their blindness and come again into Divine favor and blessing. Then the words will be fulfilled of which all of the world will be witnesses—“Through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.”—Rom. 11:31 ■

Glorious Hope of the Church

***“By whom also we
have access by
faith into this
grace wherein we
stand, and rejoice
in hope of the glory
of God.”***

—Romans 5:2

IN THIS SCRIPTURE THE

Apostle Paul is speaking of the hope which the faithful followers of Christ have of receiving glory, which he points to as the ‘glory of God.’ To the brethren at Colosse he said, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Col. 1:27

To those at Corinth, Paul wrote, “If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.” (II Cor. 3:9-12) The hope of glory of which the apostle spoke (vss.7,8) was

represented by the radiance of Moses' countenance when he came down from the mount to inaugurate the typical Law Covenant with Israel.

During the present Gospel Age, God has been calling and selecting from among the fallen human family a bride class for his Son, our Lord Jesus. These faithful followers will share his glory in the future administration of the kingdom of righteousness, and the institution of the New Covenant for the blessing of the people.

These promises of glory are limited to a faith class to which Jesus refers when he said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) Those who make up this 'little flock' therefore, are the ones to whom these precious promises apply, those who are willing to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and share in his sacrifice for sin.—Col. 1:24

THE RICH YOUNG NOBLEMAN

A very limited glimpse of the Bible's promises of glory may be seen in the conversation that took place between Jesus and the rich young ruler who came to him to ask the way to eternal life. This young ruler knew nothing of these special promises, but was familiar with the Law of Moses, which said, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD." (Lev. 18:5) He knew that he was failing to obtain life by keeping the Law, as he had hoped to do. His failure to obtain life was perhaps becoming manifest in his declining health. He had heard of Jesus' power to perform miracles, and of the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.

Apparently he was convinced that Jesus was a great teacher sent from God, and that perhaps he could point out a better way to life than that which was offered through the Law given by Moses.

Whatever the background of this rich young ruler's question may have been, the question itself clearly revealed the man's desire to find the secret of life, in order that he might not grow old and die. When Jesus questioned him concerning the Law, he assured the Master that he had made the best effort possible to abide by the requirements of the Law from the time that he was very young. The answer seems to imply that, in spite of his best efforts to keep Moses' Law, he realized that he was not obtaining the health and life which is promised to the obedient. It was because of this that he had come to Jesus to find out if there was anything else that he could do.

"Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." (Luke 18:22) Jesus' reply was no doubt a surprise to him for he was a rich man. Jesus assured him that if he did these things it would result in his receiving treasure in heaven. However, both the price that was to be paid, as well as the reward to follow, were beyond the ability of this man to appreciate and comprehend. The account says that he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

THE DISCIPLES' REACTION

It is interesting to note the reaction of the disciples to this conversation between Jesus and the rich

young nobleman. They had accepted Jesus as their Messiah who had been promised in the Old Testament prophecies. To them, he was the one who was destined to establish a kingdom that would rule over the whole earth. Through this kingdom, they believed all mankind were to be blessed. They no doubt knew of the angels' message on the night that Jesus was born, proclaiming him as the Savior of the world, and that because of his birth glad tidings were to go to all the families of the earth. With these thoughts in their minds as to the scope of the Lord's kingdom work, we can readily understand why they asked the question, "Who then can be saved?"—Matt. 19:25

The disciples thought that Jesus was to give salvation to all mankind. They knew that the prophecies indicated that he was to be king over the whole earth. Their prophet had said that he was the "arm" of the LORD which will be revealed in the "eyes of all the nations," and that because of this "all the ends of the earth" shall see the salvation of God. (Isa. 52:10) With this broad view of what was to be accomplished through the work of the Messiah, it was very difficult for the disciples to understand why it was that this young nobleman coming to Jesus to inquire the way to life should be given an answer so difficult to understand. He appeared to be making the way of salvation so hard that the man went away sorrowful.

Jesus explained to them that with man it would not be possible to accomplish, but that with God all things are possible. This implied that God was able to fulfill his promise to bless all nations, even though from the disciples' immediate viewpoint

something seemed to be out of harmony with this Divine intention.

The disciples were not satisfied, and they reminded our Lord that they too had left all to follow him, even as he had asked the young nobleman to do. They wanted to know what they were to receive as a result of the sacrifice they had made. Concerning this point, we read, "Jesus said unto them, 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. 19:28

THE HEAVENLY HOPE

In Jesus' answer we note two points of importance which help give a clearer vision of God's kingdom and purpose. In Jesus' statement to the rich young nobleman, he declares that if the great sacrifice was made by faithfully following him, he would then have treasure in heaven. The heavenly hope and spiritual promises were not easily understood, and the young nobleman had only asked how he could live on the earth, not how to lay up treasure in heaven.

The second important point is found in Jesus' statement to the disciples, in which he assures them that if they were faithful in giving up all and following him even unto death, they would sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This great privilege, as Jesus revealed, would be realized by the disciples in that period which he identified as the future time of regeneration [rebirth, #3824, *Strong's Bible Concordance*].—Matt. 19:28

The heavenly hope and the prospect of being enthroned with our Lord in his kingdom was thus introduced to the disciples. We note also that the fruition of this—the Christian's hope—does not mean the end of all hope for others. Jesus said that when the reward of the Christian is ultimately realized, a work of regeneration and judgment will then begin on behalf of the whole world of mankind.

PROMISES OF GLORY

Jesus, by explaining to the disciples that they would be enthroned with him and share his glory in the work of blessing mankind in the kingdom, was on the authority of the promises of God recorded in the Old Testament. Many of these promises are made only to Jesus himself, but when the Master through the Gospel brought life and immortality to light (II Tim. 1:10), he reveals that those who are faithful in following in his footsteps are to share with him the glory that is promised.—Col. 3:4

Thus Jesus, in his prayer toward the close of his ministry, said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one." (John 17:22) The glory to which Jesus refers had at that time been given to him by promise. At the time he uttered this remarkable prayer, it was merely a 'hope of glory.' But to Jesus, who had implicit trust in his Heavenly Father's purpose, these promises were real. He knew that God's promises could not fail, and he spoke of the glory as having been already given to him. This wondrous glory of exaltation in the messianic kingdom was a part of the Divine plan for him, and there was no

doubt in his mind that it was to become a reality in his Father's ultimate plan.

One of these promises of glory recorded in the Old Testament was uttered by Jacob when he referred to the Messiah as "Shiloh" and declared that unto him would the "gathering of the people be." (Gen. 49:10) Isaiah also refers to the Master, "Unto us a child is born, . . . and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6) In the same prophecy the prophet assures us, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—vs. 7

Isaiah again spoke of the promises of glory. The Heavenly Father made the promise that he will exalt Jesus to his own right hand and give him "a portion with the great." (Isa. 53:12) Other Old Testament scriptures also note the many wondrous promises that are made on behalf of Jesus, all of which indicate the height of glory to which it was the Father's will to exalt him.

Jesus was to be given a 'portion with the great.' This is one of the promises showing that he would be exalted to the right hand of the throne of God as shown by the Apostle Paul. "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 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. 2:9-11

This promised glory is seen to be twofold. It is a glory of the Divine nature, that when Jesus was

raised from the dead he became the “express image” of the Father’s person. (Heb. 1:3) The Apostle Peter then refers to the promises made on behalf of Jesus’ followers, and says that by these promises we are made “partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:4

Secondly, it is a glory of office. Jesus, who is now raised to immortality, the ‘express image’ of his Father, is also a great king, priest, and judge. As such he is to rule the world of mankind in his kingdom. The apostle declares that to him ‘every knee should bow’ and ‘every tongue should confess’ him. Paul was quoting from Isaiah 45:23. God makes this declaration of glory concerning himself, but Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit shows that it will be fulfilled through Jesus. Thus we have another scriptural example of how Jesus partakes of the glory of God.

REWARDING THE STRONG

The prophet said that God promised that Jesus would be given a portion with the great and that he in turn would divide the reward with the strong. This is one of the fundamental promises that gives Jesus the authority to assure his disciples that if they were faithful in following him into death they would share with him in his kingdom glory. The promises of God also gave Jesus the authority to say, “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) God had already fulfilled his promise of glory to our Lord, and now he was prepared to carry out his part of the Divine arrangement by exalting his faithful church members to share that glory with him.

The Apostle Peter said, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (II Pet. 1:4) He was here speaking of the many precious assurances to Christ and the church that are recorded in the Old Testament. The prophets did not understand the significance of these promises. They perhaps saw them as pertaining to a glorious kingdom that would be established through the nation of Israel, and then to the blessings of earthly restitution.

When Peter wrote these words, the Old Testament was the only portion of the Scriptures then available. He had a blessed association with Jesus, and no doubt remembered some of the statements Jesus had made to his disciples pertaining to joint-heirship with him in his kingdom. The Holy Spirit which came at Pentecost also helped him recall other promises Jesus had made. Isaiah's prophecy (53:12) also provided a firm foundation of faith and hope which enabled Peter to refer to these 'exceeding great and precious promises' by which we may become partakers of the Divine nature, and sharers in the glory of God.

SUFFERING, THEN GLORY

The disciples did not fully understand these promises of glory prior to Jesus' death and resurrection. They knew that he was the Messiah, and had come to earth by the authority of God. They were also learning that through him would come a dispensation of Divine glory in which, according to the various statements he had made to them, they expected to share.

When Jesus indicated to his disciples that he would be put to death, “Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, [pity thyself, *Marginal Translation*] Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” (Matt. 16:22) Peter could not understand how an experience of suffering and death could be associated with the promises of glory which they were sure belonged to the Messiah. When Jesus was actually taken from them and crucified, they were bewildered. Some may have even concluded temporarily that Jesus may not have been the Messiah. They may have reasoned, how could the Messiah who is supported and strengthened by God be crucified by his enemies?

It was not until after the resurrection of Jesus that the disciples began to comprehend the significance of what had taken place. Two of his disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus, and “Their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”—Luke 24:31,32

Jesus had appeared to them as a stranger, but they were greatly encouraged and their hearts burned within them with joy. Jesus had pointed out to them the necessity for him to first suffer and die, and afterward to enter into his glory. The disciples had been given brief glimpses of a messianic kingdom of glory and the share which they hoped to enjoy in that kingdom with him, but they had not understood the message of the Old Testament which pointed out that before glory could come,

those who would partake of this wonderful hope must share in the experiences of sacrificial suffering and death.

The Apostle Peter seems to have grasped the meaning of these two important phases of the Divine plan. In his first epistle, he analyzes these thoughts, and reminds us that they constituted an important part of the entire Spirit-inspired testimony of the holy prophets. He also saw what Jesus revealed to his disciples at Pentecost, that those who follow in his footsteps are to share his glory with him. The Divine program for the Christ, was a program of suffering followed by glory, and it included the church as well.

The promises of glory to Jesus were not fulfilled on his behalf until he finished his sacrificial course in death. Neither can any member of the body of Christ expect to share in his glory until their sacrificial work is also completed in death. The Divine rule is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) In keeping with this Divine principle, it can be seen that there is no possibility of anyone reigning with Christ in any sense of the word while still in the flesh.

PETER'S TESTIMONY

In his first epistle, Peter wrote concerning the promises of glory, and shows that they are not fulfilled while the individual is in the flesh. This was true even with respect to Jesus. Concerning this he said, "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God."—I Pet. 1:21

The apostle again speaks of the hope of glory which we have because of association with Jesus in the Divine program of suffering and glory. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, *Marginal Translation*] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (chap. 2:9) There is hope of glory, and this hope will be translated into reality in the first resurrection. It will then be only to those who have been faithful in participation in the suffering.

HEREUNTO WERE YE CALLED

Sacrificial suffering unto death is the first experience of those who are to be joint-heirs with Christ in his kingdom glory. "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (vs. 21) The nature of the suffering is referred to by the apostle, "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."—vs. 20

The Christian should expect to suffer for righteousness' sake. Peter says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—I Pet. 4:12,13

The prophets had prophesied concerning the sufferings of Christ, and if we are partakers of those sufferings because of our association with him, why

should we think it strange? Peter rejoices because this is evidence that our consecration and sacrifice is acceptable to God. It means that through the fiery trials which he permits to come, he is dealing with us, and preparing us for a position of glory with him in his kingdom.

Peter continues, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you." (vs. 14, *New American Standard Bible*) These experiences are the testimony of God's Holy Spirit through his prophets, and apply to us.

The Apostle Paul also says, "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) How wonderful to think that we can come into such close contact and fellowship with God through his Spirit, simply upon the basis of our willingness to faithfully yield our wills to the doing of his will.

THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST

In order to have this hope of glory as an inspiration in our lives, it is necessary that we live close to our Lord. We must strive earnestly to do his will, and be determined to count all things as loss and dross, as compared to the attaining of that glorious hope set before us in the Gospel.

This is expressed by Paul when he says, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do

count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”—Phil. 3:8-11

The apostle further wrote, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) This joy was set before Jesus in the exceeding great and precious promises which God caused to be recorded for his encouragement. He no doubt thrilled at the prospect of returning to the heavenly courts, and of being once more in close association with his Heavenly Father. In addition to this, there was the prospect of being able to dispense blessings of life and happiness to all mankind. Jesus realized what joy it would be for all mankind when once the messianic kingdom was established and life would flow out to all the obedient.

THE JOY SET BEFORE US

A similar joy is set before all of Jesus’ faithful followers. It is a joy in the prospect of close association with the Heavenly Father and with our beloved Lord. It is a joy of being partners in the outworking of the ultimate plan for the blessing of all mankind. What a wondrous hope of glory this is. Had the rich young ruler really comprehended the

full significance of what Jesus was saying to him, surely he would not have gone away sorrowful. The Scriptures say to those who are privileged to hear this call to glory, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”—Matt. 13:16 ■

“In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

“Deliver me in thy righteousness, . . . For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

“Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. . . . I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.”

—Psalm 71: 1,2,5,8,14

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 6—“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”—Proverbs 25:28 (Z. '01-295 Hymn 183)

DECEMBER 13—“Lay not this sin to their charge.”—Acts 7:60 (Z. '01-331 Hymn 186)

DECEMBER 20—“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—II Timothy 2:15 (Z. '02-318 Hymn 99)

DECEMBER 27—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”—I John 5:21 (Z. '02 -284 Hymn 71)

We Have Seen His Star

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

—Matthew 2:1,2

AS WE LOOK TO THE HEAVENS

at this time of the year when the Christian world celebrates the birth of the Savior, what comes to mind? Observing the stars on a clear night is a wonderful way to reflect upon the beauty of God's Creation, and of his great power. Perhaps we ponder as David did, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Oh LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth.”—Ps. 8:3,4,9

During the fourth creative day, “God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven; . . . and it was so.” (Gen. 1:14,15) Stars have always been important to every culture. They have been

used in religious practices and for celestial navigation and orientation. The sheer grandeur of the stars may be found in the definition of a star—‘A self-luminous body visible in the sky whose shape is usually a sphere and whose size may vary. A star may be as small as the earth or as large as 650 times greater in diameter than the Sun.’ (*Wikipedia*) Truly the verse, “One star differeth from another star in glory” (I Cor. 15:41), applies here although we have come to understand that there is also a spiritual application to these words. When we realize from recent discoveries that the countless stars may each be a solar system, we should be amazed and feel our own insignificance.

LIGHT BRINGS HOPE

The sun is our most important star, it brings us warmth, light, and life and it is a fitting comparison to the Son of God who also is responsible for light and life coming to the world. Life as we know it would not be able to exist without the sun. Since the penalty of sin and death was pronounced (Gen. 2:17), all have been born in sin and “shapen in iniquity.” (Ps. 51:5) It would take the seed of the woman to end the reign of sin and death. So we see that without the sun, representing God’s beloved only begotten Son, all would be lost, mankind would be condemned to death, and have no hope of life in the future. “Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold.” (Eccl. 11:7) “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14; Num. 14:21) Looking at the promises of God gives us hope and joy that everything is working out

according to his wonderful Divine plan of the ages. As a result, “every knee” shall bow and “every tongue” confess to the glory of God.—Phil. 2:10,11

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Looking at the scripture, “As the people were in expectation, . . . all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ.” (Luke 3:15) Even the Gentile world was in expectation of the coming Messiah. The question is also posed “What manner of child shall this be!” (chap. 1:66) God had promised centuries before that a holy child would be born. (Dan. 9:24) The question would be answered by John, when he said, “One mightier than I cometh.” (Luke 3:16) It was proclaimed in the promise to Mary, Thou shalt “bring forth a son.” (chap. 1:31) It was then fulfilled in the words, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (chap. 2:11) According to the flesh, our Lord Jesus was born through his mother, and therefore was the son of the man David. (Luke 3:23-38) It is of importance to note that the Saviour of the world be born through the kingly line of the Jews in fulfillment of prophecy.

We further read “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head.” (Gen. 3:15) These verses had no immediate application at the time they were delivered, but would be fulfilled in God’s due time. We would then not apply these verses to the Lord’s First Advent, but to the worldwide blessings that follow the Second Coming of our Lord, and the subsequent establishment of his glorious kingdom.

VISIT OF THE WISE MEN

The Gentile world was in expectation of a coming Messiah as demonstrated by the visit of the wise men who came from the east. (Matt. 2:1) The term originally belonged to a class of priests among the Medes and Persians, who constituted the king's council and who practiced astrology. Ancient writers make frequent references to them, and the term was later applied to all eastern philosophers. Nations of the Far East had for a long time cherished a tradition that God would descend to earth in a visible form.

The Prophet Daniel associated with some of these wise men. He was once a prince in Persia, and was well known to the disciples of Zoroaster. (Dan. 2:48) His prophecies were made known to them, as probably were the calculations by which he pointed to the time of the birth of the Messiah.

The further belief was that this child from heaven would be born in Judea, gain dominion over the whole world and establish a golden age. The miraculous star in the east which some of the Gentile wise men had been taught to look for, had finally made its appearance, and would guide them to the wonderful light of the world. "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel."—Num. 24:17

They had now come to Jerusalem, having traveled a far distance to observe firsthand what they thought was to be the culmination of their beliefs. They explained, when they arrived, that they had come to see "he that is born King of the Jews, for we have seen his star, and are come to worship him." (Matt. 2:2) When they met with King Herod, they quoted the

words of the prophet, “Thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, . . . out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.” (vs. 6) As we know, Herod was troubled by the news, and sent them away under the guise of wanting to know more about the child so that he could “worship him also.”—vs. 8

When departing for Bethlehem, they again saw the star and rejoiced, because it would lead them to the place “where the young child was.” (vss. 9,10) Upon reaching the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary and “fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (vs. 11) Gold represents obedience and consecration; frankincense represents praise, devotion, and gratitude; and myrrh represents submission, and a willingness to do service. These gifts also have special significance, and point out to us how we should present our hearts to him.—Luke 12:34

They showed their reverence to the mighty God of Israel, their faith in the divinely inspired prophecies, their zeal as truth seekers, and their humility to inquire of the God of another nation. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, and praise be to God, the true source “of every good and every perfect gift.” (James 1:17) We have the assurance that there was a truth associated with this special peculiar star, thankful that we have the “more sure word of prophecy.”—II Pet. 1:19

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

We have now seen the humble beginning and earliest manifestation of the great light. Jesus is indeed the light of the world, and the “Sun of righteousness.”

(Mal. 4:2) "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:4,9) Light here is used figuratively signifying hope, instruction, and knowledge. Everywhere throughout the Scriptures light is used to represent God, his Truth, servants and their messages. To know God, one must first gain a knowledge of him. No one can commune with God without becoming acquainted in some measure with his Truth. With this comes an enlightened mind through the Holy Spirit that leads to an understanding of his plans and purposes. If they are in harmony and fellowship with him, his plans and purposes become theirs.

When the clouds and darkness of error pass away, and the clear light of Truth shines brightly, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all will see it. (Isa. 40:5; 11:9) So Jesus came not only to redeem man's life, but also to enlighten him, and to restore as many as are willing to accept sonship.

Darkness represents error, superstition, and sin. The people that walk in darkness now are to see the great light one day when all of mankind will have eyes to see and ears to hear. At the present time, "gross darkness" covers the people. (Isa. 60:2) The exception to this is a very small group, the "church" (Heb. 12:23), who as our Lord declared, are "not of this world." (John 17:16) The whole world is the land "of the shadow of death." (Jer. 2:6) "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, until now" waiting "for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:19-22) The world needs this great light of peace and joy. The light of the true knowledge of the glory of God, as it did shine in the

face of Jesus Christ our Lord, will, in God's due time, be revealed. John tells us concerning Jesus, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." (Rev. 22:16) He will shine forth for the blessing of mankind, to bring order out of the present confusion by dispelling the darkness, and cause the knowledge of the glory of God to fill the whole earth. This scripture shows the fulfillment of the promises made by God concerning his Son, who is now the glorified Jesus.

BEING LIGHT BEARERS

The true light is now shining in the hearts of the faithful footstep followers of the Lord. These have their paths illuminated by the Heavenly Father through his dear Son. We have an assurance of this—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105) Concerning God's leadings of his own, we read, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." (Matt. 13:16) This is a reference to having eyes of faith, and understanding. This is the blessing of present Truth, that he might show us the way in which the believer should go. Is this light of God's Truth now shining in your heart? If it is there, it should shine out upon those who we come in contact with during the daily experiences of life. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16) This light that comes to us from the Heavenly Father is not directly seen, but should be more of a reflective type. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. . . . Walk in the light, as he is in the light." (I John 1:5,7) Light stands for truth and righteousness.

Divine Truth comes by the words of Truth that the Holy Spirit operates upon. Jesus has assured his followers that they should be confident, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33

His church is invited to become associated with him as light bearers; and if faithful in permitting their light to shine now, they will be joined with him to shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom. The foot-step followers should be in the world, not of the world. (James 4:4) "Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8) This refers to a transfer from darkness to light. It is a gradual process which involves the mind, and which leads finally to perfection in the first resurrection. It involves an active service and effort on the part of the believer, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) Be guided by God's Word, and trust totally in him. In this way, we can lift up the light of truth so that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17) How thankful we should be that we are able to walk in the light of understanding, and in harmony with his plans and purposes through "a new and living way." (Heb. 10:20) This new way of life, or narrow way, leads to everlasting life for the "called, and chosen, and faithful."—Rev. 17:14; Matt. 7:14

PROMISED GLORY

The glory of a star is beautiful, yet different and less than the glory of the sun. The nearest star to the Earth and the most important one is the sun.

The Scriptures tell us that the church as a whole shall “shine forth as the sun.” (Matt. 13:43) Our Lord Jesus is the true center of the Sun of Righteousness, and his bride will be with him in the morning when righteousness is established in the earth, shining forth and sharing in his glory. “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. 12:3) This can only be true through Christ and the example of the Father’s power in the resurrection of our dear Redeemer—“Christ the firstfruits.” (I Cor. 15:20,23) He was the first to experience a resurrection in the full sense, to perfection and everlasting life. We have the promise of a future life through Christ and a reward in heaven. “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels.”—Heb. 1:3,4

Since our Lord Jesus was the direct creation of God, it is fitting that he has the character likeness of the Heavenly Father, being “full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Each one, in proportion as he receives the Spirit of the Lord, gradually becomes a copy of God’s dear Son, and a copy of the Father, when we shall awake in his “likeness.” (Ps. 17:15) “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” (I John 3:2) The reward of the faithful ones will be a glorious one, for they will receive “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom. 2:7) Joint-heirship with the Lord in his heavenly

kingdom is the hope set before the church class. They seek to do only the will of the Heavenly Father, and set their affections on heavenly things by lifting their affections away from earthly things. The Apostle Paul said, "Let this mind be in you." (Phil. 2:5) This is why the Lord tells his followers to "lay up . . . treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:20) A treasure is something that we take special pleasure in. It is in our thoughts, plans, and hopes. How much more precious should the treasure of a future heavenly reward be to those who are "called according to his purpose."—Rom. 8:28

THE GREAT HEAVENLY KING

No treasure is more important to the world of mankind than the promise made to them concerning the process by which the blessing and release of all people from the curse of sin and death would be accomplished. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. 9:6,7

We see how the change in the old order of things would come, and how the world would be prepared for the coming kingdom of God. We read, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, made great their joy." (vs. 2, *Leeser Translation*) This 'nation' is the world of mankind under the new administration of the Millennial Kingdom. At that time, the kingdoms of this world will have passed away, and will have become the kingdom of our Lord. The people shall 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, . . . for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—Isa. 2:3; Rev. 11:15

These provisions began with the birth of our Lord as the babe born in Bethlehem. He is then presented as God’s Son, given on our behalf. His sacrifice began at Jordan, and culminated at Calvary. Because of his obedience unto death, “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” (Phil. 2:9,10) In God’s wisdom, this includes those who sleep in death, and who will be raised up to a restored perfect life on earth.

‘The government shall be upon his shoulder,’ is figurative of authority, glory, and honor that shall be upon the Lord. It is given to him from the Father through his great law of love. The change in dispensation will be ushered in through the Father’s “times of restitution.” (Acts 3:19-21) This will be the time for Christ to receive the honor, glory, and dominion that was exclusively promised to him. He shall then fulfill all of the things predicted by God through his holy prophets.

When he assumes the control of earth’s affairs his character of love and justice will be evident, and all power in heaven and earth will be given to him. It insures to all of the faithful that his reign will be a time of blessing, of peace and joy to all who love righteousness and truth. His name and titles, representing the gracious things of which he is, are then brought to the attention of all mankind. He is

‘Wonderful,’ beyond the power of human comprehension. Yet as the express image of the Father’s person, he will be a leader and instructor of his people, to all who want to be “taught of God.” (John 6:45) He will be the ‘Counsellor,’ whose instructions in righteousness will be satisfactory and respected by the world of mankind who will be seeking a return to Divine favor and a full restoration of what was lost.

He shall be called, ‘The mighty God’ or mighty one, and on him shall rest all of the power and authority of God his Father. He is called the ‘everlasting Father’—a father forever—because he will be the life-giver to all who will accept life under the terms of the New Covenant, which was sealed by his own precious blood, and will be established after all of the faithful members of the body of Christ have passed beyond the veil.—Heb. 12:24

He shall be known as the ‘Prince of Peace.’ Although his empire will be established by a smiting of the nations with a rod of iron, everything is being done in the interest of bringing peace to the world. His entire reign will further insure the complete establishment of everlasting peace to all. The increase of his government will spread and be so successful that it will extend over all nations and families of the earth.—Isa. 65:20; Rev. 20:9,14,15

According to God’s plan, this kingdom will be established upon the throne of David. As David sat upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD, the greater than David, the Messiah, will reign because he has the right to do so. (Luke 2:14) The peace that he brings will be without end, “from henceforth even for ever” (Isa. 9:7), for God “hath appointed

[him] heir of all things.” (Heb. 1:2) This is not given to the man Christ Jesus, but to the New Creature, the glorified Lord. As the ‘heir of all things’ he will be the representative of the Father for all eternity and the heir of all of the gracious promises of God’s Word. “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” This is truly a wonderful expression of the love of God, for it was love that motivated the Father to give his only begotten Son. It will bring great joy to the Father to restore man to his original condition of perfection.—Gen. 1:27-31

Recall to mind the blessed words that the Sun of righteousness will come to bless the world. (Mal. 4:2) God created a “greater light to rule the day,” and a “lesser light.” (Gen. 1:16) This ‘greater light’ is a type of Christ, who comes to dispel all darkness in the morning of the grand Millennial Day. The church class will then be in place as the ‘lesser light’ reflecting the light from the true source of purest light, the Heavenly Father and his dear Son. Only those who have accepted Christ, who truly believe on him and who have entered into a covenant relationship with him as his future bride and joint-heirs can say, ‘we have seen his star.’ They desire to “press toward the mark.” (Phil. 3:14) They remember the wise admonition to “study” to see that their life is in harmony with the will of God. (II Tim. 2:15) One of the most important things for a child of God to do is to remember all of the Lord’s blessings to him.—Ps. 103:2

May the light of Divine truth illuminate your paths, and lead you in the path of righteousness, until one day, if faithful to him, you shall behold the glories of the LORD. ■

The Lord Is My Shepherd

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

—*Psalm 23:1*

WHEN THE PSALMIST DA-

vid wrote these inspiring words, he used a Hebrew word which has been trans-

lated Lord in many of our English Bibles. He intended this reference to apply to our Heavenly Father who is the Creator of all life, and who is the Great Shepherd of his people. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”—Isa. 57:15

Jesus also spoke of himself as a shepherd, saying, “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11) Furthermore he emphasized, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.” (vs. 14) When writing his first epistle, the Apostle Peter said, “Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”—I Pet. 2:25

These scriptures have been put in proper perspective by the Apostle Paul who explained, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (I Cor. 8:6) It is thus our Heavenly Father who is the Great Shepherd. One of the evidences of his loving interest and care for us as his sheep was the gift of his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, who is a shepherd to the children of God, as well as being their Redeemer and Advocate.

Jesus referred to himself as the 'good shepherd,' and he indicated that proof of his goodness was that he would give his life for the sheep. The Heavenly Father's interest in us is manifested by his love. We read, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) He loved the entire human race, but his special interest during the present Gospel Age has been with those who are of the sheep class. They are very dear to him and no good thing will he withhold from them. Whatever of love and sympathy toward the sheep that we find manifested in Jesus, we are to attribute to our Heavenly Father. Jesus came to manifest the Father and to speak and act for him. It is written, "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father." (John 14:9) One of the chief evidences of God's care for us was the provision of Jesus as our chief under-shepherd.

JESUS: A FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

Jesus is our chief under-shepherd, and he was totally devoted to the sheep of his day. The children of Israel were the Lord's sheep at the time of his First Advent, and many tended to stray from the fold, not appreciating his special interest in them. Only a remnant of them recognized the voice of the good shepherd when he spoke to them, preferring to follow the leadership of the false shepherds of that time—their religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. Nevertheless, he did not spare himself in doing all that he could for them, and in this we see manifest the characteristics of a true shepherd.

As proof of this, we read, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." (Matt. 9:35,36) Here is described the life that was devoted to continuous service, and which surely sapped the physical strength of our dear Lord. Yet, he did this despite the claims that he was a false shepherd and a servant of the Devil, as we read, "When the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils."—Matt. 12:24

The expression, 'sheep having no shepherd' was first used by Moses concerning the Israelites when he asked God to appoint someone to take his place as leader. "Moses spake unto the LORD, saying, Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before

them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in: that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.” (Num. 27:15- 17) Thus was Joshua appointed to be Moses’ successor, and Jesus as the antitypical Joshua had now come to be the true shepherd of the people of Israel. Although the Israelites did not recognize the voice of our Lord as their shepherd, he was nevertheless faithful to them and continued to sacrifice his time and strength in their interests.

OTHER UNDER-SHEPHERDS

Another loving arrangement of our Heavenly Father, the Chief Shepherd, is the provision he made for additional under-shepherds besides Jesus. It is recorded, “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:11,12) This is also true of those who are elected elders by their local ecclesias. As Jesus was a perfect example of the Chief Shepherd’s interest in and care for the sheep, so also the under-shepherds should strive to pattern themselves after him by seeking to serve the sheep patiently, lovingly, and untiringly as he did.

One of the chief characteristics of a good shepherd is his genuine interest in and concern for the sheep. Those whom the Lord can use as under-shepherds over his sheep must have this qualification. They must be willing to lay down their lives for the sheep.

A true shepherd will do all he can to gather the scattered sheep. When Jesus, the chief under-

shepherd, was smitten, the true sheep which he had gathered were temporarily scattered. The Lord would have his true shepherds gather his sheep that they may be together and rejoice together in the abundance of his love.

PRESENT DAY SHEEPFOLDS

When we see the Lord's people being brought together into sheepfolds, it is important to keep in mind the ultimate purpose to which they have been gathered. Every true gathering of the Lord's sheep is centered around the shepherd. The sheep will hear his voice and recognize the arrangements that have been made for them. Jesus is the chief under-shepherd, and is the head over the various members of his church. Each congregation of the Lord's people therefore becomes representative of the present Gospel Age church as a whole. The elders of these congregations are the under-shepherds, and thus cooperate with Jesus in caring for the best interests of his special people.

True under-shepherds care for the Lord's sheep even as the Chief Shepherd has directed. The sheep have liberty only to hearken to the voice of the Good Shepherd, to be led by him, and to feed upon the spiritual food which he has provided. False shepherds, and wolves in sheep's clothing, should not be allowed to devour the sheep, although under the guise of liberty they may make attempts to do this. The under-shepherds are also sheep, and every one in the Lord's little flock has a certain measure of responsibility toward all the other sheep. They should all endeavor as best they can to care for one another.

When the Lord's true sheep hearken to him their spiritual needs will be provided. "No good thing" will the shepherd withhold from those "that walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11) And, he has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13: 5) The Chief Shepherd gives even the weakest of his sheep the comfort and encouragement they need to fight a good fight of faith as they walk in the narrow way. "He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—II Cor. 12:9 ■

*While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the LORD came down,
And glory shone around.*

*"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread,
Had seized their troubled mind,
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
To you and all mankind.*

*"To you, in David's town, this day
Is born of David's line,
The Savior, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:*

*"The heav'nly babe you there shall find
To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid.*

*"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth from heav'n to men
Begin, and never cease,
Begin, and never cease!"*

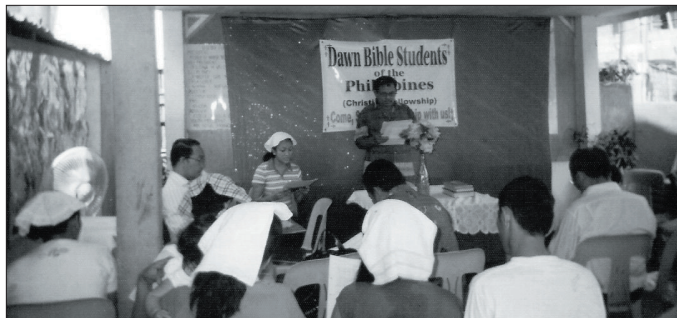
—Hymns of Dawn

A New Ecclesia

Manila, Philippine Islands

WE ARE VERY glad to include in this month's *Dawn* magazine a "Vineyard Echoes" article concerning the new Bible Students ecclesia that was formed in Manila, Philippine Islands about five years ago. This interesting information was sent to us by Brother Agripino D. Polistico who is the acting Secretary and Coordinator of the Dawn Bible Student Ecclesia in Manila.

Brother Agripino reports that he first learned about the Truth when he was a young man of about 23 years of age from a friend who gave him two *Dawn* magazines. Evidently his friend had made earlier contact with the brethren at the Dawn. He became readily aware of the fact that the publishers of the magazine, the Dawn Bible Students Association, were also still reprinting Pastor Russell's books as well as other Truth literature. As an eager seeker for the Truth, he contacted the Dawn in America and requested a set of the six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*. The brethren at the Dawn have since that time kept in touch with him and have sent him many other Truth-related books and booklets.



Having moved to Manila from another location in the Philippine Islands in 1986, Brother Agripino tells us that he was then able to listen to the “Frank and Ernest” radio program over a local station and learned that it was also being sponsored by the Dawn Bible Students. As a result of his growing interest in the Truth as presented through the Dawn’s extensive witness activity, he left his association with another religious group to establish a new Bible Student ecclesia in his home city Manila.

In his letter, Brother Agripino writes that at the time this took place there were four other interested brethren who met with him on a regular basis. During these past five years, relatives, friends and others also showed an interest and appreciation for the Truth and began to meet with them. Together they have promoted the Truth in various ways, and we understand that there are now about 25 baptized brethren associated with the newly formed Manila ecclesia. We are informed that they meet together for study, and are presently using *Dawn* magazine articles and other books and booklets which they have received.

The Dawn initially assisted the Manila brethren wherever possible to get their ecclesia established, and have since helped in financing their witness activity as well as in their translation and printing of the booklet *God's Plan for Man* into the national Tagalog language. They have also prepared various tracts for distribution, and plans are now under-way to translate *The Divine Plan of the Ages* into Tagalog.

On July 22, 2007, which coincides with the fifth anniversary of their new ecclesia, the brethren in Manila sponsored a one-day convention. Effort was made to advertise the upcoming event and all who responded were given a warm welcome. They rented a sound system so that the message of Truth could be heard throughout the surrounding neighborhood. Discourses were heard and those in attendance were invited to share in a meal which was provided.





We trust our Heavenly Father's loving care and providence will continue to reside over the affairs of the brethren in the Philippine Islands. For this we give our thanks and render our prayers to him. ■

*Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness.—
Psalm 65:11*

As we review the leadings of Divine providence during the year that is past, let God's goodness and mercy stimulate our faith and confidence in him as respects the new incoming year. A proper retrospect on the part of a proper child of God will enable him not only to render thanks for the past, but to look up and lift up his head, realizing that our deliverance is nearer than when we first believed; and that he that began a good work in us is both able and willing to complete it, if we will but continue to submit our wills, our lives, our all, to his wisdom and loving care.

—December 30, Daily Heavenly Manna

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

R. Gorecki

Bangalore, India December 1-4
Chennai 5

The speakers listed below, in cooperation with the Dawn, are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

W. Austin

Bangalore, India December 1-4
Chennai 5
Detroit, MI 15

E. Blicharz

St. Augustine, FL December 9

R. Carnegie

Phoenix, AZ December 29-31

E. Kuenzli

Bangalore, India December 1,2
Vizag 3
Rajahmundry 4

R. Goodman

Chicago, IL December 29,30

M. Nekora

Phoenix, AZ December 29-31

J. Parkinson

Phoenix, AZ December 29-31

T. Thomassen

Phoenix, AZ December 29-31

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 Barbara Janczuk, Melbourne, Australia—October 7. Age, 42

Sister Mary Chuberka, Monessen, PA—October 14. Age, 94

Brother Everett Koetseer, Midland Park, NJ—October 23. Age, 99

Brother Cosmas Enwereji, Ibadon, Nigeria—October 24. Age, 43

Brother Mitchell Zielinski, Agawam, MA—October 25.

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.

DETROIT CHRISTMAS GATHERING, December 15—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact M. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 879-1814

CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 29,30—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact J. Vasilevich. Phone: (312) 391-4376

PHOENIX CONVENTION, December 29,30,31—La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85203. Contact J. Porcolab, PO Box 5432, Sun City West, AZ 85376. Phone: (602) 363-2612

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA CONVENTION, January 24,25,26,27,28—ESA Conference Centre, Buxton Road, Marysville. Contact R. Charlton, 6 Laane Avenue, Rosanna 3084 VIC Australia.

LOS ANGELES QUARTERLY CONVENTION, January 27—Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA. Contact R. Bieniak. Phone: (949) 457-0894

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 15,16, 17—The Clarion Hotel, 2600 Auburn Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact K. Ajise, 6925 Gallery Way, Sacramento, CA 95831. Phone: (916) 813-3948

SOUTHWEST WINTER CONVENTION, February 23,24,25—Sunnyslope High School, 35 West Dunlap Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85021. Contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767

DETROIT/METRO DETROIT JOINT GATHERING, February 24—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact M. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 879-1814

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 8,9,10—Hilton Orlando Altamonte Springs, 350 S. North Lake Blvd., Altamonte Springs, FL 32701. Contact S. Jeuck, 471 Kentia Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 834-7592

COLUMBUS PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 22,23—Ramada Inn East (Airport), 4801 E. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43213. Phone: (614) 861-0321. Contact T. Alexander, 3278 Foxcroft Drive, Lewis Center, OH 43035. Phone: (614) 519-8282

NEW YORK SPRING CONVENTION, March 30—Doubletree Hotel, Mahway, NJ. Contact D. Szybinski. Phone: (212) 998-2095

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5,6—Macomb Community College, 14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, MI 48088. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588

FRESNO PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5,6—Vagabond Inn Executive, 2141 N. Parkway Drive, Fresno, CA 93705. Contact B. Wilson, 2103 N. Price Avenue, #112, Fresno, CA 93705. Phone: (559) 255-2241

GREATER NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 6—Bayview Lodge, Society Road, East Lyme, CT. Contact V. Grillo. Phone: (860) 823-7099

BOISE CONVENTION, April 25,26,27—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street, Boise, ID. Please contact by April 4, D. Allers, 7558 W. Hathaway Lane, Boise, ID 83714. Phone: (208) 375-6873

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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