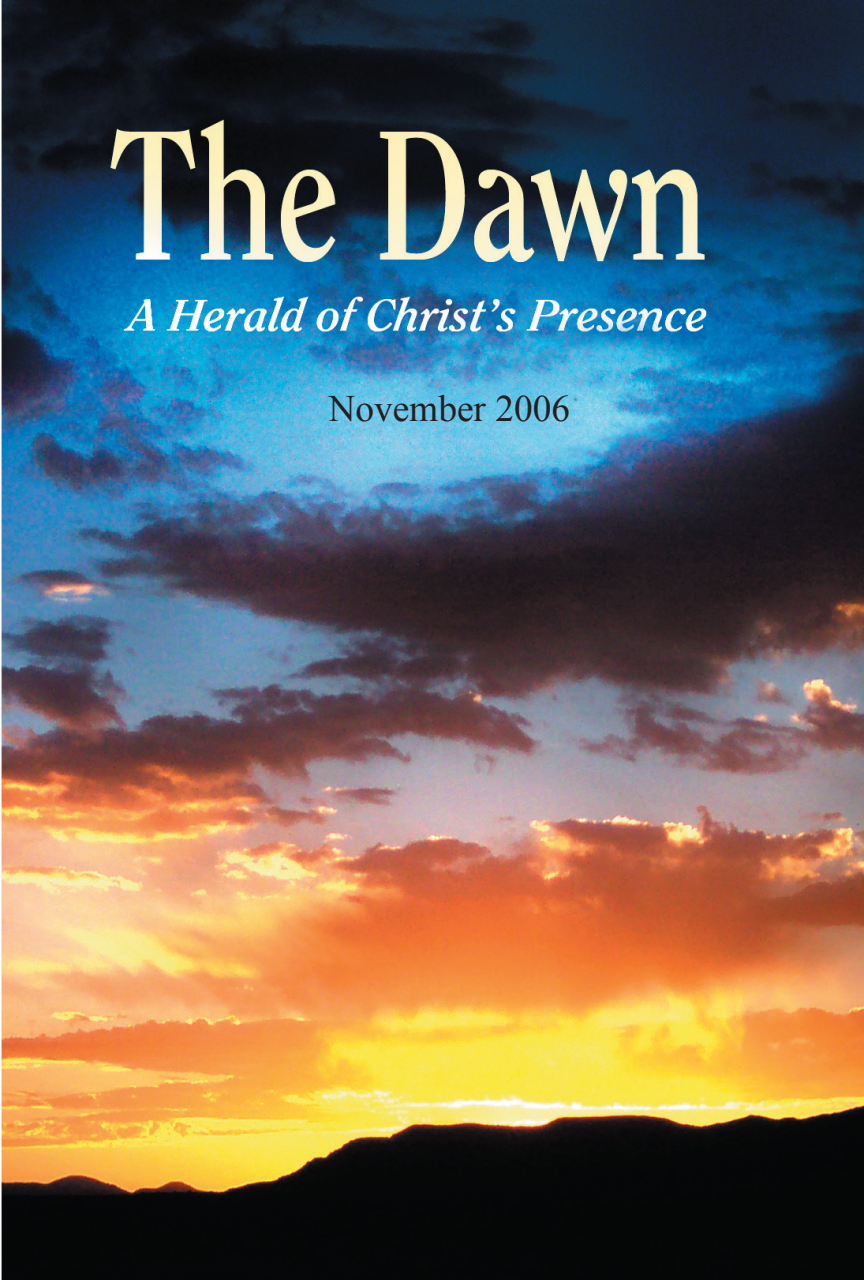


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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

- Dangerous Times: And Our Reeling Earth 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

- Depending on God's Power 16
Seeking Renewal 18
Making Wrong Choices 20
Experiencing Forgiveness 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

- God's Word in Prophecy—Part 11
Peace through Christ's Kingdom 24
My Cup Runneth Over 40
A Time for Thanksgiving 49
Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 39

TALKING THINGS OVER 15

ENCOURAGING LETTERS 60

OBITUARIES 48

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 63

CONVENTIONS 63

Dangerous Times:

And Our Reeling Earth

“The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.”

—Isaiah 24:20

IN THE TWENTY-FOURTH

chapter of Isaiah’s prophecy, he provides us with graphic symbols that describe our present chaotic and violent world. He foresees our time, during the closing years of this Gospel Age, as one in which the world is reeling and staggering like a drunken man toward its inevitable destruction. Isaiah’s prophecy deals with the overthrow of Satan’s present evil world order, and we are told of the ultimate consequences. The prophet says, “Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down [perverteth the face thereof, *Marginal Translation*], and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.”—Isa. 24:1

The prophet also describes the earth as being “utterly emptied,” and in mourning. (vs. 3) It is seen to fade away (vs. 4), and is being “defiled under” its “inhabitants.” (vs. 5) He portrays the earth and

its inhabitants as being “desolate” and “burned” up. (vs. 6) Isaiah foretells the time when “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.” (vs. 19) Furthermore, he says it is also a time when the LORD will “punish the host of the high ones,” and “the kings” that are on high.—vs. 21

The word earth that is found in these verses represents the symbolic earth, a term used to denote the present world order. Isaiah has used the words “earth” and “world” interchangeably (vs. 4), and each of these terms is used in a pictorial sense. The word ‘earth’ refers to our planet earth [#8398, *Strong’s Bible Concordance*], and the word ‘world’ means our inhabited earth [#776, *SBC*]. The various expressions which are employed by them describe how the symbolic earth, and what it represents, is eventually dissolved. The Scriptures elsewhere tell us that “the earth abideth for ever.” (Eccles. 1:4) The use of these symbols conveys the thought that Satan’s world will be completely destroyed in the closing years of this Gospel Age. It must be destroyed before God’s new world order can be established under the administration of Christ. That new world order is described by the Apostle Peter. He said, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—II Pet. 3:13

A TIME OF TROUBLE

There can be little doubt that we, who are now living during the closing years of this present Gospel Age, are witnessing the foretold death throes of the present world order described by the Prophet

Isaiah. Worldwide chaos marks our time, and the violent changes now occurring have caused men and women of all nations to long for a new and better world. We can appreciate the good intentions and efforts of the world's leaders and statesmen to do all in their power to assure that the present society will be one of peace and security for all. We do not speak disparagingly of human efforts when we say, based on the Scriptures, that there can be no ideal world order with lasting peace and security until the kingdom of Christ is ultimately established here on earth.

INCREASING TERRORISM

One of the greatest obstacles to achieving world peace and security is the rising tide of terrorist activities throughout the world. Recently a United States Government report was released that confirms the growing level of violence and its threat of worldwide terrorism. The report appeared in a *Los Angeles Times* article (April 29, 2006) under the caption, "U.S. Reports a Surge in Global Terrorism." The writer Josh Meyer says in part, "The State Department's annual report on global terrorism concludes that the number of reported terrorist incidents and deaths has increased exponentially in the three years since the United States invaded Iraq, largely because of Iraq itself. The report also said that although the United States had made some gains in fighting terrorism, Al Qaeda and its affiliate groups remained a grave threat to U.S. national security at home and abroad—both in Iraq and elsewhere.

"Of potentially greater concern, the government said, is mounting evidence that small, autonomous

cells and individuals are becoming more active. Such 'micro-actors' are engaging in more suicide bombings, and increasingly sophisticated technologies to communicate, organize, and plot their attacks, including the Internet, satellite communications and international commerce, according to the 292-page report."

NUCLEAR THREATS

In recent years, there has been a high level of interest among smaller nations and terrorist groups around the globe to obtain weapons of mass destruction. These lethal means to conduct modern warfare include chemical, biological, and nuclear weaponry.

Nuclear technology has become the ultimate aim of these groups, and among them is one of Pakistan's top nuclear scientists A. Q. Khan. He is of the greatest concern to western nations, and the United States in particular, because of his activities in connection with nuclear projects. He is responsible in recent years for having smuggled top nuclear secrets from Europe to help Pakistan build a nuclear bomb, to compete with his native country's archenemy India, who also has an arsenal of nuclear weapons.

Since that time, Khan has proceeded to peddle this nuclear technology, whether with or without his country's help, to Iran, North Korea, Libya, and perhaps other places. The extreme danger with Khan's actions has thus hastened the possibility that terrorist groups that are not linked to nation-states will soon have access to these nuclear weapons.

At the present time, and without the use of weapons of mass destruction—and in particular nuclear weapons—terrorist groups have the capability to

prepare roadside bombs from readily available fragments, explosive devices and other materials. These destructive materials, once they are assembled together, can be used to blow up a truck or an armored vehicle killing all those inside.

This nightmare scenario, however, is that soon these same terrorists groups may be able to smuggle nuclear materials into a European or American city and detonate a portable device capable of murder on a much larger scale. Nuclear technology is now accelerating, and the size of the bombs more compact and more easily concealed.

In the meantime, Khan is a hero in his country for having produced an 'Islamic bomb' to rival those, not only in India, but also in Israel. Although Pakistan leader and military strongman Pervez Musharraf made Khan publicly apologize for his actions once they had been discovered, Khan faces no further criminal charges. He continues to live a quiet life of retirement in one of Islamabad's suburbs and cannot be questioned by the CIA, or any other outsiders, concerning his involvement in what has become one of the most dangerous terrorist activities in our time.

NORTH KOREA

One of the hot spots in the world of nuclear technology is the small Asian country North Korea. They have a determined nuclear program and negotiations with leading world powers have failed to curb their intentions of producing nuclear weapons. It is believed by many that they already have on hand a small arsenal of nuclear weapons. To make matters even more serious, the North Koreans have

recently tested their latest missile systems, including their new long-range missiles which they claim will reach targets thousands of miles away, including the west coast of America.

The Bush administration has considered making a preemptive strike against the North Korean nuclear facilities to eliminate the growing threat. A news column submitted by the *Associated Press* from Seoul a few months ago appeared in the *Daily News* under the caption, “North Korea Warns U.S. on Preemptive Strike,” suggesting the defiant attitude of the country’s current regime. We quote in part, “North Korea suggested that it had the ability to launch a preemptive attack on the United States. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said the North had built atomic weapons to counter the U.S. nuclear threat. ‘Preemptive strike is not the monopoly of the United States,’ the unnamed spokesman said in a report in the official Korean Central News Agency.

“Last week, the communist country warned that it had the right to launch a preemptive strike, saying it would strengthen its war footing before South Korea-U.S. military exercises scheduled for this weekend. Pyongyang’s spokesman said it would be a wise step for the United States to cooperate on nuclear issues with North Korea in the same way it did with India. It is rare for North Korea to mention its nuclear capabilities in such an explicit manner. The communist state usually refers to its ‘nuclear deterrent force.’”

LONG-RANGE MISSILES

Writing for the *Los Angeles Times* (July 5, 2006), staff writers Bruce Wallace and Barbara Demick

reported the serious escalation in North Korea's nuclear technology and weapons program. Their article appeared under the title, "In Defiance, North Korea Fires Missiles." In part, the report from Seoul said, "Defying broad international pressure, North Korea test-fired at least six missiles into the Sea of Japan today, including a long-range Taepodong 2 that has been the focus of tension because of its purported ability to reach U.S. territory.

"The barrage of missiles, which started about the same time as the space shuttle Discovery's Independence Day launch from Cape Canaveral, Fla., was 'provocative behavior' from a country that had been warned against breaking its six-year-old moratorium on long-range missile tests. 'The United States strongly condemns these missile launches and North Korea's unwillingness to heed calls of restraint from the international community,' the White House said in a statement. It said the tests demonstrate North Korea's intent to intimidate other states by developing missiles of increasingly longer ranges."

IRAN'S NUCLEAR AMBITIONS

During the past several years, by persuasion or coercion, the Bush administration has been unable to convince Iran to discontinue its nuclear program. In the meantime, the nuclear threat continues to increase, and the prospects of reaching a peaceful solution continue to decrease. The United States is thus faced with the prospect of developing a new strategy to end Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Many believe President Bush's approach to dealing with Iran's nuclear program has allowed Tehran

to outwit the United States government in the game of brinkmanship, serving to gain much needed time for them to make tremendous progress in their technology and quest for nuclear weapons. According to these, the Bush administration has been pre-occupied with the war in Iraq that is going badly, and has refused to conduct direct negotiations with the Iran government. Iran continues to defy not only the United States, but also America's partners in Britain, France, and Germany, representing the European Union, who have also made little progress in their negotiations with Tehran.

Even more disturbing is Iran's dismissal of the United Nations Security Council resolution to end its uranium enrichment program. Tehran's governing clergy is counting on Russia and China, with their substantial oil and gas interests in Iran, to prevent any meaningful economic sanctions from being imposed upon it by any future resolutions.

Others believe that the Bush administration has fallen prey to Iran's ploys and, as a result, Washington should perhaps offer Iran the option of conducting direct negotiations, not only with the United States, but also with its partners in Europe. Therefore, a negotiated settlement could be met that satisfies the interests of both the United States and Iran, while also supporting those of Russia and China.

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI

The United States was the first nation to use the atomic bomb during warfare. They were used twice during the closing days of World War II in its war with Japan. The first atomic bomb, called "Little Boy," was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945,

destroying approximately 90% of the city. It is estimated that the number of those initially killed by the bomb, together with its extensive and associated aftereffects—which were calculated at the end of 1945—was approximately 145,000, mostly civilians. The second bomb, called “Fat Boy,” was dropped on Nagasaki three days later with an estimated death toll of 74,000. It is difficult to calculate the exact casualties because of continuing radiation effects many years later.

UNIMAGINABLE DESTRUCTION

The role of the bombings in Japan’s surrender, which occurred a few days later, as well as the effects and justification of the use of atomic bombs, has been the subject of much debate ever since. This military action began the nuclear age, and the realization of the immense and previously unimaginable power of the atom that had been demonstrated.

In the years following the end of the war, several governments began to obtain nuclear secrets and the new technology started an ‘arms race.’ The international community began to focus increasing attention on how to contain the threat of nuclear weapons proliferation.

NONPROLIFERATION TREATY

Efforts were made to draw up an international treaty that dealt with the threat of spreading nuclear technology, and the Nonproliferation Treaty was ultimately agreed upon. The treaty also sought to promote cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to achieve disarmament. Opened for signature in 1968, the treaty entered into force March 5, 1970, and was signed in Washington, London, and Moscow.

Five nations were permitted to have nuclear weapons, the only ones possessing such weapons at the time the treaty was opened for signature. The five were the United States, Soviet Union (rights and obligations have been assumed by Russia), Great Britain, France, and China. These same members of the 'Nuclear Club' are also the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Initially 59 other countries also signed the treaty, which has since grown to 187. As a testament to the significance of the treaty, more countries have ratified it than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreements.

MEMBER STATE OBLIGATIONS

These five member states agreed to not transfer nuclear technology or weapons to any other country. Nonmember states also agreed to not develop this technology for weapons. However, India, Pakistan, and Israel have since developed nuclear weapons, but have declined to sign the treaty. North Korea ratified and was a party to the treaty from December 12, 1985 until April 10, 2003, when they withdrew. Iran is a signatory to the treaty but has ignored the demand to stop its uranium enrichment program, which is believed to be a cover for the development of nuclear weapons.

As an added safeguard to the treaty, it was further agreed to set up the International Atomic Energy Agency to verify compliance with the treaty through inspections to be conducted by the newly established agency.

THE WORLD'S ONLY HOPE

The dim prospects for achieving peace in the world are increasingly gloomy, and there appears to be no

ready solution at hand. However, out of all the violence and chaos that is being experienced by the present generation there is soon to emerge an era of genuine and lasting peace. This is the promise of God's Word, but it will not come to pass because man will have finally triumphed over his pride and selfishness. God will establish Divine control over the nations and its people under the administration of Christ's kingdom of Truth and righteousness.

We are given the assurance in the final verse of Isaiah's prophecy that this time of blessing for the world will come to pass in due time. He writes, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Isa. 24:23) In this scripture, Isaiah makes reference to Jerusalem which was the capital city of Judea, and also to Mount Zion which was a place of prominence on which the government of Israel was centered. The promise of God to reign in Zion points to his ultimate control over the affairs of his human family.

MOUNT ZION

In the prophet's reference to Mount Zion, he says elsewhere, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out

of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—Isa. 2:2,3

We read further, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Ps. 2:6) The psalmist then explains that God’s king, who is Christ Jesus, will dash the nations to pieces “like a potter’s vessel.” (vs. 9) The Prophet Obadiah also writes, “Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.” (Obad. 17) And again he says, “Saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.”—vs. 21

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

A NEW WORLD ORDER

When we study God's plan for the future, we are inspired with hope and courage, but a hope that is based upon human plans and accomplishments is indefinite and weak. It becomes apparent that Isaiah's prophecy of a reeling, staggering world is being fulfilled before our very eyes. (chap. 24) This is encouraging to those whose hopes are centered, not on preserving the old world order, nor in a new world order that is established by man. The only hope is in the plan of God and the establishment of his kingdom. Let us continue to pray for that kingdom, knowing that when our prayers are answered there will be security, peace, and joy for all, and that all will then "call upon the name of the LORD to serve him with one consent," because they will have come under the influence of God's message of Truth, and peace, and love.—Zeph. 3:9 ■

"A long chain of promises in the Old Testament, and continuing in the New Testament, reveal that Jesus would establish a worldwide government in the earth, and that it would be through the agencies of this government that God's promised blessings of life would be extended to the people. One of the promises of Jesus' birth declares of this great One that 'of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.'—Isa. 9:6,7

"The wonderful manner in which world conditions today are fulfilling the prophecies of the Bible gives us every reason to believe that we are standing at the threshold of the long-promised Messianic kingdom."—excerpt, God Has a Plan

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Depending on God's Power

Key Verse: “*When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.*”
—*I Kings 18:39*

Selected Scripture:
*I Kings 18:20-24,
30-35, 38,39*

DURING THE REIGN OF KING

Ahab of Israel, wickedness and idolatry flourished for a time along with national prosperity. Then a change came, a severe drought and subsequent famine gripped the land due to God's providence—a retribution of punishment upon Israel.

Elijah, the prophet, was God's messenger for reproving King Ahab, Jezebel his wife, and the ten tribes of Israel who supported them. “Elijah . . . said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, . . . there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”—*I Kings 17:1*

Every form of drought or famine should not be considered a punishment from God. These are part of the general curse of sin and death upon the earth, which has not yet been lifted. In the case of Israel, we must realize that matters were different. At Mt. Sinai Israel entered into a covenant relationship with God. (Exod. 19:5) As his people, they would receive blessings if faithful, and were sure to receive punishments if they were disobedient and forsook the LORD.

As months grew into years and the drought continued,

the king ordered that a search be made for Elijah, that the drought might be broken. But Elijah, under the LORD's direction, hid himself near the brook Cherith, where ravens brought him food morning and evening. When the time was fulfilled under Divine guidance to relieve the drought, Elijah would present himself to King Ahab. Upon arriving at the palace, Ahab called for the royal governor, Obadiah. He was a godly man, and was distressed by the idolatry that surrounded him. He was so moved when seeing the persecution of God's people to death, "that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them."—I Kings 18:1-4

When the king met Elijah his first words were, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (vs. 17) Elijah answered, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim." (vs. 18) Elijah asked that the prophets of Baal, and the chief men of Israel should meet at Mt. Carmel to hold a contest. Elijah declared, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." (vs. 21) The test involved the building of two altars upon which two bullocks would be sacrificed. Whichever god accepted the offering would be acknowledged as the true God. The priests of Baal prayed and shouted to their god all through the day, but nothing happened. After commanding that water be used to flood the altar, Elijah prayed calmly, earnestly, and reverently. The answer came—a fire from heaven consuming the sacrifice and licking up even the water in the trench. The people then fell on their faces declaring, "The LORD, he is the God."—vs. 39

Our lesson shows us that we need to depend on a power greater than ourselves—the true and living God. Elijah depended upon God's power, and he was not disappointed. We should strive to act in ways that show our own trust in his power. "They that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."—Ps. 34:10 ■

Seeking Renewal

Key Verse: *“The king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.”*
—II Kings 23:3

Selected Scripture:
*II Kings 22:8-10;
23:1-3, 21-23*

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF

Manasseh, his son Amon succeeded him as king of Judah. Born and raised during the period of his father’s idolatry, his reign was full of wickedness, and would cost him his life after only two years on the throne. He was followed in the kingdom by his son Josiah, whose name signifies, ‘God will support.’ He, at the age of eight, would develop a very different character, and would become a true servant of God—“He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.” (II Kings 22:2) He came to be known as one of the greatest reform kings of the nation of Israel through a magnificent ceremony of covenant renewal.

Life provides us with opportunities for second chances and other forms of renewal. What spurs us to seek renewal? It is necessary that we become the Lord’s, devoting ourselves wholly to his will, and to seek after him to know his will that we may do it. For those who draw near to the Lord, this promise extends, “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.”

(James 4:8) This young king, under the guidance of his religious mother, “began to seek after the God of David, . . . and . . . began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, . . . and the carved images, and the molten images.” (II Chron. 34:3) This reform work was so extensive that even with his personal direction it took six years to complete. Josiah now looked at ways to further serve God, and determined that this would be in the form of repairing the Temple, which now had been completely neglected. During this repair work, a very ancient manuscript of the Law was discovered. We should remember that books were uncommon in that day, and few people could write or read them. The Law of Moses was therefore presented to the people orally, by the priests, from memory. It is no wonder that this Book of the Law, when found by Hilkiah, was deemed a treasure. After hearing the book read by his secretary Shaphan, the king was so moved and astonished by them, “that he rent his clothes.”—II Kings 22:11

Realizing how far short Israel had come from the demands of the Law, and noting the punishments prescribed for unfaithfulness, the king was troubled. He inquired of the LORD respecting what should be done to escape the punishments which were justly to come to the nation under the conditions of the Law Covenant. The LORD’s reply, through the prophetess Huldah, was direct concerning the penalties that would come upon the nation for their years of wickedness. God added words of consolation for the king, “Because thine heart was tender, . . . and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.” (vs. 19) God promised that he would spare Josiah from seeing the severe punishments that would come upon Israel.—vs. 20

The result of this promise led to the words from our key text, ‘to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart.’ Our lesson is to do the Father’s will, looking for ways to serve him with a pure heart, and be faithful to him in all things. ■

Making Wrong Choices

Key Verse: “*By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.*”

—*Psalms 137:1*

Selected Scripture:
II Chronicles 36:15-21; Psalms 137:1-6

upon the condition of taking a solemn oath to do the king's will, which would be the immediate cause of his downfall.—Ezek. 17:11-21

During his reign, Zedekiah continued to make choices in his life that were displeasing to God. He rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and rejected the direct words that came to him from the Heavenly Father through the prophet Jeremiah. We note his words, “Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.”—Jer. 37:17

The wrong course that the king took in this matter serves as an illustration of the general mistake that is made by all those who reject the LORD as their counselor. An evil heart of unbelief is inclined to trust in its own wisdom. This earthly wisdom we are reminded of as being, “sensual” and “devilish.” (James 3:15) The account goes on to tell us that, “The wisdom that is from above is first pure.”—vs. 17

PRIDEFUL AND STUBBORN

behavior often leads to painful consequences. This fact is illustrated to us in the story of Zedekiah, the last king on the throne of David. After being exalted to his position by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, he would reign eleven years in Jerusalem. He was given the throne

In Zedekiah's case, the LORD allowed the natural consequences of his wrong course to follow, and they would be very severe. He saw his sons slain, he was blinded and carried away to Babylon, where he was a prisoner until his death. Ruin would then come upon Jerusalem, and to the entire nation, as foretold by the prophet. The lessons that God had sent them, when he scattered the ten tribes on account of their idolatry, had not been taken to heart by the two tribes. Now he would remove his favor from them, and leave their land desolate for a period of seventy years. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." (Hos. 4:17) Jesus said, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind." (Matt. 15:14) They were also likened to "blind" watchmen (Isa. 56:10), for their lack of mental perception of the character and purposes of God.

It was during this period, too, in which there were those who still revered God—as, for instance, Daniel and Ezekiel. Although they were in exile, they would look back longingly to their land of promise. "O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies." (Dan. 9:18) They would read more attentively than ever the accounts of the blessings that God had provided to them. (Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 3:8) We can see this in the words from our Key Verse, as expressed by those who had been carried away as captives. 'By the rivers of Babylon, . . . yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.' As they reflected on the Lord's dealings with their nation, it would lead them to a better condition of heart and to the instruction of their children in the right way of the LORD.

Thank God for the great blessing and privilege of living with a spirit of praise by recalling what he has done for us. Let us continue to be faithful to our vow, waiting for the LORD in his own time, to establish his kingdom and to fulfill all the gracious promises of his Word. ■

Experiencing Forgiveness

Key Verse: *“Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.”*
—II Chronicles 36:23

Selected Scripture:
II Chronicles 36:22,23; Ezra 1:5-7

OUR LESSON BEGINS WITH

a proclamation, the result of which would bring to a close the seventy years of exile of the children of Israel from Jerusalem. The LORD raised up Cyrus, the King of Media and Persia, who, after having conquered the Babylonians, offered liberty to all of the Jews who desired to return to their own land. This decree would have little effect upon the vast majority of the Israelites who had gone into captivity. Their indifference was mainly due to the belief that it would be a disadvantage to leave their homes in Babylon to go back to Palestine, and deal with the inconveniences. Consequently, of all the number of the twelve tribes that went down to Babylon, only about 50,000 accepted the offer of Cyrus to return. These had learned the

lessons which their fathers had refused to learn. From the day of their return from captivity, there is no record of further idolatry in Jerusalem and Judea.

Many people experience forgiveness when they have done something wrong. How do we experience God's forgiveness? The Israelites knew God had forgiven them when they were allowed to return home and rebuild. Deliverance of fleshly Israel by Cyrus, whose name signifies 'sun' or 'brightness,' represents the deliverance of spiritual Israel out of "Babylon the Great" (Rev. 17:5), by the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness, the Great Deliverer. The great deliverer is our Lord, and soon he will go forth to victory and establish his kingdom, which will cover the whole of heaven and earth.

Isaiah's prophecy distinctly marked out the return of God's favor to the Israelites, and mentioned Cyrus by name. (Isa. 44:26-28; 45:1-4) The LORD's word, from the mouth of Jeremiah, also told of the return of the Israelites from captivity after 70 years. (Jer. 25:12; 29:10) After a long journey, and bearing the costly vessels of the Temple service with them, they reached their goal. Psalm 126 pictures the returning of the Jewish exiles from captivity, "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. He that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing." (vss. 3,6) In the Ezra account, they return with the joyful sound of music, with a band of horsemen, and with "two hundred singing men and singing women." (Ezra 2:41-65) They would come to find that the Temple, and much of the city, lay in ruin. It required more than a year before they turned to the rebuilding of the Temple with the laying of the foundation stones. The priests and the Levites, dressed in their robes and making joyful noises before the LORD, represented the faith and confidence of the people in the precious promises associated with that Temple and that great city.

As we remember these faithful Israelites, let those who have been called as spiritual Israelites sing the praises of their King in appreciation of his grace and Truth. As the Prophet declares, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God."—Ps. 40:3 ■

Peace through Christ's Kingdom

“The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

—Daniel 7:27

THE PAGES OF HISTORY

are stained with the blood of war. Disputes among nations have almost invariably been arbitrated on the battlefield. Seers and sages have envisioned a day when this ruthless and senseless practice would be stopped, and the peoples of the earth would adopt a sane and righteous method of living with one another.

OLD TESTAMENT TESTIMONY

The prophets of the Bible, writing under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, foretold a future time of blessing, explaining that it would come about through the establishment of a world government, or dominion, under the administration of Truth and righteousness. That kingdom under Christ would arbitrarily impose upon the people of

all nations just and righteous laws, through the keeping of which universal and lasting peace would be assured for all people.

In the Bible's prophecies of this coming time of peace under a future world government, the assurance is given that there will be no miscarriage of the Divine plan, because the kingdom of promise is to be a literal and righteous government. It will be perfectly organized and powerfully implemented to perform every function assigned to it in the prophecies. It is the long-promised kingdom of Christ, and the Bible reveals that it will be a genuine and lasting government. Concerning this kingdom, and Christ the chief ruler in it, the prophet foretold "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."—Isa. 9:6,7

The coming world government—the kingdom of Christ—is one of the prominent themes of the Bible. The Old Testament prophets glowingly foretold and described this divinely empowered rulership that will be set up over all the earth. One of the first references to it was by Jacob, who, on his death-bed, prophesied, "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."—Gen. 49:9,10

This wonderful prophecy was uttered while Jacob and his family were in Egypt. In Egypt at that time, a couched lion was the recognized symbol of royal rulership, and thus represented the right to rule. The prophecy depicting Judah as a 'couched lion,'

therefore, was a pictorial way of saying that from this royal tribe of Israel would come the one whom the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob had long promised. This seed of Abraham would be Messiah and the king, and to this royal one to come, Jacob had prophetically assigned the title 'Shiloh,' which means 'peaceful one.' His prophecy that the 'gathering of the people' would be to Shiloh, simply meant that this future ruler who would be sent by God would, as "The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6), bring peace to the nations.

The Prophet Isaiah foretold the birth and ultimate exaltation to rulership of this great king, saying, "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." Later in his prophecy, Isaiah also referred to this coming ruler of earth as God's "arm." "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isa. 52:10

Concerning the universality of the Messianic kingdom, David also foretold this time when he wrote, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations." (Ps. 22:27,28) Again, David wrote concerning the LORD'S kingdom, "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.”—Ps. 145:10-13

The Prophet Daniel, in a prophecy pertaining to the end of this Gospel Age and the breaking up of the present social order in readiness for the establishment of Christ’s kingdom, wrote, “In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” (Dan. 2:44) With the displacement of some of these long-established earthly kingdoms as a result of World War I, we see manifest evidence of God’s powerful hand in preparation for Christ’s future kingdom over the nations of the world.

NEW TESTAMENT TESTIMONY

We have quoted only a very few of the many promises recorded in the Old Testament pertaining to the kingdom, or government, which in God’s due time is to rule the world. The New Testament continues with the same reassuring kingdom theme. The angel, who announced the birth of Jesus, said to the shepherds, “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: 10-14) The angel said that this announcement of the birth of Christ, the promised Messiah, was good news which would ultimately reach all people.

The New Testament references to Messiah, the king, and the kingdom to be established by him, are not exclusively in the nature of prophecies, because they identify the beginning of the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets had forecast. While, for example, the Old Testament foretold that the king would come, the angel announced to the shepherds that now he was born. This first expression of God’s good will toward men, in fulfillment of his promises, had now become a reality.

John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, speaks of prophecy being fulfilled when he said, “The Royal Majesty of the heavens has approached.” (Matt. 3:2, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) The Prophet Daniel had prophesied that the God of heaven would set up a kingdom. (Dan. 2:44) Obviously there must be a king in a kingdom, and now that Royal Majesty promised by the God of heaven had indeed appeared in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus also preached, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 4:17) A more literal translation of this text suggests, even as announced by John the Baptist, that the king, in the kingdom promised by the God of heaven, had indeed come and was ‘at hand,’ or in the midst of the people of Israel. When Jesus sent his disciples into the ministry, his commission to them was, “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—Matt. 10:7

The nation of Israel knew about God’s kingdom promises. This was particularly true of the religious

rulers of the nation, including the Pharisees, and others. They knew that many had considered Jesus to be the promised king who would set up this kingdom, and they sought answers from him. “When he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation [with outward show, *Marginal Translation*]: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [among you, *MT*].”—Luke 17:20,21

The Pharisees had little or no faith that Jesus was sent into the world by the God of Israel to set up the Messianic kingdom. They could not visualize anyone accomplishing a task like this without the support of a huge army with which he could conquer the Roman Empire and release the nation of Israel from its bondage to the Caesars. Jesus sensed what was in their minds, hence his explanation that the kingdom in which he would be the king would not be set up in this way. It would not come, he said, with an outward show of splendor and glory such as the world was accustomed to seeing displayed by a conquering ruler.

Knowing that the Pharisees doubted that he was God’s promised king, Jesus further explained, according to a more proper translation of the Greek text as noted in the above *Marginal Translation* of the scriptural text (vs. 21), that the Royal Majesty of the heavens was among them, which he was applying to himself. This was a very bold assertion to hurl at these hypocritical religious rulers, but it was a powerful witness to them, although few, if any of them, then believed it.

A poor translation of this text has led to a great deal of confusion as to just what the kingdom of heaven really is. As it appears in our *King James Version* Bible, the translation says, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you.' Those who do not believe the promises of God to establish a literal, worldwide government in the earth, which will bring peace and joy to all mankind in due time, have seized upon this mistranslated text in an attempt to undermine its true significance. They try to prove that the testimony of the Bible pertaining to God's kingdom refers merely to a wholesome, godly state of heart and mind that may be acquired by individuals who yield to the influence of Jesus' moral and ethical teachings, such as those contained in his Sermon on the Mount and others. The foretold increase of Christ's kingdom, these skeptics say, is represented in the increasing number of those who have thus yielded themselves to Christ and seek to obey his commandments.

The incongruity of this viewpoint is at once apparent when we take into consideration the fact that the statement in question was made to the Pharisees, men whom Jesus more than once had called hypocrites. Without hesitation he said to them, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matt. 23:27,28) How could the kingdom of God be within the hearts of such people as those? But, when we realize what Jesus really meant when he said that 'the kingdom

of God is within you [among you, *MT*],’ was that he was that future king, he was in the very midst of the Pharisees and they had failed to recognize him. The thought is then made clear and in harmony with the general testimony of the Scriptures on the subject.

Seemingly it is difficult for our finite minds, fallen and imperfect as they are, to exercise faith in the idea that the Creator has any intention of ever doing anything to help his human creation. This lack of faith on the part of the professed people of God has been manifest throughout all the ages. They have imagined that the promises of God would have their fulfillment through human efforts. The promises implied merely that God would place his stamp of approval on whatever his human servants conceived to be right, and in their zeal endeavored to accomplish.

Since Jesus was put to death by his enemies, and centuries went by with no evidence of a visible and literal kingdom ever being established on earth by him—even though he had been raised from the dead—it was easy and natural to conclude that the kingdom promises of the Bible referred merely to what the followers of Jesus could accomplish by their own means. Devious notions developed as a result of this lack of faith and understanding. The great mass of professed Christians eventually united with civil governments, and called their unholy union Christendom. Millions of others, particularly in these later years of the Gospel Age, have seized upon the idea as noted, that the kingdom of Christ is merely a righteous influence, or holy impulse, in the hearts of Christian believers. *(Continued on page 35)*

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When Jesus was brought before Pilate by his enemies during the closing time of his earthly ministry, the charge they leveled against him was that he claimed to be a king. Such a claim, if true, would make him guilty of treason against the Roman Empire. Jesus acknowledged that he came into the world to be a king, but explained, "My kingdom is not of this world [social order—Greek, *kosmos*]: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."—John 18:36,37

Jesus' statement that his kingdom was not of this world and, if it were, his servants would fight for him, places Divine condemnation upon all military operations that have been promoted and executed in the name of Christ and claiming to be for the purpose of promoting the interests of his kingdom. According to this rule of action expressed by Jesus, all the so-called holy wars of the centuries have not been holy at all, but unholy, and thus unauthorized by God.

Jesus' explanation that his kingdom was not of this world, means that the human concept of civilization called "Christendom," which means Christ's kingdom, has been a misnomer, and in reality a counterfeit of the real future kingdom of Christ. Therefore, all the various philosophies which have

cunningly applied the kingdom promises of the Bible to one or another of these devious human efforts to establish a better world, have been out of harmony with, and contrary to, the Divine plan for the fulfillment of God's promises.

There has been no valid reason why sincere and reverent students of the Bible should indulge in these human philosophies, or be misled by them, for Jesus made it very clear that no one should expect his kingdom to be established during the present Gospel Age. Only a few days before Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, he related a parable to his disciples which was designed to teach them this same important truth. The parable concerned a certain nobleman [Jesus] who went into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return. The introduction to the parable explains that it was related by Jesus because his disciples thought that his kingdom was to appear immediately.—Luke 19:11,12

THE DISCIPLES' HOPE

The disciples of Jesus thoroughly believed that he was the Messiah, the great king, that had been foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament. They believed that he had then come to establish the long-promised kingdom, that government which would extend its sphere of influence until it embraced the whole earth and would bring everlasting peace and happiness to all mankind. They were right in this belief, but they expected that Jesus would at once set up this marvelous and powerful government. In this they were wrong, as the parable of the certain nobleman revealed.

This wrong viewpoint on the part of Jesus' disciples was quite excusable, for he had let them believe that they would be prominently associated with him in his kingdom. In their limited vision of God's plan at that time, this implied that Christ's kingdom would of necessity have to be set up within their natural lifetime. How else, as they reasoned, could they hope to share with Jesus in the rulership of the kingdom? How else could Jesus' promise be fulfilled when he said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"?—Luke 12:32

The apostles were much concerned over the prospect of being associated with Jesus in the rulership of his kingdom, and had many discussions about it among themselves. James and John were particularly anxious to secure favored positions in the kingdom, and had their mother ask Jesus if one of them might sit on his right hand and the other on his left hand in his kingdom. Jesus did not say that they could not and would not be with him in his kingdom, for he had given them reason to believe that they would be. He merely called attention to the high price that they would have to pay to be with him. "Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."—Mark 10:38-40

Thus, while Jesus did not promise these two beloved apostles a specific position in his kingdom, explaining that he did not have the authority to make such designations, he did confirm their understanding that they would share in the rulership of the kingdom with him if they proved their worthiness by drinking of his 'cup' and being baptized with his 'baptism.' While they affirmed that they were able, or willing, to meet these requirements, it is doubtful if they understood at that time just what was implied by the drinking of Jesus' cup, and by being baptized with his baptism. Actually, as subsequently revealed in the New Testament, Jesus was inviting his disciples to suffer and die with him. Had they understood this, they would have known that they could not in any case be with Jesus in the glory of his kingdom until they were raised from the dead, and this they knew would not be until the end of the age.—John 11:24; Matt. 13:39

Jesus' cup was one of suffering and death, and he drank it faithfully to the bitter dregs. His baptism was a baptism of death, of which his immersion in water by John the Baptist was merely a symbol. Paul wrote, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3) Nothing is made more clear in the Bible than the fact that the disciples of Jesus in this age are invited to follow in his steps of self-sacrifice even unto death. Associated with these conditions of discipleship are the promises that those who prove faithful to them will reign with him in his kingdom.

Paul further wrote, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If

we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (II Tim. 2:11,12) Again, “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. 8:17) After his resurrection, Jesus said, “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

Jesus also confirmed, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) Then there is that wonderful promise to these faithful ones that they shall come forth from death in the “first resurrection” to live and reign “with Christ a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4,6) This is the wonderful hope of our High Calling in Christ Jesus concerning his future kingdom to be set up over all nations and people. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 2—“It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.”—I Samuel 3:18 (Z. '01-317 Hymn 313)

NOVEMBER 9—“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”—Galatians 5:17 (Z. '03-424 Hymn 183)

NOVEMBER 16—“She hath done what she could.”—Mark 14:8 (Z. '99-78; '00-378 Hymn 23)

NOVEMBER 23—“Ye have need of patience, [cheerful endurance, constancy] that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”—Hebrews 10:36 (Z. '01-117 Hymn 197)

NOVEMBER 30—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age.”—Matthew 28:20 (Z. '01-155 Hymn 70)

My Cup Runneth Over

***“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”
—Psalm 23:5***

THE ‘CUP’ IS USED TO SYM-bolize various truths and experiences pertaining to the Christian’s life, and there is a close relationship between these precious truths. To understand them clearly is to have our appreciation of

Divine love, and our relationship to the Divine plan, enhanced. When Jesus instituted the memorial of his death, he gave the cup to his disciples and invited them to drink of it, explaining that it represented his blood. Previous to this he had said to two of his disciples, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?” (Matt. 20:22) It was evidently this latter ‘cup’ which Jesus referred to when, in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” (Matt. 26:39) In Psalm 116:13, we read of the “cup of salvation,” and, in Psalm 16:5, David writes prophetically of Jesus, “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.” The Apostle Paul also

contrasts the “cup of the Lord” with the “cup of devils.”—I Cor. 10:21

It would be confusing should we attempt to take the same meaning from all these various symbolic uses of the term ‘cup,’ although they are related. The Memorial cup, of which Jesus invited his disciples to drink, is explained by him to represent his blood—his life poured out for the sins of the church and of the world. We, as the followers of Jesus, are invited to drink of this cup because it represents that through him, through the merit of his shed blood, we have life.

We partake of his cup also in the sense that we lay down our justified lives with him. We are “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Rom. 6:5) Under Jewish Law, to drink blood was punishable with death (Lev. 7:26,27), hence, when Jesus asked his disciples to drink of the cup which represented his blood, it was the equivalent of asking them to die with him. This particular symbolism of the cup applies alike to the entire church of Christ. Jesus laid down his life, and all who are to live with him and share in his kingdom reign also are to lay down their lives, ‘planted together in the likeness of his death.’ It is an individual matter in the sense that each one who qualifies for a position in the body of Christ must prove faithful. We see then that the symbolism of the cup applies to all members of the body of Christ. There are not many cups, but only one, and the entire Christ participates in that one cup.

THE CUP OF SALVATION

The ‘cup of salvation’ is closely related to the cup which symbolizes the blood of Christ. It may

be considered an extension of that symbol. It is by participating in the death of Jesus that the body members of the Christ attain to the great salvation which began to be spoken of by Jesus, and has been confirmed to the entire church by those who heard him. (Heb. 2:3) This association of thought was given by Jesus when he said to his disciples, "who-soever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life . . . shall save it." (Luke 9:24; Matt. 16:25) These words were addressed to the disciples at the time Peter advised Jesus against going to Jerusalem where his life would be in danger. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to die as the Redeemer of the world, and that only by obedience to his covenant of sacrifice could he expect to obtain "glory and honour and immortality."—Rom. 2:7

The same is true of all followers of the Master. David wrote, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" Answering his own question, David continues, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (Ps. 116:12-15) Like Jesus, his true followers have entered into a covenant with the Heavenly Father which is based upon the sacrifice of their all, even unto death. (Ps. 50:5) Having entered this narrow way of sacrifice which leads to life through sacrificial death, they realize that now their only hope of life is in faithfulness to their vows of consecration.

All of the Lord's followers accept this arrangement and provision of the great salvation with joy. They know that to attain salvation in this way will

first mean faithfulness unto death. They call upon the name of the LORD for grace to help in time of need, that they may have strength to be faithful. They know that the death of the saints (Rev. 2:10) is precious to God and that he will help them to be faithful unto death that they may attain salvation in the glory of the kingdom. This cup of salvation is symbolic of that which is common to the entire Christ. There is no variation from this arrangement whereby Jesus and the church attain to immortality and the glory of the kingdom. There is no other way to attain to the Divine nature or to attain to the heights of Mount Zion. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, reached his position of exaltation by way of sacrificial death, and those who share this reward with him are those only who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” (Rev. 14:4) Gladly do we take this precious cup of salvation.

It was this cup to which Jesus referred when he asked his disciples, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Matt. 20:22) The fact that Jesus asked about their drinking this cup with him indicates that it represents that which is common to all body members of the Christ. The sacrificial death, leading to life beyond the veil, is common to them all. It is a cup of death and also a cup of salvation for those who, in sharing with Jesus in this phase of the Divine plan, lose their lives, and by so doing shall save them.

THE CUP WHICH MY FATHER HATH POURED

When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, just a few hours before he was crucified, he prayed

to his father, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," but then he added, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39) Here the Master is using the symbol of the cup to represent certain experiences which he then realized were impending for him, and which in some respects were peculiar to him alone. The very fact that he considered the possibility of this particular cup being necessary, indicates that it was not the cup in which all members of the Christ alike participate; nor was it the cup which represented the shedding of his blood.

Jesus knew that it was the Father's will for him to die as the Redeemer of the world. He knew that it was only through death that he could attain to immortality, the Divine nature. There was no question in his mind about this, and he was determined to carry out this covenant of sacrifice, to drink this cup of death, knowing that in the drinking it would become a cup of salvation. He knew that it was the Father's will for him. The Old Testament types had foreshadowed it, and the prophecies had revealed this as being the Father's will. But now he realized that other experiences were in store for him. In addition to dying, he could now see that there was to be shame, ignominy, and suffering. He could now see that although he had done nothing wrong he was to die as a malefactor, an outcast, charged with blaspheming his God.

There was no hesitancy in accepting this cup if it was the Divine will—"The cup which my father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11) Jesus wanted to be sure that this was the cup which the Father had poured, and when in answer to his prayer

he was assured that it was, there was no wavering, not the slightest hesitancy, nor any holding back, from doing all that had been written of him in the “volume of the book.”—Ps. 40:7,8

At times, the cup is used in the Scriptures to represent individual experiences of the consecrated. These experiences are best suited to the individual needs of those for whom they are provided, and are in keeping with the Divine plan as it applies to all the consecrated. It is in this sense that David used the symbolism of the cup when he wrote in our featured text, “My cup runneth over.”

Earlier in this beautiful psalm, David reminds us of the shepherd’s provisions which are supplied alike for all of his sheep. All of them are made to lie down in green pastures; all are led beside the still waters and all are protected as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death. In these references, we are reminded of the abundance of God’s care for all his people through the Truth, and the assurances of the exceeding great and precious promises of his Word.

But the provisions of the cup may vary according to individual needs. This thought is borne out in the psalm, particularly if we follow the shepherd and sheep symbolism throughout. Those who are acquainted with the customs of shepherds tell us that they did use a cup in connection with their care of individual sheep. Ordinarily this was at the close of the day, in the final roundup of the sheep, and the inspecting of them for bruises and fatigue. When, as frequently would be the case, the shepherd found a sheep that had become wearied from the day’s experiences, and needed special attention, it would

be given a refreshing drink from a cup which the shepherd used for this very purpose.

What a precious thought is thus illustrated! We know that it is only as we are in Christ that we have any right to expect Divine favors. We know of the general and abundant provisions the Lord has made for all his sheep, and in these provisions we do indeed rejoice. There is nothing more that the Heavenly Father could do or say in order to assure us of his love. We know that as long as we continue to follow the Good Shepherd, hearkening to his voice at all times, there will never be any lack of green pastures nor of still, refreshing waters.

In the cup symbolism, there is a touch of intimacy and of personal and individual care that suggests a tenderness and warmth of love which is almost beyond our ability to grasp. Without detracting from the reality of the shepherd's care as it manifests itself in a blanket of Divine love spread over all his sheep, we are given this additional assurance that he knows all our individual needs and is providing for them also. There are many such occasions of need. There is no time when we are more weak and in danger of stumbling and falling by the wayside than when we feel self-sufficient and are not depending upon the provisions of the Good Shepherd. At such times, we may think we are strong, but the wisdom of the Good Shepherd detects our self-sufficiency, and knowing that if we are permitted to continue on in our own strength we are sure to fall behind and lose our way, he pours a cup of bitterness, disappointment, humiliation and sorrow, and holds it to our lips that we may drink and thereby have our weakness removed. It is only as we tremble

when thinking of self that we are truly strong in the Lord, and whatever experiences bring about this proper viewpoint are a refreshing cup.

There are times when a cup of sorrow would discourage and crush us, times when our greatest need is to be encouraged by a cup of sweetness, some gladdening experience which assures us of the Good Shepherd's smile of approval of the efforts we are making. In such cases, we may be sure that our cup will run over with an abundant provision of just the right experiences which we need. There are many ways in which our cup of joy runs over. We may be permitted to see some evidence that the Lord has blessed our efforts to bear witness to this Truth; someone may be showing interest in the Divine plan through our efforts to tell them the old, old story. What a joy such an experience is to those who truly love the Lord and his Truth.

Paul assured us of this fact when he wrote that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28) They are working together for our good because the Good Shepherd is pouring the cup for us, and because he knows exactly what we need at any and every moment of our walk with him. What a blessed assurance, 'My cup runneth over'—the Good Shepherd abundantly supplies our individual needs. Thus does he continue to refresh and strengthen us that we may be able to follow him through the dry and thirsty land of an unfriendly world, and through the "valley of the shadow of death."

We read, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (II Cor. 9:8)

This is Paul's way of saying that our cup runneth over. The Greek word translated 'abound' in this passage means 'over and above,' or in other words, running over. This running over of God's grace is experienced always, and in all things. Could the Good Shepherd do more for us than this?

Our response to such abundant provisions of Divine grace should be as suggested by the apostle—namely, that we in turn 'abound to every good work.' How could any of the Lord's sheep be indifferent to the Good Shepherd's tender care and fail to appreciate what is being done for them? May it not be so with any of us! The way is narrow and difficult, but the privilege of drinking the cup of death with Jesus, that we may partake of the cup of salvation together with all the faithful in the first resurrection, is a glorious one. The strength needed to share this partnership of suffering, death, and glory, is assured. We can together feed in the green pastures of nourishing Truth; and together partake of the refreshing waters of the Word. All the while, the Good Shepherd is watching out for our individual needs, causing our cup of experiences—the very experiences we need—to run over. Thus we will have no lack of strength, nor of any other quality we may need, in order to follow the Good Shepherd. ■

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.

Brother David Wilmott, Arlington, TX—September 28. Age, 37

A Time for Thanksgiving

*“That I may
publish with the
voice of
thanksgiving, and
tell of all thy
wondrous
works.”
—Psalm 26:7*

THE THANKSGIVING HOL-

iday is a time for people to remember and give thanks to God for the blessings they have enjoyed at his hands during the past year. It is appropriate that all of God's creatures recognize his goodness, and endeavor in whatever way they can to show their appreciation. It is better to be thankful one day out of the year than to not be thankful at all. This year, in the United States, Thanksgiving Day occurs on Thursday, November 23rd.

Christians consecrated to follow in the footsteps of Jesus should, above all others, give thanks to God. Every day with them should be a time for thanksgiving. They should be glad to have their privilege of giving thanks brought especially to their attention by this national observance of Thanksgiving Day. Together with all the people, Christians appropriately give thanks to God for their material blessings of food, raiment, homes in which to live and many other blessings. All should be thankful for

temporal blessings, for they are the necessities of everyday life.

For those who are walking in the way of sacrifice with Jesus, however, there are blessings of far greater importance than those which have to do with our temporal needs.

How much more thankful should we be for the Divine favors which are the necessities of our spiritual and eternal life. If we were to single out any one of these spiritual blessings as being more important than another, perhaps it would be the knowledge of God. Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3) A knowledge of God is possible only by knowing his plan and, as our featured text states, his 'wondrous works,' and our part in that plan. To know our part in the plan of God, and our share in his works, means having a knowledge of the manner in which he is dealing with us, and a faith understanding of his providence in our lives, whether it be bitter or sweet.

To know and believe what the Scriptures say concerning the creative works of God is essential to knowing God himself. In those creative works as outlined in Genesis, we see displayed God's mighty power, his infinite wisdom, and his boundless love. In the events which followed Creation, we see God's justice displayed. How truly thankful we are for this knowledge. How glad indeed we should be that the LORD has given us eyes to discern and hearts to believe what his Word declares to be the truth concerning creation. How wonderful is this knowledge when compared with the unbelief of others.

In the creation of man and God's provision for him, we see the purpose of the Creator concerning the human family. Man was made "a little lower than the angels" as the Scriptures declare. (Ps. 8:4-8) He was not put here to live temporarily, to suffer and to die, with the possibility of enjoying a better existence in some other part of the universe later, or a far worse experience of suffering eternally in a fiery hell. A true knowledge concerning man's creation, and the Divine purpose for him, is well to remember with thankfulness. It means the complete plan of God, through which the Creator's character is revealed to us. It is a fundamental truth which we should ever remember with much appreciation.

Beautifully simple and understandable is the truth concerning the fall of man. Having been created perfect, and in the image of God, the Creator properly demanded absolute obedience. Man disobeyed, and the penalty of death was pronounced upon him. Here God's justice is revealed. Everything that Adam possessed, including his life, was his because of God's goodness. He was expected to manifest his appreciation by obeying the Creator's law, but he failed. Hence the withdrawal of his blessings by God was a just and right punishment. The Divine sentence was, "Unto dust shalt thou return."—Gen. 3:19

It is a great blessing to know the Truth, but when we recognize that every feature contributes to our acquaintance with God, our knowledge then becomes far more blessed. God's justice condemned the race to death, but his love provided a way of escape from that penalty. His love became operative and he began to make promises of future deliverance. The "seed" of the woman was to "bruise" the serpent's

head. (Gen. 3:15) The “seed” of Abraham was to bless all the families of the earth.—chap. 22:15-18

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

How wonderfully this Divine provision highlights the scriptural portrait of God. How meaningful is this knowledge in the light of God’s gift of his Beloved Son in order that his plan for recovery might be accomplished in harmony with his will. We should be truly thankful for an understanding of the familiar text, “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) Our hearts should be full of love and appreciation for the wonderful gift of Jesus, even as the Apostle Paul proclaimed, “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—II Cor. 9:15

The Logos (Jesus in his prehuman existence) was made flesh for the suffering of death, and, because he was faithful in laying down his life to redeem the sin-cursed and dying world, God’s great plan of recovery for the human family will be accomplished. What a glorious prospect for the world. The knowledge of Truth gives us a vivid picture of God’s interest in the world of mankind. We are truly thankful for the prospects of restitution blessings for the poor groaning creation.

Jesus is the world’s Redeemer, even as he is our Redeemer, Head, and future Bridegroom. When we contemplate these blessed realities, we are thankful for the glorious privilege that is ours of being workers together with God in the outworking of the Divine Plan of the Ages. We are called to a heavenly reward and we have the privilege of running “for the

prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:14

The various details of the LORD’s loving plan make it possible for us, as members of the fallen race, to enjoy such an exalted position as partners with him and with our Lord Jesus. Our thankfulness should know no bounds, and nothing should be held back in the expression of our appreciation for his loving-kindness. We should be thankful every day of the year, and everything which we have and are should be put into our giving of thanks.—Ps. 103:1

The Divine grace, which makes it possible for us to be servants of God, is great cause for giving thanks. That grace is manifested through God’s unspeakable gift, the gift of his Son to be our Redeemer and Advocate. The proper appreciative viewpoint of this is expressed by Paul when he wrote, “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”—II Cor. 5:14,15

RECKONED PERFECT

We should never forget what the merit of Christ’s sacrifice really means to us. Because of this loving provision, God views us as though we were perfect. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us and God accepts our best endeavors as though they were perfect endeavors. Upon the basis of this provision, we have the privilege of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices, no longer dead in trespasses and sins, and with the assurance that they are holy and acceptable to God. This, the apostle explains, is our

“reasonable service,” the only reasonable way we can properly express our thankfulness for God’s grace.—Rom. 12:1,2

David, who was a type of Christ, said, “I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD.” (Ps. 26:6) Jesus was innocent, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (Heb. 7:26) The sin of the fallen race did not contaminate him, and he was not responsible for it. Through his merit, the church enjoys the same blessed position of innocency. However, we should remember that with Jesus, as well as with the church, innocency before God was possible only through faithfulness in the doing of the Father’s will. Righteousness in God’s sight is a positive, active obedience to his will. This is in harmony with our Lord’s desire to serve God. “Then said I, Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God.”—Heb. 10:7

The language of this text takes our minds into the court which surrounded the typical Tabernacle, where were located both the brazen altar and the laver of water. The priests washed at the laver which foreshadowed our “washing of water by the word.” (Eph. 5:26) It is only as we wash that we have a standing of innocency before the Lord and have the privilege of offering sacrifice. Cleansing ourselves by the water of the Word calls not only for a study of the Word, but the bringing of ourselves into harmony with its righteous requirements. These requirements are recognition of, and repentance for, sin; faith in the shed blood of the Redeemer; full consecration to do God’s will; and a

daily effort to conform our every thought, word, and deed to the high standards of righteousness set forth in God's Word.

There is more to the Christian life than to wash our hands in innocency. The cleansing of our lives by the blood of Christ, and our best efforts to bring ourselves into line with the righteous requirements of the Word of God, is the necessary prerequisite to sacrifice.

David associates the altar, symbolic of sacrifice, with the voice of thanksgiving. This indicates that wholehearted thanksgiving calls for sacrifice. The psalmist presents this viewpoint saying, "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." (Ps. 103:1) The expression, "all that is within me," denotes all of our powers and all that we possess. Nothing short of this should be considered an adequate thanksgiving offering to the LORD in return for all that he has done for us.

The Apostle Paul expresses a similar thought, saying, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." (Heb. 13:15) The thought is that true Christian thanksgiving involves sacrifice as foreshadowed by the typical sacrifices of the Tabernacle.

There are various ways whereby we can praise God. We can sing hymns of praise. It is a delight to raise our voices in songs of praise to the Giver of every good and perfect gift. However, there is little effort of sacrifice involved. We should also express our thanks to God by means of prayer. How blessed to pour out our hearts to him in praise and adoration, telling him how much we love and appreciate

him. Such incense of praise is a sweet-smelling savor to our Heavenly Father. It is this form of praise that is pictured more particularly by the offering of incense at the golden altar in the Holy of the Tabernacle.

We should remember that the fire that burned the incense at the golden altar was brought by the priest from the brazen altar out in the court. If the fires of sacrifice were not burning on this altar there could be no burning of incense at the golden altar. The one depended upon the other. While prayer, adoration, and praise are the most direct offerings of incense to the LORD, he has so arranged matters that we cannot offer these sincerely and acceptably except as we have the proper spirit. To do this means to bear witness to the Truth.

It is to others that we tell of God's wondrous works, and in doing this that we show forth the praises of him who hath called us "out of darkness into his marvelous light." Peter said, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people [purchased people, *Marginal Translation*]; that ye should shew forth the praises [virtues, *MT*] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (I Pet. 2:9) What a wonderful privilege it is to tell others of God's works. Every feature of his plan is a delight to his people, and their joy in the Truth increases as they tell it to others. When relating these precious things to one another, it becomes more precious and more wonderfully sweet. There is no better way to live a true life of thanksgiving and praise to God than to show forth his virtues. All we have, and all we hope for, are ours by God's grace. Our debt of gratitude calls for nothing less than the devoting of our all to him.

It is this thought that is expressed by David when he said, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people."—Ps. 116:12-18

The psalmist again calls upon us to remember the LORD's goodness with thanksgiving, saying, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing. (Ps. 107:21,22) How clearly does David here, as elsewhere, associate thanksgiving with declaring the works of the LORD.

How wonderfully the LORD has favored us with rich blessings. How grand are the things he has promised yet to do for us; and not only for us, but also for the whole world. To tell of all his works it is necessary to publish the Truth of his plan and purpose. Thus it is that in appreciation of what God has done for us, his people become "the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid."—Matt. 5:14

THANKFUL FOR TRIALS

As we count our many blessings, we should not overlook the trials which the Heavenly Father has permitted to come into our lives. If we had the choosing of our own experiences we would avoid the

things which try us. But God, in his wisdom, sees that we need trials, and in his love permits them. If our wills are wholly resigned to him, then we will be thankful that he is providing all our needs, even trials that are so necessary for the rounding out of our Christian characters.

Some of our trials may be permitted by God to test our faith and confidence in him, while others may be permitted to develop our patience and long-suffering. At times, they may be in the nature of chastening from the LORD. In any case, they are permitted by our Heavenly Father who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. Even though he may discipline us, our hearts should respond in grateful appreciation for this evidence that he is supplying all our needs. "In every thing give thanks," the apostle exhorts. (I Thess. 5:18) None but Truth-enlightened consecrated Christians can do this wholeheartedly. These know that nothing can come into their lives except that which is for their good. (Rom. 8:28) They know that they are the children of a loving Heavenly Father who is watching over their every interest. They have the assurance that even the smallest affairs of their lives are known by him and directed according to his wisdom and love.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way" (Ps. 37:23) is a promise which every Christian should apply to himself. If we are truly thankful for the manner in which the LORD is directing our lives, then we will not resist nor go contrary to his will. Instead, with a prayer in our hearts and a song on our lips, we will continue to pay our vows unto him, keeping our sacrifice on the altar until it is wholly consumed.

“He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold,” said Job. (Job 23:10) God knows the way we take, and he is trying us as gold is tried. This means that he puts us through the fires of affliction that the gold of our character might be refined. How precious the thought that the Great Refiner tempers the heat, and will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. If he sees that the heat is becoming so intense that we are liable to be injured, he provides a way of escape. (I Cor. 10:13) May this blessed truth become so thoroughly fixed in our minds and hearts that nothing will be able to disturb our inner peace and rest in him and in his promises. “The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”—Ps. 84:11 ■

Render Thanks to God

*O render thanks to God above,
The fountain of eternal love,
Whose mercy firm through ages past
Hath stood, and shall forever last.*

*Who can his mighty deeds express,
Not only vast, but numberless?
What mortal eloquence can raise
His tribute of eternal praise.*

*O may I worthy prove to see
Thy saints in full prosperity,
That I the joyful choir may join,
And count thy people's triumph mine!*

—Hymns of Dawn

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

COUNTY FAIR WITNESS

DawnBible: The Los Angeles County Fair is barely underway, but already I'd like to share one good experience with you.

A man came to the booth and said, "I have been getting your magazine (*The Dawn*) for years, and it has really helped me. I've been a Christian for six years now. Before that, I was an addict and in prison."

God's Remedy for a World Gone Mad has been taken rapidly. Some ask if they can take a second one for a friend. *Why God Permits Evil*, *How God Answers Prayer*, the *Israel* booklets, and *Life After Death* continue to do well, as in years past.

While we display about 60 different titles, the distribution so far has probably been 500-1000 per day.—CA

DAWN WEBSITE

DawnBible: Wow! What a site. I found your website address in the 2007 *Farmers Almanac*. The Bible study is just awesome. Thank you—TX

ENCOURAGED IN TRUTH

Dear Dawn: How kind of you to respond to my message. It also encouraged me just to hear from someone that believes the Truth.

I have been praying for the Jewish people as the Bible tells us to pray for Jerusalem, that she will be the praise of the earth.

I have the video *Can These Bones Live*, and I love to watch that, and *For This Cause*.

I receive *The Dawn* magazine. I always look forward to that. The subject of global warming was on the NBC news. I couldn't help but think

about your article (February 2006 issue).

I pray that you all can stay steadfast in the Truth, as I would be lost without you. I do search the Scriptures to see if these things be true. What I read in the studies forty years ago, I see happening now.

Our deliverance draws nigh.—WV

AUDIO DAWN MAGAZINE

DawnBible: My father-in-law has long followed the message of *The Dawn*. He has received *The Dawn* magazine for much of his adult life.

At 85, he has recently been suffering from cataracts and macular degeneration in both of his eyes.

Is there a cassette or CD version of *The Dawn* magazine available?

Thanks for any help you might provide.—KY

Dear KY: Yes, we do have a service, which provides

The Dawn magazine on both cassettes or CDs. The yearly subscription cost for either is \$20.00. —DawnBible

CHRISTMAS WITNESS

Dear Dawn: Thank you for the 100 copies of *God Has a Plan* (illustrated) from the Diorama.

I am including this booklet in my Christmas cards, so you can send the booklets whenever it is convenient. Thank you.—MI

SHARING THE MESSAGE

DawnBible: It has been five wonderful years of learning through your articulate and inspiring publication. Both my life, and my ministry as an evangelist, have been blessed through your articles.

Others are blessed, too, as I share your messages with them from the pulpit and the classroom. Keep up the good work, and may the Lord strengthen you to do more.—NIGERIA

2006 General Convention

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

E. Blicharz

New York, NY November 12

B. Carnegie

New Haven, CT November 5

O. B. Elbert

Jersey City, NJ November 19

R. Goodman

Louisville, AL November 12

B. Keith

New York, NY November 12

T. Krupa

San Diego, CA

November 17-19

E. Kuenzli

St. Augustine, FL November 19

T. Ruggirello

San Diego, CA

November 17-19

L. Young

St. Petersburg, FL

November 12

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.

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 5—Italian American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. M. Suraci, 171 Johnson Road, Hamden, CT 06518. Phone: (203) 248-3793

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 17-19—Alliant International University, 10455 Pomerado Road, San Diego, CA 92131. Phone: (866) 825-5426. Contact D. Rice. Phone: (619) 589-1534

JERSEY CITY PRE-THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, November 19—The Loyalty Lodge, 1912 Morris Avenue, Union, New Jersey. Phone: (908) 688-9842. Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (718) 961-4437 or (917) 554-2348

CHICAGO NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 30-January 1—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact J. Vasilevich. Phone: (773) 774-2542

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 30-January 1—La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85203. For reservations, contact Alexis, (602) 993-0800, ext. 5582. Other information, contact J. Porcolab. Phone: (602) 363-2612

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 28—Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact R. Bieniak. Phone: (949) 457-0894

SOUTHWEST PHOENIX CONVENTION, February 17,18—Sunnyslope High School, 35 West Dunlap Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85021. For accomodations, contact T. Iloca. Phone: (602) 768-8064. Other information, contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767

ROCKLAND CONVENTION, February 25—Comfort Inn & Suites, 425 East Route 59, Nanuet, NY. Contact D. Shallieu, 1041 Johnston Drive, Watchung, NJ 07069. Phone: (908) 756-4954

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 3-5—(New Location) Hilton Orlando Altamonte Springs, 350 S. North Lake Blvd., Altamonte Springs, FL 32701. Phone: (407) 830-1985. Specify "Florida Bible Students" to guarantee special rates. Contact E. Kuenzli, phone: (407) 831-2098, or R. Sconyers, phone: (407) 339-0970

FRESNO PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 16-18—Best Western Garden Court Inn, 2141 N. Parkway Drive, Fresno, CA 93705. Contact B. Wilson, 2103 N. Price Avenue, #112, Fresno, CA 93703. Phone: (559) 255-2241

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 26-28—Chapman University, Orange CA 92866. Contact M. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248

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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