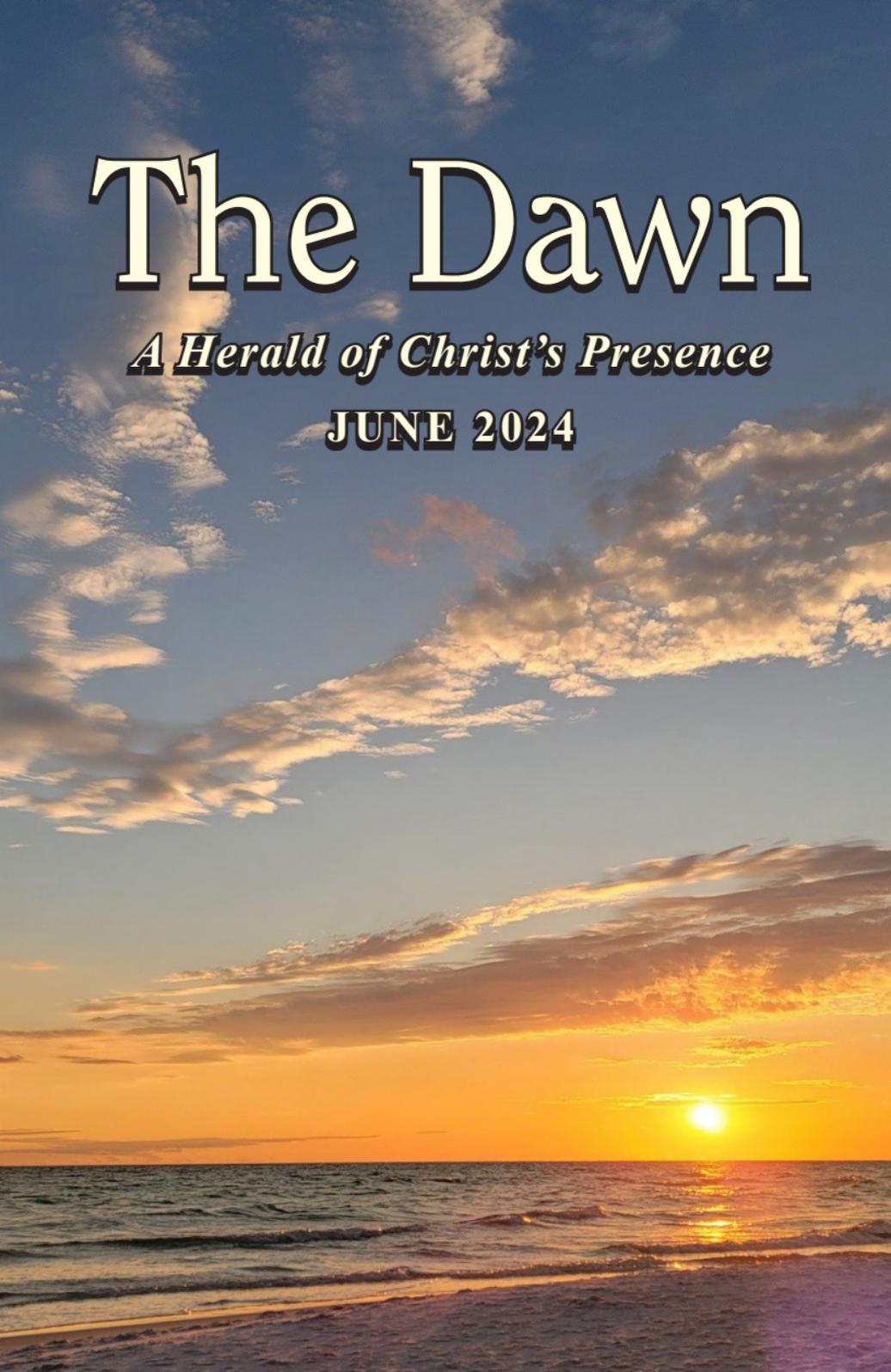
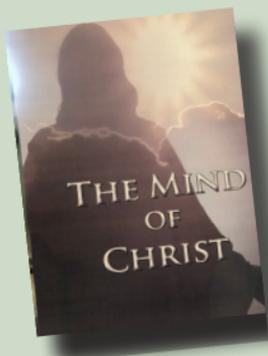


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JUNE 2024





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The DAWN

VOLUME No. XCII, Number 6
(USPS 149-380), June 2024

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Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167. \$12.00 a year.

ARGENTINA: A. Lupsor, Calle Almirante Brown 684, Monte Grande C.P, 1842 Buenos Aires

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BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, Brook House, Whitchurch Road, Prees, Whitchurch Shropshire, SY13 3JZ UK

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SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

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A World without Fear

*“Be still, and know
that I am God!
I will be honored
by every nation.
I will be honored
throughout the
world.”*

—*Psalm 46:10, New
Living Translation*

IN PART 1 OF OUR CON-sideration of this subject in last month’s issue of *The Dawn*, we identified many of the fears that plague our world today. We also pointed out the many Scriptures which speak prophetically of

these “last days,” showing that the unprecedented trouble upon the earth is for the purpose of bringing to end this present world order under the rulership of Satan.

These are not the “last days” of the earth, nor of human existence on the earth, but the final days of the present reign of sin and death. All of the current institutions of unrighteousness must be removed to make way for the new day of God’s promised kingdom. (Matt. 6:10) We will now continue our examination of this subject, in particular the many promises of God’s Word to end forever the fear in the hearts of mankind.

LAST DAYS TO RESULT IN BLESSINGS

We are even now living in the time of these prophetic “last days,” and have already witnessed the destruction of some of the past evils which have afflicted most of the nations. For example, the hereditary ruling monarchies of Europe, which oppressed the people in the name of God for centuries, have already come to an end. As the divine purposes progress in these last days, we will eventually witness also the end of totalitarian dictatorship, whether communist, fascist, or otherwise. We will also see the end of war, and the last of that blighting fear which now fills the hearts of the people.

Indeed, the last days foretold in the prophecies are a glorious time in which to be living, and soon it shall come to pass, even as the prophet has declared, that the “mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.” (Mic. 4:1) The mountain of the Lord represents the kingdom of the Lord. Daniel, in the second chapter of his prophecy, when interpreting a dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, symbolically depicts human rulership over the earth by an imposing, humanlike image. The end of this rulership is pictured by the destruction of the image. The instrument of destruction is shown to be a stone, which ultimately grows until it becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. In his interpretation of this wonderful prophecy, Daniel states that this mountain, “which shall never be destroyed” and “shall stand for ever,” represents the kingdom of God.—Dan. 2:31-45

The “house of the LORD” described in Micah’s prophecy above is God’s ruling house, made up of those whom the Scriptures identify as his own family of sons. Jesus is chief among these, and together with him will be those who have accepted the invitation to suffer and die with him. To these the promise is given that they shall live and reign with him. The Apostle Paul reassures the followers of the Master on this point, saying, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:16,17

Miracle-working divine power guarantees the success of this new government. Satan thought he had killed Jesus, the Prince of Peace and King of Kings, but divine power raised him from the dead. Those who have suffered and died with him are also raised from the dead in what the Scriptures designate the “first resurrection,” that they might live and reign with Christ.—Rev. 20:6

In another prophecy descriptive of the victorious rulership of Christ’s kingdom, Isaiah tells us that “the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isa. 9:7) When we consider that the power of God has already raised the King of Kings from the dead and that divine power is likewise used to restore his associate rulers to life, can we doubt the ability of the Lord to fulfill all his good promises? Surely not!

IN THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS

Let us take further note, therefore, of what has been promised. Referring again to Micah’s prophecy,

he declares that this ruling house of God shall be established in the “top of the mountains,” or kingdoms. That is to say, it will occupy a controlling position in the affairs of all nations, for, as Isaiah states, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:7

“And people shall flow unto it,” continues Micah. Human experience thus far has been that when imperialistic governments sought to extend their spheres of influence over other nations, many fled for refuge into other countries. However, it will not be so in the case of Christ’s kingdom. As the people learn of its universal power they will, as the prophet declares, flow unto it.

Giving us further details along this same line, the prophecy continues: “And many nations [Hebrew: people] shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, ... and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” (Mic. 4:2) By the time this portion of the prophecy is fulfilled, the people will have learned the futility and folly of their own ways. Failure having attended their every effort to save their world from chaos and ruin, they will then be ready to look to him who alone can provide the solution, even Christ, the one who by that time will be recognized as the rightful king of earth.

When mankind is willing to learn the Lord’s ways and apply them, what will be the result? It will be a most happy result, for the prophecy declares that they will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks,” and “neither shall they learn war any more.” (vs. 3) Human wisdom has always contended that the

only way to keep the peace is to be prepared for war, but this order will be reversed by earth's new king, for as the people come under the hallowed influence of his kingdom laws, the resources of the earth, which formerly were diverted to provide the implements of war, will be used to supply the people with the necessities of life.

Nations shall learn war no more! Think of the far-reaching changes in human outlook and experience these few words imply. They do away with all the various acts of violence, atrocities, and destruction which are committed in war. They assure the mothers of all nations that they will not be raising their children to lose their life in war. They do away with militarism in all its ugly forms. They take away fear and hatred from the hearts of the people, and when the nations no longer learn war, they will not engage in war. Thank God for a program of education which omits from its curriculum the strategies of war, conflict, strife, and hatred!

UNDER VINE AND FIG TREE

Because the people will then learn and practice the ways of peace and righteousness, they will have economic security. This assurance is given us in that beautiful picture given by Micah of every man sitting "under his vine and under his fig tree." This is just another way of saying that under the administration of Christ's kingdom the resources of the earth will be available to all and that the rights of all to share equally in those resources will be guaranteed by the laws of the divine kingdom. Because this will be true, the prophet adds, "and

none shall make them afraid.” Thank God for this assurance of freedom from fear!—Mic. 4:4

Fear of aggression in its many forms haunts the minds of all people today, and it is not limited to the possible or threatened aggression of nations going to war. Economic aggression, with its resulting price gouging and other inequities, also inflicts equally severe suffering upon the masses. Fear, engendered by societal aggression and man’s inhumanity to man along many lines, continues to destroy the heritage of peace and joy which is the right of every human being, whose original parents were created in the image of God. Under the laws of Christ’s kingdom that right will be restored, for then none shall make afraid.

DEATH DESTROYED

As beautiful and reassuring as the prophecy of Micah is, by itself it does not present the full plan of God pertaining to human destiny under the rulership of Christ. A world without war and the fear of war would be a vastly better world than the one which is now coming to an end. If we added to this the certainty of social and economic security for all, we would have a world of the sort that philosophers have dreamed about but could never establish. However, there would still be other fears.

There would still be the fear of death, and because of the distorted teachings that have been handed down for centuries, there would be fear of what lies beyond death. There would still be the need for hospitals and doctors and morticians. Thank God, however, for the other promises of his Word which assure us that even sickness and death, with

all their attendant evils, are to be destroyed by the reign of Christ.

Here we note the words of Isaiah 25:6-9. In this prophecy, even as in the prophecy of Micah, the kingdom of the Lord is symbolized by a mountain. We are told that "in this mountain," death will be swallowed up in victory, and that "the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces. ... And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

This hope of salvation for a dying race is referred to by the Apostle Peter in the New Testament. In Peter's prophecy he tells us of the purpose of Christ's return and Second Advent, that it will bring about what he describes as "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:20,21) We are indeed glad for the information that the second coming of Christ is not to result in the destruction of the earth, but rather, the restitution or restoration, of all things.

This will mean not only restoration to health for the living, and also the resurrection of the dead for all those billions of mankind who have gone into the grave. Jesus said, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth." To this Paul adds, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust," and "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; I Cor. 15:21,22) That is, not only will all

mankind be raised from the dead, afterwards all who will then obey from the heart the righteous laws of Christ's kingdom will "be made alive" in the full sense of restoration to perfect human life here upon the earth. Thus will be fulfilled the words of the oft-quoted prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

Today we are already witnessing the tearing down of this present evil order of things preparatory to Christ's rulership of justice and love, but this is only the destruction of the selfish institutions of men. The human race, the living and the dead, if obedient to God's laws in his kingdom, are to be restored to that which was lost because of Adamic sin. Man did not lose a home in heaven, but on the earth. The earth was made for man, and when man was created he was given dominion over the earth. (Gen. 1:26-28) Mankind's dominion, and his life also, were lost as a result of Adam's disobedience. This lost paradise is to be restored, and it is this work of restoration which is described by the Apostle Peter as "times of restitution of all things." He declares that this grand purpose of God has been foretold by his holy prophets since the world began.

Among these prophetic utterances descriptive of the restoration of mankind under the administration of Christ's kingdom is that which has already been quoted from the Prophet Isaiah—that blessed promise that death will be swallowed up in victory, and that God will wipe away tears from off all faces. Think of the change in human experience that will be! God will wipe away the tears of the people by removing the cause of their sorrow. Consider the many causes of sorrow there are in the world today

and what it will mean to all mankind when these are removed!

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

The Prophet Haggai, in describing the times of restitution, declared that the “desire of all nations shall come.” (Hag. 2:7) Nearly every nation desires peace; they desire security against aggression; they desire prosperity for their people. The Prophet David declares of earth’s new king, Christ Jesus, that “he shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”—Ps. 72:4

In another restoration promise, the Prophet Isaiah declares that then—that is, during the reign of Christ and his church—“shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.” He also says that the “eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.” (Isa. 35:5,6, *English Standard Version*) All of these physical maladies will no longer exist. In addition, however, these words have reference to those who, symbolically speaking, are blind and deaf to the things of God. Of these there are millions, for the Apostle Paul tells us that “the god of this world,” who is Satan the Devil, has blinded the minds of all who believe not, and thus has prevented them from knowing and loving and praising the true God of love.—II Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4

The Prophet Habakkuk, describing the blessings of restitution from still another angle, says of that thousand year period of Christ’s reign that “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

(Hab. 2:14) No longer will the people worship a diversity of gods and embrace conflicting religious beliefs. On this point another prophecy declares that God will “turn to the people a pure language [or message],” and that they will “call upon the name of the LORD to serve him with one consent.” (Zeph. 3:9) Then the people will be free to worship and serve the true God of love with their whole heart and with proper understanding.

In the Book of Revelation we have another wonderful promise of the blessings that will come to the people during the reign of Christ. It declares that then “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:4

It is difficult to imagine a world in which there is no death, but God has promised that it shall be so, and we believe it and take courage. If such a promise were made by one less powerful than God we might be justified in doubting. However, the Creator is able to fulfill such promises, for he is the fountain and source of all life. “In him we live, and move, and have our being,” declared the Apostle Paul.—Acts 17:28

God knows what makes us live and what gives us strength to move. He is our Creator. Hence, he is abundantly able to give life everlasting to all who will obey the laws of Christ’s kingdom. It is just this that he has promised to do. It is for this purpose that Christ returns and establishes his kingdom. The Scriptures state, however, that any who under the favorable conditions of that time refuse to believe and obey will, as Peter puts it, “be destroyed from

among the people.” (Acts 3:23) Everlasting life will be given only to those who qualify through belief and obedience.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

This is the glorious hope which now can be held out to the people of a distressed and fear-filled world. It is a glorious hope, and in proclaiming it we are following the suggestion of the prophet when he wrote, “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.”—Isa. 35:4

One of the descriptive names given to our day in prophecy is the day of vengeance. (Isa. 61:1,2; 63:4) It is a time when God’s righteous anger is being manifested in the overthrow of age-old systems and institutions of sin and oppression. While fear and distress are experienced by the people as a result of the uprooting of this present evil world, the ultimate purpose of God is to save the people from sin and death through the establishment of Christ’s kingdom. Hence we can say to the world today, to this fear-filled world, “Fear not!” Divine intervention in the affairs of men will soon bring peace and health and life—indeed, the opportunity for everlasting salvation—to all the families of the earth.

Think of living in a world with all fear removed—no fear of enemies, of war, of catastrophe, of crippling sickness, of financial ruin, of poverty, starvation, and greatest of all, no fear of death. God’s Word assures us that this is what he has ultimately purposed for mankind. Truly, freedom from fear is guaranteed by the sure promises of God! ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 6—“Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life.”—Luke 21:34 (Z. '95-201 Hymn 192)

JUNE 13—“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”—Psalm 17:15 (Z. '95-251 Hymn 105)

JUNE 20—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—I John 2:15 (Z. '96-67 Hymn 312)

JUNE 27—“Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us.”—II Corinthians 1:21,22 (Z. '96-212 Hymn 109)



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 Rob Ingram, Salem, OR—February 22. Age, 82

Brother Stefan Dziewoński, Kędzierzyn-Koźle, Poland—March 31. Age, 79

Sister Nancy Kleppe, Valparaiso, IN—April 12. Age, 84

Sister Józefa Koput, Nałęczów, Poland—April 12. Age, 95

Sister Pamela Niles, Valparaiso, IN—April 13. Age, 71

Sister Wanda Koterba, Grywałd, Poland—April 26. Age, 85

Sister Helena Kłusak, Żywiec, Poland—April 26. Age, 97

Brother Jan Kołacz, Lublin, Poland—May 1. Age, 73

Glorious Riches

Key Verses: *“That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*
—Colossians 2:2,3

Selected Scripture:
Colossians 1:24–2:3

flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition

AS A DEVOTED SERVANT and mouthpiece of God, Paul grasped more quickly than the other apostles a vital truth concerning things pertinent to the new dispensation. This was the fact that Gentiles were to be fellow heirs with the Jews in the kingdom privileges of entertaining the hope of the high calling.—Col. 1:24-27

Our Key Verses indicate the true church is being selected from the world of mankind. This is a great mystery to those who are not initiated into this fellowship. These fail to realize the great privilege of enjoying heavenly blessings to a degree even now as we sojourn in our earthly tabernacle.

“Though I be absent in the

of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”—Col. 2:5-8

The foregoing exhortation is a reminder that believers whose lives are in conformity with the principles of righteousness, having been justified by faith in the merit of Christ’s ransom, are viewed from God’s standpoint as being sanctified. Thus they have the prospect of being glorified and reigning with our Lord in blessing all the families of the earth when the church is complete and Satan is bound for a thousand years.—Rev. 20:1-3,6

Nevertheless, devotion to the ministry of the Gospel can lead to weariness of the flesh. True saints can never be content to take life easy when there are brethren to be served, or when the Truth of God’s Word can be proclaimed to reach those who may be called to become a part of the bride. We have a wonderful example of this in the ministry of Paul. He endured a great amount of suffering following his encounter with the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-8) Stripes, imprisonments, stonings, perils in the sea and in the city, and even perils among false brethren were his portion, all for Christ’s “body’s sake, which is the church.”—II Cor. 11:23-28; Col. 1:24

Suffering is such a common experience among humanity. We might hardly take notice of it without some extraordinary event causing it to be brought to our attention in some forceful manner. Believers willingly experience this while emulating the Lord’s course of righteousness in the face of evil. Nevertheless, there will come a time when such will no longer be the case, either for the saints who have proven faithful unto the end of their course, or for humanity in general. God’s kingdom shall eradicate every vestige of sin, sickness, sorrow, pain and death. What a cause for perpetual rejoicing when Satan is destroyed and our exalted Heavenly Father is acknowledged by all people as the eternal fountain of wisdom, justice, love and power.—I Cor. 15:24-28 ■

Changed into Jesus' Image

Key Verse: *“We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*
—II Corinthians 3:18

Selected Scripture:
II Corinthians 3:1-18

tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [Greek: covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”—vss. 3-6

In elaborating further on this matter, Paul explains that the Law Covenant ministered only condemnation to death to those under it. However, the glory of the New

IN TODAY'S LESSON, PAUL asserts the best “epistle,” or message, which can be given as respects reaching the hearts of men is the life of a true Christian who is living to glorify the Heavenly Father. This will be beneficial to himself and to the person to whom he ministers.—II Cor. 3:1,2

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy

Covenant, as yet only apprehended by faith, will be far superior to the typical character of what Moses portrayed as Israel's mediator.—vss. 7-9

All of the present advantages of health, comfort, or worldly joy will be nothing when compared to the spiritual glory. The Apostle Paul's life exemplified this attitude. He said of himself, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: ... not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. 3:7-11) This will be far more wonderful than the human perfection to which mankind in general will be restored, and it will also surpass the resurrection of the faithful worthy ones of old.—Heb. 11:39,40

We must possess a faith that will earnestly endeavor to bring our whole life into harmony with our beliefs. Thus, if we have received the spirit of sonship and have become children of God, we must walk as such, being "followers of God, as dear children," rather than walking as others walk, "in the vanity of their mind." (Eph. 5:1; 4:17) If we believe we have been honored by being made the Lord's ambassadors, we will "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."—Col. 3:17

Since our faith is based on the fact that Jesus gave himself "a ransom for all," we must tell how, in due time, a blessing is to come to all. (I Tim. 2:5,6) If we believe the end of the age has come, we must live in accord with its implications: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be?" (II Pet. 3:11) Our Key Verse foretells the glorious future of the saints who will make their calling and election sure by being conformed to the image of God's dear Son. ■

Glorify God

Key Verses: “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
—Romans 15:5,6

Selected Scripture:
Romans 15:1-13

“For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”—vss. 3,4

Our Key Verses strongly imply that as footstep followers of the Master, the mission of consecrated brethren is especially to comfort one another as the mouthpieces of God. Oneness of thought, mind, and action required of the saints towards each other is evidence that we are disciples of Christ, our Head, and that we are seeking to “glorify God, even the Father.”

HUMAN WISDOM GENERALLY is very much out of harmony with divine principles as revealed in the Bible. For example, because of sin and selfishness the idea of making personal sacrifices for the sake of others as being the way to true happiness in life, or that building up others will result in personal fulfillment, seems foreign to many in the world. Most consider satisfying their own needs or desires as their major focus.—Rom. 15:1,2

It was not so with Jesus nor should it be with his footstep followers. The Apostle Paul states,

Instead of letting issues about disputable things divide believers, they should receive one another just as Christ received them, in the terms of pure grace, knowing yet bearing with each other's faults. In loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, Jesus welcomed us to his heart.

In our lesson Paul also alludes to and explains something of God's plan relative to the casting away, and subsequent restoration of the Jews based on the "promises made unto the fathers." In addition, he speaks of the blessings to come to the Gentiles, that they "might glorify God for his mercy." Such a hope, the apostle says, should fill us "with all joy and peace in believing." Thus we can have a peace that is not transitory but permanent, not partial but complete.—vss. 7-13

God's magnificent plan for establishing and maintaining peace is majestically described in the final book of the Bible. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; ... And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—Rev. 21:1-4

The prospect of helping to bring about these conditions for mankind should be inspiring to us. Therefore, each spirit-begotten child of God should be willing to pay the full cost of discipleship required to effect the complete reconciliation of mankind back to God under the leadership of Christ Jesus, the Prince of Peace.—Isa. 9:6,7

Full Assurance

Key Verses: “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”
—Hebrews 6:19,20

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 6:9-20

same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”—Heb. 6:10-12

When God made a promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, “Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ... God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.” The apostle here

GOD’S PROMISED REWARD

to loyal Christians as a result of Jesus Christ’s high priestly ministry is absolute and unchangeable. Those who inherit it do so because of their implicit faith and patient endurance, even unto death. As devoted believers, we should follow the example of those who have emulated those qualities.

“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the

is not discussing the covenant, but is merely citing the illustration of Abraham's faith in God's promises and patiently waiting for their fulfillment as being essential to actually having them become a personal possession. Men accept human oaths as proof the words spoken to them are trustworthy, but God demonstrated his unchangeable nature as he confirmed it by his oath. What could be more definitive than that?—vss. 13-17

Our Key Verses reveal that an abundant assurance of God's loving purpose toward his people is fully in keeping with his grace and mercy. He did not need to confirm the covenant with his oath, for no one would ever have reason to doubt his word. Later, one of the requirements of the Law was that important matters should be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses, and God was willing to conform to this principle. His word was immutable and his oath was immutable, so by these "two immutable things," he has given us "strong consolation," who have laid hold of the hope set before us of being heirs of the covenant made with Abraham.—vs. 18

As in all the other provisions of divine grace, it is necessary, not only to maintain a heart condition through which God can fulfill his promises to us, but also to earnestly long for these blessings which he has promised. Additionally, God made the receiving of heavenly wisdom dependent upon our prayers. That is why the Apostle James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." In view of all the precious promises of God which affirm his willingness to endow us with wisdom from on high, how fully justified was the apostle in his further admonition, which states, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering."—James 1:5,6

Thus, by the assurances contained in the many promises of God, may our hope be as an anchor, "both sure and steadfast," and which enters to the glories beyond the veil. ■

Fearless Testimony

Key Verse: “*And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers.*”
—Acts 26:6

Selected Scripture:
Acts 26:1-23

this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.”—Acts 26:2,3

He realized that Agrippa, although not a Jew himself, was a descendant of the Herod family. For several generations the Herodian dynasty claimed belief in the Jewish religion, though they were not particularly devout. Paul continued by recounting his way of life as a Pharisee, the strictest sect of his religion. “My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.”—vss. 4,5

In our Key Verse, Paul declared he was being condemned for expressing his hope in the promise God made to Abraham that through his seed, all the families

of the earth would be blessed. It was abundantly clear that this hope included the resurrection of the dead. Paul had been an ardent Pharisee prior to his conversion, and he and others of this religious sect were convinced as to the reality of this glorious doctrine. Now, however, the Pharisees' animosity toward Paul was aroused by this very teaching—that the God of Israel had raised Jesus from the dead. They hated Jesus because the common people received his teachings gladly.—Mark 12:37

Additionally, when Peter preached his sermon on “restitution” and declared that it had been foretold by all God’s holy prophets since the world began, the religious rulers of the Jews were grieved that he “preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”—Acts 3:15–4:2

Paul related to Agrippa how, as a Pharisee, he had persecuted the disciples of Jesus. He said, “Being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” (Acts 26:9-11) Here we are reminded of the possibility of being wrong, yet sincere. Just being a Pharisee did not make one insincere, as for instance Nicodemus, who also was a Pharisee.—John 3:1-10

At the conclusion of Paul’s statements, King Agrippa was moved to say, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” However, Agrippa reminded Festus, the Roman governor of the region, “This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.” (Acts 26:24-32) This was, of course, because of divine providence since it was God’s design for Paul to go to Rome, and give his final witness in that city.

Paul wrote to Timothy: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) This surely would result in suffering, and thus call for endurance. May each of us diligently persevere so that we can receive the blessings promised through Paul’s encouraging words. “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, ... unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:8 ■

Keeping the Heart

*“Keep thy heart
with all diligence;
for out of it are the
issues of life.”*
—Proverbs 4:23

IT SEEMS A THING INCRED-
ible that one, having once
been enlightened and come
into the fellowship of the
Lord’s family, could ever allow

God’s Word of Truth to slip away from them. However, we sadly face the fact that it has happened, and does, from time to time. Someone may say, “Well, this surely cannot happen to us,” and we trust and pray that it will not happen to any of us. The point is, unless we are constantly on our guard, this could indeed happen to any of the Lord’s people.

As we look back to the earlier days of the harvest period of the Gospel Age, to the many brethren who helped spread the glorious message of the Scriptures, almost unbelievably, a good number of them lost that very understanding before they died. What was the reason? Was it because they were deceived by the Adversary? Was it the attractions of the world that overwhelmed them? Was it the weakness of the flesh? Were they not as spiritually minded as the Lord’s people of today? Surely the word of the Lord we hear spoken today is no more spiritual than that which was spoken during the earlier part of the harvest. Whatever the details

may have been in each individual case, failure along the lines of one's heart condition likely played a key role in the departure of some from the faith. This should be a warning to us. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—I Cor. 10:12

THE HEART—OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The Lord has promised many things to us: protection from the Adversary; wisdom and enlightenment from above; sufficiency in all things to make our calling and election sure; daily experiences that are best suited for our spiritual development. We are assured that if God is for us, no one can prevail against us, and he has promised that he will never leave us, nor forsake us. (Rom. 8:31; Heb. 13:5) However, there is one thing that the Lord will not do for us, and that is the matter of keeping the heart. This we must do ourselves, as noted in our opening text.

We can illustrate the point in this way. Many people have a small garden in one corner of their backyard where they enjoy working the soil and watching the various kinds of vegetables grow and develop until they reach maturity and fruition. There are three elements that are essential for a healthy garden: water, sunlight, and soil. The sunlight and rain are provided by God—we have no control over these. The soil, though, is our responsibility. We must see to it that it is cultivated regularly and supplied with the organic matter and nutrients necessary for the health of each plant.

Similarly, the Lord has provided, so to speak, the sunshine and rain necessary for our spiritual growth,

but he has appointed us the job of preparing the soil of our heart. Unless we prepare our hearts properly and cultivate and care for it regularly, this new life in Christ will not be healthy and will not grow properly. In the garden at home, we also find it necessary to pull the weeds out every once in a while, and when we think we have gotten them all, in a few days we find others have appeared and must also be pulled.

This means we must examine our hearts regularly and see to it that we do not allow any of these weeds to grow—impure thoughts, wrong motives, the little beginnings of pride and selfishness; for if we do not get rid of them quickly, they can cause us much trouble. If not dealt with, they are very apt to soon choke out the New Creature. (II Cor. 5:17) The New Creature is rooted in the soil of our heart, and the lifeblood of this newly begotten being is circulated and controlled by the heart condition.

KEY TO THE NEW CREATURE

Why did the Lord use the symbol of the heart in this way? Just as the fleshly heart is the central source of the life-flow through our natural bodies, so our newly consecrated heart is the mainspring of our life as a New Creature. Our heart attitude toward God, Jesus, the Word of Truth, and our fellow brethren will determine the growth of our new life in Christ.

When we made a consecration to God we were very sincere—we held back nothing. It was a complete consecration. Otherwise the Heavenly Father would never have accepted it. If, however, we begin to draw back from the fulfillment of our vow of

consecration, and if our consecrated attitude begins to change, it would be a serious detriment to the New Creature, which depends upon a proper heart condition to maintain its spiritual health and growth.

We note in our opening verse that out of the heart are “the issues of life.” Through the words of Solomon, the Lord is here telling us that life itself is going to be dependent upon the condition of our heart. Whether we will be found worthy to attain unto the future reward of life everlasting is fully—not partly—dependent upon whether we are now, in this present life, keeping our hearts with all diligence.

SCRIPTURAL ADMONITIONS

The Lord considers this matter of keeping the heart so important that he has given us many admonitions in the Bible to help us understand what is required of us to keep our hearts properly. We find mentioned in the Scriptures particular attributes, or elements, of a sanctified heart. It is critical that we have them continually before our minds.

Meekness and humility are two of these elements. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11:29) Humility and meekness are very important as foundations of a proper heart condition. Jesus, our perfect example along this line, indicates in this verse that if we become yoked with him, and learn from him, we will become like him in meekness and humility of heart. Doing so we will find peace and rest for our souls.

Sitting at the feet of Jesus is another way we develop a meek and humble attitude. We sit at his feet every time we come together for fellowship

and study. Jesus said he would be there with us on these occasions. (Heb. 10:25; Matt. 18:20) He does this through the spirit of Truth emanating from each consecrated heart present. If we humble ourselves, we will find it possible to learn valuable lessons from every member of the body, even those who may appear to be the weakest saints among us. Let us see to it that humility and meekness are truly a part of our heart condition.

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Prov. 3:5) Trust with all our heart, this verse tells us. We would not get very far if trust and confidence in the Lord were not a part of our heart condition. It is easy to trust in the written Word of God in the quietness of study and meditation. How often, though, we lean on our own understanding in meeting the trials and experiences of our daily lives and fail to apply the things we have learned from his Word. Let us learn, rather, to seek his will and guidance in all things pertaining to our daily lives, and then to follow it in our decisions, words, and actions. If we have this trustful attitude of heart, coupled with submissiveness to his leading, we will be richly blessed through the providential overruling of our Heavenly Father.

Obedience is another important heart attitude. “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” (Ps. 119:2) Obedience is a universal law of God, and none will ever have life everlasting without learning this fundamental principle. For the child of God, this means a conscientious doing of the Lord’s will daily, and a sincere application of the principles of truth and righteousness in our lives. As the psalmist

declared, this is not something we can do halfheartedly, but we must give wholehearted obedience to the Lord. We must obey, not out of compulsion, but because our heart delights to do the Father's will.—Ps. 40:8

THE PEACE OF GOD

Another heart element is peace. “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.” (Col. 3:15) Jesus said, “My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27) The peace of God and of Christ is wonderful. However, we can lose that peace simply by fraternizing with the world and appropriating to ourselves some of the cares, ambitions, and fears, that are so much a part of this present order of things. Let us be sure that we are not allowing anything in this life to interfere with the peace of God ruling in our heart.

Next we come to patience. “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” (James 5:8) We are not always as patient as we would like to be, but it must become a part of our heart condition. We must learn to “wait patiently” upon the Lord in all things.—Ps. 37:7

A very important element of our heart is love. “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deut. 6:5) Nothing else would matter much if love was not the crowning attribute of our heart condition. “Love the LORD thy God with all thine heart”—that is, with a wholehearted, unreserved love. Nothing short of that is acceptable to God. We love God “because he first loved us.” (I John 4:19) We

increase our love for him by learning more about him through the study of his Word, thus being drawn into a closer fellowship with him.

True love then is in proportion to knowledge and understanding. We love God because we know something about his wonderful character and plan. He has revealed himself to us in order that we can love him, for he wants our love and adoration. That love is increased as we seek to increase our understanding of his Word and his will for us. Our love for the brethren likewise increases as we come to know more about them—their faithfulness, their spirituality, their example. We love them accordingly, just as our Lord loved his disciples more and more as he saw their dedication and devotion to the Messianic cause grow and develop over time. So then, through fellowship together we learn to love one another more.

SEEKING GOD

In Jeremiah 29:13, seeking the Lord is identified as a desired heart element. “Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.” It was because of our heart condition that the Lord revealed himself to us in the first place, and we consecrated our lives to him, but this must continue to be our attitude. We must daily seek the Lord’s guidance and overruling in all our affairs of life. If we do, the hand of the Lord will be revealed to us, and we will learn the lessons and benefit by the experiences he gives us. Let us continue daily to search for the will of the Lord with all our heart.

Certainly our heart condition would not be complete without faith. “Let us draw near with a true

heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” (Heb. 10:22) We also know that “without faith it is impossible to please him [God].” (Heb. 11:6) The apostle suggests that a true heart is one having a “full assurance of faith.” We sometimes define faith as a conviction or belief, but this is not sufficient. A real faith is one in which a conviction or belief is evidenced by works. “Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:26) It would seem then that the Lord does not gauge our faith on the basis of how much knowledge and understanding we have, but rather by the way that knowledge is proven and given expression in our daily conduct. Let us, therefore, show our faith to the Lord and to one another through our good works, and seek to have his will fulfilled in our lives continually.

LOVE WITH A PURE HEART

We are to have the heart characteristic of love for the brethren. “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.” (I Pet. 1:22) Loving the brethren is one of the unmistakable evidences that we are in the family of Christ. Notice that the Apostle Peter indicates that this love should not be just a passive one, but a fervent love. The Apostle John wrote: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” (I John 3:14) If we ever lose the desire to have fellowship with the fellow body members of Christ, we would have reason to fear that something has gone seriously wrong in our heart.

It is important that we consider Paul’s multi-faceted definition of true brotherly love: “Love

suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (I Cor. 13:4-7, *Revised Version*) Let us measure our own hearts by these standards, and if we always have this kind of all-encompassing love toward our brethren, our fellowship together will indeed be sweet.

MAKING MELODY IN OUR HEART

Finally, we note Ephesians 5:19, in which we learn that our heart must always be in a rejoicing and prayerful attitude: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” If the Truth has entered deeply into our hearts, it will bring immeasurable joy to us. All true Christians should find this to be the case as they look upon their lives. This attitude of prayer and communion with our Heavenly Father is the condition in which our heart should find itself. However, “singing and making melody” in our heart to the Lord is not always easy. Our Heavenly Father gives us experiences from time to time designed to test us along this line.

Have we ever found ourselves murmuring and complaining when things go wrong, or when they seem to work out differently than we had planned? Have we ever chafed under trials and unpleasant circumstances? Let us each take stock of our own hearts, and perhaps we will see that there is

something more yet to be done along this line. It is not easy to “glory in tribulations,” but this is the standard we must reach.—Rom. 5:3

Let us call to mind the occasion when Paul and Silas were in prison. “When they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: ... And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.” (Acts 16:23-25) We must give careful attention to our own hearts along this line.

ENLARGING OUR HEART

As we have discussed these elements of a sanctified heart, we trust that all the Lord’s dear people have made progress along these lines. However, after carefully examining ourselves and taking stock of our heart condition, we may feel the need to continue to have these heart elements “enlarged.” This thought is suggested in II Corinthians 6:11,13. “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. ... Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.” The enlarging of one’s heart is vital to the spiritual growth of the Christian. With the natural body, the heart of a baby is enlarged as the child grows toward maturity in order to take care of the needs of a growing body. Thus it is also with the New Creature. Our sanctified heart must be enlarged in proportion as we grow toward spiritual maturity.

If we plant a seed in a container with just a little bit of soil it will sprout and begin to grow, but as it gets larger we must put it in a larger container with more soil. Otherwise it will become sickly and

perhaps even die. When we dedicated our life to the Lord, the soil of our heart was sufficiently prepared so that this new spiritual life could take root and have its beginning. However, unless we are enlarging these heart elements the New Creature will not properly grow and develop toward maturity. Let us recall our theme text once again: “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” Our very life in Christ is dependent upon how we keep our heart.

Another important thought is this: The Lord tries our hearts from time to time. “The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts.” (Prov. 17:3, *New King James Version*) Does God test our heart so he can determine what condition it is in? We think not. He could simply read the heart and know its present condition. The Heavenly Father gives us these experiences—he “tests the hearts”—in order that we ourselves might see some of our weaknesses and imperfections. Through trying experiences, he indicates to us those areas of our heart condition which need special attention. Then it is up to us to benefit from these lessons and have them serve as stepping-stones in this work of having our hearts enlarged.

OUR HEART TO BE JUDGED

We believe that in the final analysis, at the end of life’s course, our Heavenly Father will judge in the case of each one of his people as to their worthiness or unworthiness to share with our Lord Jesus in the glory of the divine plane. We suggest that he will make this a judgment of our heart, plus the expression of our heart sentiments through good

works. This thought is expressed by John the Revelator: “All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”—Rev. 2:23

God is giving us all the tools and experiences necessary so that we can take good care of our hearts. We must be careful, however, not to use our pruning shears on our brother or sister in Christ, or perhaps attempt to pull a weed or two out of another’s heart that we think we see there. We have all we can do to prepare our own hearts, and as we seek to do this, our brethren will notice this work progressing in our lives, and they will be encouraged to do likewise. We are examples one to another in this way. May this work of “enlarging” and developing our heart continue in our individual lives, for the Lord has promised to pour out his rich blessings upon all those who are keeping their “heart with all diligence.” ■

If I Shall Stand

*If I shall stand within those Jasper walls
And hear the voice of my Beloved Lord,
And be like him and see his face so dear;
Then I must reach the mark of perfect love,
And fix my heart on things above.
I must trust him for grace in time of need,
Upon his written Word my soul must feed,
And bear my cross tho 'tis with feeble hand;
Ere I dare hope within those walls to stand.*

—*Poems of the Way*

Commendation and Encouragement

*“To all the saints
in Christ Jesus
which are at
Philippi, with the
bishops and
deacons: Grace be
unto you, and
peace, from God
our Father, and
from the Lord
Jesus Christ.”*

—*Philippians 1:1,2*

THE CONGREGATION OF

Christians at Philippi was the first to be organized in Europe. It was the result of the Apostle Paul's answer to the call to go to Macedonia and help those hungry for the Gospel message. (Acts 16:9-40) The apostle's later epistle to these brethren reveals a strong personal attachment he felt toward this small group

of the Lord's people. It is quite a different letter from many of his others written to the various churches he had helped to establish. For example, Paul does not mention his apostolic title in this epistle at all. He did not need to, because all the brethren at Philippi knew that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ and accepted him as such.

How different when he wrote to the Christians in Galatia, where possibly some of them doubted his apostleship. To these, he addressed with these strong words: “Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father).” By contrast, when writing to the church at Philippi, in no place did he say, “Oh foolish Philippians, who hath bewitched you,” as he did in his letter to the brethren in Galatia. It was not necessary.—Gal. 1:1; 3:1

Paul’s letter to the Philippian church was one primarily of commendation and encouragement. One of the things that the apostle had in mind in writing this epistle was to inspire the brethren to take hold of the truths of their salvation, and apply them toward the spirit, attitude, and actions of their Christian life. After mentioning the high standards of such behavior, he climaxes his exhortation in the last chapter of his letter by telling them where their thinking must be centered in order to successfully develop the Christian character. He says, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”—Phil. 4:8

It has been well said that the mind is the battleground of the Christian. It is in our thoughts that our actions have their real beginning. Therefore, in his exhortation to “think on these things,” Paul is simply saying that as followers of the Master we are to be very careful of the things that we think about. Wrong thinking will result in wrong conclusions,

which in turn may result in wrong words or actions, while right thinking will result in proper conclusions and lead to good words and works.

Another point emphasized in this epistle is to avoid the spirit of dissension in the church of God. Paul did not criticize them along this line, but rather warned that those who promote dissension are evildoers and are “enemies of the cross of Christ.” (Phil. 3:18) For us also, how much better if, in our thinking and in our doing, we endeavor to develop the spirit of unity and the spirit of holiness.

Paul also gives us in this letter that great theme which we would like to think we have absorbed into our own life—namely, that we are rejoicing Christians. Time and again the apostle speaks of “rejoicing” to the Philippian brethren, and in chapter 4, verse 4, he says, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I say, Rejoice.” When we think of the many blessings we have received—the blessings of the knowledge of God’s plan, the blessings of fellowship, the blessings of walking in the footsteps of Jesus, and the glorious prospect of helping to bless all the families of the earth in Christ’s kingdom—we have every reason to rejoice.

BLESSED MEMORIES

For the balance of our lesson, we will focus on Paul’s words in the first chapter of this loving epistle. In verse 3, Paul writes, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” This is the way the apostle felt about the church at Philippi. We, too, know brethren of whom we could make the same statement. Many have been examples to us in the faith and who have mentored and guided us in the

narrow way of sacrifice. When we apply this text of Scripture to those who have been such examples to us of Christian character and service to the Lord, we understand the feeling the Apostle Paul had for his brethren at Philippi.

Paul then says, “Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” (vss. 4,5) The Apostle John later wrote concerning this wonderful fellowship: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” —I John 1:3

No wonder Christian fellowship is such a wonderful thing! It is the Gospel message that brings us together, and our resulting fellowship is not only with one another, but also is with our Heavenly Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. It is because of this intimate relationship that our hearts are bound together in the bonds of Christian love.

Paul uses the expression, “fellowship in the gospel.” The *Emphatic Diaglott* uses the word “participation” and translates the verse this way: “Always, in every prayer of mine, making supplication on behalf of you all with joy, on account of your participation in the glad tidings, from the first day till now.” One of the reasons the Apostle Paul had such sweet fellowship with those at Philippi was their participation in the Gospel from the first time that they heard it until the time he wrote the epistle.

The privilege of participating in the Gospel is a precious one, and there are so many ways that we can participate. By ourselves we could perhaps do

very little, but because of others enjoying this fellowship, or participation, in the Gospel, the message of the kingdom goes out by many different means and reaches the ears of people throughout the world.

THE DAY OF CHRIST

Paul continues, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it [Greek: fulfill completely] until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1:6) The one who has begun the good work in us is God, and he is able to complete it. There is no doubt about the completion of his work in us, if we are submissive to him and his perfect will.

The phrase that finishes this verse is very interesting: “until the day of Jesus Christ.” This is speaking of the time of the Messianic kingdom, over which Christ Jesus will be the ruler. The *Weymouth New Testament* translation reads, “In preparation for the day of Jesus Christ.” This is the reason we have been called out of darkness into light, out of the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Our participation in the Gospel at the present time is feeble, but is in preparation for a greater ministry, a greater participation, a greater joy, during “the day of Jesus Christ.”

Paul told the Philippian brethren that they had the privilege of participating with him “in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.” (vs. 7) These words are expressive of the privilege that the apostle so thoroughly demonstrated in his life—the defense of the Gospel. There were many times when he had to defend the Gospel against the errors

of his day. At the same time he had the privilege of “confirming” the Gospel in the hearts of the humble, the teachable, and those who wanted to have its message fortified to strengthen their faith.

This text of scripture also includes us in that privilege, for we are all partakers of the Gospel with him. There are errors today, as then, and it is God’s Word of Truth that is our defense. The truths that defend against the errors of our day are the fundamental teachings of the Scriptures for which we stand and which we delight to declare. Not only do we have the privilege of defending the Gospel, we also have the privilege of confirming it, of encouraging one another in this most holy faith, of building up one another and being established in the faith, and of helping one another to recognize the beauty and force of the Gospel in our Christian life.—Jude 1:20; Col. 2:7

The privilege of participating in the Gospel is not limited just to the elders of our ecclesias, nor to only those more directly involved in putting forth the glorious message of the coming kingdom. This privilege belongs to all of us. Every child of God has the opportunity of cooperating in the defense and in the confirmation of the Gospel.

Philippians 1:8 reads, “For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” In other words, Paul’s love for the brethren at Philippi was so intense that he was emotionally affected as he saw the spirit of Jesus Christ reflected in them. Verses 9 and 10 continue, “I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be

sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” The Greek word translated “judgment” in verse 9 means “discernment” or “perception.” Paul wanted the Philippian brethren to have spiritual discernment. He wanted them to have personal knowledge and perception in order to make proper decisions and to express proper judgment.

THE BEST THINGS

The *International Standard Version* renders the first part of Philippians 1:10, “That you may be able to choose what is best.” When we discern between thoughts, words, or actions that differ, we want to choose that which is “best” for our development in the likeness of Christ. The only way we can choose the best things is by having spiritual discernment. There are two types of values set before us in many of our experiences. First, there are those along fleshly or temporal lines. They might involve business, or family, or home. Though we surely are not to ignore these, we must treat them as of more or less temporal consideration.

There are also those values which are unseen. These are the eternal things and are “best” for our eternal spiritual welfare. In II Corinthians 4:18 Paul speaks to this very point: “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Thus we are to develop spiritual understanding, discernment, and perception that we may choose those things that are best—the unseen things, the things that the world does not understand, the things that are eternal.

Choosing the things that are “best” for us spiritually will result in our being prepared for the greater work during the “day of Christ.” This is why it is worthwhile to walk in the narrow way. This is why understanding the Gospel message is such a privilege. The Master said, “He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.” (John 4:36) As Jesus further stated, we receive “an hundredfold now in this time,” and “in the world to come” something even better, “eternal life.” (Mark 10:30) All this is being done in our lives in preparation for the “day of Christ.”

FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

Philippians 1:11-14 reads, “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace [residence of the Roman guard], and in all other places. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

Here Paul said his going to prison in Rome was a blessing in disguise because it had resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel. It had encouraged some of those who prior to this, because of fear, were holding back from speaking the Gospel. This word “furtherance” is an interesting one. The Greek words from which furtherance is translated mean to “drive forward” or “advance.”

In ancient Greece, the military had an engineering corps the name of which was based upon the same word that is here used by Paul. They were used for the “furtherance” of the army, to remove the obstacles so the army could go forward. Thus the apostle says that his imprisonment has resulted in the “furtherance of the gospel”—the removal of obstacles to the preaching of the Gospel, and he appreciated the privilege of going to prison to that end.

Paul explains that all in the Roman guard knew his stand. Because the brethren recognized that he was willing to preach the Gospel in his bonds, the result was that many became more confident and were further emboldened to speak forth the Gospel without fear. The obstacles of doubt and fear had been removed from the hearts of the brethren, and the spread of the message of God’s Word grew.

It took great courage to preach the Gospel in those days when the Apostle Paul was in prison—in most cases more than it takes at this present time, because it was at the risk of life itself. In the Roman Coliseum many faithful Christians paid with their lives for the privilege of witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

IT STILL TAKES COURAGE

Indeed, it took great courage in Paul’s day to preach the Gospel, and it also takes courage to do the same today. Now, however, it is rarely in fear of death. It is possibly for fear of what our neighbor or business associates might think of us. It is the fear of the opinion of other people. The odd part of it is that the world’s opinion of our spreading the

Gospel message does not truly matter. Nevertheless, fear can often be the obstacle that gets in our way.

We recognize that the understanding of God's plan for man's recovery from sin and death is the most wonderful thing that has ever come into our lives. It is the message of the Heavenly Father's love—its "breadth, and length, and depth, and height." (Eph. 3:18) Along with his love, it reveals his attributes of justice, wisdom, and power. It means everything to us, and yet sometimes we find that in talking to people it is far easier to talk about the mundane things of life than it is to speak of the things which we recognize are the most wonderful and valuable that the Lord has given us. Paul said he was "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." (Rom. 1:16) May every obstacle be removed that hinders us from having part in the proclamation of the Gospel!

Some, due to age or physical infirmity, are unable to directly participate in preaching the Gospel. Even here, though, they can pray for those who are able to engage more fully in the vineyard. Paul speaks of such who "became companions of them that were so used," commending them for their support of those at the forefront of service to the Lord. (Heb. 10:32-34) All of this is part of the cooperative effort in which all the Lord's people can participate of proclaiming the message of the Gospel.

Paul continues, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: ... notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this

shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. ... As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.”—Phil. 1:15-20

A peculiar situation arose when the brethren began to preach Jesus Christ in Rome. Some of them, Paul said, preached from good will, but some of them preached the Gospel as if it was a weapon to force upon others. What was the attitude of the apostle? Sometimes just one word from a person’s lips lets you know their depth of spirit or depth of maturity in Christ, and here Paul indicates that some were proclaiming the message in such a way as to get him into more trouble. However, that did not matter to him. If the Gospel was being preached, even if it meant more suffering for him, he said, “I therein do rejoice.”—vs. 18

Verse 27 reads, “Only let your conversation [behavior or conduct] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” Above all else, Paul admonished, the brethren’s conduct of life should be that which is in heart harmony with the glorious message with which they had been entrusted. Whether he were ever to see them again or not, he desired that they be unified in one spirit, in one mind, striving together to be faithful.

PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING

Paul closes this chapter with these words: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only

to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.” (Phil. 1:29,30) The Apostle Paul loved the Philippian brethren. One might think that because of his love he would have told them how they could avoid suffering, but he did not. He told them that part of their joy was not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for his sake.

This was the privilege of which Paul spoke elsewhere of presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, our reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1) It is the privilege of going “outside the camp, bearing His [Christ’s] reproach.” (Heb. 13:13, *New King James Version*) It is under these conditions that we have become prospective members of the body of Christ, and of having the hope of joint-heirship with him.

Unless these conditions are accepted and acted upon now, we will never have the privilege of joint-heirship on the other side of the veil. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” “If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12) This is the true meaning of the Christian life. If we are faithful in this participation and fellowship in the Gospel, we shall hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”—Matt. 25:21 ■

Preparing for the Marriage

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”
—*Revelation 19:7*

THE CONSECRATED CHILDREN of God are now living in a most important time during the present harvest period of the Gospel Age. It is the time of the church’s final testing which takes place just prior to the intro-

duction of the faithful members of the bride of Christ into the marriage feast. At that time, they will be married to our dear Lord Jesus, their heavenly bridegroom, the Son of our loving Heavenly Father who is the king of the whole universe. Following the words of our opening text, John the Revelator further wrote concerning the bride of Christ: “To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”—Rev 19:8,9

The faithful bride class will become part of “the Christ” and share in the great work of restoring the human family to obedience to the divine law and the resulting life everlasting on the earth. The Apostle Paul wrote, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.” (Gal. 3:8,9, *English Standard Version*) It is by faith that we thus look forward with great desire and anticipation to this wonderful scene of splendor and blessing that will be made available for all mankind.

A PROPHETIC VISION

The psalmist also spoke of this marriage in heaven, saying, “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.” (Ps. 45:13,14) Our attention is drawn to one of the beautiful figures by which the close and very precious relationship between our dear Lord Jesus and his elect bride has been scripturally portrayed. This may also be seen in the illustration of the captain and his soldiers, the shepherd and his sheep, the master and his servants or, as in this case, the bridegroom and the bride. In each of these instances Christ’s relationship to his true followers teaches a particular and valuable lesson.

The picture under consideration is very important because it brings to our mental vision the fact that Jesus has been highly exalted to the Heavenly Father’s right hand in his throne on high. Faithful

Christians, the church triumphant, will be associated with their Lord and Master in his glorious Messianic kingdom reign, and for the ages to come. These, and many other scriptural illustrations of heavenly hopes, lift the minds of the faithful members of Jesus' bride from that of earthly desires, aims, and ambitions, to those of heavenly blessings.—Matt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21

In his letter to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul pointed this out to the brethren. Partially quoting Isaiah 64:4, he wrote: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."—I Cor. 2:9-12

A HEAVENLY INHERITANCE

A heavenly inheritance is the promise of God for the bride of Christ—"the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21:9) Those who enter into this indescribable scene and glorious spiritual inheritance are inspired by the words of God that have been revealed to them. Thus the psalmist has directed us, "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house."—Ps. 45:10

The centuries since Pentecost have been especially set apart in the divine program for the calling,

developing, testing, and proving of the bride of Christ. Rulership in God's promised kingdom is the great honor which has been bestowed upon his beloved Son, and this he is to share with his glorified bride. Thus, together they will comprise "the Christ," one body with many members.—I Cor. 12:12-14,27

SELECTION OF A BRIDE

The Scriptures reveal that God is selecting a bride for his Son during this present time. This was shown by Abraham choosing a bride for his son Isaac, through his "eldest servant," thought to be Eliezer. (Gen. 24:1-67; 15:2) In this illustration, Abraham is representative of the Heavenly Father, Isaac pictures our Lord Jesus, and Eliezer symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Rebekah, the one chosen to be the wife of Isaac, represents the bride of Christ. Jesus indicated this special relationship between himself, his prospective bride, and the Father when he said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."—John 6:44,45

This Christ does through the power of God's Holy Spirit, operating in connection with the Scriptures. (I Thess. 1:5, *ESV*; II Cor. 6:7) Through this holy influence, we have been "betrothed ... to one husband," that we may be presented as a "chaste virgin to Christ." (II Cor. 11:2, *New King James Version*) We must have great appreciation in connection with this betrothal and maintain our purity. Only thus

are we to be ultimately presented to the glorious bridegroom and be associated with him in the administration of his glorious kingdom and its ultimate purpose of bringing reconciliation for all people.

A JEWISH WEDDING

The act of betrothal under the established Jewish custom was celebrated by a feast, at which time the bridegroom placed a ring on the finger of the bride-to-be. A ring is the symbol of endless faithfulness, and being placed on the finger indicated that the contract was a binding one. It could not be violated without grave consequences to the offending person. Faithfulness was to be maintained at all costs.

When the Heavenly Father calls us to fully dedicate ourselves to him and become the betrothed bride of our Lord Jesus, we respond by entering into a marriage covenant. God then seals it with the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 1:12,13) This signifies our consecration and acceptance of his dear Son, and binds us to faithfulness to our covenant even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) Under the Jewish custom an interval elapsed, usually about a year, between the betrothal and the marriage. During this period, the bride would embroider her wedding robe, and do other preparations to make herself ready. This represents how the betrothed bride of Christ must build the necessary character and develop the required fruitage of the Holy Spirit.—Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7

During this period of time, the Jewish bride continued to live at the house of her father even as does the prospective bride of Christ, all communications being carried on through a friend of the bridegroom, which pictures God's Holy Spirit or

influence. The bride was then regarded as the betrothed wife of her future husband, and her faithfulness to him was of vital importance. The arrangement also consisted in the final removal of the bride-elect from her father's house to the home of the bridegroom's father. This shows how the betrothed bride of Christ will be taken from her father's house, the earthly temporary house of Adam, to the home of her bridegroom's father, the Heavenly Father, and her permanent spiritual abode in heaven.—II Cor. 5:1

This is shown in the inspiring words which were spoken by Jesus, our heavenly bridegroom, when he proclaimed, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:1-3

THE BRIDE'S ROBE

The robe which the bride wore covered her entire body, and it was a most beautiful and distinctive feature of her attire. Isaiah's prophetic words describe the bride's attention to her garment. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."—Isa. 61:10

The bride's robe was made of white linen which represented purity and righteousness. (Rev. 19:8;

I Thess. 4:7) It was “embroidered with gold thread,” which is symbolic of the promise of the divine nature. (Ps. 45:13, *International Standard Version*; II Pet. 1:4) It was scented with exquisite perfume, of which the psalmist spoke, saying, “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” (Ps. 45:8) The Revelator also spoke of the bride and her preparation for the marriage. “I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”—Rev. 21:2

THE DIVINE ARRANGEMENT

The Scriptures reveal to us the specific requirements whereby we might be privileged to enter into this exceeding great honor of becoming the bride of the only begotten Son of God. It is made clear that we could not in any sense attain to such an invitation by way of our own ability or position in life. “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”—Isa. 64:6

Our loving Heavenly Father devised a way in which he could call from among the sinful race of mankind a select people for his name. The Apostle Paul addresses this special invitation by saying, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his

righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”—Rom. 3:24-26

These have had their sins covered by the symbolic “robe” of Christ’s righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) The merit of Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice is imputed to them, and by wholehearted acceptance and belief in this divine arrangement, they have been made acceptable to the Heavenly Father. (Eph. 1:6,7) The Apostle Paul explains, “Not having mine own righteousness, ... but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”—Phil. 3:9

KINGDOM GLORY

The inspired psalmist has given us a glimpse of the grandeur and majesty of our heavenly bridegroom, Christ Jesus. We read, “Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.” (Ps. 45:2) Because he loved righteousness and Truth, and was meek and lowly, the Heavenly Father highly exalted him as proclaimed by Paul. “What is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”—Eph. 1:19-21

During the closing years of this Gospel Age, the church is not yet the bride of the King’s Son in glorious garments. During her present earthly

pilgrimage, she is the betrothed virgin living “in earthen vessels.” (II Cor. 4:7) If faithful, she shall be given a divine body in the first resurrection. Then the bride will be all beautiful within and without, clothed with glory and honor. As indicated by the psalmist, “Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.”—Ps. 45:9

INCLINE THINE EAR

From the psalmist’s wonderful words, we further read, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” (Ps. 45:10,11) These delicate and beautiful thoughts convey the sublime scene in all its heavenly glory. The bride is asked to hearken and consider that the Heavenly Father has set his wonderful favor and affection upon the specially called of his earthly creation. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

In response to the words, “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house,” we observe that during the present time there are many voices that are calling to those who are betrothed to Christ. These earthly callings may come from the home, job, friends, pleasure, a desire for wealth and popularity, or other self-interests. We are not ignorant of some of the ways this may occur, either from the flesh, the world, or the workings of the great Adversary, Satan. Any of these devices may be used to subtly draw us away from the prize of our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus, or in cooperating with

earthly interests and influences. As the betrothed virgin listens, she hears the voice of her bridegroom, saying, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.”—John 14:15; Rev. 3:21

While the world invites us to be absorbed with its attractions and ambitions, the Lord tells us to consider that the things of the present life are, at best, only “temporary.” (II Cor. 4:18, *NKJV*) We have an opportunity to sacrifice these now and to gain the very highest of all blessings, “glory and honour and immortality,” and to become the bride of Christ.—Rom. 2:7

The worldly-wise do not hearken to this invitation because they are generally absorbed with the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches. (Matt. 13:22) They do not fully appreciate the instructions that come from our dear Lord. Those who eventually will constitute the bride in glory, do hearken and consider, and are guided by the counsel from on high. They thus press with vigor along the narrow way of sacrifice which, by divine grace, leads to a place in Christ’s glorious kingdom.

PRESENTED TO THE BRIDEGROOM

Soon, we believe, all of the faithful members of the body of Christ will be brought together for the marriage to the glorious heavenly bridegroom. She will then be clothed with the divine nature, and will take her place in the presence of the king. We catch a glimpse of this beautiful scene, quoting again the words of the psalmist. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.”—Ps. 45:13,14

RAIMENT OF NEEDLEWORK

The “raiment of needlework” of which the psalmist spoke points to the white robe which the Lord furnished us for the occasion—the robe of righteousness. This is the robe upon which painstaking effort has been made by the betrothed bride in readiness and anticipation for this most wonderful event. With much patience and carefulness, she has woven on her robe the beautiful adornments of the Christian graces during her consecrated “walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4) This scene depicts great rejoicing in both heaven and in earth, and is associated with her glorious and abundant entrance into the king’s palace.

The Psalmist David has written, “Thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” (Ps. 139:13-15) The bride has been fashioned from among fallen mankind, but, “Your eyes looked upon my embryo, and everything was recorded in your book. The days scheduled for my formation were inscribed, even though not one of them had come yet.”—vs.16, *International Standard Version*

These brief glimpses given to us long ago reveal the power of the Heavenly Father to fashion the bride of Christ, who will receive her heavenly inheritance. This is also expressed by the Apostle Peter, who wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance

incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.”—I Pet. 1:3,4

THE GREAT FUTURE WORK

We read, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” (Rev. 21:9-11) “I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”—vss. 22-26

When this heavenly marriage is consummated, the bride of Christ will together share in the great work of Christ’s kingdom. It will include the setting up of a new and better covenant especially designed for the blessings of all the families of earth. (Jer. 31:31-34) God’s long-prayed-for kingdom “in earth” will be established. (Matt. 6:10) At that time the wonderful words of the Revelator will be accomplished. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17 ■

Press Down on the Mark

Phil. 3:13-15 II Tim. 4:7,8

*Press down on the mark—beloved,
Press down on the mark each day,
Let nothing that comes upon you
Have power to move or sway;
For none but the overcomer
Shall share in the joys above,
So keep at the mark, beloved—
Press down on the mark of love.*

*When the Father sends fiery trials,
When billows around you sweep,
If doubts of His loving kindness
Might over your spirit creep,
Beloved—press down the harder,
One purpose He has in view,
Each trial and test He sendeth
To perfect His love in you.*

*At sight of your brothers' failings
Your patience may be sore tried,
But love from a heart o'erflowing
Must all imperfections hide;
And love in the form of service
Must daily be manifest,
As incense sweetly ascending,
As down on the mark you press.*

*The world when it fails to win you
May hate you with cruel breath,
And hatred may take a cruel form
That only shall end in death;
But the worst they can do, beloved,
Is to change your cross for a crown;
So while you let God's will be done—
Press down on the mark—press down.*

—Selected

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

PRAYER BOOKLET

Dear Dawn: Please send (4) copies of your booklet, *How God Answers Prayer*.

May God continue to bless and keep you all for your faithful and true service in the spreading of his Holy Word for all these many years.—IL

DAWN VIDEOS

DawnBible: I like your short videos, I also have *The Divine Plan of The Ages* you sent, Thank you.—United Kingdom

DIGITAL DAWN

DawnBible: I read some articles of your enlightening digital magazine [*The Dawn*]. I'm really touched. I plan to share them with my family members. Thanks.—Ethiopia

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

DawnBible: A fellow shared November 16th of *Daily Heavenly Manna* through a text. ... am now perusing your website. ... definitely enlightening and inspiring. Thank you.—CT

BIBLE STUDY SERIES

DawnBible: Thank you for making *Studies in the Scriptures* available.—CA

FARMER'S ALMANAC

DawnBible: Were it not for the [*Farmer's*] *Almanac* I might not have discovered you all. You will be hearing from me later. So far I feel you are positive.—OH

RADIO AFRICA

Dear Dawn: May God continue to bless you for coming to us with such beautiful and wonderful programs on Radio Africa. Hoping to continue to listen every week.—Ghana

LEARNED AS A CHILD

DawnBible: I learned about God and Jesus as a child and elevated my faith through my mom.

I've been to numerous conventions with both of my parents and have ordered many booklets for myself and others.

I am hoping this venue will help enrich me and teach me new things. I am very grateful.—TX

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Costelli

Portland, OR June 28-30

M. Davis

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

A. Fernets

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

R. Goodman

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

K. Humphreys

Prince Albert, SK June 29,30

B. Keith

Portland, OR June 28-30

M. Kerry

Delaware Valley, PA June 1

T. Krupa

Portland, OR June 28-30

T. Malinowski

Delaware Valley, PA June 1

H. Montague

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

J. Parkinson

Prince Albert, SK June 29,30

D. Rice

Prince Albert, SK June 29,30

B. Siwak

Vancouver, BC June 8,9

J. Trzeciak

Portland, OR June 28-30

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; ... Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.”

—Isaiah 11:1-10 English Standard Version

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 1—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 8,9—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC V4W 3B8. Contact B. A. Smith. Phone: (604) 250-2900 or Email: bas@telus.net. Or contact M. Kopak. Phone: (604) 842-1404

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 28-30—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Bible Students Retirement Center, 1801 NE 201st Avenue, Fairview, OR 97024. For convention accommodations, contact D. Burke. Phone: (636) 222-2923 or Email: dmburke62@icloud.com. Other information, contact B. Hislop. Phone: (503) 351-5551 or Email: bwhislop@aol.com

PRINCE ALBERT & SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 29,30—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Siwak Farm, R. R. #1, Prince Albert, SK S6V 5P8. Contact B. Siwak. Phone (306) 960-5526 or Email: bswk77@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 6-11—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Folwark

Zalesie, Poland. Contact T. Lecko. Email: theresa.kuehmichel@gmail.com

HODDESDON, U. K. CONVENTION, August 14-18
—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—

High Leigh Conference Centre, Lord Street, Hoddesdon, EN11 8SH U.K.. Contact N. Charcharos. Email: n.a.charcharos@gmail.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, August 31-September 1
—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—

Contact K. Weber. Email: kfweber@optonline.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, August 31, September 1,2
—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—

Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd St., Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact C Becker. Email: christie@christiebeckerviolin.com

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 6-8
—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—

Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (HWY 72), Huntsville, AL 35806, phone (256) 562-2525. Contact R. Satheesan. Email: rosaliasatheesan@gmail.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 28,29
—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—

Little Pine Island Camp, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Contact K. Osterman. Email: kenosterman@gmail.com



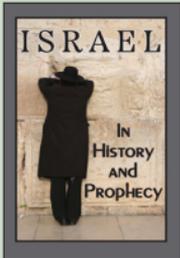
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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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 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

