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Intervention or Isolation

*“Keep not thou
silence, O God:
hold not thy peace,
and be not still, O
God. That men may
know that thou,
whose name alone
is JEHOVAH, art
the most high over
all the earth.”*
—Psalm 83:1,18

A GENERAL STATE OF chaos and revolution has existed within various countries of the world during the seven decades since the end of the Second World War. This is despite the presence of the peace-making mechanism of the United Nations which came into being as a direct result of that horrific worldwide conflict. Today, the semblance of peace which does exist in many parts of the earth is still maintained, to a large extent, by sheer force of arms on the part of the more powerful nations, rather than by genuine harmony and goodwill among peoples or leaders.

In a most recent example, the United States military in early April intervened in Syria by carrying out missile strikes against that country's Shayrat Air Base. The air base was the supposed origin of an alleged chemical weapons attack by the Syrian government against its own people just days earlier,

in which nearly ninety died, one-third of them children. The U.S. action, it is feared by some, may draw the United States into another conflict such as in Iraq or Afghanistan, which have embroiled this country, to a greater or lesser extent, for more than fifteen years. At the same time, however, nearly all condemn the recent chemical gas attack, and admit that something must be done to put an end to the carnage of Syria's civil war, which has raged for more than five years, and by some estimates, has taken the lives of nearly 500,000 people.

INTERVENTION VERSUS ISOLATION

Generally speaking, only under extreme circumstances do the people of any country welcome intervention by another nation, especially by means of armed force. However, whatever these conditions might be, we have seen much in the way of intervention, particularly during the past seven decades, some partially successful and others having disastrous results. To those who are taking military action such as air strikes or placing soldiers on the soil of other nations, the word intervention is oftentimes used to justify their actions which they hope, in the long run, will be good for the people involved. They regard it as being necessary to prevent the complete breakdown of law and order, or control by oppressive and dictatorial leaders.

The history of the United States in this regard, particularly over the past 120 years, has ranged from preferred isolation and general noninvolvement in the affairs of other nations to that of expected intervention throughout the world, ostensibly for the sake of freedom, peace, and order. In the half-century prior

to the end of the Second World War, the United States attempted, though not often successfully, to avoid direct involvement with the conflicts of other nations.

Even our country's entrance into World Wars I and II was not initially contemplated, but ultimately played a major role in their outcomes. President Woodrow Wilson repeatedly vowed the United States would not enter World War I, which began in the summer of 1914. At the end of 1916, two and one-half years later, the United States remained on the sidelines, but was getting pressure from Great Britain to enter the war, as it had become a virtual stalemate, with both sides on the verge of mutual destruction. In April 1917, President Wilson reluctantly committed the United States to the war, and it was over just a year and a half later, in November 1918.

Similarly, the United States, mired in the depths of the 1930's Great Depression, did not want to enter World War II. That all changed, however, on December 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Though the war raged on for nearly four more years, it was primarily through this country's advanced technological, scientific, and military know-how that the Axis powers were finally defeated.

In the decades since the end of the Second World War, the United States has transitioned into a nation which has intervened—and is often expected to do so—in the conflicts of many nations and peoples. History records that over the past seven decades this country has made such interventions more than eighty separate times, and this number only includes those which involved military operations. Some of these lasted for a day, while others continued on for many years.

WILL GOD INTERVENE?

As followers of the Master and students of the Word of God, it is not within our province to decide who is right in matters of this kind. To us the entire world situation gives evidence that man, with all his technical and scientific knowledge and advancement, is failing to govern himself in a manner to assure peace, security, and happiness for all. Human selfishness has driven man into a situation from which he is unable to extricate himself. Some are trying one method, and some another, but ultimately all human efforts will fail, and we will have the climax in what the Prophet Daniel describes as “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1

There are millions in the world who profess to believe in God and in his ability to help them. However, it has evidently not occurred to many of these that God will ever actually do anything to straighten out the tangled affairs of the nations, and of the world in general. They do not understand that God has promised to intercede in human affairs, to do for the people what they cannot do for themselves. For those who do have some awareness of this, rarely is their faith in God’s wisdom and power to accomplish any permanent results strong enough to enable them to believe it. They look at secular history and observe that in the past God has not interfered to establish peace, and they ask why we should expect him to do so now.

PAST INTERVENTIONS

From Bible history, however, we learn that in the past God did intervene in human affairs. An

outstanding example of this was the case of the Flood in Noah's day. Prior to the Flood, as the Bible explains, the world had become desperately wicked. The imaginations of men's hearts were "only evil continually." (Gen. 6:1-5) Divine intervention at that time resulted in the destruction of the entire human race, with the exception of Noah and his family. These, following the instructions of God, were brought safely through the Flood, and formed the nucleus for a new world.

There was divine intervention in the affairs of a nation when God delivered the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt. Pharaoh learned that he could not hold out against the God of Israel, although he tried desperately to do so, finally losing his life in the attempt. The reason for this intervention is apparent. The Hebrews were God's chosen people, the children of Abraham. God had promised Abraham that all the families of the earth would be blessed by his "seed." Since Jesus was that true seed of promise, it was necessary that the descendants of Abraham survive on the earth until Jesus, the Messiah, came. (Gen. 22:16-18; Gal. 3:16) The bondage in Egypt might well have ultimately destroyed this people—hence God's intervention to deliver them.

Many examples of divine intervention on behalf of individuals come down to us from the ancient past. The three Hebrews were delivered from the fiery furnace, and Daniel was saved from the mouths of the lions. (Dan. 3:1-30; 6:1-28) However, God did not intervene to save Jesus from death, because his plan was for his only begotten Son to give his life as the Redeemer and Savior of the world. (John 1:14; 3:16) During his earthly ministry, Jesus, by the

power of God, performed many miracles, and later the apostles also performed miracles—temporarily intervening in the lives of those who were healed.

Although God did not save Jesus from death, even the cruel death of the cross, he intervened powerfully three days later, when he raised him from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand, giving him the divine nature—immortality. God’s intervention to raise his son from the dead was a vital part of his plan for man’s salvation, for although it was necessary for Jesus to die as a “ransom for all,” his death would have been in vain if he had not been subsequently resurrected.—Phil. 2:8,9; Heb. 12:2; I Tim. 2:5,6; I Cor. 15:13-20

The foregoing examples indicate that God’s intervention, or in some cases nonintervention, in the affairs of mankind, is determined according to the accomplishment of his various plans and purposes. In turn, this is governed by the different “times and seasons” during which certain aspects of his plan are due to be fulfilled. (Dan. 2:20,21; Acts 1:7) In all cases, however, the great Creator’s actions, or a deferring of such actions, are for the ultimate purpose of man’s eventual, eternal blessing.—Rev. 21:3-7; 22:1,2

THE WORLD’S VIEWPOINT

Since the days of the Early Church, neither the world nor the professed people of God have witnessed much in the way of outward demonstrations to indicate that the Lord is interfering in mankind’s affairs. God’s consecrated people, by the eye of faith, recognize his dealings with them along spiritual lines, but they have been allowed to suffer and die even as the rest of the world. For the most part, the

worldly viewpoint, including those of sincere religious persuasion, is that we are not to expect God to ever do anything in a positive way to help mankind out of the chaos and disarray into which human selfishness has plunged it.

As a result, most seem to think that the world will continue to struggle forward indefinitely, with mankind laboring as best they can to rule themselves. Thus, their efforts are to influence governments to enact better laws, and in other ways improve the social and moral tone of society. These have long since discarded the idea of Christ's return and the establishment of his long-promised kingdom. In other words, the people of the world, including those of various religious beliefs, generally do not believe that there will ever be divine intervention in the affairs of men. Man, they say, must attempt to improve his own lot, and that of his fellowman.

LONG SILENCE—BUT NOT FOREVER

Those who do not know the plan of God as revealed in the Bible are not to be blamed for their lack of belief in divine intervention as a solution to the world's problems. After all, as we have noted, it has been a long time since humans have seen much visible evidence of the mighty working power of our God in the affairs of men. The Lord takes this into account when, through the Prophet Isaiah, he says, "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself." (Isa. 42:14) Likewise, the psalmist in our opening text speaks of God's having kept silent, holding his peace, for a long period of time.

Indeed, God has held his peace and has "been still, and refrained" for a long time from interfering in

human affairs to any visible extent. However, in both the above passages, we are informed that God does not propose to refrain forever from interfering with the downward course of human selfishness. In Isaiah 42:13, just one verse prior to the above reference, the prophet says, “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”

While speaking of God’s silence, the psalmist also makes it clear in subsequent verses that this is not to be the case forever, and that in due time, mankind will know that the Lord alone is “the most high over all the earth.” The only means by which such an understanding can come to all the earth is by the miraculous intervention of God in the world’s affairs and activities. Many may feel that God has given up on his human creation, even to the point of “isolation,” and will simply let man destroy himself. This is not the God of the Bible, however, and the abandonment of mankind has no part in his plan.

GOD’S METHODS

God is unlimited in his methods of accomplishing his purposes for man’s ultimate blessing. His intervention in human affairs in Noah’s day was by means of a flood of waters. Through the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, we believe that the closing of another world order is near at hand, to be followed by the establishment of the long-promised Messianic kingdom on earth. God’s intervention in bringing the present world order to a close utilizes different methods than were employed at the time of the Flood. One of these, as indicated in the prophecies

just quoted, is for God to allow nations, armies, and ideologies to pit themselves against each other to a sufficient extent that the imperfect social order of which they are an integral part, but which will have no part in Christ's kingdom, might be brought to destruction.

Another prophecy is one in which the present social order is symbolically described as "the earth." It reads: "Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy," or zeal.—Zeph. 3:8

This and other prophecies indicate that in the final phase of the "time of trouble" foretold by Daniel, God will, in his own way, reveal his hand in what is taking place, and at that time, the nations will recognize his intervention. In this final phase of the prophetic destruction of the symbolic earth, or present world order, the Scriptures indicate that the people of Israel will figure prominently.

ROLE OF ISRAEL IN GOD'S INTERVENTION

The prophecy of Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, indicates that at the time of its fulfillment the returned Israelites will be well established in the land promised to them. Under such conditions, aggressor hordes from the north, under the leadership of a symbolic character named "Gog," will attack them. It will be then, when the situation for his ancient people looks hopeless, that God will intervene on their behalf. Concerning this we quote the following portion of Ezekiel's prophecy.

“It shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him [Gog] throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man’s sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”—Ezek. 38:18-23

As this prophecy reveals, when the horrendous event which it describes occurs, all nations will have their eyes opened to discern that this defeat of Israel’s enemies was accomplished by God. They will then know that the Lord of heaven has intervened on behalf of his people. The prophecy speaks of “an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone,” which God will use to defeat the enemies of Israel. These expressions may well be symbolic of whatever forces the Lord may use at that time. Details of prophecies are seldom understood until

they are fulfilled. However, the important consideration now is that God, at the precise due time, will intervene in human affairs, and when he does, all nations will know the significance of what has taken place.

THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

The defeat of Israel's enemies will result in the establishment of Messianic kingdom authority throughout all the earth. This will be the ending climax to the Time of Trouble. Jesus referred to this as a period of "great tribulation," so great that unless it was "shortened, there should no flesh be saved." However, Jesus assured us that this time of chaos and trouble would be brought to an end "for the elect's sake." (Matt. 24:21,22) The thought in the original Greek is that this tribulation will be stopped "through the elect"—that is, through Jesus and those who will be associated with him in the spiritual phase of the kingdom, and who will "reign with him a thousand years."—Rev. 20:6

The Prophet Isaiah provides a marvelous description of the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. In this prophecy, the kingdom government is symbolized as being a mountain above all others, and the various mountains and hills of earth subservient to it. The prophecy reads: "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his

paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-3

The Lord’s “mountain,” or kingdom, will be a ruling house, made up of the sons of God. These include Jesus and those who have suffered and died with him that they might live and reign with him. (II Tim. 2:11,12) This ruling house of sons will oversee and govern in all the affairs of men, as denoted by its being established in the “top of the mountains,” and “exalted above the hills.” Through divine intervention this new government will be firmly established to rule over the peoples of the world, and they will voluntarily “flow unto it.”

The peoples of all nations, by that time, will have learned the futility of their own efforts to establish peace and security. They will know that the world cannot go on indefinitely under the constant threats of war, revolution, and weapons of mass destruction. They will learn that an uneasy peace, brought about by the intervention of man and his armaments, is not really a worthwhile peace. They will be “glad and rejoice” for this new government, the kingdom of Christ, to exercise authority over them. It will be this, of which they have unknowingly waited for thousands of years.—Isa. 25:9

The foregoing prophecy quoted from Isaiah 2:2-4 states that people will desire to be taught by the “God of Jacob,” and to learn of his ways. This is because they will know that their own plans and

ways have failed. Seeing the grand results of God's intervention, they will want to learn his precepts, and walk in his paths. The ways of the Lord will then be made plain, and freely available to all. His law shall go forth "out of Zion," and his word "from Jerusalem."—Isa. 2:3

"SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES"

When the people recognize the authority of Messiah's kingdom over them, and seek to walk in his ways, they will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." They will not "learn war any more." (vs. 4) This means that divine intervention in the earth will result in the end of war and the preparation for war, symbolized by the reshaping of swords and spears into farm implements.

How ironic it is that this symbolism of Isaiah's prophecy has been viewed by people and leaders of all nations for nearly sixty years. In 1959, a bronze statue sculpted by a famous artist and sculptor from the Ukraine was donated by the Soviet Union to the United Nations, where it was placed in a garden setting. The sculpture is called Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares. It depicts the figure of a man hammering a sword into the shape of the cutting blade of a plow, representing the wish to end all wars and convert the weapons of death and destruction into peaceful and productive tools for the benefit of mankind.

We look forward to the time, so near at hand, when God, through his Son Christ Jesus and his faithful footstep followers, will intervene in man's affairs "once for all" time, to bring about a "kingdom

not to be shaken.” Therefore, “let us have gratitude—whereby we may be rendering divine service well-pleasingly unto God, with reverence and awe.” (Heb. 12:26-28, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) God’s intervention will bring an eternal solution to the basic human problem of selfishness, for the people will also be reformed in their hearts, and will delight in the ways of the Lord, the ways of love. ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 1—“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”—John 14:21 (Z. ’95-75 Hymn 145)

JUNE 8—“He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”—James 5:20 (Z. ’95-203 Hymn 22)

JUNE 15—“I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”—Isaiah 55:3 (Z. ’96-29 Hymn 178A)

JUNE 22—“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. . . . Every man according to his several ability.”—I Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:15 (Z. ’07-63 Hymn 210)

JUNE 29—“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”—Matthew 5:8 (Z. ’00-71 Hymn 208)

Deborah and Barak

Key Verse: “*She said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.*”
—Judges 4:9

Selected Scripture:
Judges 4:1-24

wisdom, integrity, and courage. Having taken stock of Israel’s deplorable state under the oppression of the Canaanites, Deborah sought out the warrior Barak. She said to him, “Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee . . . Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand.”—vss. 6,7

AFTER ENJOYING AN eighty-year period of peace and blessing due to the efforts of Ehud, Israel faltered and turned again to idolatry. Persecution by the Canaanites at the hands of King Jabin and his captain Sisera came upon Israel due to their unfaithfulness. In God’s providence, however, a godly woman was raised to a position of leadership. She was Deborah, a prophetess and judge of Israel.

Deborah’s counsel was sought as she sat “under the palm tree . . . in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.” (Judg. 4:5) She was a woman of tremendous

Barak had heard this message before, but had failed to do anything about it. Now, at the encouragement of Deborah, it was time to act. Barak still hesitated, though the Word of the Lord should have been sufficient to stimulate his faith and embolden his leadership. He said to Deborah, “If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.” (vs. 8) Barak’s hesitation demonstrated a weakness in his faith. As a result, in the challenge facing him, he suffered the loss of the full glory of victory, and the blessing and honor that God desired to bestow on him. Deborah declared, as stated in our Key Verse, that she would go with Barak, but that the resulting victory and honor would not be fully his.

The battle against Sisera, his army and nine hundred chariots was a complete rout. God gave them into the hands of Barak just as he had promised. Sisera abandoned his chariot and tried to escape on foot. The Lord arranged for another courageous woman of Israel to be waiting for him. Jael, the wife of Heber, invited Sisera, now a fugitive, to take shelter in her tent. She gave him milk to drink, a sleep aid, and covered him up.—vss. 13-19

Weary from the battle, Sisera fell into a deep sleep. Jael resolutely grabbed a tent stake in one hand and a hammer in the other. She went into the tent where Israel’s enemy and oppressor slept, and drove the stake through his temple and into the ground. (vss. 21,22) Israel’s victory was now complete, and as Deborah had prophesied, Sisera fell at “the hand of a woman.”

Deborah and Barak teach us great lessons from two different perspectives. When God commands us, we should be swift to render obedience. Deborah was faithful and firmly resolved to do God’s will. She received a great blessing, being made an example of faith in God’s Word. Barak’s experience teaches us that God can give us the victory, even when we are weak in faith. ■

Gideon's Call

Key Verse: *“The angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”*
—*Judges 6:12*

Selected Scripture:
Judges 6:11-24

The Lord had assured Israel that if they kept his commands they would be blessed. Their unfaithfulness would result in curses. (Deut. 28) These curses would include oppression by their enemies. Now, deeply impoverished, Israel cried out to the Lord for deliverance from Midian.—Judg. 6:6

God's angel greeted Gideon, assuring him that the Lord was with him. Gideon's response, however, reflects a somewhat different state of mind: “Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”—vs. 13

Gideon did not receive a rebuke for his wavering faith, but rather encouragement. “The LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel

OUR KEY VERSE INTRO-duces us to Gideon, a “mighty man of valour.” Israel was in dire need of a great leader to deliver them. They had lapsed once again into a condition of unfaithfulness to God. Idolatry was openly and rampantly practiced. Marauding bands of Midianites plundered their livestock and grain, leaving Israel in a desperate condition. Such calamity had been foretold.

from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (vs. 14) As Christians, we have often found this to be God's loving way of dealing with us. Though we may expect a rebuke in moments of doubt or weakness, the lovingkindness of our Heavenly Father consistently gives encouragement.

The Lord's words, "Go in this thy might," could be thought of as referring to Gideon's strength as a mighty and valiant warrior. However, it more likely signifies the assuring message of hope for Israel's deliverance. Gideon was to take strength from God's pledge of blessing and victory over the Midianites. Nevertheless, another barrier to Gideon's full faith in God's call arose. He expressed this concern: "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."—vs. 15

We may have similar feelings at times, with misgivings about our ability to do the Lord's work. The Scriptures give us strength to counter such doubts. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: . . . That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."—I Cor. 1:26-28,31

Gideon prepared a meal for God's messenger, perhaps believing that if the angel ate of it, proof would be given that this was no imagined vision. The meal was not merely eaten, but was wholly consumed by fire. (Judg. 6:19-22) The evidence was irrefutable. Gideon now grasped the reality of the moment, that an angel of God had indeed spoken to him. He truly was called to service by the Lord. In like manner, and by God's grace, let us be strengthened to accept the profound reality of our call to his service. ■

Jephthah Answers God's Call

Key Verse:
***“Jephthah said
unto the elders of
Gilead, If ye bring
me home again to
fight against the
children of
Ammon, and the
LORD deliver them
before me, shall I
be your head?”***
—Judges 11:9

Selected Scripture:
Judges 11:4-33

not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of a strange woman.” (Judg. 11:1,2) Rather than causing bitter feelings or diminishing Jephthah's character, this experience would make his nobility stand out.

The Gileadites had come under persecution by the Ammonites, whom they did not have the wherewithal to resist. Their only hope was to look to their alienated brother, Jephthah, because he was a skilled man of war. “They said unto Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.” (vs. 6) His answer showed perplexity. “Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of

GOD'S GIFTS AND CALL-
ings are a source of wonderful lessons. Our Key Verse finds the elders of Gilead begging Jephthah to return as their commander. Previously, he had been estranged by his brethren. “Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah. And Gilead's wife bare him sons; and his wife's sons grew up, and they thrust out Jephthah, and said unto him, Thou shalt

my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?" (vs. 7) He did not lash out in anger or chide them, but his words were heart-searching. We may take great instruction from this example.

We must not harbor ill feelings toward those who have wronged us, but be ready to forgive and assist. Jesus tells us, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: . . . if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?"—Matt. 5:44-46

If Jephthah had been of a reprehensible character, surely his brethren would not have asked him to be their leader. He must have been of good character and zealous faith. It is written of him in the gallery of the faithful, "What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; . . . Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, . . . out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."—Heb. 11:32-34

Jephthah's character is further revealed by his wise attempt at a diplomatic solution to the conflict with Ammon. He appealed to the king to be reasonable, saying, "What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me to fight in my land?" (Judg. 11:12) Jephthah then recounted the history of Israel's passage into the promised land, which was mandated by God. (vss. 14-23) In conclusion, Jephthah told the king to let Chemosh, the god of the Ammonites, give them the land he wished them to have, and the Lord would give Israel the land he desired them to possess. However, it would be wrong to go to war with Israel. (vss. 24,27) The king of Ammon gave no heed to Jephthah's words. War ensued and God gave the victory to Jephthah, who was formerly reproached. (vss. 28-33) We can also gain the victory, even when reproached, by standing firm in faith. ■

Samson's Call

Key Verse: *“For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”*
—Judges 13:5

Selected Scripture:
Judges 13:1-25

Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.” (Judg. 13:1) Hence, there arose the need for a righteous judge in Israel to deliver them.

God's angel visited the wife of Manoah, and after telling her that she was to soon bear a son, he instructed her in proper prenatal care. “Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.” (vss. 3-5) Our Key Verse continues with the angel saying that her son would be a Nazarite, especially dedicated to God from birth.

FOR ANY CHILDLESS COUPLE, the news that they were to have a son would be cause for great rejoicing. Imagine the added excitement to hear that the son would be a deliverer of your nation. Such is the joy expressed in our Key Verse, that the son of Manoah and his wife would grow up to help deliver Israel from the oppression of the Philistines. Thus, God's calling had arranged Samson's destiny before he was conceived.

The oft backslidings of Israel had occasioned another period of oppression. “The children of

The news that she would no longer be barren was thrilling, and she ran to tell Manoah. Upon hearing it, he intreated the Lord, requesting that he might also meet with the messenger. Manoah's prayer was soon answered. The angel returned and confirmed all that his wife had reported. At first, however, Manoah did not understand that he was speaking with God's messenger. He asked him to stay while he prepared a sacrifice to commemorate the joyous occasion.—vss. 6-19

As the sacrifice was consumed, flames ascended to the heavens. Manoah and his wife were startled to see their visitor go into the flame and rise to the heavens as well. (vss. 20,21) Realizing that they had indeed seen an angel sent directly from God, Manoah supposed that they would die as a result. "But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."—vss. 22,23

The Nazarite vow is outlined in Numbers 6:1-21. It signified a separation unto the work of God, to last for a specific length of time. Samson was called to be a Nazarite for life—from before birth until his death. Although set apart for life to do God's work of deliverance on behalf of Israel, Samson had recognizable faults, as detailed in Judges chapters 14-16. However, the flaws in Samson's character were offset by his strong faith. Despite his human weaknesses, he was used by God in divine service. We are thankful that the Bible provides such an honest portrayal of Samson. By it we are assured that, despite our flaws, God's grace enables us to live a life separated unto him—for here unto were we called. We concur with Paul, who thanked God that, although he served the law of sin with the flesh, "With the mind I . . . serve the law of God."—Rom. 7:25 ■

Paul at Athens

*“As I passed by,
and beheld your
devotions, I found
an altar with this
inscription, TO
THE UNKNOWN
GOD. Whom
therefore ye
ignorantly
worship, him
declare I
unto you.”*
—Acts 17:23

WHEN PAUL SUDDENLY had to leave his newly found brethren of Thessalonica and Berea to escape mob violence and threats to his life brought on by his enemies, he was escorted safely by his friends to a port city where he boarded a ship bound for Athens. As he departed, he left word for both Timothy and Silas, who had stayed

behind in Macedonia, that when their work was finished in Thessalonica and Berea, they were to join him in Athens. (Acts 17:13-15) Although Paul's abrupt departure was from Berea, we know that Timothy went to Thessalonica, as stated in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, while Silas appears to have stayed in Berea. (I Thess. 3:1,2; Acts 17:14) Luke's record indicates that Timothy and Silas, perhaps due to the great amount of work still to be done in Macedonia, did not meet Paul in Athens, as had been planned, but in Corinth, which was to be the next stop on his journey.—Acts 18:1,5

Athens did not appear to be part of Paul's originally arranged journey to search out a people for God's name. He found himself there mainly because persecution had driven him in that direction, and he did not expect to stay any longer than necessary. The Scriptural record, in fact, only mentions this one brief stop in Athens, and no return visit either by Paul or his associates is recorded.

A CITY OF IDOLATRY

Nevertheless, while waiting in Athens for his two colleagues, Paul was not idle. At first, he toured the city, where he saw their many pagan idols. Athens was the most celebrated city in ancient Greece for learning, the arts, science, music, culture, and philosophy. A few centuries before, Alexander the Great had conquered much of the world, helping to establish the powerful Greek Empire. Athens became the most prominent city in the world, and was considered the empire's capital. Now it had yielded that distinction to Rome. However, it still retained its reputation as a great cultural center. Many learned men and philosophers came from Athens, including Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Sophocles, and Demosthenes.

As Paul went through the city, he looked at the temples, altars, and statues, appalled at the idolatry he found. (Acts 17:16) It is said that no matter where anyone would stand in Athens, his eyes would range over innumerable temples, altars, and statues of gods. Athens was a paradox. Of all the cities in the world, it boasted of having the most learned and cultural heritage, and yet it was the most idolatrous. It is unknown as to how many gods the Athenians worshipped. Estimates by historians range from several

hundred to tens of thousands. Regardless of the number, however, it is clearly evident that religion, whether based on theology or mythology, was exploited in stone, silver, and gold.

As Paul walked through the city, he came upon the local synagogue, where he stopped to reason with the Jews. Nothing is written as to whether he found acceptance or opposition from them. It is possible that the Jews there had come considerably under the influence of worldly wisdom, and that he found little in the way of response to true religion. With these Jews, perhaps, it was less a matter of opening the Scriptures, and more that of a debate about the philosophies of that time. Paul also sought out people who were religious, successfully finding them in the marketplace. Since he could speak Greek fluently, Paul could reason effectively with these people, informing them of Jesus and the resurrection. Luke records these meetings, saying that Paul reasoned “in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.”—Acts 17:17

PUTTING FORTH “STRANGE GODS”

Paul’s efforts were not localized nor secretive. Soon men in all parts of Athens had heard of his discussions. The record states that “certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.” (vs. 18) Paul was aided in his efforts to spread these glad tidings by the customs of the Athenians, who spent their leisure

time in deliberating over the newest thoughts on philosophy. Luke informs us: “All the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.”—vs. 21

It is believed by some historians that laws had been passed which prohibited the introduction of any more gods in the region, particularly if their origin was not from Greek or Roman philosophy or mythology. Although not so stated in Luke’s account of Paul in Athens, Acts 16:20,21 gives some indication that this may have been the case in Philippi, where earlier Paul and Silas had been put into prison. There, the claim was made by the local authorities that their teachings were “not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, [we] being Romans.”

ORIGINS OF ANCIENT GODS

We may wonder as to the large number of deities that the ancient Greeks, Romans, and other peoples of the world had, and which constituted the basis of the mythology of that era. The pattern among each was similar. Every god or goddess had a different function, but mainly it consisted of control over the natural elements and fundamental aspects of life on the earth. The Greek deities were thought to live on the top of Mount Olympus, or sometimes in the air above it, but they were free to wander about the world at will. Although Zeus was the chief of all their gods, there were many others, some of the more well-known being Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Athena, and Poseidon.

It is likely that such a multiplicity of gods, and the accompanying mythology, had its origin in the

exploits of the mighty beings that came to earth in the days before the Flood. Some of the angelic creation took on human form and intermarried with the daughters of men, producing a hybrid race which contributed to much evil in the earth. (Gen. 6:1-5) Greek mythology reflects this, speaking of gods coming and going to and from the earth, marrying fair maidens, and producing offspring which performed mighty deeds. The number of deities and the related mythology increased as the events of Noah's day passed down from one generation to another. It is noteworthy that these "strange gods," as they are called in Acts 17:18 and 22 are in the Greek language identified by the word *daimonion*, which is the Greek root of our English word "demon." This is another indication that their mythological worship most likely had its beginning with the fallen angels, or demons, of Noah's day.

PAUL BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH COURT

When Paul's preaching relating to the resurrection of Jesus reached the ears of the Epicureans and Stoics, two major groups of philosophers, they decided to bring him before the Aeropagus—the supreme court of Athens. They said of Paul, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange demons." Then they inquired of him, "Can we know what this new doctrine is, which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears; we desire, therefore, to know what these things mean."—Acts 17:18-20, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

It might appear that Paul was merely being asked to explain his teachings. However, if this were

true, they could just as easily have heard him in the marketplace where they encountered him. Their statements about Paul were not complimentary—calling him a “babblers,” meaning a seed-picker, or empty talker. These philosophers also seemed to be skeptical about what he was preaching, even though they had widely differing religious views among themselves, and like most Athenians, worshipped many gods. Thus, Paul’s hearing before them was likely in the nature of a trial, because he had been preaching things to the Athenians which, up to this time, they had never before heard.

The Epicureans believed that the world was made by chance, that there is no providence, no resurrection, no immortality, and that pleasure is the chief good of life. The Stoics, on the other hand, had a philosophy which contended that everything which has reality is natural, and is overruled by divine will to be calmly accepted without passion, grief or joy. In this viewpoint, they defined “force” as the shaping principle that is joined with matter to be the universal influence which pervades all, and becomes the reason and soul of the animate creation.

The proponents of both these philosophies suspected that Paul’s teachings were contrary to theirs when he introduced the idea of the resurrection. If so, they likely thought that the law forbidding the introduction of new gods could be used to prevent him from continuing. We do not know what the penalty would have been if the Aeropagus had decided that Paul was guilty of breaking such a law. Whatever the prospect, he was not in a friendly environment.

THE “UNKNOWN” GOD

During the time he had traveled in Athens, Paul read many of the inscriptions on the various altars, temples, and statues. He noticed one altar in particular, on which the words, “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,” had been inscribed. In their concern not to overlook any deity, the Athenians had erected this special altar. It was the existence of this altar to an “unknown god” around which Paul developed his defense.

Standing before the supreme court and a large assembly of Athenians who had gathered on Mars’ Hill, Paul began to speak. Luke describes the scene as follows: “Paul stood in the midst, . . . and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.”—Acts 17:22,23

In the *Diaglott* translation, Paul’s opening words are rendered: “You are extremely devoted to the worship of demons.” Other translations soften this statement by translating the passage, “You are very religious,” or “You are too superstitious.” The Greek word here, however, as in verse 18, has as its root the equivalent of our English word “demon.”

We might think it strange that Paul should be so blunt. If he had been speaking to Jews, they would have been insulted. However, when Paul described the Greeks’ religion as centered in the worship of demons, they understood this to be correct, and therefore were not insulted. The word demon, as translated in its various Greek forms, did not have a bad connotation to the Grecians—it meant “God.”

The noted philosopher Plato used a form of this word which meant “knowing.” It was not until later that Gentiles, through the widespread influence of Christianity, started using this word to denote evil spirits and fallen angels.

THE SUPREME CREATOR

When Paul told those gathered at Mars’ Hill that their unknown God was the one and only true God, he used the Greek word *theos*, a designation of the supreme divinity. As he informed the Athenians about this Supreme Creator of the universe, he made it clear that they could never make a likeness of him from gold, silver, or stone, to place in a temple. They could not create this God with their hands. The reverse, in fact, was true. Paul said, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.”—vss. 24,25

This mighty Creator was responsible for all life upon earth in every form, and all life was dependent upon him. They did not have God in their hands—he had them in his hands. Paul said this Supreme God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being.” Even some of the Greeks’ own poets, Paul said, spoke in this fashion, believing that we are all God’s offspring.—vss. 26-28

We marvel at the great tact and logic of Paul in presenting his case, and how well he used the teachings of some of their own respected writers, building upon them the structure of God's plan. Being God's offspring, Paul reasoned with them, no one of mankind could make gold, silver, or stone sculptures or images to look like God, or to worship as God.—Acts. 17:29

JUDGMENT DAY APPOINTED

As Paul stood before the supreme court of Athens, he reminded his listeners that in times past God overlooked such misunderstandings of his nature and character. However, the light of truth shone more brightly now. Man should repent, Paul said, change from his superstitious beliefs in many gods, and devote himself fully to the worship and obedience of the one true God. As he was coming under the judgment of their court, Paul stated that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," and has selected his own judge for this task. Paul said that God had "given assurance unto all men" of this "in that he raised [Jesus] from the dead."—vss. 30,31

Immediately at Paul's mention of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, many of his listeners began deriding him in such a loud manner that he could no longer be heard. Others indicated that they would like to hear more at a later time. As for the court, it was not necessary for them to hear more of his defense. He had made it clear that he was not introducing a new god, but rather was speaking about one they already worshipped as the Unknown God. Thus, he was free to go. "So Paul departed from among them."—vss. 32,33

SMALL ECCLESIA FORMED

Although Athens was not a place Paul had planned to visit, the Lord overruled circumstances to take him there, and his trial helped to put him in contact with several who became believers in the Gospel. Only two of these are named, and their names appear only once in the Scriptures. One was “Dionysius the Aeropagite.” Because of this designation, it is thought that he was one of the judges in front of whom Paul made his defense. The other individual mentioned was “a woman named Damaris,” of whom no additional information is given. These and “others with them,” as the account states, adhered to Paul and likely became the nucleus of a small congregation of the Lord’s people in Athens.—vs. 34

How often God has shaped circumstances in the lives of individuals such as Paul to bring the Gospel message to those—one here and one there—who have a hearing ear. Likewise, the Lord overrules in the lives of those who desire to follow and serve him, so they can hear his Word and be brought into the body of Christ.

We might initially think of Paul’s time in Athens as a “detour” in his journey. However, the Lord knew in advance that there were a few there who were waiting to learn about God’s plan, and of the great opportunity which would be given to Paul to give a witness in the midst of the world’s most renown cultural and religious center of that time. We can manifestly see in these events how the body of Christ was being selected, and how it was growing through the faithfulness of Paul and the many laborers associated with him in this search for God’s people. ■

Led by God's Holy Spirit

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

—*Romans 8:14*

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

had left businesses, families, and friends to follow the Master. During the three and one-half years of Jesus' ministry on earth, these specially chosen disciples of the Lord heard the many wonderful lessons which he taught, and witnessed his perfect behavior at all times. They also saw Jesus perform many miracles, such as healing the sick, the lame, the blind, and even raising the dead back to life.

Yet, when it was due time for Jesus to allow himself to be crucified, and to give his life as a ransom for all, the apostles became afraid. Nearly all of them ran away when Jesus refused to use his miraculous powers to save himself from death. One of the reasons the apostles reacted in this way when Jesus was about to be crucified was that they had not yet received the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus knew this ahead of time, and in one of the final lessons he gave to the apostles he spoke regarding the Holy Spirit. While with them on the night

in which he was later betrayed, Jesus said, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, . . . the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”—John 14:16,17

In the above passage, the word translated “Spirit” comes from the Greek word *pneuma*, which means “a current of air,” and denotes any invisible power or influence. For example, in the English language one may refer to a “pneumatic” tire, which means it is filled with invisible, pressurized air. The pressurized air inside the tire provides an effect, or power, which is not visible to human eyes. However, its influence is noticed, because the air diminishes the vibrations which enter through the tread of the tire, as it rotates over rough or uneven surfaces. This provides a much smoother and safer ride than if the tire was to turn with little or no internal air pressure.

The pronouns which have been translated as “him” and “he” in the *King James Version* of verse 17 quoted above, should more accurately be translated “it.” This is because the word Spirit, to which the pronouns refer, does not signify a personality, just as we know there is no personality to the pressurized air in the tires of our vehicle. *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* translation of verse 17 renders these pronouns correctly: “The spirit of truth, which the world cannot receive, because it beholds it not, nor knows it; but you know it; because it abides with you, and will be in you.”

Thus, we understand that the Holy Spirit is any holy influence or power emanating from God. It is a holy influence or power which comes to us through

the Scriptures, including the lives and examples of God's people throughout the ages. The Holy Spirit is the influence or power of God's perfect will and purpose, exercised always according to his harmonious attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power.

KNOWING GOD'S THOUGHTS

The Apostle Peter tells us that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Pet. 1:21) Indeed, many centuries earlier, the Lord told Moses that he would put his words into the mouth of a prophet. God said, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."—Deut. 18:18

This "Prophet" of which God foretold was none other than his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus. Throughout his earthly ministry, he emphasized that his words and teachings were not his own, but rather were those of his Heavenly Father. Jesus said, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . . Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 12:49,50; 14:24) Later, we are told by the Apostle Paul that God has "in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." (Heb. 1:1,2) Hence, when we read and study the Bible, we are really listening to God's thoughts and words.

HOLY SPIRIT AS A "COMFORTER"

In the words quoted earlier from John 14:16, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as "another Comforter."

The word “comforter” is translated from the Greek word *parakletos*, which means: a consoler, intercessor, succorer, assistant, or helper. The *Diaglott* translation of this verse renders this Greek word as “helper.” Just as Jesus had been a personal helper to the disciples during his time on earth with them, he now promised that after his departure, he would send “another helper,” which would be the Holy Spirit.

In verse 26 of this same chapter, Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit, which the Father would send in his name, would “remind you of all things which I said to you.” (*Diaglott*) On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, it immediately helped them to recall, and to understand, things that Jesus had previously said. By this, they were given the ability to speak and write concerning the Gospel message in a manner which would benefit others. The Holy Spirit also strengthened the apostles’ zeal and determination to endure whatever God’s providence permitted during their ministry. Most assuredly, then, we see that the Holy Spirit was a comforter, helper, and assistant to our Lord’s specially chosen apostles.

The help provided by the Holy Spirit was not just for the benefit of the apostles, but for all consecrated followers of Christ throughout the Gospel Age, and is often found through the Scriptures. Paul tells us, “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”—Rom. 15:4

In his second letter to the Corinthian brethren, Paul further wrote, “Blessed be God, even the Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (II Cor. 1:3,4) We note in these verses that the promised comfort does not imply removal of our tribulations. Rather, the meaning of the word in the original Greek is “to strengthen together.”

As we gain more of the Holy Spirit and increase our knowledge of the Word of truth, we become comforters—representatives of the power and influence of God. One of the main purposes for this is that we might be helpers to one another, strengthening and encouraging fellow members of the body of Christ. It is not easy to develop as a Christian because the world, our fallen flesh, and the great Adversary are all working to discourage us. Thus, our mutual help and comfort one toward another is vitally important.

LED BY GOD’S SPIRIT

In Romans 8:14, our opening text, we are told that those who are led—or “guided,” as the *Diaglott* translation states—by the Holy Spirit are considered to be God’s sons. This guidance is provided by the instructions given to us in the Scriptures. Concerning God’s leading, the psalmist wrote, “Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.”—Ps. 143:10

Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “For God is he who is working effectually among you, both to will and to perform, on account of his benevolence.” (Phil. 2:13, *Diaglott*) In this verse, the expression “to will” means to choose, prefer or delight in. The

Holy Spirit guides us, by the instructions given in the Bible, to ignore our fallen fleshly will, and instead choose, and delight in, God's will, which is that we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. In this regard, we quote the following: "To the extent that the consecrated believers resign themselves to the Lord, and, ignoring their own wills and preferences, seek to walk in his way, they are 'led of the Spirit,' 'taught of the Spirit.'"—*Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 5, page 185

A WITNESS THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

In Romans 8:16, we are told: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." One of the evidences of this "witness" is given in the next verse: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (vs. 17) Here the word "suffer" is translated from a Greek word which means "to experience jointly or of the same kind." Throughout the New Testament we are told about the many types of experiences we should expect to have if we are truly following in our Master's footsteps.

In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he wrote, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Tim. 3:12) Similarly, Peter stated: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you."—I Pet. 4:12-14, *Revised Standard Version*

Jesus said to his followers, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:18,19) Trials, suffering, and even persecution which come upon us because we are striving to follow in the footsteps of our Master, and to apply God’s principles in our lives, are indeed important components of the witness of the Holy Spirit in our Christian sojourn. Because the witness of God’s Holy Spirit is so closely related to following our great pattern, Paul refers to this power and influence as “the spirit of Christ.”—Rom. 8:9

CHARACTER QUALITIES

Another evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the development of various holy qualities, or fruitage, in our character. We read, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” To this Paul adds, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:22,23,25) Herein is the indication that these qualities, or fruits, are not developed instantaneously, but rather come about through gradual development, as a result of labor and effort, as we daily “walk in the Spirit.”

It has been appropriately suggested that each of the fruits of the Spirit given in the above text represent various aspects of Love, the crowning quality of character found in God and in his Son, Christ Jesus. Joy is love which is exultant and cheerful. Peace is love in repose, or at rest. Long-suffering is love which is enduring. Gentleness is love in society.

Goodness is love in action. Faith is love on the battlefield of life. Meekness is love in resignation and humility. Temperance, or moderation, is love in training.—*Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 6, page 186

Jesus gave us instructions as to how we can bring forth these fruits of the Spirit. He said, “Abide in me. . . . As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:4,5) To develop each of these fruits of the Spirit, we must abide in Jesus—to think as Jesus thought, and do as he did.

As we desire to more fully have Christ dwell in our hearts, we will become filled with a greater measure of God’s holy influence and power. We quote: “That [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints . . . the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Eph. 3:16-19) To be filled with the “fulness of God” implies that we gain an increased desire to have our Heavenly Father, through his Son, Christ Jesus, sit as king, ruler and director of our every thought, word, and deed. Thus, the Holy Spirit helps us see matters from God’s viewpoint, as brought to our attention in these words: “For I consider that the sufferings of the present time, as unworthy of comparison with the future glory to be revealed in us.”—Rom. 8:18, *Diaglott*

One trait which is not a fruit of the Spirit, and hence not from God, is fear. The Apostle Paul clearly tells us, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (II Tim. 1:7) The root cause of many fears which may develop at one point or another in our lives can often be traced to some form of selfishness. There may be a fear of losing things such as temporal goods, status, or reputation among men, which, perhaps without realizing, we might selfishly desire to keep. If this be the case, we should endeavor to renew our efforts to imbibe more of God’s Holy Spirit.

“HAPPY FEELINGS”

Happy feelings are not to be thought of as a basis for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our life. Because we are still in the flesh, our feelings may change from moment to moment. Faith, however, one of the prime evidences of the Spirit’s presence in our life, is something which is permanent. Our faith can be just as strong whether we are passing through a difficult experience, or if our day is filled only with joy. As an analogy, the sun shines as clearly on the gloomiest day as it does on the brightest one. The difference is not in the sun, but in some clouds that form, blocking our vision of it. Hence, in our consecrated walk, we can benefit from the influence of the Holy Spirit at all times, regardless of outward happiness or sorrow.

Let us consider the experience of Paul and Silas when they preached in the city of Philippi. The narrative states: “It came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters

much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. . . . Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers, . . . saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. . . . And the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into . . . the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.”—Acts 16:16-25

Paul and Silas were passing through a most difficult experience, yet they still had the Holy Spirit’s faith-strengthening influence. Their humble submission to the Lord’s guiding hand in this experience produced a most joyful outcome. By a miracle of God, Paul and Silas were released from their bonds. Then, the keeper of the prison was converted, along with his entire household, and they were baptized. They invited Paul and Silas to their home, where their wounds were washed, and they had a meal together. After this, the magistrates, who had put Paul and Silas into prison, allowed them to go free, saying “depart, and go in peace.”—vss. 26-36

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

Paul said, “Be filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18) One way to do this is to store up heavenly treasure. Jesus instructed his followers, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”—Matt. 6:19-21

Along these lines, a helpful illustration has been suggested. Imagine there is a room, with a door to enter therein. Our mind can be likened to such a room. The door to enter the room may be thought of as our will. Just as the door to a room must first be opened in order to place treasures inside, our will must first give consent to whatever enters and dwells in our mind and heart. A room which is already full of various objects has little or no room left to place more valuable things. Thus, our heart and mind must be emptied of earthly hopes, aims, and ambitions, to have room for God’s precious promises. The Apostle Paul testified, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”—Phil. 3:8, *New American Standard Bible*

Another means by which we will surely be filled with more of the Holy Spirit is through prayer. Jesus said to his disciples, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13) If we “hunger

and thirst after righteousness,” Jesus said in his sermon on the mount, we “shall be filled.” (Matt. 5:6) When one is hungry or thirsty, it is hard to concentrate on anything else. Therefore, if we hunger and thirst to be filled with the righteous influence of the Holy Spirit, we will be less likely to concentrate on other thoughts and endeavors.

Paul’s zeal is manifested to us in the following words: “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13,14) This was the secret of the apostle’s power. He left behind the aims and ambitions of this life, and reached to grasp those heavenly treasures which lay before him in the promises of God’s Word. This is the reason why God, through his Holy Spirit, used Paul so greatly and efficiently, both for the blessing of the church at that time, and throughout the Gospel Age, even to our day.

SOWING TO THE SPIRIT

In Galatians 6:7,8, we read, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” A farmer who desires to have a high quality and plentiful harvest must first carefully choose and “sow” good seeds. Our thoughts, words, and actions are like seeds. They must be sown carefully and with tenacity. An abundant supply of these good seeds is provided to us in the Word of God.—Luke 8:11

The Holy Spirit helps us to increase our understanding, appreciation, and love for God's precious promises. "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."—I Cor. 2:9,10

THE EPISTLE OF CHRIST

Paul, speaking to the brethren at Corinth, said, "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 tables of the heart." (II Cor. 3:3) A wise commentary has been written regarding the way the Holy Spirit writes the epistle of Christ in our hearts, which we quote in part:

"What is the message, what is the epistle, that is being written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit through various agencies? Is it the knowledge of chronology? Is it the unraveling of types and shadows? Is it the cracking of hard theological nuts in respect to differently understood passages of Scripture? Is it the knowledge of the history of the Jews, the history of the world, the history of the church? Is it the understanding and appreciation of the different covenants, past, present, and to come? No, it is none of these.

"All of these subjects have more or less value, and are more or less used of the Lord in connection with this writing that is to be done in the hearts of his people. But writing the Epistle of Christ is different—it is the writing . . . of the character-likeness

of the Master in the hearts of his people—his meekness, his gentleness, his patience, his long-suffering, his brotherly-kindness, his love, his joy, his peace.

“We might have all knowledge respecting chronology and history, might be able to quote every text in the Bible, and to cite it, too; and yet not have the Epistle of Christ written in our hearts.”—Reprints, page 5967

It is concerning this epistle of the character likeness of Christ that the Apostle Peter says, “If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” With these characteristics of the Master deeply engraved upon our hearts, and fruitage abounding in our words and actions, we shall be granted “an entrance . . . abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:8,11

Thus, a true Christian is not merely Spirit begotten, but developed into the character image of the Savior by the development of the Spirit’s fruits and graces. This is the evidence of the power of God at work in us, and in cooperation with our will. Let us hear and meditate upon the words of Paul: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”—Rom. 15:13, RSV ■

*“When he putteth forth his own sheep,
he goeth before them and the sheep follow him:
for they know his voice. And a stranger
will they not follow.”*

—John 10:4,5

Given for a Covenant

“I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”

—Isaiah 42:6

THERE ARE MANY TEXTS in the Old Testament that the Heavenly Father caused to be recorded for the specific purpose of giving instructions and encouragement to his beloved Son during his First Advent. Until the proper time, these scriptures lay dormant in God’s storehouse of wisdom, the Bible. One of these is Psalm chapter 110, in which is prophesied the responsibilities of kingship, priesthood, and judgment, to be given to Christ Jesus as the result of his faithfulness in providing for man’s redemption. Another such passage is Leviticus 23:4-21, where various typical features of Israel’s Law Covenant point forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Isaiah chapter 42 is another wonderful passage of Scripture which was meant to inform and encourage Jesus. The opening words of this chapter

are beautiful, and must have been of great comfort to the Lord: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.”

In this verse, there are several statements that were very meaningful to Jesus. There is the promise that the Father would uphold him, giving him strength and help in every time of need. Then there is God’s testimony that Jesus was his elect, or chosen servant; that he had great delight in his Son because of his faithfulness, and would give him of his spirit and understanding in order that he might carry out his Father’s plans and purposes.

In verse 2, the prophet states, “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.” The thought here is a recognition of our Lord’s humility and proper conduct. The word “cry” carries the thought of striving or contention, and the idea that his voice would not be heard in the street would seem to indicate that Jesus would not be boisterous or ostentatious in carrying out the work that the Heavenly Father had given him to do.

“BRUISED REED” AND “SMOKING FLAX”

The prophet next uses a beautiful metaphor in describing the tender nature of the work to be done by Jesus, “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” (vs. 3) A bruised reed is a very fragile thing. Even though it may be standing, a touch will cause it to fall and lie broken on the ground. How beautifully this pictures fallen man. It was not the purpose of God to destroy men but

rather to save them. We are reminded of this by the reassuring words of Jesus: “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”—John 3:17

The smoking flax—or dimly burning wick, as is the meaning of the Hebrew text—aptly pictures the manifestation of God’s spirit by his covenanted people, the nation of Israel. The prophet illustrates the nation of Israel at the time of the Lord’s First Advent by a lamp that is almost out. However, God’s purpose for his Son, as indicated by the prophet, is not to quench the small flame, but bring about changes and corrections that will cause it to burn brightly once again.

Although Jesus, during his First Advent, reignited the dimly lit faith of some in Israel, the primary fulfillment of this part of Isaiah’s prophecy would not be until a future time. The *New English Bible* translates the last part of Isaiah 42:3, “He will make justice shine on every race.” This points forward to the time of God’s kingdom, when Christ’s equitable rule will be universal throughout the earth. Concerning this time, the prophet states in another place, “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”—Isa. 26:9

JUDGMENT TO BE ESTABLISHED

In the next verse of our lesson, Isaiah, as the mouthpiece of God, gives further assurance to Jesus with reference to the success of his mission: “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.” (Isa. 42:4) The word “fail” in the text means

“to go out, as a lamp,” and “discouraged” has the meaning of being “broken in pieces, bruised, or crushed.” The thought seems to be that Jesus would not be bruised or crushed until righteous judgment was established in the earth.

The Law Covenant as given to the nation of Israel was an expression of God’s perfect standard. None of the Israelites, though, could keep its precepts because of their fallen condition. However, when Jesus came at his First Advent he stated, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt. 5:17,18) By fulfilling God’s law given to Israel, Jesus established its righteousness and proved that it was just.

The divine principle of justice was to be further illustrated by Jesus’ offering himself as a ransom sacrifice to take Adam’s place in death. By this means, Jesus “set judgment in the earth,” which would eventually provide redemption to the entire race, giving Adam and his progeny the opportunity to regain life and perfection, “that which was lost” in Eden through disobedience.—Luke 19:10

Jesus demonstrated his awareness of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning him when he quoted it in connection with an experience recorded in Matthew 12:14-21. In this instance, Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees took counsel together to see how they might destroy him. However, he knew of the plot and withdrew himself, telling his followers that they “should not make him known: That it might be fulfilled which was

spoken by Esaias the prophet.” (Matt. 12:16,17) Then, Jesus continued by quoting the first four verses of Isaiah 42.

GOD’S MAJESTY AND POWER ASSURED

In verse 5 of Isaiah’s prophecy there is a break in the continuity of thought. It is as if the Heavenly Father desired to preface what was to follow by a description of his own majesty and power in order to fortify and assure the Son concerning the remaining portion of the prophecy. Verse 5 reads, “Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.”

God’s overwhelming power and wisdom had been illustrated in his creation of the universe and the subsequent preparation of this earth for habitation by man, and finally by the creation of man himself. All of this grand power was now to be directed toward the personal supervision and care of Jesus, as he was to carry out the Heavenly Father’s will concerning the most crucial aspects of his plan and purpose for mankind.

GIVEN FOR A COVENANT

In our opening Scripture, Isaiah speaks prophetically of God as giving his Son “for a covenant.” The expression was meaningful to the people of Isaiah’s day. It was the practice to confirm an agreement, or covenant, between two parties by slaying an animal and sprinkling blood upon the agreement document. The word “covenant” is from the Hebrew word *beriyth*, which means “a cutting.”

It was also the custom to slay and divide an animal in two and pass between the parts to approve the covenant.

The first recorded instance of cutting an animal to confirm a covenant is given to us in Genesis chapter 15. In this account, God had assured Abram that he would have a seed, and that he would receive land, both of which had been previously promised. (vss. 5-7) Abram, however, wanted additional assurance concerning the land. “He said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” (vs. 8) Then God proceeded to confirm a covenant with Abram, to give him absolute assurance that he would receive the promised land.

Abram knew that a covenant so authorized was certain and unchangeable. God instructed him to slay three animals and divide them into two groups, placing them opposite to each other. To these were added a turtledove and a young pigeon. (vss. 9,10) In verse 17, we read, “It came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.” Here God was represented as a brilliant consuming fire passing between the pieces, confirming the promise concerning the land to be given to Abram. Then the following is stated: “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.” (vs. 18) What had previously been given by promise was now made a surety—an unchangeable covenant between God and Abram.

A NEW COVENANT TO COME

When Jesus read of himself in Isaiah's prophecy that he was to be "given for a covenant of the people," he knew that by his death a future New Covenant would be made sure, by which all people would be blessed with an opportunity to attain human perfection during his kingdom. As Jesus approached the final days and hours of his earthly life, we are certain he was aware that the focus of prophetic fulfillment was upon him at that moment. The voluntary surrender of his life would release Adam, and therefore all his progeny, from Adamic condemnation. However, more than this was needed if the ultimate objective of complete reconciliation between God and his human creation was to be attained. Since the fall of our first parents, mankind has developed a natural propensity for sin. They have gone down into the dust with these weaknesses of the flesh that will still be present even after they are awakened from the sleep of death.

Most inhabitants of the earth have never known God, nor been instructed in the way of righteousness. Those who have had a limited knowledge have been instructed imperfectly. A very important part of God's plan of salvation, therefore, is a period of instruction and learning—a thousand years long—that is to be conducted under the terms of the New Covenant. It will provide for the instruction of the entire world in righteousness and bring all those who render heart obedience to a condition of perfection. At the end of this time, everyone who is found worthy of life everlasting will enter into relationship with the Heavenly Father as his earthly children.—Jer. 31:28-33; Rev. 21:3-7

As Jesus further contemplated the prophecy concerning him, he would note something of the wonderful time that would be made possible through his sacrifice, which was the surety that the New Covenant would be established in due time. Its purpose would be, “To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” (Isa. 42:7) This is a reference to the resurrection of mankind from the prison house of death. Continuing in verse 16, we read, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.”

We know that blindness and other physical handicaps will be healed under the kingdom arrangement. “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” (Isa. 35:5,6) We believe, however, that this prophecy is speaking primarily of the spiritual blindness that has affected mankind, which has been aided and abetted by ignorance, prejudice, and the influence of Satan. (II Cor. 4:4) Under the New Covenant this blindness will be lifted, and the inhabitants of the earth will see clearly the character attributes of their loving Heavenly Father. Isaiah, in other prophecies concerning this wonderful time, states, “In that day, . . . the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” “The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”—Isa. 29:18; 40:5

“BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT”

On the night before his death, Jesus gathered with his disciples in a quiet “upper room” in Jerusalem. (Mark 14:15-17) As they ate together, Jesus instituted a special remembrance, or Memorial, of his death, which would take place in less than twenty-four hours. “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—Matt. 26:26-28

The word “testament” in this passage is more properly translated “covenant.” When Jesus spoke of the cup as being his blood of the New Covenant, he indicated that he knew he was fulfilling prophecy, that it was his blood that would confirm, or make sure, the New Covenant. In advance of its establishment, however, it would be the privilege of his disciples to receive the benefits of his blood in a special way. Jesus’ instructions to them to drink of the cup was that they might show their acceptance of the value of his blood, or ransom merit, which would be available to be imputed to his consecrated followers after his death and resurrection. The application of that same merit on behalf of the world in general would not occur until after the church class is complete. Then the New Covenant arrangement with mankind on earth will begin. Thus, by connecting the “blood” to the “New Covenant,” Jesus gave a pledge that this feature of God’s plan will most assuredly come.

SPECIAL PRIVILEGE OF DISCIPLESHIP

The special privilege of Jesus' footstep followers to partake of the benefits of his ransom sacrifice in advance of the world is described by the Apostle Paul in these words: "If any man be in Christ"—that is, if any have accepted, by full consecration to God, the ransom merit of Jesus' blood—"he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (II Cor. 5:17) Being reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus, these are given "the ministry of reconciliation," and thereby they become "ambassadors for Christ." It is God's purpose that these be developed into the character likeness of Jesus during the present Gospel Age, so that they can be prepared to minister with him in dispensing the New Covenant instructions and blessings of the kingdom to the remainder of the world of mankind.—vss. 18-20

In the next chapter, the apostle continues this line of thought, saying, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." (chap. 6:1) The thought is, in view of the great privilege extended to these called out ones, they should yield themselves to do the Heavenly Father's will. Otherwise, the special grace and favor afforded them of working together with God would be to no avail.

The next verse is a partial quotation from Isaiah, and is used by the apostle to give authenticity and power to his plea for action. The full prophecy reads: "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause

to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.”—Isa. 49:8,9

CHURCH ALSO APPOINTED

What a wonderful assurance and encouragement to note the similar language and expressions used in this prophecy, which Paul relates to the footstep followers of Jesus, and the prophecy in Isaiah 42, which points to Jesus alone. Of particular interest to us in this study is the statement in both prophecies that God will give, or appoint, certain ones the responsibility of administering a covenant of the people. This appointment constitutes both Christ Jesus, as well as his faithful footstep followers—the church of the Gospel Age.

The church does not share in providing the blood of the ransom. That aspect of God’s purpose could only be completed by the death of the perfect man, Jesus. It was his blood alone that ensured the eventual establishment of the New Covenant. Paul later emphasized this, saying that Jesus had “become the surety of a better covenant.”—Heb. 7:22, *Revised Version*

The church’s privilege with regard to being appointed with Christ, their head, to minister the New Covenant to the people, relates to the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of the Master during the present age. Having received, in advance of the world, the imputation of his blood, these are invited by Jesus to follow in his footsteps of service and sacrifice. His invitation is: “If any man will come

after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”—Luke 9:23

In other words, if we, Jesus’ disciples, expect to be associated with him in the great work of the next age in administering the New Covenant, it is necessary that we follow his example. Our words and conduct, walk of life, the desire to do God’s will, hunger for his Word of truth, and zeal in his service, must be patterned after that of the Master. Only such will join our Lord, to be given for a covenant of the people.

A BETTER ARRANGEMENT

The Apostle Paul, in Hebrews chapter 9, compares the typical Law Covenant sacrifices and offerings with the better arrangements provided through Christ. (vss. 1-11) He then states, “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.” (vs. 12) In other words, Jesus’ death on Calvary’s cross supplanted the old Law Covenant sacrifices, where forgiveness was typically provided by the repetitive offering of animals, year after year. The death of Jesus was the reality, or antitype of those typical sacrifices, and provided eternal redemption, not just for Israel, but for Adam and all his progeny.

In verses 13 and 14, Paul again compares the typical arrangement under the Law Covenant with the reality being fulfilled by the blood of Christ, which sets in motion the process for the eventual establishment of the New Covenant. “If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying

of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

If, as Paul says to these Jewish Christians, the Law Covenant, with its imperfect mediator, ever-changing priesthood, and animal sacrifices, could sanctify the Israelites in a limited, typical sense, "How much more shall the blood of the anointed one . . . cleanse your conscience from works of death, for the service of the living God."—Heb. 9:14, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

In verse 15, the Apostle Paul states that because Jesus, through his death, is able to provide eternal redemption for mankind, he is made the Mediator of a New Covenant. Then he proceeds to buttress his previous statement concerning those who now, ahead of the world, are given the opportunity to "serve the living God." These "which are called," Paul says, are given "the promise of eternal inheritance." This inheritance is to be part of the anti-typical "seed" of Abraham—the Christ, head and body. (Gal. 3:16,29) This seed will constitute the Mediator, who will administer the New Covenant to all mankind in God's kingdom.

COVENANT MADE SURE BY BLOOD

The apostle continues, "For where a covenant exists, the death of that which has ratified it is necessary to be produced; because a covenant is firm over dead victims, since it is never valid when that which ratifies it is alive." (Heb. 9:16,17, *Diaglott*) The essence of what Paul is saying is that it was necessary for Jesus to die in order to provide the

means for making sure the New Covenant. Then, in verse 18, he makes the positive statement that even the Law Covenant, which only foreshadowed the New Covenant, was confirmed by the shedding of blood, pointing to the fulfillment that was to come through Christ's death. In verse 22, Paul continues, saying, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Here, we are reminded again of Jesus' statement when he instituted the Memorial supper that the cup represented his blood, "shed for many for the remission of sins," which made sure the New Covenant.—Matt. 26:28

The apostle concludes his comparison of the two covenants with these words: "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these." In other words, the sacrifice of animals purified only in connection with the pattern, or the type. The "heavenly things," however—the antitype, or reality—we understand must be purified with "better sacrifices than these."—Heb. 9:23

We realize and appreciate very much that Christ has assured the establishment of the New Covenant by the shedding of his blood. We are also thankful that he has invited us to follow in his footsteps of sacrifice and service, and is preparing us to be "able ministers" of the New Covenant. (II Cor. 3:6) It is through the one efficacious offering of Jesus as a "ransom for all" that this is possible, and it is by grace that we, together with our Lord, are privileged to be counted as those given for a "covenant of the people." ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Nemes

<u>Germany</u>		Ludwigshafen	11
Korbach	June 3-5	Bruchhausen	12
Hamburg	7	<u>France</u>	
Bonn	10	Sainte Sève Sur Indre	14

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

T. N. Alexander

Portland, OR June 16-18

G. Balko

Delaware Valley, PA June 4

D. Christiansen

Portland, OR June 16-18

O. B. Elbert

Toronto, ON June 10,11

R. Goodman

Vancouver, BC June 10,11

S. Jeuck

Delaware Valley, PA June 4
New York, NY 11

R. Niemczyk

Portland, OR June 16-18

A. Oystryk

Vancouver, BC June 10,11

J. Parkinson

Portland, OR June 16-18

J. Trzeciak

Detroit, MI June 18

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 J. Josiah, Coimbatore, India—March 6. Age, 21

Sister Beth Cooper, Boise, ID—April 13. Age, 90

Brother Karol Baklarz, Miechow, Poland—April 14.
Age, 91

Brother Robert Phillips, Kansas City, MO—April 17.
Age, 90

Brother Johnny Mejia, Taguig, Philippines—April 28.
Age, 72

CONVENTIONS

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

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 4—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 10,11—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 16-18—Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. Phone: (503) 281-2500. Contact B. or C. Hislop. Phone: (503) 691-2699 or Email: bwhislop@aol.com or claudiahis@aol.com

DETROIT/METROPOLITAN DETROIT JOINT CONVENTION, June 18—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact G. Zendler. Phone: (248) 399-8843 or Email: ngzendler@wowway.com

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1-3—Siwak Farm RR1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK Canada S6V5P8. Contact A. Siwak. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or Email: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

EAST SASKATCHEWAN CONVENTION, July 7-9—Sturgis Community Hall, Hwy. #9, Sturgis, SK, Canada. Contact N. Paley, Box 1522, Canora, SK S0A0L0. Phone: (306) 563-5441 or Email: thepaleys@sasktel.net

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 15-20—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 25-27—Central School Obudi Agwa Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu, #24 Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 2,3—Double-Tree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

JACKSON CONVENTION, September 2,3—FaHoLo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Grass Lake, MI 49240. For information, contact B. Davis. Phone: (517) 788-6552 or Email: r2d2lad@comcast.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2-4—(New location) Bastyr University, 14500 Juanita Drive NE, Kenmore, WA 98028. For reservations and information, contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 9,10—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (Hwy. 72), Huntsville, AL 35806. Phone: (256) 562-2525. Mention “Huntsville Bible Students” when making reservations. Contact J. Cothren. Phone: (256) 852-8505 or Email: jimmcothren@att.net

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONVENTION, October 21,22—Masonic Hall, 859 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, CA. Contact M. Allard. Phone: (805) 773-2962 or Email: medlallard@juno.com

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