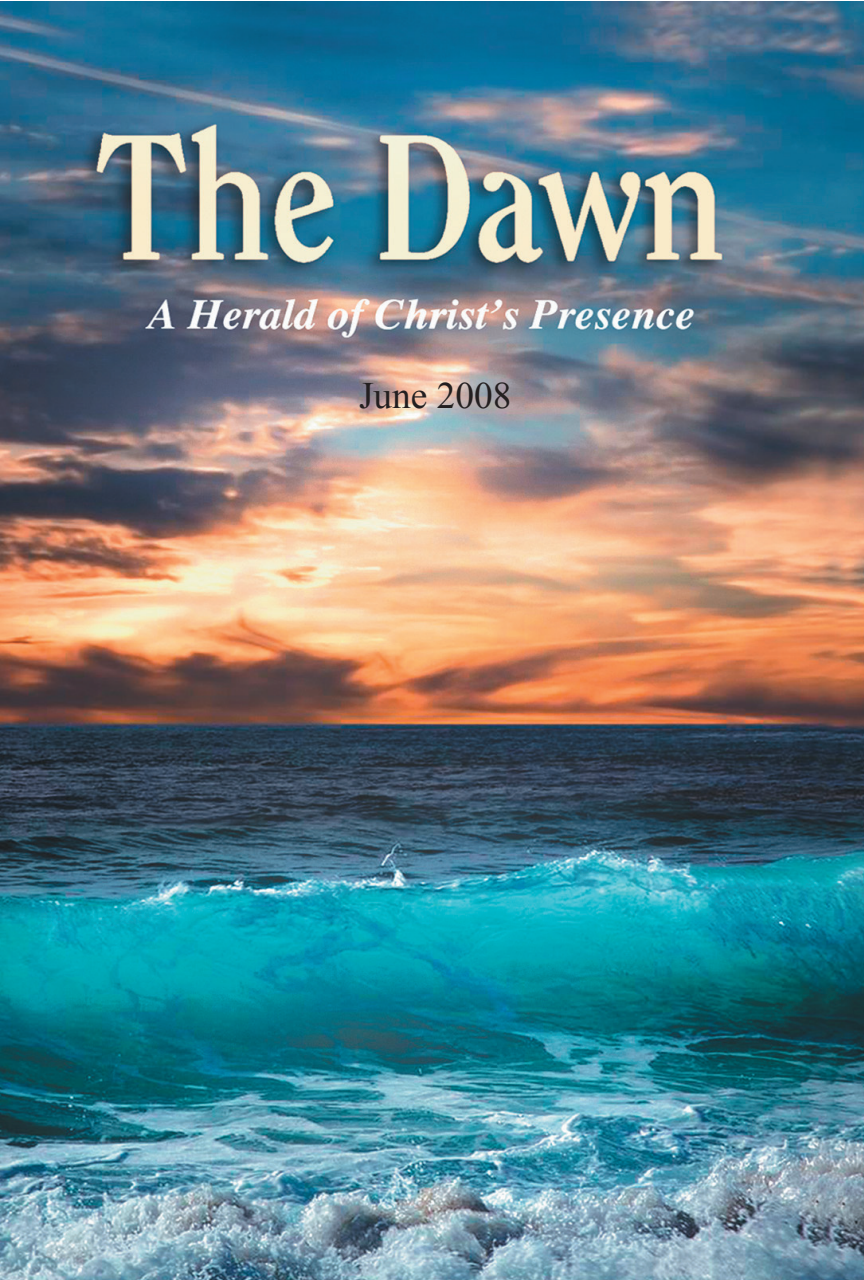


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The DAWN

VOLUME NO. LXXVI, Number 6
(USPS 149-380), June 2008

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Second-class postage paid at Rutherford, NJ. Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. \$5.00 a year; Great Britain £2. Write to foreign addresses for other prices.

ARGENTINA: El Alba, Calle Almirante Brown 674, Monte Grande 1842, Buenos Aires

AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, P.O. Box 136, Chesham, Bucks HP5 3EB

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: Aurore, B. Boulter, 8 rue du Docteur Laennec, 95520, Osny

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Alzeyer Str. 8 (Postfach 252), D 67253 Freinsheim

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), 33-33 149th Street, Flushing, NY 11354 USA

ITALY: Aurora, Via S. Leonardo 21, Ottaviano 80044, Napoli

SOUTH AMERICA: El Alba, Apartado 1390, Trujillo, Peru

SPAIN: El Alba, Via S. Leonardo 21, Ottaviano 80044 Napoli, Italy

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Threatened Global Food Supply: Shortages Possible

***“Nation shall rise
against nation,
and kingdom
against kingdom:
and there shall be
famines, and
pestilences, and
earthquakes, in
divers places. All
these are the
beginning of
sorrows.”***

—Matthew 24:7,8

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, MAT-

thew records part of Jesus’ answer to his disciples when they had asked him what sign would be given to indicate the time of his Second Presence and the end of the present Gospel Age. In his answer, he pointed out many things to them that would come to pass before his kingdom would finally be estab-

lished. He emphasized that one of the signs of his return would be associated with famine, and an increasing time of trouble that truly marks our distressed and chaotic world today.

END OF THE AGE

The question may be asked if Jesus has returned, is now present and his kingdom near, why then should this blessed promise be associated with the worldwide troubles and distress that we now see among the peoples and nations of earth? On another occasion, Matthew recorded the Master's words that address this very situation, when he said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt. 10:34) Jesus himself endured much persecution and violence at the hands of fallen men, and he was subject to the corrupt powers that be during his earthly ministry. He was falsely accused as a blasphemer, tried and physically abused during the darkness of night, and nailed to a cross the next morning to pay the price for the sins of mankind.

The prophetic words of our Lord concerning the end of the age have significant meaning as we witness the chaotic events of our day. Jesus proclaimed, "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."—Luke 21:25,26

Our Lord often spoke in symbolic language during his earthly ministry, and in the above scripture. He spoke of signs in the sun which represent the Gospel Truth that he was preaching, the moon which portrayed the Law of God, and stars that pointed to the inspired teachings of the apostles. The roaring of the sea and the waves illustrates the

troubled masses of humanity that exercise their pent-up frustrations against the present world order that includes the social, political, financial, and ecclesiastical institutions.

HUNGER AND THIRST FOR TRUTH

The Prophet Amos spoke of a spiritual famine for the bread and water of life when he wrote, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.”—Amos 8:11,12

During the long, intervening centuries since our Lord’s First Advent, many of the followers of Jesus have experienced this famine of the bread and water of life. Some were persecuted even unto death, while countless others were denied the common blessings of fellowship and study that we enjoy today. Coinciding with the promised return of our Lord in the latter part of the 19th century, truth concerning the Divine Plan of the Ages has been made available to the Lord’s people on a scale never before realized. During this time, however, there are challenging new philosophies, ideologies, and temptations that have caused some to stumble in their quest for the Truth. The faithful child of God will heed well the words of the revelator. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”—Rev. 3:10

A TIME OF TROUBLE

Concerning some of the events that would take place at the end of this age, Jesus said, “Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.” (Matt. 24:21,22) This Time of Trouble identifies the turbulent years that the world has been passing through, especially since the beginning of World War I. The Master had earlier identified this time as the “beginning of sorrows.”—vs. 8

A UNITED NATIONS REPORT

In connection with Jesus’ reference to famine in our featured text, we note that in December, 2007 the United Nations Food and Agriculture Agency reported that there has been an unforeseen and unprecedented shift in the rapidly dwindling world food supply. They also said that prices for food are now soaring to historic levels. These changes are creating a very serious risk, especially in the developing nations of the world. The agency’s report included the food price index which indicates a rise of more than 40% during the past year. This is compared to a 9% increase that was reported during the previous year, which was considered unacceptable. Their figures also show that prices paid for imported food by the poorest countries rose by 25% during that same time.

The United Nations Agency pointed out that reserves of cereals are severely depleted. World wheat stores declined by 11% this past year, which

corresponds to about twelve weeks of total world-wide stocks on hand, a decline from the previous eighteen weeks supply. They say that there are only eight weeks of corn in storage at the present time, which is down from an eleven-week previous supply. Prices for wheat have risen 52%, and oil-seeds are also at record high levels.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Some specialists have suggested that there are several reasons to explain the rapidly dwindling food stores in the world today. Some of these reasons point to climate changes and may include both drought and flood conditions. If a significant change in climate occurs in a particular high production area, or if a disease affects a major crop, then the risks to food production are very high. Another serious problem concerns dramatic worldwide population growth, as there are more mouths to feed, and less land to produce food. In recent months, there has been a tremendous increase in the price of oil supplies, and rising fuel costs for agricultural machinery, as well as transportation and distribution costs for trucking companies that is causing increased concern.

POLLINATION

Another contributing factor in connection with the production of food points to the vanishing honeybee colonies due to Colony-Collapse Disorder (CCD). These little insects are directly responsible for the pollination of one third of all flowering food crops grown in America and in other countries of the world. Scientists are searching to find the cause for the disorder which has devastated beekeeper

colonies throughout the country during the past few years. Without honeybees, the growing of numerous varieties of fruits, nuts, and vegetable products is seriously threatened.

AGRIBUSINESS

During the past several decades in the United States and in other countries, there has been a gradual shift in population from rural areas to urban and suburban locations. With this shift, there has also been realized the death of the family farm where many families were once able to produce a considerable percentage of their own food, either by way of home gardens and fruit trees, or through eggs, milk, and various kinds of meat products.

Some of this former farmland has been purchased and developed by building contractors who have changed the landscape into subdivisions and strip malls that now occupy the land. Also, during this time, large agribusiness concerns have taken over many areas of this vacated farmland and have concentrated their production on growing fewer crops used solely for human consumption. Instead, they are turning their attention to the production of crops used for biofuel and cattle feed.

BIOFUEL PRODUCTION

Ethanol is a homegrown biofuel that is being produced on American farmland to help reduce the dependence on oil that is being imported from foreign sources, mostly from Middle Eastern countries. Corn is grown in large quantities as an important part of the biofuel production, thereby making it less available for human food production.

Corn has always been a mainstay of American agriculture, and is one of the principal ingredients in the production of cereals, baked goods, and corn syrup which is used to make processed foods such as candy and soft drinks. Corn is also a major source of food for cattle, pigs, chickens, and turkeys.

A recent study has been conducted by the Center for Agriculture and Rural Development at Iowa State University. Their report indicates the direct and indirect costs of producing biofuel, or energy crops, on America's farmland. It also shows that ethanol production in the United States could end up consuming half of the nation's cereal grain production, including corn, wheat, and other coarse grains by the year 2012. This situation is expected to drive up food prices as well as to cause shortages.

The growing of animal feed stocks also creates an inefficient ratio when this diversion is compared to the growing of crops for human consumption. These are important factors in relation to America's ability to feed its own citizens, now reported to be over three hundred million people. The study also estimates that the greatly expanding production of ethanol in America's heartland has raised the price of food by approximately \$50 for each person annually.

Alternatives to corn are being considered, such as making biofuel from waste materials such as leftovers from paper mill and logging operations. These wastes are not as economically profitable, however, as corn-based production. The federal government is funding research to make cellulosic

ethanol more commercially viable, but many technical problems still exist.

THE GROWING REALITY

The idea that food supplies in our modern world could be threatened seems an impossible thought, but the reality is that there have been huge increases recently in the cost of wheat, corn, rice, oats, soybeans, and other major agricultural products. This has come about partially because of the accelerating demand for food in the developing nations and their rapidly increasing populations. In addition, biofuel production and poor harvests in some areas of the world are beginning to make even basic food supplies scarce.

Wheat future prices have tripled since 2004, corn prices have nearly tripled since 2005, and soybeans have tripled since 2006. Food crises that occurred in past years were usually associated with crop failures, pest infestations or war. However, once global trade in grain commodities became commonplace, food shortages in one part of the world were quickly brought under control by importing foodstuffs from other countries that had not been affected. The situation at the present time seems to indicate a lack of supply everywhere all at once.

DROUGHT THREAT

From another perspective in connection with the seriousness of maintaining adequate worldwide food supplies we cite a recent news item "Wheat Supplies, Already Tight, May Be Hurt by Global Drought" and submitted (March 7, 2008) by Tony Dreibus in *Bloomberg Market Pulse*. We quote

in part, “Global wheat production, after failing to keep pace with demand the past three years, may be hurt again in 2008 by dry weather in the United States, Canada, and Russia, the three largest exporters of the grain. A moderate drought in the southern Great Plains, where most United States winter wheat is grown, has slowed development of plants starting to emerge from dormancy, the Canadian Wheat Board said today in a report. Russian crops need rain, and moisture in the Canadian Prairies is ‘poor’ for crops that will be planted in May, according to the CWB, Canada’s biggest wheat marketer.

“Wheat futures on the Chicago Board of Trade, the world’s largest agricultural exchange, have more than doubled in the past year and reached records on February 27. Global production has failed to keep pace with demand in seven of the past eight years, eroding inventories to a 30-year low, United States Department of Agriculture data show. Chicago wheat futures have rallied in the past year after the 2007 United States crop was damaged by an April freeze that was followed by excessive rainfall. Prices set records six times this year on the Kansas City Board of Trade and the Minneapolis Grain Exchange.

“World inventories are expected to fall to 109.7 million metric tons by the end of the marketing year on May 31, the lowest since 1978, the USDA said. United States stockpiles may fall to 272 million bushels by the end of May, the lowest in 60 years, the government said. In the United States, the world’s top wheat exporter, the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles and western Kansas remained

dry. That's fueled speculation about low soil-moisture levels for grain that's starting growing after lying dormant since November, the board said. Precipitation is needed very soon for plants in the region. Growers in the southern Plains grow mostly high-protein hard-red winter wheat, used to make staple foods including bread and pasta. Demand for grain has increased in the past year because of concerns that global growers wouldn't produce enough."

DISEASE THREAT

The worldwide nature of threat concerning the supply of foodstuffs is noted in the article "Spread of Wheat Disease Sparks Shortage Fears" (March 10, 2008), and published by *Business Daily*. It was written by Allan Odhiambo, who points out, "The global food prices outlook darkened after the Food and Agricultural Organization revealed that a contagious wheat disease that was previously found in Kenya has spread to key producing markets in the Middle East. The latest FAO survey of the wheat market showed the virulent fungi that spread in the entire East Africa region has attacked crops in the main wheat producing countries of Yemen and Iran.

"Agriculture experts warned that the situation could worsen if the disease spreads east of Iran to Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan—the world's leading producers. Detection of the wheat rust fungus in Iran is worrisome; the fungus was spreading rapidly, and could significantly lower output this year. It is important that the international community

gets this disease under control to reduce the risk to countries that are already hit by high food prices. Nearly 80% of all wheat varieties planted in Asia and Africa are susceptible to the wheat stem rust (*Puccinia graminis*) that spreads when its spores are carried by wind over long distances. In Kenya, the rust disease has been particularly destructive in wheat-growing districts. It has been blamed for the decline in the national wheat production that has triggered a steady rise in the price of wheat and its products such as bread.”

SHORT SUPPLIES

The National Farmers’ Union of Canada put out a press release (October 14, 2007) that included the headline, “Global Food Crisis Emerging.” The release stated, “Based on early predictions by the United States Department of Agriculture on world grain supply, and demand for the 2007-08 crop year, the NFU’s director of research, Darrin Qualman, broadcasts a dire warning that ‘we are in the opening phase of an intensifying food shortage.’ Total grain supplies were the lowest in the 47 periods for which data exists and were quite possibly at their lowest levels in a century. This crop season would mark the seventh year out of the past eight in which global grain production fell short of demand.

“Despite the so-called green revolution, the miracle of fertilizers, irrigation techniques, and disease-resistant grains, the world once again is in danger of not feeding itself. There are all kinds of reasons for this: population growth, climate change, a shift to feeding livestock instead of using grain directly

for food, which is a less efficient way of feeding people, and growing demand for ethanol. There are no easy solutions and there are other potential problems. The collapse of the cod fishery is well known, but many edible fish species are also in danger. Qualman says one-third of ocean fisheries are already in collapse and scientific journals estimate that two-thirds may be in danger by the year 2025.”

THE BREAD OF LIFE

Although conditions in the earth at the present time are deteriorating as prophesied long ago, nevertheless, we continue to put our total confidence and faith in our loving Heavenly Father’s ultimate plan of reconciliation that will be made available for mankind under the soon-to-be-established kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During our Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry, one of his major teachings related to the wonderful promise of life that would one day be made available for the whole human family in due time.

This marvelous hope was centered in the life that he would soon give for their salvation and ultimate blessing. We read, “Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35) Jesus subsequently bought the world with his own precious blood that was shed at Calvary’s cross. The ‘bread’ of which he spoke related to the great work of redemption which he accomplished. All who accept the merit of his sacrifice will share in the provisions made possible for all during the time of his future earthly kingdom.

THE DESERT SHALL BLOSSOM

We rejoice in the prospect of the long-promised kingdom that will bring peace and blessings for the poor sin-sick and dying human family. Under the provisions of Christ's kingdom, all unrighteousness will be eliminated and nothing will hurt nor destroy the beauty and harmony that is promised to all of the willing and obedient of the human family.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote centuries ago concerning this most blessed time. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God."—Isa. 35:1,2

EARTH YIELDS HER INCREASE

This wonderful promise from the loving hand of our Heavenly Father will surely come to pass, and we rejoice in the psalmist's prophetic words. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." (Ps. 67:1-7) There will no longer be

disease, drought, and a number of other negative influences concerning food supplies for all people because the earth will then yield her abundant increase for the whole human creation.

“He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Rev. 22:1,2) These marvelous words are true and faithful, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—vs. 17 ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 5—“In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust.”—Psalm 31:1 (Z. ’95-157 Hymn 263)

JUNE 12—“This one thing I do.”—Philippians 3:13 (Z. ’95-250 Hymn 177)

JUNE 19—“Light [Truth] is sown for the righteous, and gladness [the joys of the Truth] for the upright in heart.”—Psalm 97:11 (Z. ’96-55 Hymn 238)

JUNE 26—“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”—Hebrews 3:1 (Z. ’96-208 Hymn 201)

Jesus as God's Son

Key Verse: *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*
—Hebrews 1:3

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 1

IT IS OF IMPORTANCE TO

note that the book of Hebrews was written to the footstep followers of our Lord Jesus. It further serves as an assurance to the faithful called ones of this present Gospel Age, that the Heavenly Father was well pleased by the sacrifice of his Son as a ransom for all. He showed this when he raised him up to the highest plane of existence, ‘on the right hand of the Majesty on high.’

The Lord had proven that he was worthy to receive such an honor by leading a life that was approved of the Father. We see

this in the words spoken by the voice from heaven when Jesus had come to be baptized, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22) Jesus had made the covenant to lay down his humanity, and the witness of his relationship to his Father came at once. From the time of his birth, he had led a life pleasing to God. “The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” (Luke 2:40-49) This was indeed an evidence of the fact that he had great zeal, showing to us that the mind of Christ should instill in us a heartfelt desire to do the

Father's will. "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."—vs. 52

We know also that the words, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God" (John 1:1), refer to the Lord Jesus in his prehuman existence. This verse is properly translated to mean that in the beginning of God's Creation, Jesus was there in heaven with him, before anything was created. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." (Prov. 8:22,23,30) At this time, the '*Logos*' [the Word] existed with God—he was the first created and the first, or highest, in rank. The Greek word *Logos* would be properly translated by the words intention, plan, purpose, or expression. It also signifies mouthpiece or special messenger. His entire three-and-one-half years of ministry following his baptism exemplified the laying down of his life as a willing sacrifice. As his earthly life was about to end, he said, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: . . . I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."—John 17:1-5

What a blessed assurance these scriptures give to his faithful footstep followers. They trust that he 'purged our sins' by humbling himself to become a man and die on the cross. Only those who, after believing in him, follow on to consecration are given the great privilege of sonship, and of joint-heirship. They have taken up their crosses, being begotten of the Holy Spirit, and, if faithful sons in all things, will be there in heaven with him—seeing "him as he is"—as heirs of God attaining the Divine nature.—I John 3:2 ■

Christ as Intercessor

Key Verse: *“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”*
—**Hebrews 7:25**

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 7

WE ARE GIVEN AN ASSUR-
ance that our Lord Jesus is fully able, not only to deliver all from sin, but from the curse of death. He is able to save mankind from the tomb, and from all of the weaknesses of heredity, and from all of the instruments of sin that rest upon our race. This will be an everlasting release from sin, Divine disfavor, and death. “Since by man came death, by man came also the

resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—I Cor. 15:21,22

The original sinner was Adam, and his children have shared his penalty. We read that there was “None righteous, no, not one,” and “He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him.” (Rom. 3:10; Isa. 59:16) It would take Christ Jesus, who would willingly come to pay the price of redemption and serve as ‘intercessor.’ An intercessor is one who pleads for, or makes a request in behalf of another, or others, for the purpose of producing agreement, or to mediate.

Our Lord made a sacrifice for us that he presented to the Father to make atonement for the church class. (Heb. 9:24) Jesus has been placed in the position throughout the Gospel Age of being the great High

Priest and Advocate for his people. It makes it possible for them to be no longer strangers from God, but “accepted in the beloved,” by the Father. (Eph. 1:6) They now have a standing before God, and, as members of the body of Christ, may ask for help and guidance. (Rom. 5:1,2) We realize that we have no standing before God on our own—“No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6) We are first accepted, and then daily show our devotion to righteousness by making an effort towards holiness. It is because we recognize Jesus as our Advocate that we may come to the throne of grace. Our Lord continues to supply and apply his sacrifice until we, made perfect, have no further need of it. That sacrifice and merit will never be forgotten.

Since only that which is perfect could be acceptable of God, our acceptance with him then is under the covering of Christ’s robe of righteousness, his perfection imputed to us. He saves us from the sins that are past. During our earthly course, he also covers those blemishes that result from the imperfections of our human body. (Isa. 61:10) By this robe of justification, we can approach God through our Saviour’s righteousness, and have the privilege of knowing him and calling him Father. Christ will save us in the fullest sense in the “first resurrection.” “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” (Rev. 20:6) The saving of the world will begin after the completion of the church class—the 144,000 whose names are written in heaven.—Rev. 14:1; Heb. 12:23

The key to it all, and the hope for all, lies in the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus. “God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11 ■

Christ as Redeemer

Key Verse: “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 for us.” —Hebrews 9:12

Selected Scripture: Hebrews 9:11-10:18

“two kid goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.”—Lev. 16:3-19

These sacrifices were an important part of the covenant relationship between God and his people; however, they could not actually cleanse them from the curse of Adamic sin and death. The yearly repetition was necessary to maintain the cleansing of the people and their covenant with God. Although these offerings possessed no real merit, their purpose was to shadow “good things to come.”—Heb. 9:11

In the Old Testament, the word atonement is the English word used to translate the Hebrew words which mean cover, coverings, or to cover. The Levitical offerings ‘covered’ the sins of Israel until, and in anticipation of, the cross. Again, they did not take away those sins,

THE ARRANGEMENT THAT

existed between our Heavenly Father and the nation of Israel required that the priests offer Atonement Day sacrifices. The account tells us that a young bullock was taken for a sin offering; it was killed, and the blood of it was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. There Aaron, the High Priest, sprinkled the blood on and before the Mercy Seat seven times. In addition to this, Aaron selected

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” (Heb. 10:4) These were used to serve as a type, or picture, of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus who was “set forth to be a propitiation” for the sins of the world. (Rom. 3:25) The only begotten Son of God was able to make the actual satisfaction, or covering, of justice for Adamic sin. His blood became the basis for the forgiveness of our sins—made peace for us, opened the way to reconciliation, and transferred us back to sonship in God’s family.

We realize that the sacrifice that the antitypical High Priest presents are then of a superior nature to those that for centuries were offered in the Tabernacle services. The sacrifice of bulls and goats as mentioned in our theme text pointed to the blood, to the life, of Jesus Christ. Redemption under the Law could be made only by an equivalent value, and when sin was involved only blood could atone, or justify. To pay the price for Adam and his race, he “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:6

So we see that he first had to redeem mankind through the sacrifice of himself, and then, applying it to the satisfaction of justice, he could undertake the uplifting and blessing of all. Our Lord Jesus then entered into the Most Holy—‘by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place’—representing heaven itself, from which our great High Priest comes forth with promised blessings of restitution. “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: . . . So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” (Heb. 9:24,28) He gives the opportunity for all to have the human rights and privileges to which he had a right to, and to live on a restored, perfect earth forever. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:7 ■

Christ as Leader

Key Verse:
***“Looking unto
Jesus the author
and finisher of our
faith; who for the
joy that was set
before him endured
the cross, despising
the shame, and is
set down at the
right hand of the
throne of
God.”***
—Hebrews 12:2

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 12:1-13

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT A good leader leads by example. This is especially true when we consider our Lord Jesus. His life exemplifies that of a guiding head, whose ability to lead was proven at a great cost. Remember the words, “The LORD is my shepherd.” (Ps. 23:1) God is ‘shepherd’ in the largest sense of the word, and he appointed Jesus as the Great Shepherd to all of the flock. As our shepherd, he leads his sheep in the “paths of righteousness,” as they pass “through the valley of the shadow of death.”—vss. 3,4

In this beautiful psalm, we have laid out the wonderful arrangement that exists between the shepherd and his flock. He watches over them, uses his staff of guidance and hope, protecting them from those that would harm them, especially the Adversary, Satan. The desire for them is that goodness and mercy will be with them every day, every moment, making “all things work together for good.” (Rom. 8:28) The shepherd continues his care over them until, as faithful footstep followers, they enter into the glorious condition at the end of their journey. For this to be a reality, the followers must “be conformed to the image of his Son.”—vs. 29

We know that this relationship was made possible by the laying down of his life on behalf of his sheep, and giving himself as a ransom for all. Our Lord spoke these words in reference to himself, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (John 10:11) This was further shown in the verse, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (chap. 15:13) It was his desire to willingly lay his life down, being obedient even unto death, the death of the cross.

Another important aspect of this lesson is that the sheep hear and know the voice of the shepherd, and they willingly, and gladly, follow him. "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, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." (John 10:4,5) This results in a life filled with trials, testings, and experiences that involve joys as well as sorrows. However, as the compassionate leader who had gone before to prepare the way, Jesus was a living expression of his Father's love. Through all of his experience he demonstrated that, "Love suffereth long, and is kind." (I Cor. 13:4) He also gives his dear ones the assurance, when you have trials, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16:33

This lesson further reveals to us how the Father rewards faithful obedience, and that he wants his children to remember the meekness, patience, and suffering of Christ as an example. "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again." (I Pet. 2:23) He is 'set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Jesus committed his all in service to his Father, and to the cause of truth and righteousness. In our own case, we must also faithfully endure to the end, gladly walking in his footsteps, having the same experiences and not becoming "wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12:3) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 2:5 ■

The Eternal Christ

Key Verse “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.*”
—*Hebrews 13:8*

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 13:1-16

WHAT A TRULY BLESSED

expression! In our present-day world when the only thing certain is change, how comforting it is to know this truth. This is the basis for which we can have “full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10:22) One of the important aspects of this statement involves an earlier verse, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (chap. 13:5) Our Master is with us, and we have the same watch care over us that is provided by our Heavenly Father. The unchangeableness on the part of the Father and his dear Son is a guarantee that the blessings to be bestowed under this arrangement will be everlasting, unending blessings. Apostle Paul is writing to encourage us to have confidence and trust in God, the secret of which lies in having confidence and strength in the Lord. “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” (Ps. 84:11) We are promised “grace to help in time of need.”—Heb. 4:16

God’s qualities and attributes were the same in the beginning of Creation as they are now. When God created his Son, he gave him the same attributes that he possessed. We know these to be wisdom, justice, mercy, love, and power. Our Lord Jesus spoke these words in affirmation of this, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:9) We further read, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (chap. 1:14) “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” (I Cor. 1:24) Our Lord has continued to be an example to us of God’s love.—John 3:16; Eph. 3:19

We should also be reminded of the verse, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.” (Rev. 1:8) He was the first and only begotten Son of God. By him all the Divine purpose would be accomplished including the redemption of the fallen race of mankind. He has the same office, authority, and relationship to mankind, and the same character, sympathy, and perfect love all of the way. Jesus is referred to as “the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (chap. 13:8) God’s plans from the beginning recognized that there would be the need for his Son to lay down his life, which he willingly did. The best evidence of true faith, continuous confidence in God, and heart harmony is found in the Lord’s experiences and their narratives. This is further evidence that these words are true—“His mercy endureth for ever.”—Jer. 33:11

Our Lord’s statement, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), serves to identify the man Jesus with his previous condition before he was made flesh and dwelt among us. He is the same today, although he has been received to the Spirit plane. He says, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.” (Rev. 1:18) As a man he lived, and he died. At his resurrection, he was made alive on the Spirit plane, far above all beings, angels, principalities and powers, but his identity—the personality—is the same. “God . . . Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”—Heb. 1:1-3 ■

According to His Riches

***“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”
—Philippians 4:19***

THE SCRIPTURES ABOUND with God’s wonderful promises to love and care for his people. In our featured scripture, the Apostle Paul speaks of some of these provisions of grace that are made available to those who have been specially called during the present Gospel Age. These riches of God’s grace are freely available to us because of our faith in Christ Jesus’ blood, and are for the development and ultimate deliverance of the body of Christ who are being called during this age.

PROVISIONS OF GRACE

Some of these riches are identified in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the brethren at Rome, where we read, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) The apostle further addresses this

provision by saying, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (vss. 8,9) Paul then explains, “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation, *Marginal Translation*].”—vss. 10,11

These are indeed wonderful provisions from God’s abounding grace on behalf of members of the fallen human family. “Not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” (vss. 15-17) Provision for our justification has been made available to us through Jesus’ blood as Paul has explained.

BLESSED PROMISES

God’s great salvation has thus been made known through Christ Jesus, not only in connection with the salvation which we now enjoy, but to the grander and higher prospect which is yet future. “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

(Rom. 13:11) We read also of all the exceeding great and precious promises, “All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (II Cor. 1:20) This may result in trials and testings as we continue to walk in newness of life with our Lord. Our trials also come from the loving Divine care of our Heavenly Father, and we know that he will supply all our needs to be victorious. He declares over and over again in his Word that his provision is enough to meet our every need, whatever those needs may be. If we fail to appreciate this favor we are discrediting his promises.

THE WORK OF FAITH

Our trust in God’s wonderful provisions for our growth and development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus should be strong enough to carry us throughout our consecrated walk. Although our weaknesses, shortcomings, and fleshly imperfections may often be painfully visible to us, God’s promised grace and strength are always available for every time of need. His abundant supply is hidden in the secret of his presence and can only be realized through faith. “Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”—Heb. 12:1

We are to realize things that are unseen, and if our vision is limited to the things that are seen, it will be more difficult to endure and faithfully walk in the pathway that has been marked out for us as God’s people. We are reminded of the Apostle Paul’s words, “Our light affliction, which is but for

a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:17,18

When we look at self and the things that are seen we sometimes tremble, but when we look to God and those things that are not seen we become strong. We can trust that God’s provision for all our needs is indeed sufficient. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).”—Heb. 10:22,23

OUR GREAT ENEMY

Satan, the great Adversary, has always sought to thwart and falsify God’s ultimate plan and purpose and to hinder God’s faithful children. When man was created in the Garden of Eden the wily serpent questioned the power of God’s command, as we read, “The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1) This questions the reliability of God’s word. Again, when our Lord Jesus was about to enter his earthly ministry, Satan questioned his relationship to the Heavenly Father, saying, “If thou be the Son of God.” (Matt. 4:3-6) Satan’s use of the word ‘if’ identifies his attempt to cast doubt on Jesus’ relationship with his Father.

The Adversary has also targeted those who would serve our Heavenly Father with poisonous arrows of doubt, discouragement, and defeat. When writing to the ecclesia at Rome, Paul looked back in time to some of the experiences of these brethren. He told them, "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) There are numerous accounts relating to the faithful endurance that some of these people experienced. Their trying experiences are recorded for our encouragement, and the apostle has enumerated many of them in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews.

COMFORT IN TRIBULATION

When considering the apostle's words that were written to the brethren at Corinth, we read, "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

The question may be asked whether there have ever been experiences in our own consecrated life when the great Adversary of God has endeavored to precipitate his poisonous arrows of doubt, discouragement, or defeat? It is doubtful that anyone who is fully consecrated to God and is presently walking in the narrow way of sacrifice has not, at some time or other, experienced tribulation of some kind. However, in full assurance of faith—a faith

that is sure and simple—we will take our Heavenly Father at his Word.

Trusting in his providence we shall endure until the end of our consecrated course. All things, evil as well as good, will be overruled for good to us. We know that God's provision is more than sufficient to equal the most serious emergency that can ever befall us.

IF GOD BE FOR US

God's promises to his consecrated children are again brought to our attention by the apostle in his epistle to the Romans. He says, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—Rom. 8:31,32

Thus realizing that God freely gave to us his greatest gift, our precious Lord Jesus, while we were yet sinners should surely be sufficient guarantee that we have been reconciled to him, and that he will also freely give us all other necessities to keep us from falling and to make our calling and election sure. None of us can doubt that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There can be no question as to whether God will, or will not, keep his promise, and no one can rightfully say in their heart, am I his or am I not.

LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

Another scripture which speaks of the abundant provision of God in Christ Jesus is found in Hebrews. We read, "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?" (Heb. 9:13,14) God so arranged matters in connection with the typical Tabernacle and with his typical people Israel that the 'blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean' did serve to sanctify and purify the flesh.

Paul was here making a comparison with the typical people and typical Tabernacle arrangements, with the true tabernacle and with God's true people. He made clear the fact that the blood of Christ would 'purge your conscience from dead works,' and to further provide the way to serve the living God.

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Serving the living God was never made possible with the typical arrangement in connection with Israel's Tabernacle. The Apostle Peter spoke of the true value of Jesus' blood, when he wrote, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."—I Pet. 1:18,19

The Scriptures teach that there is a special relationship that exists between members of the body of Christ and their Lord during this present Gospel Age. In one illustration, Jesus is pictured as the true vine, and the various members of his church are represented by the branches. In another scriptural

picture the closeness of this relationship is shown as a temple, with our Lord as the chief cornerstone and the church represented as living stones. There is also the illustration of the human body, with Jesus being the head and the church represented as various members of the body.

As body members of Jesus, we have a responsibility, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) There is also the beautiful illustration of the closeness between husbands and wives, where we read, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."—Eph. 5:25-27

The Apostle Paul testified to the very special blessing of being a coworker with our dear Lord Jesus. He said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) Here the apostle speaks of his personal and individual relationship with Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION OF PROVIDENCE

When speaking of God's providential love and care over his people, Jesus used an illustration from our everyday natural surroundings. He said,

“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?” (Luke 12:27,28) Jesus chose the lily as an apt illustration because of the special care and attention they must receive from those who grow them, and also by using all of the essential nutrients that are provided for them by our loving Creator.

The glory of Solomon was only an outward display, but the lily of the field has an inherent glory as part of its very nature. There is perfection in the texture of the flower that has been created and cared for by an infinite and unseen hand. If God can so clothe the lily, how much more able is he to clothe you and to provide for all of your needs. Let us, as ‘lilies’ of his planting, take every advantage of his wonderful care and attention for our every need that we may blossom forth for his ultimate glory.

With another beautiful illustration, Jesus said, “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?” (Luke 12:24) Plant and animal life in our natural surroundings are the quiet recipients of our Creator’s loving providence. As we meditate upon these illustrations, we realize more and more that our loving Heavenly Father is abundantly able to provide for all of our needs as his special people. Luke also recorded other lessons in which Jesus used examples from nature. “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of

them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:6,7) Our Lord has truly emphasized the grand and glorious reality of our Father’s loving care over us.

TO THEM THAT ASK

Jesus emphasized the glorious truth concerning the Father’s provision for his own people from another aspect, when he said, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” (Luke 11:11,12) No parent would ever think of giving something that was bad to a child who had asked for a good gift. On the contrary, any parent would take delight in giving good gifts to their children except when circumstances over which there was no control might prevent it. Our Lord provided the comparative and worthy explanation, when he answered, “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?”—vs. 13

In Matthew’s gospel, he records a parallel account of Jesus’ lesson, but there are some interesting variations. In the full account, Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give

him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"—Matt. 7:7-11

In either Luke's or Matthew's accounts, Jesus was addressing the underlying principles that govern our loving Heavenly Father's willingness to provide all things that are necessary for our development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. He pointed out that these provisions will be granted to God's children, but only 'to them that ask him.' Apart from the gift of his own dear Son, God's greatest gift to the church during this age of acceptable sacrifice is the Holy Spirit. We must understand our need for it, and our desire to be filled with it. Luke has emphasized the gift of the Holy Spirit in his account of what Jesus was teaching, whereas Matthew's included certain other details that Jesus used to portray the wonderful gifts that come from our loving Father.

In connection with the Master's lesson, the Apostle Paul reminds us, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9) We must realize our deficiencies and our need for the wonderful blessings that come to us from on high. In God's storehouse are promised abundant mercies, and if we ask him for more of them we shall surely receive them.

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD

Whatsoever is good for us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus will be given to us if we have the proper condition of heart. Paul had a deep appreciation

of the marvelous grace of God and, in his letter to the Corinthian church, he wrote, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” (II Cor. 3:5) Later, in the same letter, we are given an insight into his consecrated heart. “Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”—II Cor. 12:7-10

ABOVE ALL WE ASK OR THINK

The great apostle, notwithstanding his many and grievous trials, was able to testify to the marvelous love of God. “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Rom. 8:38,39

Our loving Father is abundantly able to do much more for us as New Creatures than we could ever possibly ask or think. In our consecrated walk in newness of life, we have come to appreciate him more and more, “To know the love of Christ, which

passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” (Eph. 3:19-21) Whatever our needs may be, in God’s provision there is an abundant supply that exceeds all that we could ever ask.

FEAR NOT LITTLE FLOCK

One of the most important lessons we must learn as followers of our dear Lord is that the Father is dealing with us with the positive conviction that his provisions are sufficient for all of our needs, whatever those needs may be. This has been the experience of all God’s faithful ones down through the stream of time. We are strengthened by the wonderful words of Jesus, which remind us, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32 ■

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to their family and friends in the loss of these dear ones.

Sister Jean Gonczewski, Agawam, MA—April 10. Age, 89

Sister Hazel Little, New York, NY—April 15. Age, 93

Sister Josephine Wardak, Agawam, MA—April 26.

Brother Anthony Onwumere, Aba, Nigeria—April 29.
Age, 48

Keeping the Heart

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

IT SEEMS A THING INCRED-

ible that one, having once been enlightened and come into the fellowship of the Lord’s family, could ever allow the Truth to slip away from them. However, we sadly face the fact that it has happened, and does, from time to time. Someone may say, “Well, brother, we are all in the Truth here and surely it cannot happen to us,” and we trust and pray that it will not happen to any of us. The point is, unless we are constantly on our guard, it could very easily happen to any of the Lord’s people.

As we look back to the earlier days of the harvest, to the many pilgrims and elders who helped spread the Truth, almost unbelievably, many of them lost that very Truth before they died. What was the reason? Was it because they were deceived by the Adversary? Was it the attractions of the world that overwhelmed them? Was it the weakness of the flesh? Were they not as spiritually minded as the Lord’s people of today? Surely the word of the Lord we hear spoken today is no more spiritual than those wonderful discourses from the earlier part of the harvest. Yet, many of those very

brethren lost the Truth, in large measure due to failure along the lines of their heart condition. This should be a warning to us, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”—I Cor. 10:12

KEEPING THE HEART—OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The Lord has promised many things to us—protection from the Adversary; wisdom and enlightenment from above; sufficiency in all things to make our calling and election sure; daily experiences that are best suited for our spiritual development. We are assured that if God be for us, no one could prevail against us (Rom. 8:31), and he has promised that he will never leave us, nor forsake us. (Heb. 13:5) However, there is one thing that the Lord will not do for us, and that is the matter of keeping the heart. “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) This we must do ourselves.

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

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

but he has appointed us the job of preparing the soil of our heart, and unless we prepare our hearts properly and cultivate and care for it regularly, this new life—this New Creature—will not be healthy, and will not grow properly. Also, in the garden at home, we find it necessary to pull the weeds out every once in a while, and when we think we've gotten them all, in a few days we find others to get rid of.

Let us then examine our hearts regularly, and see to it that we do not allow any of these weeds to grow—impure thoughts, wrong motives, the little beginnings of pride, selfishness, etc.; for if we do not get rid of them quickly they can get us into a lot of trouble, and they are very apt to choke out the New Creature. Yes, the New Creature is rooted in the soil of our heart and the lifeblood of this newly begotten being is circulated and controlled by the heart condition.

THE HEART—KEY TO THE NEW CREATURE

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

When we made a consecration to the Lord we were very sincere, we never held back anything—it was a complete consecration, otherwise the Lord would never have accepted it. Now, if we begin to draw back from the fulfillment of these vows of consecration, and if our consecrated attitude begins

to change, it would be a serious thing to the New Creature which depends upon this heart condition.

Let us notice our key text again—'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.' The Lord is telling us that the issue is that of life, and whether we will ever be found worthy to attain unto life everlasting is fully, not partly, dependent upon whether we are now, on this side of the veil, keeping our hearts with all diligence.

SCRIPTURAL ADMONITIONS CONCERNING THE HEART

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

Meekness and humility are two of these elements. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matt. 11:29) Humility is very important as an element of our heart condition. Jesus, our perfect example of humility, indicates in this verse that if we become yoked with him, and learn from him, we will become like him in meekness and humility of heart, and doing so we will find peace and rest for our souls. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is another way we develop a meek and humble attitude. We sit at his feet every time we come together for fellowship and study. Jesus said he would be there with us on these occasions. He does this through the Spirit of Truth emanating

from each consecrated heart present. If we humble ourselves, we will find it possible to learn valuable lessons from every member of the body, even those who may appear to be the weakest saints among us. Let us see to it that humility and meekness are truly a part of our heart condition.

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

Obedience is another important heart attitude. “Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” (Ps. 119:2) Obedience is a universal law of God, and none will ever have life everlasting without learning this fundamental principle. For the child of God, this means a conscientious doing of the Lord’s will daily, and a sincere application of the principles of truth and righteousness in our lives. As the psalmist declared, this is not something we can do halfheartedly, but we must give wholehearted obedience to the Lord. We must obey, not out of being forced, but

because our heart delights to do the Father's will.—
Ps. 40:8

THE PEACE OF GOD

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

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

A very important element of our heart is love. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. 6:5) Nothing else would matter much if love was not the crowning attribute of our heart condition. 'Love the LORD thy God with all thine heart'—a wholehearted love. Nothing short of that is acceptable to God. We love God "because he first loved us." (I John 4:19) We increase our love for him by learning more about him through the study of his Word, thus being drawn into a closer fellowship with him.

True love then is in proportion to knowledge and understanding. We love God because we know something about his wonderful character and plan. He has revealed himself to us in order that we can love him, for he wants our love and adoration. That love is increased as we seek to increase our understanding of his Word and his will for us. Our love for the brethren increases as we come to know more about them—their faithfulness to the Truth, their spirituality, etc. We love them accordingly, just as our Lord loved Peter, James, and John more than the others because of their greater zeal. So then, through fellowship together we learn to love one another more.

SEEKING GOD

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

Certainly our heart condition would not be complete without faith. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” (Heb. 10:22) We also know that “without faith it is impossible to please him [God].” (Heb. 11:6) The apostle suggests

that a true heart is one having a 'full assurance of faith.' We sometimes define faith as a conviction or belief, but this is not sufficient. A real faith is one in which a conviction or belief is evidenced by works. "Faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) It would seem then that the Lord does not gauge our faith on the basis of how much knowledge and understanding we have, but rather by the way that knowledge is proven and given expression of in our daily conduct. Let us, therefore, show our faith to the Lord and to one another through our good works, and seek to have his will fulfilled in our lives continually.

LOVE WITH A PURE HEART

We are to have the heart characteristic of love for the brethren. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (I Pet. 1:22) Loving the brethren is one of the unmistakable evidences that we are in the family of Christ. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (I John 3:14) If we ever lose the desire to be with the fellow body members of Christ, we would have reason to fear that something has gone seriously wrong in our heart.

It is important that we consider Paul's definition of true brotherly love in I Corinthians 13:4-7—"Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Let us measure our own hearts

by this standard, and if we always have this kind of love toward our brethren, our fellowship together will indeed be sweet. We notice that the Apostle Peter indicates that this love should not be just a passive one, but a fervent love. ‘See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.’

MAKING MELODY IN OUR HEART

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

Have we ever found ourselves murmuring and complaining when things go wrong—when things seem to go different than we had planned? Have we ever chafed under trials and unpleasant circumstances? Let us each take stock of our own hearts, and perhaps we will see that there is something more yet to be done along this line. ‘Rejoicing in tribulation’ is not always easy, but this is the standard we must reach.

Let us call to mind the occasion when Paul and Silas were in prison. “When they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison,

charging the jailor to keep them safely: . . . And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.” (Acts 16:23-25) We must give careful attention to our own hearts along this line.

ENLARGING OUR HEART

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

If we plant a seed in a container with just a little bit of soil it will sprout and begin to grow, but as it gets larger we must put it in a larger container with more soil, otherwise it will become sickly and perhaps even die. When we consecrated to the Lord, the soil of our hearts was sufficiently prepared so this new life, this embryo New Creature, could take root and have its beginning, but unless we are enlarging these heart elements the New Creature will not properly grow, and may become

sick and even die. Let us recall our theme text once again—‘Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.’ The life of the New Creature is dependent upon how we keep our heart.

Another important thought is this: The Lord tries our hearts from time to time. “The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts.” (Prov. 17:3) Does the Lord try our heart so he can determine what condition it is in? We think not—he could simply read the heart and tell that, without giving us any trying experiences. The Lord gives us these experiences—he ‘trieth the hearts’—in order that we might see some of our weaknesses and imperfections. Through trying experiences, he indicates to us those areas of our heart condition which need special attention. Then it is up to us to benefit from these lessons and have them serve as stepping-stones in this work of having our hearts enlarged.

OUR HEART TO BE JUDGED

We believe that in the final analysis, at the end of life’s course, our Heavenly Father will judge in the case of each one of his people, as to their worthiness or unworthiness to share with our Lord Jesus in the glory of the Divine plane. We suggest that he will make this a judgment of our heart, plus the expression of our heart sentiments through good works. This thought is expressed in Revelation 2:23, “All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

Finally, the Lord has given us all the tools and everything necessary so that we can take good care of our hearts. We must be careful not to use our pruning shears on our brother, or perhaps attempt to pull a weed or two out of our brother's heart that we think we see there. We have all we can do to prepare our own hearts, and as we seek to do this, our brethren are going to notice these heart sentiments being manifest in our lives, and they will be encouraged to do likewise. We are examples one to another in this way. May this work of 'enlarging the heart' continue in our individual lives, for the Lord has promised to pour out his rich blessings upon all those who are 'keeping the heart.'

■

*O for a heart more like my God,
From imperfection free;
A heart conformed unto thy Word,
And pleasing, Lord, to thee;*

*A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From him who dwells within;*

*A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love Divine,
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good,
A copy, Lord, of thine.*

—Hymns of Dawn

Faith and Good Doctrine

“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.”

—I Timothy 4:6

WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL wrote to young Timothy whom he loved as his own son, he stressed the need for further growth, understanding, and determination in the ways of truth and righteousness. He gave him sound advice concerning faith and the fundamental teachings of God’s Word. “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”—I Tim. 4:12,13

OUR SAVIOR

The Apostle Peter also spoke of those important truths, and proclaimed the Gospel message of our dear Lord and Savior, the one who had suffered and died for us. He said, “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might

bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” (I Pet. 3:18) The Apostle John affirms, “Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” (I John 4:3) Even in the days of the apostles the pure message of truth and salvation for all mankind was being subverted by false teachers. John cautioned the brethren in the early church, saying, “Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”—II John 7

PRAISE AND CONCERN

The necessity for guarding the purity of the Gospel message was evident and urgent as spoken by Paul in his letter to the brethren at Corinth. “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.” (I Cor. 11:2) Later, he said to them, “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory [hold fast, *Marginal Translation*] what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”—chap. 15:1-3

It was to those who were not holding fast to the pure doctrines of truth that Paul was addressing. He was concerned about them and also those who

were teaching error. Later, in his letter to Timothy, the apostle cautioned against these foreign teachings. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”—I Tim. 4:16

AN APOSTOLIC COMMISSION

Paul urged Timothy to raise the standard high for his brethren, and to resist all efforts of those who would alter the original and pure message of the Gospel. With his whole heart, the apostle pleaded with him to grasp the significance of the danger to the Gospel truth and the great blessing he was given of being chosen as one of its defenders in the early Christian church. “O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee.”—chap. 6:20,21

To emphasize the privilege of his own apostolic commission and his desire to guard the pure Gospel message, Paul reverently gave thanks and praise to God. “According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” (chap. 1:11,12) Paul was aware of the intense opposition that Timothy and other commissioned guardians of the doctrines would have to confront throughout the Gospel Age. The apostle then spoke concerning his own ferocious opposition to the Lord’s people and their message of Truth before the time of his own conversion.

Speaking freely, he recalled, "Who [I, Paul] was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."—I Tim. 1:13

PAUL COMMISSIONS TIMOTHY

As an aging veteran of intense spiritual warfare and with the view toward his own eventual departure, Paul repeatedly encouraged his younger brother Timothy to carry on the defense of the precious Gospel truth. He said, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck."—vss. 18,19

The apostle also writes concerning Timothy's commission, when he wrote to him a second time, saying, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (II Tim. 4:1-4) Paul was projecting Timothy's commission far into the future from his day, even to the end of the age. He was thus pointing forward in time and commissioning all of the faithful followers of Christ to defend the precious Truth during that long period of time.

FABLES AND CONFUSION

The faithful are to encourage one another with great patience by holding fast to the fundamental teachings of our faith. During this age they are to 'exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine' to counter the errors of false teachers and their teachings. The apostle warns that those who profess Christ and then fail to be faithful will eventually turn to fables. The result of such action will lead to confusion and a distortion of their faith that he likens to a 'shipwreck' of our faith. It was because of the disintegration of hope that he proclaimed, "Faith is the substance [ground, or confidence, *Marginal Translation*] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—Heb. 11:1

Putting his admonitions into a much larger context than for his own day, Paul told Timothy that the corruption of the Gospel, which he said had already begun, would reach its full and systematic maturity by the end of the age. He cautioned that it would be particularly dangerous at that time, and to those who were holding fast to the doctrines of the Gospel. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." (II Tim.3:1) The apostle foresaw progressively fewer defenders of the doctrines of the Truth as the church would draw nearer to its completion at the end of the Gospel Age. He said that the influence of false teachers would rapidly increase and overthrow the faith of all who do not study and teach the pure doctrines without personal theory or the prejudices of tradition.

THE ARMOR OF GOD

The Apostle Paul assures his brethren that Divine protection is available to those who would stand in

the holy condition of Spirit begettall, and against corruption of the Gospel message. He likens that protection to armor, and identifies its various components which the faithful must put on and keep wearing. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all [overcome all, *Marginal Translation*], to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:13-17) In addition to these six components, the apostle includes a seventh without which the armor of God will not be complete, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."—vs. 18

THE GIFT OF PRAYER

Prayer is the mark of the spiritually mature, for they alone understand that prayer not only benefits the recipient, but that it also has a sanctifying effect upon all who witness God's wonderful response. Paul offers an example of the power of reciprocal prayer. He wrote, "We would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a

death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.”—II Cor. 1:8-11

“LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH”

A vital element in the preparation of the faithful is the fellowship of others of “like precious faith” to which the Apostle Peter refers in the opening salutation of his second epistle. “To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” (II Pet. 1:1,2) In these alone will the New Creature in Christ find a truly sympathetic heart, an understanding smile, a selfless encouraging touch, or a welcoming embrace. Only those who have received the astonishing gift of the Holy Spirit can fully appreciate the depths of the New Creature’s thankfulness to God for all his benefits. As the psalmist wrote, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?”—Ps. 116:12

THE LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION

The faithful footstep followers of our Lord Jesus will alone understand and appreciate what it means to be baptized into Christ’s death, and have the hope of being raised in the likeness of his resurrection. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we

also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:3,4) This is the ultimate hope of our High Calling in Christ Jesus. “If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—vs. 5

PARTAKERS OF HIS SUFFERING

None but those who follow Christ in the way of sacrifice can truly comprehend, and yet rejoice in suffering as spoken by Peter. “Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (I Pet. 4:13) Through weariness, we might be occasionally inclined to wish for our own last hour of suffering in the narrow way. However, those who diligently strive to be faithful unto death will not be turned aside but will heed the words of the Psalmist David, who wrote, “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” (Ps. 27:14) Again, he wrote, “Evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.” (chap. 37:9) Those who will ‘inherit the earth’ are the faithful of the Gospel Age whom Paul, in a different context, called “heirs of salvation.”—Heb. 1:14

The special class of our Lord Jesus’ followers will patiently wait, and be content in the knowledge that it is the Lord who will decide when our trials and testings are over. As the faithful wait, their hearts are strengthened by the fellowship of others of like precious faith. It is a deep and mutual love that the ‘heirs of salvation’ have for one another, and renders the waiting endurable. It fulfills Christ’s only commandment to them when he said,

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”—John 15:12

THE DANGER OF DOUBT

In general, mankind is skeptical of God’s promise of eternal salvation for all mankind through the blood of Jesus. Some may have hope, but fewer believe, because they lack faith and trust in our loving Heavenly Father and his plan for the salvation of the whole human family. On the other hand, the entire hope and expectation of members of the church who are now being called is based upon total belief and confidence in God and every word of his promises. The church believes even as its Lord believed, for he said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4) These believers must remain wholly apart from the skepticism and ignorance that permeates our present-day world. The Spirit-begotten followers of Christ put their trust in God and his provisions of grace on their behalf. “The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”—Heb. 10:38,39

During the present Gospel Age, the Spirit-begotten New Creature in Christ Jesus must believe at the end of his course that which he also believed at its beginning. Though surrounded by a sea of skepticism and beset by the world, the flesh, and the Devil, they must continue to have faith in his plan for their everlasting welfare. We read, “Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of

God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” (John 6:28,29) For those in Christ, maintaining confidence in God and his every word is a matter of life or death. To this the Apostle Paul says, “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.” (Heb. 3:14) James also wrote, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”—James 1:12

THE COMMON STRUGGLE

To assure his brethren that all the Spirit-begotten, including the apostles, share a common experience, the Apostle Paul generously shares the nature of his own struggle, a struggle with which all the Spirit-begotten are familiar, but which the world is incapable of comprehending. “I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:22-24) The consecrated, enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit of God to see what wonders lie beyond death, do not fear. From the moment of consecration and Spirit begetting, all things are designed to assist the New Creature in Christ toward that ultimate goal. Their work is to submit and believe unto the end of their consecrated walk in newness of life. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:28

THE FAITHFUL

During this present Gospel Age, there have been some few of the Lord's consecrated people who have heeded the call of the apostles to defend the doctrines of the Truth and the faith. They have resisted the temptations of the worldly-wise to render the oracles of God more widely appealing to others through alteration. They have understood that alteration would lead to uncertainty, and uncertainty would in turn lead to confusion and doubt. For the New Creature, doubt would lead to spiritual death, which is Satan's desire.

This faithful class of believers hear the urgent tone of Paul's plea to Timothy to defend the doctrines of the faith even as it was in the days of Timothy. Satan's wiles have not diminished nor has his animosity toward the Truth and its defenders lessened since that earlier time. Let each New Creature in Christ consider himself a specially commissioned defender of the faith and Truth as was Paul, and his encouragement to Timothy to do the same. Let each of us also heed the words of the Apostle Peter, when he said, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."—I Pet. 5:8

As we consider the importance of faith and good doctrine, may we heed the words of Jude who wrote, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. B. Alexander

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
June 28-30

E. Blicharz

St. Petersburg, FL June 15

R. Goodman

Louisville, AL June 8

R. Gowryluk

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
June 28-30

L. Griehs

Portland, OR June 20-22

S. Jeuck

Portland, OR June 20-22

A. Kopczyk

Portland, OR June 20-22

T. Krupa

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
June 28-30

P. Mali

Portland, OR June 20-22

F. Nemesh

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G. Tabac

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WARRI, NIGERIA CONVENTION, June 7—Contact A. Awhotu, 23 Udu Road, Enerhen, PO Box 1854, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria. Phone: +(234) 805-414-5090; (234) 805-483-7556

ASSOCIATED BIBLE STUDENTS OF PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 20,21,22—Holiday Inn, 2752 NE Hogan Drive, Gresham, OR 97030. Contact R. Evans. Phone: (360) 750-7366

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 28,29,30—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada. Phone: (306)764-7692

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 19-24—University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, PA. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 3-8—Nowy Sacz, Poland. Contact T. Machacek. Phone: (219) 662-8107

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, August 16,17—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Moore, 2176 South 71st Street, West Allis, WI 53219. Phone: (414) 541-8937

JACKSON LABOR DAY CONVENTION, August 30,31—Fa-Ho-Lo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Unit 1, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact V. Lumley, 2531 Ashton Road, Jackson, MI 49203. Phone: (517) 782-7252

SEATTLE LABOR DAY CONVENTION, August 30,31,September 1—Seabeck Christian Conference

Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380.
Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 939-9838

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 12,13,14—
Bevil Conference Center & Hotel, Huntsville, AL 35816.
Contact J. Cothren, 1300 Huntsville Hills Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802. Phone: (256) 852-8505

COLUMBUS INDIANA OLDE HARVEST TIME CONVENTION, September 20,21—Dan Ledwinka Farm, 10004 E 550 N, Columbus, IN 47203. Contact D. McClellan, 3181 Martha Court, Columbus, IN 47302. Phone: (812) 344-0066 Or contact E. Ledwinka. Phone: (812) 546-5311

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 4,5—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136 West Newton, PA. Contact G. Balko, 308 Burger Street, West Newton, PA 15089. Phone: (724) 872-6418

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 18,19—Garden Club of Sanford, 200 Fairmont Drive (Corner of Hwy 17-92), Sanford, FL. Contact J. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 831-2098



“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”—Hebrews 10:23-25, New American Standard Bible

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

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