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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

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

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

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

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Postfach 11 03, 64368 Ober-Ramstadt

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 USA

INDIA: The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

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

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Conquering the Pandemic of Fear 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

A Prophecy of Restoration 14

Promised Blessings 16

Punishment Pronounced 18

An Exhortation to Repent 20

Pursue Mercy and Judgment 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

“Your Reasonable Service” 24

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 12

VINEYARD ECHOES

India Trip Report 41

TALKING THINGS OVER

General Convention Bulletin 61

OBITUARIES 40

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 62

Conquering the Pandemic of Fear

*“I sought the LORD,
and he answered
me and delivered
me from all
my fears.”*
—*Psalm 34:4,*
English Standard
Version

THE WORD “PANDEMIC” IS not a term that has been often used in recent history. It is derived from the Greek *pan*, meaning “all,” and *demos*, meaning “people.” A pandemic is defined as a disease epidemic that has spread across

a large region, such as multiple continents, or worldwide. During the past century there have been a number of relatively small pandemics, but the last one of major worldwide significance, and in fact believed by many to be the deadliest of all known in history, was the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918. It infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide, resulting in estimated deaths ranging from 20 to 100 million, including some 675,000 Americans.

The previously sporadic use of the term pandemic came to an abrupt end on March 11 of this year, when the World Health Organization (WHO), declared COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus, to be a worldwide pandemic. As of the latter part of

April, the time of this writing, worldwide cases are estimated at over 2.7 million, with more than 192,000 deaths reported. These numbers, of course, are changing daily and will undoubtedly be much higher in coming weeks.

Another “pandemic” of sorts which is beginning to affect the entire world as a result of COVID-19 is the economic impact associated with the shutdown of a majority of non-essential businesses and services. This has been deemed necessary in order to slow the spread of the Coronavirus until, it is hoped, this highly infectious disease runs its course and the numbers of new cases show a consistent decline. Governments and central banks around the world are currently pumping trillions of dollars into the economic infrastructure for the purpose of helping to keep businesses and individuals afloat until the longer-term financial aspect of this pandemic subsides.

There is yet a third “pandemic” associated with the current world situation—the pandemic of fear. It has been spreading due to the feelings of concern, uncertainty, and anxiety in the hearts and minds of much of the population. There are the concerns regarding the virus itself. Will I or any of my loved ones contract it? If so, what is the prospect for recovery? When will a vaccine be available? Then there is the economic uncertainty and anxiety. Will I be laid off from my job? Will I be able to continue paying my bills? Will I have the ability to feed my family? These, and a host of other questions and concerns, are going through the minds of many among mankind.

As members of the general population, we have little, if any, individual control over the health aspect

of the pandemic, with the important exception that we follow all the recommended guidelines associated with the prevention of the virus' spread. We also most likely have little control over the economic side of the pandemic, except that we should manage as carefully as possible the supplying of the necessities of life to ourselves and our families.

The pandemic of fear, however, we can attack and conquer, not by our own strength nor by fleshly wisdom, but by claiming the assurances and promises in the Bible, provided to those who put their implicit faith in God. Throughout the Scriptures, in both the Old and New Testament, are found a multitude of fear-conquering promises and inspirational assurances. The Book of Psalms, in particular, is a treasure trove of such promises to those who put their trust in God. In the subsequent pages of our lesson, we will look at three passages from the Psalms. We desire that these might be spiritually strengthening to us as we look to the Lord for our comfort and peace.

PSALM 34:3-8

“Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”—*English Standard Version*

In this psalm, David states that one of the reasons we should exalt the name of the Lord is the fact that he delivers us from all our fears. How appropriate, as here stated, that all who love God and have faith in his promises should magnify him, for certainly there is none of us who has not been delivered from one sort of fear or another. The Apostle John declares that “fear hath torment.” (I John 4:18) Fear enslaves, as a heavy chain, rendering one powerless to do that which he would otherwise desire. There can be little peace or joy in the heart that is filled with fear.

“Those who look to him are radiant,” David continues, “and their faces shall never be ashamed.” The force of the expression, “Those who look to him” is strengthened by contrasting it with the idea of looking within to our own sources of strength, or of looking to the world around us in the hope of being delivered from our fears.

There is little point in looking to self, for we are too weak. If we have a proper estimate of our own strength we will tremble when we think of self. However, when we look to the Lord, we are strong in his power. How correct is the admonition, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) In another place, the Apostle Paul said concerning his own experiences, “When I am weak,” according to the flesh, “then am I strong,” in the Lord. (II Cor. 12:10) Indeed, it is in God’s strength, and not our own, that we can overcome fear.

Looking to the world around us is likewise insufficient in combatting our fears, as we note the confusion, uncertainty and perplexity that is everywhere apparent. The pandemic of fear gripping the masses

of people and nations today is further exacerbated by the fact that there are some who appear to promote and foster its hold on society, rather than attempting to give any message of hope or encouragement. If we look to the Lord, however, and to his Word, we shall find a source of hope and comfort in which, as David states, we “shall never be ashamed,” nor disappointed. The Apostle Paul writes that we have a hope that “maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.”—Rom. 5:5

The psalmist speaks of a “poor man” who cried unto the Lord, and tells us that he was saved out of his troubles. We might think of a poor man as one who has great need of help, and who, additionally, humbly realizes his need. Jesus speaks of those who are “poor in spirit,” and it is to these that the Lord gives his strength and blessing. (Matt. 5:3) One could be very poor along material lines, yet be proud in spirit and haughty. Those who are in this attitude do not enjoy the sunshine of God’s favor and blessing. On the contrary, all who are humble-minded, regardless whether they are rich or poor in material things, are in a proper attitude to receive the Lord’s mercy and loving-kindness.

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear [reverence] him, and delivers them,” writes David. Jesus, speaking of those who truly reverence the Lord, said, “Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 18:10) The Apostle Paul, speaking of the holy angels, wrote, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:14) From these texts it seems altogether likely that each one of the Lord’s fully devoted people

is under the special care of one or more of the holy angels.

The angel of the Lord “encamps” round about us. It is not an intermittent care which is exercised, but a constant vigilance. Such heavenly messengers watch over us every minute of the day and night. They do not prevent us from having trials which are good for our spiritual growth and development. Rather, they help to ensure that nothing befalls us except that which will contribute to our development in the character likeness of Christ Jesus, and hence, will be the best for our eternal welfare.

We should not limit this promise only to the care exercised over us by spirit beings. The term, angel, as used in the Scriptures, signifies “messenger,” and is broad enough in meaning to include any and every agency which God may use for our blessing. Even inanimate things, or the circumstances of life, may be utilized by him as messengers for our good. Indeed, we have the promise 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

“Taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.” David seemed to realize that not all, even of Israel, had really discovered the goodness of the Lord, so he extends an invitation to “taste and see.” This is, of course, symbolic language. It means that we should place ourselves in the position of trust wherein we can experience the Lord’s care over us. That place, or position, David describes in another psalm, is “the secret place of the most High.” (Ps. 91:1) Only those who humbly make their abode in “the secret place” of God’s care are in a position to know by experience,

to “taste” and to “see” his goodness. Blessed indeed are those who thus take refuge in him.

PSALM 37:3-6

“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”

Although these words of David certainly apply to those striving at the present time to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, they also will have a grand future fulfillment respecting the blessings to come to “all the nations of the earth.” (Gen. 22:18) The psalmist’s declaration is but one of many promises contained in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, which will have their ultimate accomplishment in God’s dealing with mankind during his kingdom, soon to be established upon the earth. Jesus taught us to pray for that time, saying, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth.”—Matt. 6:10

David said, “Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.” It would seem correct to say that the first application of this promise was to natural Israel, and that the “land” referred to was the land the Lord gave to them in which to dwell as a nation. (Deut. 11:31) However, there will be a larger fulfillment of this promise during God’s kingdom, under the righteous rulership of Christ. (Rev. 20:6) Then, all who trust in the Lord and do good will

dwell in the land—the earth. Later in this same psalm, David states in this regard, “The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.”— Ps. 37:29

Returning to verse 4: “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” The “desire of all nations shall come,” writes another prophet. (Hag. 2:7) It is true, of course, that the Lord gives to those who at the present time are striving to serve him, the desires of their hearts, to the extent they are in harmony with his purposes for their greatest spiritual benefit. However, in our text the main application seems to be the legitimate earthly desires of the world of mankind during the time when they are being restored to human perfection under the kingdom reign of Christ.

In order to participate in the blessings under the kingdom arrangement the people will have to devote themselves to the doing of God’s will. Hence, David’s further admonition, “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him.” No one will obtain everlasting life upon any other basis than that of committing his way wholly to the Lord in the spirit of full dedication, and by trusting in his all-wise guidance and instruction. Those who take these steps during the coming kingdom of righteousness will discover that God will indeed “bring it to pass,”—that is to say, he will grant them the desires of their hearts.

Their righteousness shall be brought forth “as the light,” David continues. This thought seems to be in contrast to the experiences of God’s people during this present age of sin, suffering and death. Now the godly are often persecuted, and according to the standards of this world, their conduct is

often unappreciated and ridiculed. While they let their light shine, it is not understood by a majority of the people. However, it will be different in the coming kingdom of Christ. Then the righteousness of those who commit their way unto the Lord shall shine brightly. It will be seen, appreciated and respected by all who are similarly walking on the “highway” that leads to holiness.—Isa. 35:8

PSALM 46:1-3

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”—*ESV*

This is another reassuring psalm of trust, and one that has a special application at this particular time, when the institutions of this present age are being shaken, in preparation for God’s kingdom of righteousness, a new age, soon to be established for the blessing of all the families of the earth. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” writes the psalmist, and the verses which follow clearly indicate that the “trouble” referred to is the same as that which the Prophet Daniel describes as a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1

It is true, of course, that the Lord is a “very present help” to his people in all their troubles. He guides, strengthens and comforts them in their every time of need. He allays their fears, and leads them in times of uncertainty. During this period, especially, everything is being shaken that can be shaken.

(Heb. 12:26,27) Those striving to maintain their faith and trust in the Lord are in special need of his protection and care, and this psalm promises to them that this need will be supplied.

It is because this is true that the words of the next verse are so appropriate: “Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.” This is highly symbolic language, and is descriptive of the removal of this “present evil world,” which is under the rulership of Satan, the “god of this world.” (Gal. 1:4; II Cor. 4:4) Jesus foretold of the trouble incidental to this in similar language. He said that there would be upon the earth “distress [Greek: holding fast together] of nations, with perplexity [Greek: no way out],” and that men’s hearts would be “failing them for fear,” as they looked at the things coming upon the earth. Jesus also illustrated this time of distress and fear by the symbol of the “sea and the waves roaring.”—Luke 21:25,26

At the present time, a majority of the world of mankind, not knowing the meaning of current events, and having no assurance of a happy outcome, are filled with fear. If, however, we have faith and trust in God, and in the soon establishment of his kingdom of righteousness here upon the earth, “we will not fear.” Instead of fearing, our hearts rejoice—not because of the trouble—but because we know from the promises of God’s Word that this time of shaking and great distress will soon accomplish God’s divine purpose. Then will be ushered in an age during which all the suffering of mankind will be eliminated. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor

crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Then the tabernacle of God, his dwelling place, will be “with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”—Rev. 21:3,4

Although we do not know with any degree of certainty, the current Coronavirus pandemic will likely continue at least through the early summer, and the resulting economic pandemic will last significantly longer. However, if we put our full faith and trust in the Lord, his ways, his will and his plan, as laid out for us in the Scriptures, we can be free from the pandemic of fear. Thus, we can continually abide in the “secret place of the most High.” It is our sincere prayer that this may be so with all of us. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 7—“Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel.”
—I Corinthians 9:16 (Z. '03-174 Hymn 261)

MAY 14—“Speaking the truth in love,...grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.”—
Ephesians 4:15 (Z. '03-200 Hymn 109)

MAY 21—“All scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—
II Timothy 3:16,17 (Z. '97-170 Hymn 22)

MAY 28—“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body [so long as we feel entirely contented with present conditions—ourselves and our surroundings], we are absent from the Lord.”—
II Corinthians 5:6 (Z. '97-305 Hymn 170)

Seek First the Kingdom

Seek first, seek first God's Kingdom,
If we are His elect;
With all our hearts now serve Him
In ways He will select.
From service unto service,
Our love for Him reveal,
As thus we seek to please Him
By works of faith and zeal.

Seek first, seek first God's Kingdom,
If we for Him would live;
Whatever things are needful
To us, He'll surely give.
Delighting in His promise
To give us needed grace,
Continue in our striving
To fill the chosen place.

Seek first, seek first God's Kingdom!
What else can matter now?
The things of earth are fading
As we before Him bow.
Confide in Him and trust Him,
Though plagues are on the way;
Since we are His completely,
We're not on earth to stay!

—Laura E. Kelsey

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His
righteousness, and all these things shall be added
unto you.”—Matthew 6:33

A Prophecy of Restoration

Key Verse: “Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.”
—Zephaniah 3:19

Selected Scripture:
Zephaniah 3:14-20

MUCH OF THE PROPHECY of Zephaniah is that of judgment and trouble which would come upon Israel as a result of their transgressions against God. It is also a prophecy which similarly speaks of coming judgment upon the world in general due to their falling into the ruinous ways of sin. Near the end of Zephaniah’s prophecy, however, a grand hope of restoration is laid out for Israel and for all the families of the earth. The title of today’s lesson is reflective of that hope and its eventual fulfillment.

It is important to remember that the righteous character of God requires that he first exercise judgment against sin, and defeat its power over mankind, prior to blessing the people and restoring them to his favor and to life. The psalmist says, “The LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.” (Ps. 9:7,8, *New American Standard Bible*) We are comforted in the knowledge that God’s justice and judgment are often referred to in

the Scriptures together with words descriptive of his grace, love and mercy. We note Isaiah 30:18 as one such example: “The LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”—*NASB*

Our Selected Scripture passage points out that God’s assurances of restoration follow his promises of removing the troubles and enemies that stand in the way of recovery. In the case of Israel, the prophet indicates that the destruction of Israel’s foes must precede their full restoration. As we view Israel today, although she was re-established as a nation more than seventy years ago, we see her still surrounded by enemies intent upon her destruction. This signifies that the fulfillment of this prophecy with regard to Israel still belongs to the future.

The restoration spoken of by Zephaniah in our lesson will not only be for Israel, but for all mankind. Earlier, in verse 9, the prophet speaks of a time when God will bless all people with a “pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.” The Prophet Micah says that of that time, “Many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.”—*Mic. 4:2*

The Apostle James spoke of these things, explaining that God’s selection of his church, “a people for His name,” must precede mankind’s restoration, but that “after these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, ... and I will restore it, So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.” (*Acts 15:13-18, NASB*) How thankful we are for the prophets of “long ago,” those such as Zephaniah, who foretold of restoration to come to Israel and all mankind. ■

Promised Blessings

Key Verses: *“These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.”*
—*Zechariah 8:16,17*

Selected Scripture:
Zechariah 8:1-17

Others, who remained in exile under the favorable rule of Cyrus, were asked to support the effort by giving articles of silver and gold, goods, livestock, gifts and freewill offerings to those who had volunteered to return.—Ezra 1:3-6

The rebuilding of the Temple began with its foundation, and the completion of this phase was a major

THE OCCASION OF ZECHARIAH'S prophecy was at the time of the rebuilding of Israel's Temple in Jerusalem. Under the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, Jews previously in Babylonian captivity were encouraged to return to Jerusalem to engage in the rebuilding work. (II Chron. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4) Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years earlier about Cyrus and even referred to him by name.—Isa. 45:1,13

God not only prepared the heart of Cyrus, but he also stirred up the Israelites, many of whom favorably responded to be part of the first wave of returning exiles. Those whose hearts were thus moved prepared themselves for the journey back to Jerusa-

accomplishment towards the goal of completing the work. “When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel and with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.” (Ezra 3:10) This initial joy and zeal, however, was soon replaced with a period of slackness, as the opposition of their enemies caused the Jews to forget God’s promise that he would be with them. As a result, the work ceased for a time.—Ezra 4:1-24

It was here that God reminded Israel of his love for them by sending two prophets to encourage them to redouble their zeal in serving him. The first message came from the Prophet Haggai in the form of encouragement to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah: “Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; ... be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.”—Hag. 2:4,5

The second message came through Zechariah. He reminded the Israelites that they were not to expect prosperity at that time, but rather should obediently complete the rebuilding work. If they would faithfully complete the Temple’s construction, promised blessings would follow in God’s due time.—Zech. 8:9-16

While both Haggai and Zechariah spoke to natural Israel, there is also an application to spiritual Israel. Speaking of the greater temple of God, the Apostle Peter says, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up ... sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 2:5, *New American Standard Bible*) The command of our Key Verse, “These are the things that ye shall do,” is a reminder to all of us to fulfill our covenant of consecration with God faithfully, even unto death.—Rev. 2:10 ■

Punishment Pronounced

Key Verse: “*Unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.*”
—*Jeremiah 21:8*

Selected Scripture:
Jeremiah 21:1-14

TODAY’S LESSON IS ONE of the severity of God’s dealings with his covenant people when they willfully pursued a course in violation of their national vows. Israel had entered into a solemn covenant with God. Obedience to their covenant would bring great blessings from God, while disobedience would bring corresponding judgment and punishment.

It was in fulfillment of this covenant on God’s part that the events of today’s lesson came to pass. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel was first to feel the judgment of the Lord after worshipping heathen idols and gods, including Baal. As a result of their grave sins against their covenant with God, he allowed Israel to be defeated by the king of Assyria and be carried off as captives.—II Kings 17:6-24

Despite seeing what happened to the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, Judah, the two-tribe kingdom, followed the same course of corruption. (Jer. 3:8) As King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made war against Judah, King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to pray to the Lord for deliverance “according to all his wondrous works.” (Jer. 21:1,2) The answer relayed through the prophet was not the response Zedekiah was hoping for. Instead of fighting for Judah, the message was

that the Lord would fight against Judah, due to their grave disobedience.

In our Key Verse, God sets forth a grim choice the people must make—a way of life or a way of death. The next verse states the details of that choice. Those who choose to stay in Judah and Jerusalem “shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.” Those who leave, and become captives in Babylon “shall live,” having escaped in safety. (vs. 9) Here, the “way of life” is no longer the way of righteousness, because the people of Judah had already forsaken that path. God had rendered his judgment, and the only way now to maintain life would be unconditional surrender to the kingdom of Babylon.

As pointed out in our previous lesson, after seventy years of captivity in Babylon, God overruled that the Israelites could return to their homeland. Although there was a temporary renewal of faithfulness on the part of some, the nation generally continued in many of their sinful ways and, later on, rejected Jesus, their Messiah of promise. It is important to note, however, that God did not cast off his people forever. As stated by the Apostle Paul, God has restoration and blessings yet in store for his people.—Rom. 11:25-32

The name Babylon means “confusion,” and we can see how this applies to both natural Israel and spiritual Israel. Babylon, a heathen nation, literally held the Israelites in confusion during their captivity as a result of their seeking after other gods in violation of their covenant. Symbolic Babylon of the present age is shown to represent the various church systems which have been overtaken with doctrinal errors, bringing confusion and misunderstanding to the people in general. However, like the Israelites of old who remained dedicated to God, faithful followers of the Lord now have heard and obeyed the words, “Come out of her [Babylon], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins.” (Rev. 18:4) How blessed are all of spiritual Israel who have heeded this instruction! ■

An Exhortation to Repent

Key Verse: *“Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.”*
—**Jeremiah 22:3**

Selected Scripture:
Jeremiah 22:1-10

(Jer. 22:2) David was a man after God’s own heart, and a great example of how a king should rule. (Acts 13:22) Imitating such a course would surely reap the benefit of the many promises made to David.

With the high standard of king David set before the eyes of Jehoahaz, Jeremiah sets forth the king’s duty in our Key Verse. Executing “judgment and righteousness”

IN THIS CHAPTER OF JEREMIAH’S prophecy, we find the Lord sending him to preach to the rulers of Judah which preceded their last king, Zedekiah. These sermons delivered by the prophet make it clear that the two-tribe kingdom of Judah had both an opportunity to repent of unrighteous practices, and a fair warning long before the sentence of their impending captivity was pronounced.

Today’s Selected Scripture is a message sent to the royal family during the reign of Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, Judah’s last righteous king. Jeremiah reminds Jehoahaz that he is sitting upon the throne of David.

means, among other things, paying wages to whom they belong without respect to persons and without bribe or corruption. Withholding from anyone what is due for their work is sin. Unfortunately, Jehoahaz was guilty of this unrighteous behavior, as shown later in verse 13.

Ill treatment of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow is also mentioned by the prophet. Israel, as well as many other nations around them, were guilty of such practices. Jeremiah condemns such unrighteousness as contrary to God's command to care for the poor and needy, as further spoken of by the psalmist. (Ps. 82:3,4) Another great evil is the shedding of innocent blood. (Prov. 6:16,17) Such sins are even worse when committed by those who are set over the people to secure and protect their lives and property. Jehoahaz was guilty of these heinous deeds.—Jer. 22:17

While the rulers were the most accountable for the unrighteous behavior of Judah, the people were not held blameless. Jeremiah 22:4 indicates that these responsibilities lay not only with those "sitting upon the throne," but also with the "servants" and the "people." In a similar statement, the prophet had enjoined all the people throughout Judah to bring "offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and ... sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD."—Jer. 17:25,26

When the law given at Mount Sinai was delivered to Israel by Moses, the people together said, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." (Exod. 19:8) It was the general failure of the nation, both the rulers and the people, to honor this commitment that eventually led to their being cast off, as spoken of by Jesus, though he also said the time would eventually come when they would say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:34-39) Let us learn from Israel's experiences, as these words of Paul express: "Let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow."—I Cor. 10:12, *J. B. Phillips New Testament* ■

Pursue Mercy and Judgment

Key Verse:
*“Therefore turn
thou to thy God:
keep mercy and
judgment, and
wait on thy God
continually.”*
—Hosea 12:6

Selected Scripture:
*Hosea 11:1-12;
12:1-14*

THE BOOK OF HOSEA IS written as a symbolic parallel between the prophet’s marriage to an unfaithful wife and the covenant which existed between God and Israel. The Lord first spoke to Hosea, saying, “Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.” (Hos. 1:2) This seemingly strange command only makes sense in the light of its symbolic parallel. God’s “marriage” to Israel had begun when the Law Covenant was given at Mount Sinai, and accepted by them. Even at that time, the Israelites were tainted to some degree as a “wife” due to their following after idolatry while in Egypt.—Lev. 17:7; 18:3; Josh. 24:14

Taking a wife who was already guilty of immorality in the past seems to qualify Hosea as an appropriate prophet to speak concerning Israel’s marriage to Jehovah. One of the highlights of the prophet’s words is that, in spite of her past sins, he professes great love for his wife by declaring that he will seek to recover her. (Hos. 2:14-20; 3:1) Some of the promises attached to her return sound like many found elsewhere in the Scriptures which speak of God’s coming kingdom of righteousness, in which all

mankind will be blessed. We note these words of Hosea: “I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.”—Hos. 2:23

Later in his prophesy, Hosea turns his attention directly to the covenant between God and Israel: “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.” (Hos. 4:1) As Hosea manifested patience and love toward his unfaithful wife, God manifests his love to Israel even more abundantly. The prophet holds out hope for their recovery, showing God’s great longsuffering toward them: “I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.”—Hos. 5:15, *New American Standard Bible*

The words of our Key Verse, “Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually,” remind us of the familiar words of another faithful prophet of the Lord. Micah wrote: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8) These basic principles would be the key to Israel’s hope of restoration back to favor and covenant blessings from God.

As spiritual Israelites, we should be keenly aware of the importance of our faithfulness to God and to our covenant with him, made possible through his Son, Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul spoke of his heartfelt concern along this line on behalf of his fellow brethren. “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” (II Cor. 11:2) May we be faithful to God and to his Son, to whom we are espoused, fully “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”—Rev. 21:2

“Your Reasonable Service”

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”
—Micah 6:8

OUR TITLE IS TAKEN FROM the words of Paul in which, when referring to the presenting of ourselves as a “living sacrifice,” he refers to it as our “reasonable service” unto God. (Rom. 12:1) By contrast, our opening text says nothing about sacrifice as being a requirement in order to serve

God acceptably. In fact, the context of this verse seems to give the thought that God desires no sacrifices or offerings at all from his people. (Mic. 6:6,7) In this study, we will consider both aspects of our relationship with God, and seek to understand that, in reality, there is no conflict between these two viewpoints.

The opening verse of Micah’s prophecy states that he served as a prophet of the Lord in Israel during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and that he had a message concerning “Samaria,” the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, and for

“Jerusalem,” which represented the two-tribe kingdom. (Mic. 1:1) Little else is known about Micah.

A significant portion of Micah’s prophecy reveals Israel as being unfaithful to God. Through Micah, the Lord asks his disobedient people, “What have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.” Then the Lord reminds his people of some of the ways in which he had shown his care over them. He had brought them out of bondage in Egypt and had raised up Moses, Aaron and Miriam to lead and instruct them.—Mic. 6:3,4

God then refers, as recorded in verse 5, to the time when Balak, king of Moab, requested Balaam to place a curse upon Israel. He reminds them of the way he overruled in this experience, and they received a blessing instead. (Num. chapters 22-24; Josh. 24:9,10) The people of Israel, however, had not profited from these many gracious acts of Jehovah on their behalf, but continued in their sinful and idolatrous ways.

In Micah, 6:6,7, the Israelites are represented as asking how they might please God, as though he had never given them any instructions concerning this. “Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?” they inquired. They knew that the Lord had called for the sacrifices of animals, so they asked, “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams?” Here we find an example of an extreme exaggeration of the Lord’s requirements concerning them.

Another question was asked: “Will the Lord be pleased ... with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Oil was required in connection with some of the religious observances enjoined upon Israel by the Lord,

but a very small quantity, comparatively, would be adequate. Now the people were wondering if it might be possible to please God if they brought him “rivers” of oil. The very nature of these questions called for a negative answer.

Then came a question based on their worship of false, heathen gods, which called for human sacrifices to appease them. “Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” Here was something the God of Israel had not requested at all, yet these people in their confusion were asking if he might be pleased with such a detestable offering.

The Prophet Micah answers these questions, as shown in our opening scripture. He states that the Lord requires his people to “do justly,” “love mercy,” and “walk humbly,” but makes no mention of sacrifice. The point seems to be that these three requirements must have a significant place in the character of a follower of God before sacrifice can be acceptable. Furthermore, to the extent that these requirements are being met, it will tend to lead one to a proper sacrifice and service on behalf of others. Sacrifice is a privilege, but it must be based on loyalty and obedience.

Although Micah’s words were addressed to the Jews, and his message was given in the context of the Mosaic Law, the requirements he lists apply to all who desire to know God and lead a life of willing obedience to him. We recall the Apostle Paul’s statement that those things which happened to Israel are provided as examples and lessons for the Christian, and are written for our admonition and benefit. (I Cor. 10:11) Let us, then, as followers of

Christ, examine these vitally important principles as they should be manifest in our characters, and as they lead us to a life of “reasonable service” and sacrifice, “acceptable unto God.”—Rom. 12:1

DO JUSTLY

To do justly means to do what is right in the sight of God. In applying this principle to our relationship with others, it denotes the practice of following the statement of the Master: “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31, *New International Version*) Amplifying on this Golden Rule standard, we are to deal justly, righteously, with others if we would expect them to deal similarly with us. The results of applying this principle will be evidenced by acting kindly, speaking gently, and being patient toward the weaknesses of others, and by not expecting more of them than we would expect of ourselves.

As stated in our opening text, doing justly is a requirement for the follower of God. Meeting this standard comes gradually and by its practical application in the daily affairs of life. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” (Isa. 1:17) How much our lives will be positively impacted if each day we seek to apply these just and righteous principles in our treatment of others with whom we come in contact. To do justly signifies righteousness not only in word and conduct, but also in thought and in the motives of our heart. We recall the words of the psalmist, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Ps. 19:14) This prayer is appropriate

to all the Lord's people. Even the most advanced Christian is liable at times to err with his lips, and, therefore, must diligently examine his heart to be sure it does not contain any seeds of injustice or unrighteousness.

The close examination of our hearts is to be a continual work. We are told, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4:23) The natural heart is at the center of human life, and in the spiritual sense the heart is a symbol of the center of our affections, motives and innermost desires. As a follower of Christ, our heart is to be kept loyal to God, to his principles of righteousness, and to our covenant with him. We are to examine ourselves continually by these divine standards, though realizing that we cannot measure up fully to every requirement. However, nothing short of purity of heart, will and intention, is acceptable to God. Later in the Book of Proverbs, God beseeches us, saying, "My son, give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways." (Prov. 23:26) It is only by observing God's ways of righteousness, as exemplified in the life of his Son, Christ Jesus, that our heart can be fully given to him—in worship, reverence, praise, and in the use of our time, talents, and influence in joyful service.

LOVE MERCY

The expression "to love mercy" in our text is rendered "to delight in lovingkindness" in the *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*. Our Heavenly Father is just and righteous, but he is also merciful and kind, and he wants his people to likewise "delight" in exercising the divine principle of loving-kindness toward others.

Speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, God said, "I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight." (Jer. 9:24) The Apostle Paul tells us that God's law is "holy, ... and just, and good." He adds, however, that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Rom. 7:12; Gal. 5:14) The psalmist aptly describes the close relationship between justice and mercy using these words: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."—Ps. 89:14

The proper exercise of mercy, or loving-kindness, requires that we deal justly and righteously with all. Beyond this, however, it also necessitates that we seek to cultivate an appreciation of the rights and preferences of others where fundamental principles of truth are not involved. Furthermore, we are to have the spirit of sacrifice which gladly lays down life itself in service for our brethren. In this, we again see the vital connection between our theme scripture and our "reasonable service" of sacrifice.

We realize that, as fallen human beings, we have received much in the way of God's mercy and loving-kindness. Even with difficulty, stumbling, and times of displeasure with self, our Lord is always there and has promised, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5) Appreciating God's loving-kindness towards us, and his promises of continual guidance in our lives, we are enabled to rejoice under all circumstances, and to give thanks to God for all of his overruling providences. Jesus laid out a very important principle in this regard, when he stated that our continued receipt of God's mercy will depend

on our expression of it towards others. “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5:7) To this Paul added that we are to show mercy “with cheerfulness.”—Rom. 12:8

To both properly receive of God’s mercy and benefit thereby, and then to exercise it toward others, is not always easy due to our fallen flesh and its tendencies toward self-will. We must, therefore, continually rely upon God’s promised grace to help, and develop the necessary faith and courage suggested by Paul’s words, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.” (II Cor. 3:5) We also must daily look to Jesus as our example, remembering his words, “Without me ye can do nothing.”—John 15:5

Having the principles of justice and righteousness as a foundation, we should thus cultivate more and more the quality of mercy. Only those who show mercy and loving-kindness towards others will themselves receive mercy at the Lord’s hands. We should remember well these words of the psalmist, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”—Ps. 85:10

WALK HUMBLY

The third requirement cited by Micah in our text is “to walk humbly with thy God.” This describes a condition of mind and conduct in which one can be “taught of God.” (John 6:45; Isa. 54:13) To the Jews at that ancient time this meant attentiveness to the learning of God’s Law given to them at Sinai, and then following its requirements to the best of their ability, putting aside self-will and sinful desires.

Only Jesus was able to fulfill both the letter and spirit of that Law perfectly. As Paul later wrote concerning the Master, “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (Heb. 7:26) We read further concerning Jesus’ example of humility, and its glorious results, that he “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:7-11

Jesus’ humility in laying down his life as a ransom sacrifice opened up “a new and living way” for those who would desire to similarly walk in his footsteps of service towards others. (Heb. 10:20) This invitation was given to us by the Master himself: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) We cannot read this verse without realizing the essential requirement of humility that is associated with our calling of God through Christ Jesus. Indeed, by his own life he has given us a perfect example of what it means to “walk humbly” with God.

The will of God for his people during the present age is that they walk in the “narrow” way of humble sacrifice and service. *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) (Matt. 7:14) Our dedication to walk thus should cause us not to seek what we can get out of life, but to seek that which we can put into our service for the Lord and for his people. Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, ... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:19,20) Whatever our treasure may be in life will dictate in large measure our inspiration, incentive, energy, perseverance and endurance toward its attainment. As Christians we must, in humility, come to the realization that earthly possessions and fleshly gains can no longer be our treasures, nor in any sense stand in competition with the heavenly riches the Lord has provided for us now, and has promised to confer in the future.

Paul states, "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. 6:4) The humility required to be "buried" into Christ's baptism is great, yet the resulting privilege to "walk in newness of life" is a blessing beyond human understanding. As a consecrated believer, we are then viewed by God not according to our sinful flesh, but as "a new creature" in Christ. This "inward man," the apostle further says, is "renewed day by day," and is termed "the hidden man of the heart" by the Apostle Peter. —II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; II Cor. 4:16; I Pet. 3:4

SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

While praise is not mentioned in Micah 6:8, it has much to do with our reasonable service, as well as our faithfulness in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. David, when praying to

God in the wilderness of Judah, said, “I have seen thee in the sanctuary,” a reference to the Tabernacle, in which sacrifices and offerings were made to God. The psalmist then associates what he observed in the sanctuary with God’s great loving-kindness, stating, “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.” (Ps. 63:2,3) David’s point seems to be that although the literal sacrifices of the sanctuary were sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the Mosaic Law, Jehovah’s mercy and loving-kindness were so great that he was motivated to give praise to God in a very personal and outward way—“my lips shall praise thee.” In another place, David similarly showed his burning desire to glorify the Heavenly Father: “He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.” (Ps. 40:3) This song is identified in the New Testament as “the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb.” As followers of the Lamb, we are privileged to sing its refrain, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.”—Rev. 15:3

The Apostle Paul expresses this thought, saying, “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” (Heb. 13:15) Here the apostle may have had in mind the statement of Hosea 14:2, where the prophet speaks of rendering to God the “calves of our lips.” In both verses, the evident thought is that praise to God is an important aspect of acceptable sacrifice.

There are various ways whereby we can offer the sacrifice of praise to God. We can sing hymns of praise which is pleasing to him, as David so often

did. Although not much in the way of sacrifice is involved in this form of worship, nevertheless, it is a delight to raise our voices in songs of praise to the giver of “every good gift and every perfect gift.” (James 1:17) We are encouraged to “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.”—Ps. 98:4

We can also offer the sacrifice of praise to God by means of prayer. It is a blessed privilege to pour out our hearts to the Almighty Creator in praise and adoration, and to tell him how much we love and appreciate him. The prayers of the consecrated footstep followers of the Lord are referred to as, “golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” (Rev. 5:8) The incense offered under Israel’s Tabernacle arrangement, which pointed forward to the prayers of the saints, was composed of a rare mixture of spices, giving forth a peculiarly sweet odor. Such incense of praise, offered symbolically through prayer, is a sweet-smelling savor to our Heavenly Father.

We should remember that the coals of fire that burned the incense at the golden altar of the Tabernacle were brought by the priest from the brazen altar out in the court. If the fires of sacrifice were not burning profusely on this altar there would not be sufficient heat generated from the coals brought to the golden altar to cause the incense to give forth its sweet odor. Thus, although prayers, adorations and praises are shown to be symbolic offerings of incense to the Lord, they will not generate a sweet savor to God unless our daily efforts of sacrifice and service are fervently rendered, as pictured in the brazen altar offerings of the Tabernacle.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

More than anything else, it is the principle of faith that brings together in full harmony the importance of our reasonable service of sacrifice, combined with the requirements of doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. The Apostle Paul tells us that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” and “without faith it is impossible to please” God. (Heb. 11:1,6) It is faith which enables us to engage in sacrifice and service even when it involves suffering or the bending of our time and energies toward the interests of others. Likewise, it is only by faith that we can, in this present world of sin, do justly and righteously towards all, show mercy and loving-kindness even when unappreciated, and walk in humility with God, which is in such opposition to the spirit of pride we presently see all around us.

In II Peter 1:4-10 we are given a revealing outline of qualities which we must add to our faith in order to secure the full benefit from God’s “exceeding great and precious promises,” which is that we might be “partakers of the divine nature.” We are to add to our faith fortitude, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, reverence, brotherly kindness, and love. If these things are added to our foundation of faith, and done so in abundance, we will not be “barren nor unfruitful” as we walk in the footsteps of Jesus. “If ye do these things,” Peter adds, “ye shall never fall.”

A half-hearted effort in developing these qualities is not enough. We will not be able to divide our interests between the things of God and the things of the world, nor between the interests of the new creature and the interests of the flesh. Paul wrote,

“This one thing I do.” (Phil. 3:13) This is the only approach to the Christian life which will result in victory, and the only attitude of heart that we should have, if the Lord is to fulfill his promises to us. The Lord knows about our temporal needs, and has promised: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”—Matt. 6:33

Being coworkers with the Lord now is a great honor, and those who are faithful experience an inner peace and joy which the world can neither give nor take away. However, there is a still greater work and purpose awaiting those who continue faithful, even unto death, in carrying out their present “reasonable service” unto God. That future work will also be in association with Christ, reigning with him as kings and priests to bless all the families of the earth. (Rev. 20:6; Acts 3:25) Then, all mankind will have the opportunity to do justly and righteously, to delight in loving-kindness, and to walk humbly with their God. ■

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 Madeline Kilback, Kelowna, BC, Canada—

March 1. Age, 81

Sister Helen Jacobs, Orlando, FL—April 5. Age, 86

Sister Prabhavathy Prasad, Bangalore, India—

April 16. Age, 78

Sister Renette Rissmann, Chicago, IL—April 25.

Age, 90

Brother Dick Simon, Tustin, CA—April 26. Age, 85

India Trip Report

IT WAS A PRIVILEGE for Bro. Bill and Sr. Shannah Dutka from Detroit, Bro. David Sutryk from Paris, France, and Bro. Ernie and Sr. Janice Kuenzli from Orlando to visit our brethren in India during November and December of 2019. We are pleased to present their report in this issue of *The Dawn* magazine.

We thank the Lord for the opportunity to meet with over 1,600 brethren in 21 separate meetings and conventions to share our faith and understanding of the Gospel. Our trip began on November 13th with the Dutkas and Kuenzlis leaving Orlando, Florida and arriving in Bangalore, India on Friday, November 15th. We were greeted at the airport by Bros. Roman, Ravi Chandra and Samuel. We greatly appreciate their willingness, like so many Indian brethren, to support and assist in our visits. Their help is critical to our ability to fellowship and communicate with our Indian brethren.

After a short rest, we had the opportunity to visit with Bro. Prasad, Sr. Prabha and their family. We dropped off four suitcases of books with them that we had brought for the Indian brethren. We have shared special fellowship with the Prasads over many years, both in India, and during their



The Prasad Family

earlier visits to the United States. We are thankful to have had this joy again both at the beginning of our trip and at the end. These memories are even more precious to us now, as since our trip, Sr. Prabha has finished her earthly walk, and has entered into the joys of her Lord. How thankful we are for the hope we have in Christ!

Later that afternoon, Bro. David Sutryk arrived from France, and we all met with the HAL ecclesia Friday evening in the prayer hall constructed on the top of Bro. Tony Xavier's house. Both Bros. Dutka and Kuenzli spoke, and Bro. David gave a greeting from his ecclesia. Approximately 50 were in attendance. This was the only meeting or convention during our trip where we were not translated into an Indian language.

During this trip, Bros. Bill, David and Ernie all gave PowerPoint lessons and encouraged the brethren to participate by periodically asking questions during the lesson. We also encouraged the brethren to join together in conventions rather

than request separate meetings with each ecclesia. That way, more lessons could be presented to the brethren in each gathering.



Dinner and fellowship after the KC Puram meeting

On Saturday afternoon, we met with Bro. Khurrsino Miranda before he embarked on his trip to visit the brethren in Africa. That evening, we met with the KC Puram ecclesia in Bangalore. Bros. Bill Dutka and David Sutryk gave PowerPoint lessons, and about 45 attended. As in the case of most evening gatherings, the brethren served us a lovely dinner after the meeting.

On Sunday, several Bangalore ecclesias came together for a one-day convention. All three visiting brethren spoke and around 200 attended. Bros. Khurrsino Miranda, Raju and Jayaprasad each simultaneously translated the discourses as they



Bro. Raju translating

were being given. Simultaneous translation is hard work, and we greatly appreciate the efforts of the brethren to make our lessons understandable in each ecclesia's local language. While

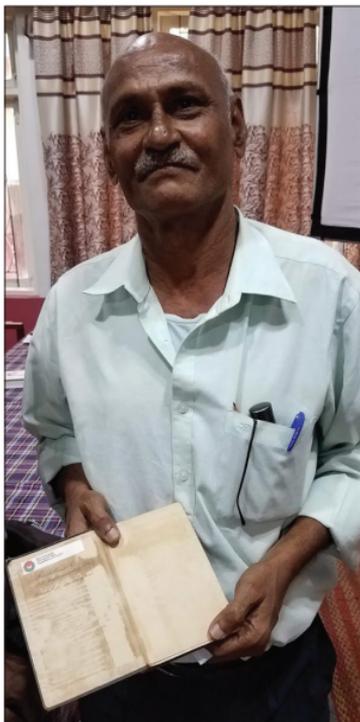


Bro. Alexander - Bangalore

many Indian brethren understand English, our accents and pronunciation make it difficult for them to easily grasp what we are saying.

At the convention, we met Bro. Alexander, elder of the first Tamil-speaking ecclesia in Bangalore. It was a joy to see him once again. Then Bro. William, who lives outside Bangalore, came up to Bro. Ernie and showed him a copy of *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, which Sr. Ann Kuenzli had previously donated to the Indian brethren. Bro. William had received the volume in 2018, and when he read in *The Dawn* magazine that Sr. Ann Kuenzli had died in August, 2019, he wanted to show the book to Bro. Ernie. It was a touching moment.

After the convention, Bro. Bill and Sr. Shannah visited the Laodicea ecclesia for an evening meeting. Simultaneously, Bro. Ernie, Sr. Janice and Bro. David visited the Dawn ecclesia for an evening service, at which Bro. David gave a Power-Point presentation. These evening meetings had been



Bro. William

added to our original schedule. The enthusiasm of the Indian brethren for squeezing in as many gatherings as possible into our visits is just another evidence of their zeal for the Truth and their desire to meet together.



Bro. Manohar and his sister, Sr. Rushmi, at the Arabian Sea

On Monday, November 18th, we flew to Mangalore, which lies on India’s western coast, the Arabian Sea, to meet with the ecclesia there. This small ecclesia still meets in the home of a brother who served many years as their elder, but who died several years ago. His son, Bro. Manohar, lives in the home with his family and looks after his mother.



Mangalore Ecclesia

We had nice fellowship with her as she recounted our earlier visits to their home. Both Bros. David and Ernie gave PowerPoint presentations. Bro. Christopher, the ecclesia elder, gave a summary translation in the Kannada language at the end of each discourse. He did so without any notes.



Mumbai meeting in Bro. and Sr. Barse's apartment

On Tuesday, November 19th, our party flew to Mumbai, India's largest city. There we met with the Mumbai ecclesia in the apartment of Bro. and Sr. Barse. Other brethren, including Bro. Carl Hagensick, had visited with the Barse's back in the 1970s, and the Barse's had traveled to the U.S. and also attended the International Convention in the



Sr. Deepa, Bro. Alex and son, Benjamin

1980s. We were able to fellowship with Bro. Barse, although he seemed very frail and was in his 90's. Bro. Alex Barnabas and his family traveled up from Pune to attend the meeting.

Bro. Bill conducted a study on “World Events that Affect the Earthly Seed.” He used the wall of the apartment to display his PowerPoint lesson, and the study lasted more than two hours. Sr. Suzanna, Bro. Barse’s granddaughter, translated into Hindi. As a



Bro. and Sr. Barse

footnote to this visit, a short time after we returned home, we learned that Bro. Barse had finished his course. He had been a faithful soldier in the Truth for many years. He had a special love for Israel, and visited there numerous times.

On Wednesday, we flew further north to Chandigarh where we were met by Bro. Ajay Atwal, his uncle Bro. William, and Bro. Dharmindar. They gave us a warm welcome of smiles and hugs. They picked up Sr. Roma and then took us on the three-



Bro. Ajay Atwal

hour journey to meet the Jalandhar ecclesia, located just 90 kilometers from the Pakistan border. During the journey, Sr. Roma asked a number of questions about our ecclesia. The Jalandhar class meets in the home of Bro. Ajay’s parents. We arrived around 8 pm, and the meeting started shortly thereafter. Bros. David and Ernie gave lessons



Jalandhar brethren fixing breakfast

which were translated by Bro. Ajay into the local language, Punjabi. Because this is the only ecclesia, perhaps in the world, conducted in the Punjabi language, they are hampered by a lack of Truth literature. Bro. Ajay, when leading their meetings, typically has

to translate all of the lessons into their local language.

The meeting in Jalandhar lasted until after 10 pm, and then we were served a lovely dinner. Fellowship continued until 1 am. After a short night's rest, they served us a breakfast of Panini sandwiches, and then it was off on the three-hour ride back to Chandigarh and the flight south to Coimbatore.

Bro. Newlin Rajkumar and his brother-in-law, Bro. Albert, picked us up at the Coimbatore airport.



Bros. Christy, Ravi, Prem, and Newlin at Kattery Park

They took us to Bro. Newlin's home, where we spent the night. The next morning, four brothers in two cars took us on the three-hour ride up into the Nilgiri or Blue hills, to the town of Ooty. On the way we stopped at beautiful Kattery Park. There are a number of ecclesias in this area, a hilly region similar to western North Carolina, and we had promised to visit them on a weekend so we could meet with them as a group in a convention setting.



Bro. Samuel Premraj, Sr. Flora and family in Ooty

Friday evening, Bro. Samuel Premraj and his family treated us and a number of brethren to a season of fellowship, food and music at their home.

On Saturday, the brethren of the Coonoor, Wellington and Ketti ecclesias hosted a convention



Coonoor, Wellington and Ketti Convention in the Nilgiri Hills

outside of Coonoor at a Christian retreat among the tea plantations. All three brothers served at the convention and 70 attended. Following the convention, as the brethren enjoyed their tea break before departing, we watched three wild pigs wander through the tea bushes of the plantation that bordered the convention site. Then, during the journey back to our hotel in Ooty, we observed three Indian bison grazing on a golf course.



Ooty and Kotagiri Convention in the Nilgiri Hills

On Sunday, the ecclesias of Ooty and Kotagiri hosted a convention at a lovely hotel and 98 attended. It was wonderful seeing brethren from different ecclesias coming together for these weekend conventions. We had a blessed day of fellowship, spiritual lessons and singing praises to our Heavenly Father.

On Monday, Bro. David Sutryk flew home to France, while the Dutka's and Kuenzli's flew to Kerela for our first meeting with the ecclesia at Kottayam. There, we stayed in the home of Sr. Mary Ninan, who spends half of her time in Kerela and the other half in Seattle as a member of the Bellevue, Washington ecclesia. A small prayer hall was built on her property back in 2002 after the



Sr. Mary Ninan and brethren in her home in Kerala brethren left the Layman's movement, and the ecclesia has been meeting there ever since. On Tuesday, a one-day convention was held, and 25 brethren attended.

On Wednesday, we flew down to Tuticorin, close to the southern tip of India, to meet with the brethren from Nagarcoil, Tuticorin and Tirunelveli for the first time. A one-day convention was held in Tirunelveli on Thursday with 80 attending. Bro. Prabhakaran, an elder from Erode, came down to



Bro. Prabhakaran, newly interested sister, and Bro. Selvaraj

translate for us. We have always appreciated Bro. Prabhakaran's dedication to serving the brethren. He used to be on the road six days per week visiting and serving the brethren. Now that he has been elected an elder in the Erode ecclesia, he does not travel quite as much.

Bro. Ernie gave Bro. David Sutryk's lesson on "Growing into Christian Maturity" while Bro. Bill followed with his lesson on "One Calling." After a lunch break, the convention broke into separate groups of brothers and sisters for simultaneous question and fellowship sessions. The Indian brothers asked Bros. Bill and Ernie a number of different questions, including: How do we handle differences between brethren on chronology? What should brethren do when they are having problems with their ecclesia—should they leave or stay? Should the ecclesia register with the government as requested? How can we apply spiritual knowledge in our lives in a practical way?



Tirunelveli Convention fellowship session with sisters

On Friday, November 29, we flew back to Coimbatore and were greeted again by Bros. Newlin and Alfred Daniel. That evening we met with the Ganapathy, Podanur, Jothipuram and Ondipudhur



Sr. Nita and daughters

ecclesias. The meeting began during a torrential downpour. The rain falling on the metal roof of the prayer hall made it very difficult to hear the Welcome Address. The rain abated and Bro. Bill gave his lesson on “One Calling.” There were 50 at the

meeting. Following the meeting, we met with Sr. Nita George and her two daughters. Sr. Nita showed us a picture when we had last met many years ago, and their oldest daughter was just an infant. How time flies!

On Saturday, Bro. Newlin took us to the CD Foundation, a conference site in the country outside



Lunch in the home of Bro. Raj Kumar, Sr. Suganthi and daughter

Coimbatore, where the Indian brethren have held youth seminars in the past. Bro. Newlin is looking to host another seminar there in the fall of 2020. Following this, we were treated to a lovely lunch at the home of Bro. Raj Kumar and Sr. Suganthi.



Mettupalayam Ecclesia

We then traveled to meet with the Mettupalayam ecclesia that evening. The class had their children welcome us with song. After Bro. Ernie's lesson, the children sang "Onward Christian Soldiers" in English and quoted several scriptures. It was very touching. Then, Srs. Janice and Shannah gave testimonies, and Bro. Bill gave his lesson. After the meeting, the brethren served us a lovely dinner, and while eating, four girls from the singing group taught Bro. Bill and Sr. Shannah a number of words in the Tamil language.

On Sunday, December 1st, Bro. J. Joshua organized a convention with a number of Coimbatore area ecclesias. Total attendance was 180. Bros. Bill and Ernie both gave lessons, including Bro. David

Sutryk's on "A Consecration, Baptism and A New Covenant." While Bro. David had already returned to France, with his permission, his lessons were given a number of times after his departure. It seems that titles of the different lessons had circulated amongst the Indian brethren, and they began to request specific ones when we met with them. The



Bro. J. Joshua, Coimbatore

convention ended with a question meeting. Questions included: In what ways can sisters serve? Does Elohim in Genesis 1:1 refer to God or Jesus? What is meant by the "Spirit" in Romans 8:26,27? What is more important—chronology or character? Following the convention, we stayed at the home of Bro. J. Joshua and Sr. Nalini, where we enjoyed lovely fellowship and wonderful hospitality.

Monday, we journeyed by taxi to Erode where, that evening, we met with the Erode Bible Students.



Srs. Latha Rajan, Beula, Julie, Esther and Ahila in Erode



Youths in Erode Ecclesia

Approximately 80 attended the meeting. Both Bros. Bill and Ernie gave PowerPoint lessons. Bro. Prabhakaran, who had translated for us in Coimbatore, joined us at Erode, Salem, Trichy and Dindigul, translating at each location. Following the meeting, each of us had discussions with a group of brethren from the ecclesia. Sr. Janice spoke with five sisters who are studying Volume 5 together on Thursday mornings. Bro. Bill and Sr. Shannah talked to another group of brethren, while some youths surrounded Bro. Ernie and asked him a multitude of questions.

Tuesday, we traveled by taxi to Salem to meet with the second largest ecclesia in India, the Salem Bible Students. In Salem, two ecclesias came together for the evening meeting. Bros. Bill and Ernie both gave lessons. After the meeting, many photos were taken with brethren of the ecclesia, something that often happens when traveling in India. The ecclesia provided a lovely dinner, and we



Saying good-bye to Bro. Amalanathan and his son, Alvin in Salem discussed with them how to organize a one-day convention to include both the Erode and Salem ecclesias during our next visit to India.

On Wednesday, we rode to Trichy, and in the afternoon met with 90 brethren from the Trichy area in a half-day convention. Bro. I. A. Jacob, the elder from Hosur, traveled 300 kilometers from Hosur to Trichy to chair the meeting. A ten year-old boy who saw us at the KR Puram ecclesia per-



Bro. I A. Jacob, Hosur

suaded his parents to make the 344 kilometer journey from Bangalore to Trichy to meet with us again. He participated in Bro. Ernie's lesson by answering one of the questions posed to the congregation. Bros. Bill and Ernie both gave Power-Point lessons, and following the convention the brethren organized a dinner served on banana leaves. On Thursday, we traveled to Dindigul



Bro. Arun from Dindigul,
Bro. Joseph, Sr. Nirmala, and
Bro. Sam from Trichy

and met with the brethren there. The two ecclesias joined together for the evening meeting, and 60 brethren were able to attend. Bros. Bill and Ernie served the brethren.

Friday morning we traveled back to Trichy and flew to Chennai for our last round of conventions during the trip. That evening at our hotel we had dinner and fellowship with Bro. Selvaraj, his

wife Sr. Esther and their entire family.

On Saturday, the Pasavakkam ecclesia in Chennai hosted a convention of 160 brethren. The last service of the convention was a two-hour question meeting. Questions included: What prophecies tell us of the events we should expect before the visible kingdom, particularly with respect to Israel? What witnessing



Bro. Selvaraj, Sr. Esther and family

are we doing? What is the role of sisters in the ecclesia? What process do we use to elect elders? How do sisters balance their spiritual life with the rest of their responsibilities?

Saturday evening we met with the Anbudaiyan ecclesia. A question meeting was held which centered on the election of elders, and follow-up studies needed for newly consecrated who come to the Truth.

On Sunday, December 8th, we attended our last convention, held in Chennai, hosted by the Tiruyo-ttiyur, Washermenpet, Ashok Nagar and East Tambaram ecclesias. Approximately 125 attended the gathering. Bros. Bill, Ernie and Newlin Rajkumar from Ganapathy served at the convention. During the convention, the children's classes, under the direction of sisters from the Ashok Nagar ecclesia, gave a 30-minute vesper service composed of scripture recitation and singing of hymns. Following the convention, we flew back to Bangalore.



On the left, Bro. Raghunathan



Chennai Convention children singing

On Monday, December 9th, we again visited with the Prasads. Bros. Roman and Ravi Chandra then drove us to Tumkur to visit a newly interested minister. Mr. Hebrick first heard of the Truth as a child from pilgrim Bro. Jayappa. After becoming a Protestant minister, he received *The Dawn* and *Herald* magazines which led him to contact Bro. Prasad. Bro. Prasad sent him a set of *Studies in the Scriptures* and then, Bro. Ravi Chandra to further present the Truth to him and members of his congregation.

Reaching Tumkur, Mr. Hebrick and about 20 members of his congregation served us a lovely lunch, then Bro. Bill gave them a lesson on “The Divine Plan of the Ages,” using the chart of the ages to illustrate. Afterwards, we bid them good-bye and then



Tumkur Meeting

visited Bro. Manesh and Bro. Ravi Chandra’s families on our way to the airport for our return home.

We thank our Heavenly Father for the privilege of once again visiting our Indian brethren. Each visit encourages us through their faith in and zeal for the Truth. ■

General Convention Bulletin

July 18-23, 2020

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many Bible Student activities. After much prayer and discussion, the Bible Students General Convention Committee has concluded that a physical convention at the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown Pennsylvania is not feasible for 2020. We thank all the brethren who have already put much work into the planning of the convention, as well as all those who have supported it through the years. We anticipate that the joys of face-to-face fellowship, study and worship will be heightened at the 2021 General Convention after a year's absence.

The General Convention Committee is now arranging a Zoom online program of General Convention Echoes. This will be broadcast during the previously established dates in July. The broadcast will consist of archived discourses, panels, and vespers from previous years, which reflect the spirit of the General Convention. Further details regarding the program's schedule will be provided in the coming months.

We are heartened by the efforts our brethren are making around the globe to stay connected and to encourage one another. We are all learning many valuable lessons from the current crisis. May the Lord keep each of you, your families and those dear to you under the shelter of his wings.—Ps. 46:1-11 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

E. Kuenzli

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Germany May 30,31

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

R. Charlton

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Australia May 9,10

A. Kopczyk

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Australia May 9,10

L. Griehs

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Australia May 9,10

J. Parkinson

Internet Broadcast of Convention
Australia May 9,10

CONVENTIONS

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

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Numerous conventions in upcoming months have been canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Those that the Dawn is aware of at this writing are indicated as POSTPONED or CANCELED in the listing below. However, some of the canceled conventions may have an Internet broadcast alternative. Please contact the brethren shown in the listings below to find out whether a canceled convention will be broadcast on the Internet, and, if so, to obtain instructions as to how you can attend.

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 3—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbc-global.net

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA CONVENTION, May 9,10—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—For information and program, go to: www.australian-biblestudents.org/event/Sydney-Melbourne-Convention

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 23,24—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact D. Whittaker. Phone: (630) 293-4810 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 23,24—POSTPONED TO 2021—Contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 247-9800 or Email: Ti77park@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 7—POSTPONED TO 2021—Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@comcast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 13,14—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact B. Smith. Phone: (250) 947-8802 or Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19-21—CANCELED—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—CANCELED—GENERAL CONVENTION ECHOES WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

CENTRAL OHIO CONVENTION, August 1,2—Tolles Technical Center, 7877 US Hwy 42 South, Plain City, OH 43064. Contact L. Winske. Phone: (614) 579-5045.

BIBLE STUDENTS INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 5-9—CANCELED—Contact M. Davis. Email: lmkdavis@earthlink.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 5-7—Seattle Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd Street, Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 11-13—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (HWY 72), Huntsville, AL 35806. For reservations, phone: (256) 562-2525. For special rate of \$75.00 per night, mention Bible Students Rate, and make reservations by August 31. For other information, contact R. Armstrong. Phone: (256) 281-6807 or Email: robin@exzaktec.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, September 12—POSTPONED TO 2021—Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 25-27—NEW LOCATION—Little Pine Island Camp, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Contact T. Malinowski. Phone: (616) 304-7691 or Email: Malinowski.TJM@gmail.com

COLORADO CONVENTION, October 2-4—Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 17140 West Colfax Avenue, Golden, CO 80401. Contact M. Homolka. Phone: (307) 267-5853

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 24,25—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact C. Goodman. Phone: (407) 695-6815 or Email: clmgoodman@gmail.com

*In one Spirit were we all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free;
and were all made to drink of one Spirit.”*

—I Corinthians 12:13