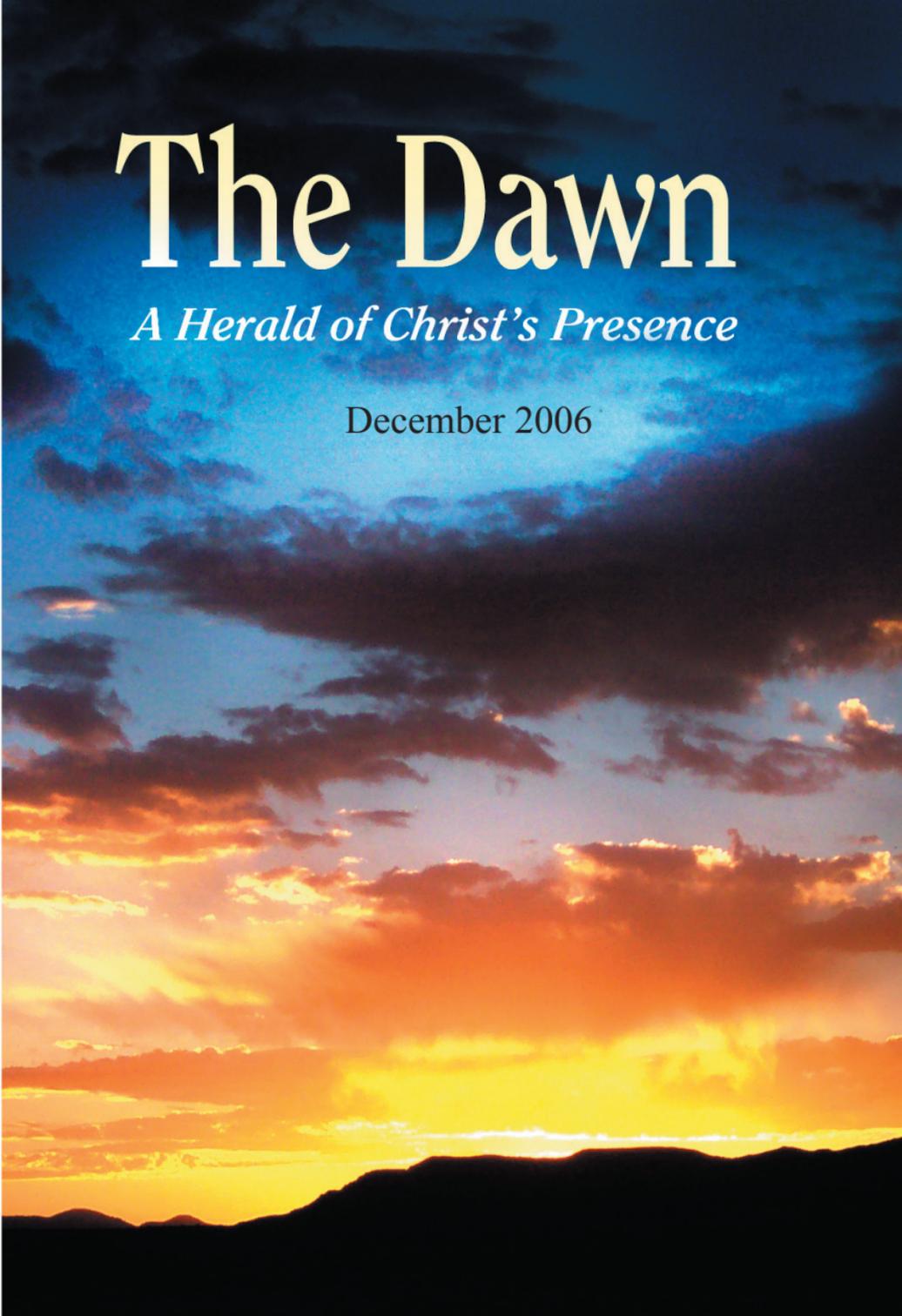


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The Increase of His Government

Established with Judgment and Justice

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

—Isaiah 9:7

THESE BLESSED WORDS

written by the Prophet Isaiah, that are often used during this special season of the year, focus on God’s wonderful gift to his human creation. In the Western world, the Christmas holiday is annually observed on December 25th, although it is acknowledged by students of the Bible to be the incorrect time of our Lord Jesus’ birth. Among many sincere Christian people, it is a time of reflection in which attention is

centered around the life and ministry of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and his ultimate purpose in paying the redemption price for the sins of mankind. The sin-sick and dying human family continue to wait for Christ’s future kingdom of Truth and

righteousness that will be established over all the earth in due time.

The assurance of God's promises concerning Jesus is that the expanding influence of his future kingdom will mean a corresponding extension of peace and good will as the prophet has said, 'of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.' Had the ancient kings and religious rulers of Israel been obedient to the laws of God, they would have been enlightened to the grand purpose of God concerning the plan of redemption and reconciliation over the affairs of mankind. Although there have been some noble rulers who have sought the best interests of the people over whom they have ruled, the majority have been tainted with a worldly spirit of pride, selfishness, and the lack of necessary wisdom to be entrusted with anything more than limited power and influence in world affairs.

At the present time, a violent and polluted world bears stark testimony to the failure of all human efforts to properly govern the nations. The hopelessness of the people, which has resulted from this failure, continues to haunt the human race, and is as a plague which is robbing the people from experiencing the peace and joy of which Isaiah spoke. In the face of this calamity the people turn in every direction to seek a way out of their dilemma, while the vast majority do not realize nor understand that there is only one hope, which is God's promised kingdom in which Jesus will be earth's new king.

A MEANINGFUL MESSAGE

How much more meaningful the Christmas message should be this year to those who are able to grasp

something of its real and long-term significance. as well as to have faith in all that the promises of God indicate. The scriptural message should have greater meaning than to merely partake of the Christmas spirit that generally prevails in the exchange of gifts and the traditional family get-together for a sumptuous meal and a good time. It would be well to keep in mind the greater event which we commemorate by thinking upon God's gift to the world—our Savior, Redeemer, and King who is soon to rule the nations. At no time has this knowledge been more meaningful and relevant as a basis for hope and trust in the hearts and lives of the people than at the present. There has never been a more binding responsibility on the part of those who understand the real meaning of Jesus' birth, than to herald wide the glorious message of his future and glorious kingdom, that it is soon to be manifested for the blessing of all nations and the solution of all the many problems of a sin-sick and dying world.

Concerning our Lord Jesus and some of the many titles that are associated with his future and glorious kingdom reign over the human family, Isaiah further wrote, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isa. 9:6) In some translations of the Bible, one of the descriptive titles our Lord will be known by is "Wonderful Counsellor," rather than by two separate titles, 'Wonderful,' and 'Counsellor.'

This prophecy of Isaiah is but one of the important scriptural accounts concerning the birth of

Jesus—the Son of God—who was hailed by the angel in those most momentous and unforgettable words, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:10-14

The promised child was born, the foretold Son was given, and the promised Christ came to be the Savior of the world. To emphasize the importance of the event and to explain further its significance, a ‘multitude of the heavenly host’ were heard praising God, and saying ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ No passage in the Scriptures is more familiar than this one. It will be repeated by many Christian people again this year, but it takes on added significance now, as the promised kingdom of Christ is ever closer at hand. May these blessed promises serve as a more meaningful inspiration to all who may consider them during this Christmas season.

EARTH’S NEW GOVERNMENT

One of the principal reasons the professed Christian world has failed to understand the full significance of the angelic message of peace and good will is that they have supposed the realization of its implications depend upon human efforts. In an attempt to Christianize the world and thus bring peace to

the nations, many have, in the name of Christ, joined hands with civil governments, and taken part in political action to accomplish their purpose. Concerning the birth of Jesus, the Son whom God would give, some have evidently failed to notice the prophetic assurance that ultimately the government shall be upon his shoulder, as promised in Isaiah 9:6.

To make sure that we understand this thought, the prophet adds, "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Isa. 9:7) The prophet refers to the promises by using the word 'this,' which emphasizes that it will be performed by the 'zeal of the LORD.' We note that the prophecy foretells the promise of the Christ child, the Son who would be born and upon whose shoulder the responsibility of the new world government would rest.

Jesus was this child, and his birth was not by the will of man, for even the fulfillment of this part of the prophecy was accomplished by Divine direction and power. When the angels sang 'on earth peace, good will toward men' they meant that through this child, and through the kingdom in which he would rule, God would bring peace to the nations. They meant, also, that his birth was an expression of God's good will toward men, and not that men would suddenly, and of their own volition, begin to exercise good will toward one another.

The prophet has told us, 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, [Wonderful Counselor] The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' All of these titles are ascribed to Jesus by God, and are indicative of the various ways in which the 'increase of his government' will be manifested

for the blessing of all the people. The title Counselor, describes his future role as Mediator of a new and better covenant between God and men. One of the fundamental causes of all suffering and death in the earth at the present time is the fact that the human race is estranged from God through rebellion against his law. One of the functions of Christ's reign will be to bring about reconciliation between God and the human family. Peace between God and men is a necessary and fundamental prerequisite to obtaining peace among men. As long as mankind continues to be at enmity with God, and defiant of his law, they will be enemies of one another as well.

The first step toward the reconciliation of the world by Jesus was the sacrifice of his life as man's Redeemer. This outstanding act of love, and interest in the subjects over which he was later to be ruler, is one of the aspects which entitles him to be called Wonderful. The rulers of this world may be considered wonderful if through their ability as leaders they can induce their subjects to die for them and for the cause they represent. But Jesus reversed this procedure. The foundation of his greatness and world rulership, was manifested in the laying down of his own life in sacrifice that his subjects might live.

It is no wonder that Jesus also merits the title, The mighty God. This does not mean that he is the Almighty God, the Heavenly Father. It simply means that the Father has exalted him to such a high position in the carrying out of the Divine plan for the reconciliation and salvation of the human race. During his kingdom, our Lord will be recognized as a god, and the mighty one to whom such honor is to

be accorded, and who is worthy of being worshiped. We, who are his followers during this present Gospel Age, are bidden to honor the Son even as we honor the Father. The restored human race is also prophetically represented as giving this honor to the One who saved them, as recorded by the Prophet Isaiah. "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:9

We note that the expression, 'we have waited for him,' is repeated twice in this text, but it is applied the second time to the Heavenly Father, saying of him, 'We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' The people will then recognize the Father as the Author of the great plan of salvation, and our Lord Jesus will be a mighty god through whose death and kingdom rule they will have ultimately been reconciled to the Father and saved from sin and death.

NO MORE DEATH

The thought of salvation from death is further emphasized by the title, The everlasting Father. The word father means life-giver, and our Lord Jesus is the one who will give everlasting life to the people. No other ruler in the history of the world has ever attempted to give life to the people, but how essential this is to the lasting peace and joy of the human family when this is fully realized. We may perhaps visualize a world enjoying all the blessings of peace and security that human governments have ever promised, yet it would still be a sin-sick and dying world. The increase of Christ's

influence among the nations will be so widespread and all-comprehensive that even the great enemy death will crumble before him in defeat and destruction. Paul writes, "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—I Cor. 15:25,26

Think what the destruction of death will mean to the human creation when it will first be manifested in the restoration to health of all the living. However, it will not stop there, for all the victims of the greatest enemy death who have been struck down throughout all the ages of the past are to be restored to life, that they too may take their places in the new world society. The responsibility for the fulfillment of all these wonderful promises that will come to pass in fulfillment of the kingdom of Christ will be 'upon his shoulder,' and we know that 'the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.' Jesus' birth was a miracle, and his glorious kingdom will be a reality to all in due time.

During his brief earthly ministry, our Lord demonstrated over and over again what miracles of healing and of resurrection are possible when Divine power is employed. He was raised from the dead by a miracle, because the zeal of the LORD of hosts performed this, and we have the blessed assurance that Divine power will also be used for the restoration of all the dead. In a world in which death is an everyday occurrence, how blessed is the promise that under the administration of Christ's future kingdom of Truth and righteousness "there shall be no more death."—Rev. 21:4

The prophet also describes Jesus as The Prince of Peace. We have noted that in his role as Mediator,

or Counsellor, that he will establish peace between God and men. This peace will be based upon obedience to the Divine laws of righteousness and justice. Those who are willingly obedient to God will be at peace with one another, for they will all be recognizing the one supreme authority. The Prophet Micah points to this future time. He writes, "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And 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: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—Mic. 4:1-3

When this prophecy is fulfilled there will be peace on earth. This will not come to pass because men will have finally devised a way of living at peace with one another, but because of God's good will toward men in providing a Prince of Peace to enforce obedience to the principles of justice and love as embodied in his laws. (Rev. 2:27) This peace on earth established by The Prince of Peace will be more than peace among nations. It will also be peace within nations, as symbolized by the expression that every man shall dwell "under his vine and under his fig tree." (Mic. 4:4) It will mean peace in

every community, and in every home. It will mean peace of heart and mind that will never be disturbed by the fear of war, poverty, sickness, or the fear of death. In this promise, the reason ascribed for the conditions of peace and safety are assured by the kingdom of Christ. “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9

When the earth is filled with the ‘knowledge of the LORD,’ and the people are living in harmony with that knowledge, they will enjoy peace among themselves and within themselves. This peace will be the outgrowth of their peace with God, a peace which they will have found through the acceptance of the redemptive work of Christ as the only means by which they are saved from death, and by obedience to the Divine standards of righteousness which are the foundation of God’s throne. Surely it is true that Jesus will be The Prince of Peace, and that of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

THE THRONE OF DAVID

Our featured text also states that the reign of the Prince of Peace will be established ‘upon the throne of David.’ This is a reaffirmation of the promise that the Messiah, the Christ, the seed of promise, would come through the lineage of David, and that The Prince of Peace would reestablish the kingdom of David. God recognized the kings of Israel as representing him, and that the kingdom of Israel was his typical kingdom. We read, “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David

his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.”—I Chron. 29:23

This arrangement ceased when King Zedekiah was overthrown and the nation taken into captivity in Babylon. The prophet Ezekiel wrote, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.” (Ezek. 21:26,27) Jesus is the one referred to in this prophecy as having the ‘right’ to reestablish the throne, or kingdom, which was there overthrown. It is from this standpoint that his rulership will be upon the throne of David.

From the time the LORD’s typical kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and until the time when Christ’s kingdom is established, the world is without a government in which the Lord takes any part. The reestablishment of the throne of David by Jesus is the prophetic manner of assuring us of the Divine authority to rule which will be vested in him. While the kingdom of Christ will be vastly more powerful and far-reaching than was the typical kingdom of Israel, it will in many respects be like it. God was Israel’s Lawgiver, and had the people obeyed those laws, and had their kings administered them properly, and in accordance with God’s will, they would have been blessed accordingly.

The laws of the kingdom of Christ will be the Divine laws administered by Jesus, the Divine king. He will have associated with him those who will have proven their worthiness of that high position by suffering and dying with him. (II Tim. 2:11,12)

These who are being called during this present Gospel Age will come forth in the first resurrection to live and reign with Jesus. We are thus assured that all the rulers in the new kingdom will be righteous administrators of the law. Their representatives on the earth will be the Worthies of old. These, as “princes in all the earth” (Ps. 45:16), will also have been prepared for their positions of responsibility. Being raised from the dead as perfect human beings, they will be capable of administering the visible earthly phase of the new kingdom wisely, and in harmony with the righteous laws and instructions which will be given to the people through them.

The throne of David is a symbol of Divine rulership that will be established, not temporarily, but forever. While the mediatorial phase of the kingdom will continue only for a thousand years, it will be long enough to restore the human race to life and to atonement with God. The rulership will thenceforth be without end. At that time, our prayer “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” shall be fully answered. (Matt. 6:10) Christ’s kingdom of Truth and righteousness will accomplish the means by which this prayer will be answered. Truly the prophet was right when he wrote that of the increase of Christ’s government and peace there shall be no end. It will have no end because it will not stop short of removing from the earth every element of unrighteousness, and every enemy of God and men. He will extend his sphere of influence until everything which has disturbed the peace of the people, and robbed them of the blessings of God, shall be destroyed.

OUR BLESSED HOPE

This is the blessed hope which continues to sustain us now during this holiday season, as well as throughout the year. Although we understand that December 25th is not the correct time of our Lord's birth, we may once more pause to give thanks to Almighty God for the miraculous and wonderful gift of our Lord Jesus who, we believe, will soon be manifest and recognized as earth's true Prince of Peace. ■

The Time is Short

*Up, up my soul, the long-spent time redeeming;
Sow thou the seeds of better deed and thought;
Light other lamps, while yet the light is beaming;
The time, the time is short.*

*Think of the eyes that often weep in sadness,
Seeing not the truth that God to thee hath taught;
O bear to them this light and joy and gladness;
The time, the time is short.*

*Think of the feet that stray from misdirection.
And into snares of error's doctrine brought:
Bear then to them these tidings of salvation;
The time, the time is short.*

*The time is short. Then be thy heart a brother's
To every heart that needs thy help in aught.
How much they need the sympathy of others!
The time, the time is short.*

—*Poems of Dawn*

“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matthew 1:21

NEVER BEFORE IN human experience has there been such a dire need for a competent ruler. We need one who would be able to lead the hate-infected nations of earth out of the crosscurrents of selfishness and despair into the wholesome atmosphere of trust and goodwill. Without this there can be no lasting peace on earth.

There are many outstanding heroes whose names and accomplishments glorify the pages of history. But none of them had to deal with such complex conditions as are confronting the world today, nor were their problems so numerous.

In the Bible, the Creator has provided his people with a blueprint of his plan for world peace. His Word reveals in no uncertain terms that Jesus is the chief One in the Divine arrangements for the blessing of the people. The song of the angels on the night Jesus was born confirms this, for they identified him as the Savior of the world, and the One through whom God’s goodwill would be manifested toward the dying race; and that through Jesus there would come peace on earth.

The prospect is glorious, and we bid all to examine more diligently the prophetic testimony of the Word and be assured from its sacred pages that Jesus, who was born in Bethlehem, who died on the cross as man’s Redeemer, who was raised from the dead as a Divine being, is now present and about to manifest himself to the world through the fulfillment of the glorious promises of God which describe the blessings of health and life which all mankind will soon be privileged to enjoy.

—excerpt, *Jesus, the World’s Savior*

Seeking Reconciliation

Key Verse: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”
—*Colossians 1:15,16*

Selected Scripture:
Colossians 1:15-23

In due time, man—the climax of the creative work of God and his Son—fell from his perfection and received the just penalty of death that had been declared would result if he disobeyed God’s commandment. God’s love, rather than simply releasing man from the just penalty of death, provided a means whereby a ransom would be paid through one who would take the sinner’s place in death. Such a plan would not violate God’s justice, but

RECONCILIATION IS A KEY part of God’s plan for man, and is centered in his Son Jesus. It is he that is spoken of in our Key Verse in his prehuman existence. He was the first creation of God, and was subsequently used by God as his primary instrument in bringing forth all other creation, both in heaven and on earth. As a mighty angelic being he was God’s mouthpiece (Greek, *Logos*), spoken of by John as the Word [*Logos*] of God, “In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a God was the Word.”—John 1:1-3 (*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*, interlinear translation)

would confirm it, and also in love provide a means whereby man might have the opportunity to once again gain life, upon certain terms and conditions. It was God's Son, not as the angelic Logos but as the man Jesus, who provided this means of reconciliation, who the Apostle Paul states "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:6

The ransom provided by Jesus was, as Paul said, to be 'for all' in 'due time'—in his coming kingdom of righteousness and peace, spoken of throughout the Scriptures. However, the immediate benefit of the reconciliation work of the ransom was to be to a special called-out class, those striving to walk sacrificially in Jesus' footsteps. Indeed, those who would make up the church, together with their head, Jesus, would be the instruments of blessing to the rest of mankind, in their due time for receiving their portion of reconciliation. This twofold aspect of the work of reconciliation, as well as the headship of Christ Jesus over the church, are both spoken of in our lesson—"Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. . . . And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."—Col. 1:20,18

The rest of our lesson focuses on how we, as prospective members of the church, have been reconciled to God through the great ransom work done by our Lord Jesus. "You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproueable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister."—Col. 1:21-23 ■

Learning about God

Key Verse: “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 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.*”
—*Hebrews 1:1,2*

Selected Scripture:
Hebrews 1:1-9

THE TITLE OF OUR LESSON, “Learning about God,” may at first elicit a question as to how we are to learn about such a one whom we cannot see, for truly Apostle John said, “No man hath seen God at any time. (John 1:18) The Key Verse indicates that God has, throughout the ages, used various instruments to speak to his people and to deliver to them his instructions and commandments. Apostle Paul, speaking here, says that in times past—Old Testament times—God communicated to his people through the prophets, such as Moses, David, Elijah, and many others. It was through the words of these

prophets, as they were inspired and guided by God’s Holy Spirit, that the people learned about their Creator, about his character, and about his plan—those limited portions which were due to be understood at that time. The Key Verse continues, however, by pointing out that now a change of dispensation had occurred, and that God now spoke to his people by his Son, Jesus. It was not that the prophets had been wrong in their message. Indeed, they had foretold that Israel’s long-promised Messiah would come in due time. (Dan. 9:24-27) At exactly the foretold

time, Jesus came upon the scene and became the one to whom man could now come to and learn about God.

Although the prophets spoke about God, none knew about him on a personal basis; for they, too, had never seen God. Jesus, however, in his prehuman existence as the Logos had been alongside of God for countless millennia as his chief instrument of Creation, as well as his mouthpiece. Now, though, this faithful Son had come to earth as the man Jesus. No one could show man what God was like better than he. Throughout his earthly ministry Jesus showed what the Father was like through his own life. Truly they were alike; one in purpose, doctrine, character, aim, and goal. It was this 'oneness' Jesus spoke of when he said, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) Because he had come to earth and personally experienced the feeling of man's infirmities, although perfect himself, Jesus even further added to his qualifications as the primary source of our knowledge about God. He became a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." (Isa. 53:3) Jesus understood how God desired that man be recovered from his current condition of sin and death, and so he faithfully laid down his life as man's Redeemer, thus fulfilling that all-important feature of his Father's plan. Because of Jesus' faithfulness, God highly exalted him, far above the angelic position he had prior to coming to earth. Speaking of the exalted Jesus, Paul says that he has "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."—Heb. 1:3,4

Not only did Jesus receive a great personal reward for his faithfulness but, more importantly, God promised that eventually he would be given rulership over mankind, and in his coming kingdom provide all people with an opportunity to learn about God. "Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."—Heb. 1:8 ■

Walking in the Light

Key Verse: *“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”*

—1 John 1:5

Selected Scripture:
1 John 1:1–2:5

IN THE SCRIPTURES, THE symbol of light is used to represent Truth, and darkness is used to picture falsehood. In the natural realm, light illuminates that upon which it is shed, making it not only visible, discernable, to the eye of man, but also putting it into its proper perspective with relation to those things surrounding it. Light allows us to see an object in its true state, in its beauty, or in its lack thereof. Light permits us to see an object as something to treasure, or something to avoid at all cost. On the other hand, darkness allows none of these things. It does not permit us to see objects, or our path among them. It promotes stumbling and wandering into areas that should be avoided. It does not permit discernment between that which is good and that which would harm or hurt us. How fitting it is, then, that our Key Verse speaks of God as ‘light,’ and that ‘no darkness’ dwells in him. From this verse, it follows that if we desire to know the Truth on any subject, we should look to God’s Word as the light which will shed that illumination.

As followers of God, it is important that we realize not only the necessity to look to him as our light, or source of Truth, but to also conform ourselves to it, bringing our character into harmony with the light that

he has shed forth to us through his Word, the Scriptures. The Apostle John continues in our lesson, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”—I John 1:6,7

Part of the light, as shown in the above verses, is the understanding that once we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), but that through the blood of God’s Son Jesus we have been cleansed, and been brought “out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) Having been brought out of darkness into light, we now have, as John states in our lesson, ‘fellowship one with another’—others who have similarly come into the light. This is a wonderful fellowship together, that of like minds who have all been recipients of the light of Truth which comes from God.

Although we have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus, this is only a reckoned condition at present, and allows us to have a standing before God. In reality, we still sin, and must confess our sins to God and seek his forgiveness. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (I John 1:8-10) Part of the light of Truth is this realization, that without our confession of sin and God’s subsequent forgiveness, our standing before him would stand in jeopardy. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (chap. 2:1,2) It is the light of Truth that reminds us here that Jesus is the one who has covered our sins, and those of the whole world. How blessed are our eyes, for they see! ■

Receiving the Word

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—John 1:14

Selected Scripture:
John 1:1-18

IN AN EARLIER LESSON, WE saw that the Scriptures point out Jesus as the Word (Greek, *Logos*) or mouthpiece of God, in particular as he served God in his prehuman existence. In due time, however, the Word offered to serve God in another way. He presented himself as the one to be sent to earth to provide for man’s redemption from sin and death. “Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8) was the heart desire of this faithful one, the only begotten Son of God. He left his heavenly glory and angelic position. God, through his mighty power, transferred the spark of life and identity of his Son into the womb of Mary. As the Key Verse says, ‘the Word was made flesh,’ by the power of his Father and, when born of Mary, he was given the name Jesus.

It was necessary that the Son of God, Jesus, be a human being in order to fulfill his role as man’s Redeemer. It was a human, Adam, who had disobeyed God’s law in the Garden of Eden, and who received the just penalty of death. It was through that disobedience, and the subsequent penalty of death, that all of Adam’s progeny fell under the same condemnation, for they all inherited the sinful condition from Adam through birth, from one generation to the next. (Ps.

51:5) None were spared in this regard. “As by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12) Just as it was by one man that death had passed upon all, it was also by another man, Jesus, that release from condemnation came. Jesus, by being perfect, even unto death, took Adam’s place in death, thus releasing him and all his posterity from the condemnation that had been placed upon him. “As by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”—vs. 18

The Key Verse also points out that the reason Jesus could faithfully carry out this mission as man’s Redeemer, when no one else could, was that he was the only begotten Son of God, and was fully imbued with God’s character attributes. He was, in fact, perfect in every sense of the word. If Jesus had simply inherited the character of a human parent, say his mother Mary, he would have been incomplete and imperfect in some measure, and hence unable to provide the corresponding ransom price. However, although born of Mary, he was begotten of his Father, and his character was the same perfect likeness to God which he had displayed in his prehuman existence as the Logos. The ‘grace and truth’ qualities spoken of in the Key Verse represented the sum total of all the good, perfect, and godlike qualities which Jesus possessed in their fullness.

Unfortunately, not all received Jesus gladly at his First Advent, and in fact his enemies had him tried and crucified as a common criminal on baseless charges. “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”—John 1:10-12 ■

Keeping the Balance

Key Verse: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”*
—Phil. 2:3

Selected Scripture:
Phil 2:1-11

AS WE CLOSE OUT THE OLD year and look forward to the new, it is a good time to review our progress thus far in following in the footsteps of Jesus, and likewise helpful to remind ourselves of the important responsibilities and privileges we have as his brethren. Paul’s admonitions to the Philippian brethren provide a solid basis for such self-examination. He starts this lesson by stating the importance of the mutual love, fellowship, and unity of the Spirit his body members should continue to share one with another. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Phil 2:1,2) In the Key Verse, Paul takes the matter one step further, that we should exercise humility in our dealings with the brethren, and look for those qualities in them which we can esteem better than those in ourselves. He states also that we should look out for the needs of others, rather than simply focusing on our own wants and desires. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”—vs. 4

It is this humble, loving, and caring attitude which Jesus had, and exemplified so perfectly for all to see. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:5-8 *New American Standard Bible*) Paul says here that we are to develop this same character as Jesus had, and even though we have not been asked to do everything that he did, we must have a corresponding humility, love, and desire to serve others, regardless of the cost and sacrifice to our flesh.

As we look back over the year past, it is appropriate that we evaluate our progress in these areas, seeing where we have both succeeded and failed in attaining the likeness of our dear Lord's character. As we do so, let us resolve to continue our progress in those things in which we have had a measure of success, and not slip or backslide from previous attainments. Additionally, let us resolve to do better in those areas of Christian development which have been more difficult for us to achieve the desired result of Christlikeness. We also are to remember that we can only examine ourselves concerning these things, and should not focus on looking at the faults and weaknesses of our brethren. It is good that we set goals for the New Year, not lofty ones that are most likely unattainable, but goals of step-by-step progress in those areas of development that are most needful. God will not judge us on outward results nearly as much as he will on sincere and honest efforts to progress. It is that effort, day by day, that we should resolve to be engaged in even more fervently in the New Year than ever before. If we do, 2007 will be a banner year for the development of the character of Christ. ■

Exceeding Great and Precious Promises

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”
—II Peter 1:4

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE Apostle Peter brings to our attention the ‘exceeding great and precious promises’ that are assured to those who suffer and die with Jesus. When these faithful have experienced their change of nature from fleshly to spiritual in the resurrection, they will receive the blessed promise to live and reign with our Lord Jesus

during the thousand years of his kingdom of Truth and righteousness. Together the church, head and body, will share in the blessing of all mankind and bring the sin-sick and dying world back to relationship with God.

Concerning this wonderful prospect the apostle further wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you [for us, *Marginal Translation*].”—I Pet. 1:3,4

Those who will share this rulership of the kingdom with our Lord will first have to experience the change in nature even as Jesus did. He gave his flesh, his humanity, for the “life of the world.” (John 6:51) It was this sacrifice of his human life that provided redemption for the world of mankind, and which will assure all an opportunity to regain life during the time of Christ’s kingdom. (I Tim. 2:3-6) Having been put to death in the flesh, Jesus was raised from the dead as a glorious Divine being with all power given to him in heaven and earth.—Heb. 1:1-4

It is these promises which have been misunderstood, and have led to the erroneous belief that all of mankind who are saved through that faith in Jesus Christ will spend eternity in heaven. However, this is not the thought at all. The heavenly promises were only offered to the footstep followers of Jesus, those who willingly deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him into sacrificial death. (Matt. 16:24) They are not invited to sacrifice their lives in order to attain salvation, but to prove worthy of living and reigning with Christ in that glorious heavenly kingdom of promise—the kingdom which is to establish peace on earth and provide health and joy and everlasting life for the human family who obey its righteous laws.

This exaltation to heavenly glory is what Jesus meant by being “born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5,6)

While every true follower of the Master is in this life begotten to this heavenly hope, it is not until the resurrection that spirit birth takes place. This is in keeping with Jesus' explanation that those who are 'born of the Spirit' are, even as the wind, invisible to human eyes, and powerful. Together with Jesus, this class, called from the world and proven faithful during the present age, will constitute the spiritual phase of the Messianic kingdom. In the parable of the wheat and tares, Jesus speaks of these as "children of the kingdom," and explains that they shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—Matt. 13:25-30,36-43

THE HEAVENLY KINGDOM

The invitation to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and to thus qualify for joint-heirship in his kingdom, is extended to his followers during this present Gospel Age through the wonderful provision of redemption that has been provided through faith in Jesus. Jesus explained that only by the denial of self could anyone become his disciple. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matt. 16:24

The narrow way of sacrifice was not actually opened to his followers until Pentecost. This was after the death and resurrection of Jesus, and after he had presented the merit of his sacrifice on behalf of his church members who respond to the spiritual calling during this acceptable time. This is further explained by the Apostle Paul when he wrote, "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.”—
Heb. 9:24

Jesus had promised Peter that he would give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven, so it was Peter who proclaimed the glad tidings and officially opened the door into the kingdom. (Matt. 16:19) This was first of all given on behalf of believers to the nation of Israel. Later, it was again Peter who also was the first to proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom to the Gentiles. This was in the home of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert. (Acts 10:34,36,44,45) It was Peter who used the keys of the kingdom in carrying forth the ultimate plan of God for the reconciliation, and recovery from sin and death, of the human family.

This did not mean that the kingdom of heaven was established at Pentecost, but it simply meant that there began the selection of those who are to share with Jesus in his future kingdom in blessing all the families of the earth. The keys Peter used at that time were keys for the opportunity of Gentile believers to obtain joint rulership in the heavenly kingdom with Christ. The way into this high position in the kingdom is a difficult one, and Paul said that it is through “much tribulation” that anyone can enter into the spiritual kingdom.—Acts 14:22

Those who are called by God to this highly exalted position in Christ’s kingdom are not, as a rule, the great, the mighty, or the noble of this world; although there is no particular discrimination against these. It is merely that in their present positions of honor and authority the terms of the narrow way may seem too costly. In this connection, we read, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor

of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5) But whether rich or poor, small or great according to the standards of this world, Jesus taught that all must become as humble, innocent children in order to enter into the heavenly kingdom. Of such he said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 18:3) It is important to note that Jesus was not saying here that the kingdom would be made up of young children, but that they must be humble and teachable like little children.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jesus said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11) Here, as in so many other instances in the Scriptures, Jesus uses the expression, 'kingdom of heaven' to denote the spiritual, or heavenly phase, of that glorious government of promise that is eventually to reign over and bless all nations. John the Baptist will have a part in the earthly phase of that kingdom. John was born and died before Jesus laid down his life, thus opening the "new and living way."—Heb. 10:20

We learn from the Scriptures that "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached." (Luke 16:16) In connection with the Law which was given at Mt. Sinai, and the rewards which were offered to the people of Israel for their obedience to it, the LORD said, "If

ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Exod. 19:5,6) The nation as a whole did not qualify for this promised position as a kingdom of priests; but the prophets and other faithful ones as individuals did qualify. The ancient patriarchs, although not under the written Law, were faithful to the precepts it proclaimed, and God will make good his promise to them.

All of these Ancient Worthies served God loyally because they had faith in the Messianic kingdom promises, although God did not hold out to them the hope of the heavenly kingdom. Their expectation was to be restored to life as humans on the earth. Paul lists many of them in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, and tells of their suffering for righteousness’ sake, and explains that they endured and died, believing that they would have a better resurrection. (Heb. 11:35,39,40) That better resurrection will be to human perfection and to a position of teachers and leaders among the people here on earth.—Isa. 1:26

Jesus said to the people of Israel in his day that they would see their prophets, including John the Baptist—the last of the prophets—in the kingdom of God, and they as a nation being thrust out. We read, “He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east,

and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.”—Luke 13:27-30

The children of the kingdom, those who by faithfulness to the Law could have qualified to be a kingdom of priests when raised from the dead, will be greatly disappointed when they realize that they do not occupy this honored position. Their disappointment is described by the expression, ‘weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ But Jesus explained who among them will occupy that position. It will be the Ancient Worthies—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets. The people will go to them in the sense of recognizing them as the representatives of the Messianic kingdom which will then be in control of earth’s affairs.

These will comprise the earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ. We are told that they will be made “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) While John the Baptist will not be with Jesus in the heavenly phase of the kingdom, he will be one of these earthly princes who will represent the heavenly rulers—Christ, and those who faithfully suffered and died by following in his steps of self-sacrifice.

Thus the organizational arrangements of the kingdom of Christ will be complete. Its personnel, in both the heavenly and earthly phases, will have been tested and trained in advance, and raised from the dead to take their positions as rulers and teachers in that glorious kingdom of Truth and righteousness. Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead, and throughout the present Gospel Age he has supervised the calling and training of his joint-heirs.

He has served as their Advocate at the throne of heavenly grace, and has been their Good Shepherd, their Counselor and Guide. He has been their Lord, Master, and Head. When the work of calling and training his joint-heirs has been completed, and when their resurrection from the dead and exaltation to the Divine nature is accomplished, then will come to pass the better resurrection of their human representatives—the worthies of old. These two phases of the kingdom will be working together, harmoniously and gloriously, during the future long-promised kingdom.

There will also be a great multitude of spiritual servants in Christ's kingdom. These we are told will be before the throne, not on the throne, not rulers in the kingdom. While the Scriptures do not specifically state just how these will serve, it will be as liaison between the heavenly and earthly phases of the kingdom. This great multitude is described in Revelation 7:9,10,13-17

This complete and perfectly organized kingdom, or government, is symbolically described by Micah the prophet as the “mountain of the house of the LORD,” the ‘mountain’ being a symbol of the kingdom, and the ‘house’ as God's ruling family, or ruling power. (Mic. 4:1) In this prophecy the two phases of the kingdom are symbolized as Zion the spiritual, and Jerusalem the earthly. The prophecy also states that in the last days the “mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and people shall flow unto it.” (vs. 1) The Prophet Isaiah, in a similar prophecy writes, “It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established

[prepared, *Marginal Translation*] in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—Isa. 2:2,3

This wonderful prophecy continues, “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (vs. 4) How evident it is from this that the kingdom of Christ will exercise a powerful control over the affairs of men, even to the rebuking of strong nations which do not, at first, bow the knee to its righteous rulership. As a result of learning the Lord’s ways under the rulership of Christ’s kingdom, and if necessary being rebuked or disciplined in the process, the nations will no longer learn war.

SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM

In addition to the kingdom of Christ having both a spiritual and an earthly phase, it also has both rulers, and those who are ruled—the subjects. It is important in the study of the Bible to note this distinction, and when Jesus promised his disciples that they would be with him in his kingdom, the reference is to the ruling aspect of the kingdom, that they would be “kings and priests” in the kingdom with him.—Rev. 5:10; 20:4,6

Jesus, during his kingdom reign, will restore the paradise conditions that originally existed in the Garden of Eden, throughout the whole earth. Our first parents disobeyed God's law and suffered the penalty of death. But the will or law of God will be reestablished under the administration of Christ's kingdom, and life will be restored to the obedient human family. The whole earth will then become as the Garden of Eden in a perfected earth, and filled with the restored and perfected human race. These will be subjects of the kingdom, and what happy subjects they will be!

Using a mountain to symbolize the kingdom, the Prophet Isaiah also wrote that in this mountain the LORD would destroy even death itself. He says, "In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy [swallow up, *Marginal Translation*] in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:6-9

Those who have died will be awakened from death and given an opportunity to enjoy the life-giving blessings of the kingdom. We are assured of this by the Apostle Paul when he described the resurrection

of the faithful class who receive the spiritual reward. In reference to this, he points to Isaiah's prophecy. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, [Isa. 25:8] Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—I Cor. 15:54,55

This will be the great work of Christ's kingdom. Paul also explains that Christ will reign until all enemies are destroyed. "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (vss. 25,26) In this glorious work of the kingdom, Jesus' followers, those who have been faithful to their spiritual calling, will share with our Lord in this time of blessing. Daniel the prophet said, "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions [rulers, *Marginal Translation*] shall serve and obey him." (Dan. 7:27) It is also the kingdom foretold by the Revelator where we read, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."—Rev. 11:15

While many centuries have gone by in the preparation for this kingdom, when the time finally arrives for it to be established it will surely accomplish all that God has promised. Its setting up will mark the time for the resurrection of the dead, when the saints of this age are exalted to reign with Christ in the spiritual phase of the kingdom, and when the worthies of old will be made 'princes in all the earth.'

At that time, the whole world will be enlightened, and all will learn to love and reverence the LORD. Those who continue willfully to oppose God and righteousness will be destroyed from among the people. Then the work of the kingdom will be completed, and through the agencies of the kingdom all will have been brought to the complete fulfillment of every Christian's prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) No prayer that has ever been offered will have had a more complete and glorious answer. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 7—"When he was reviled, he reviled not again."—I Peter 2:23 (Z. '01-298 Hymn 335)

DECEMBER 14—"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."—Matthew 5:7 (Z. '01-332, '00-70 Hymn 247A)

DECEMBER 21—"Who is worthy?"—Revelation 5:2 (Z. '02-333 Hymn 338)

DECEMBER 28—"He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."—Psalm 110:7 (Z. '02-14 Hymn 116)

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 Josephine Ryba, St. Clair Shores, MI—October 25. Age, 89

Sister Cecilia Czuli, Northville, MI—November 4. Age, 91

The Great Things of God

“Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you.”
—*I Samuel 12:24*

MANY ADMONITIONS OF the Scriptures encourage God’s people to reflect upon the Truth of his Word. The Truth is so reasonable and so wholly in harmony with that which is just, right, and loving that in every way it stands

up under the closest scrutiny. In order for error and superstition to prosper, research and reason would need to be suppressed. But all that is in harmony with God, and with Truth and righteousness, will flourish under the full light of investigation and reason. The Scriptures invite the child of God to search and to prove his Word. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.”—Isa. 1:18

As we give thought to the Word of God, and to our Heavenly Father’s loving plan for the blessing of his people and the world of mankind during the future kingdom of Christ, we are animated with a desire to serve him diligently and faithfully. Every feature of his plan reflects one or more of the glorious attributes of his character, and reminds us of

the great things he has done, and of all that he will yet do for us. As indicated in our featured text, the LORD had done many wonderful things for Israel, and the Prophet Samuel reminded them of this as a reason why they should express their appreciation to God by being faithful to his law. The same principle holds true with us today. God has richly blessed us in bringing us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Pet. 2:9) A proper realization of this should stimulate us to ever increasing effort, not only to know, but to faithfully do, his will.

There are many things which the Christian can consider with profit. It is proper that we give thanks for the everyday blessings we receive of the LORD'S creation. Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." (Matt. 6:28) Again we read, "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) Jesus' wonderful teachings were with a view of learning a lesson of God's care over all of his creative works. The fact that the beauty of the lilies comes to them without their toiling and spinning, teaches us the simple fact that God is abundantly able to provide the necessities of life for all of his Creation without anyone's aid.

The beloved David, a man after God's own heart, received great blessing from his study of the marvelous creative works of God. In one of his psalms he wrote, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

(Ps. 8:3,4) David, whose mind was attuned to the wonderful workings of God, on another occasion wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." (Ps. 19:1,2) By thus considering some of the material creations of God, the prophet gained a great appreciation of earth's Creator, an appreciation which helped to assure him of Divine protection and care in his many times of personal need. This large conception of the Divine character, as the prophet saw it revealed in nature, brought him nearer to God in humility, veneration and love.

The further enlightenment and appreciation of God's loving care for his Creation will also give us greater faith in the outworking of his plans and purposes. This is especially true concerning the calling of his people during the present age. Surely nothing but good can result from a consideration of the lilies, of the sparrows, of the ravens, of the heavens, in the light of God's will for us. These created things of God display his marvelous wisdom, love and power. This exhibit assures those of his New Creation that, being objects of his special care, he is particularly overshadowing us with his love and guiding us by his wisdom. We are assured that, if we continue to follow the leading of his Spirit, he will bring us to glory with his own dear self, as joint-heirs with his beloved Son.—Rom. 8:17

CONSIDERING GOD'S PLAN

Properly considering the material things from which we can learn lessons of Divine wisdom and care, and noting how these lessons apply in the

affairs of our Christian lives, should prepare us for the still greater revelation of God's goodness as set forth in his Word. The Divine plan of reconciliation is contained in his Word. His sympathy for the human race in its fallen condition, and his willingness to assist in man's recovery from sin and death along the lines of justice and love, are also made clear in his Word. We learn that the love of God is revealed through the gift of his Son, and this love at once commends itself to our hearts. We are inspired with a desire to bring our lives fully into harmony with it and with all the principles of righteousness which we see manifested through the further working out of the Father's plan.

The heart that reflects upon God and his Word makes progress by growing in grace, knowledge and love. If we fail to consider the things which have to do with God's hand in our affairs, then we may lose the incentive which will enable us to go forward in the narrow way. How much we lose of Divine grace when we fail to properly study the Word of God and his plan! It suggests that we lack appreciation of him and will be lacking in the necessary zeal to become like him and to serve him faithfully even unto death.

David could learn valuable lessons by considering the heavens. He was richly blessed as he endeavored to bring his life into harmony with the commandments and precepts of the LORD. Yet the precious truths of the High Calling as they are revealed to the saints during this Gospel Age were not made known to him. None of his considerations resulted in giving him an understanding concerning the spiritual phase of the plan of God as we are blessed with it today.

Jesus was asked why he taught the people in parables, and in Matthew's Gospel the account of his answer is recorded. "The disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matt. 13:10,11) This is most revealing, and the account continues, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."—vss. 16,17

How meaningful are the words of the Apostle Paul when he admonished, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." (Heb. 3:1) Many may have considered Jesus from one standpoint or another, and they have accepted him as a great teacher of wisdom and of love, and a man whose life and teachings may be exemplified with profit. But few have accepted him as the 'Apostle and High Priest' of a heavenly order of priesthood which is destined, in keeping with the Divine plan, to be the means of blessing all mankind. Yet this is one of the teachings we are privileged to know during the closing years of this Gospel Age.

Considering Jesus as the great High Priest of the heavenly order of priesthood, we see in him the chosen of God to be our special teacher. He is the one who guides and instructs the church, preparing each of its members to be joint-heirs with him in the glorious future work of the world's blessing and uplifting during Christ's kingdom.

LEST YE BE WEARY AND FAINT

In considering Jesus, we naturally think of his great faithfulness. We note his long-suffering, kindness, sympathy, and love. The consideration of all these things helps us to strive more diligently to be like him, to follow his example more and more as the days come and go, being faithful even unto death. Thus we learn to know and to appreciate more of the glorious qualities of his character.

The Apostle Paul calls our attention to particular points for study in the character of Jesus which should be a great help to us all. He said, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12:3) How easy it may be for us to become weary. The Christian's course is one which runs contrary to the natural cravings of the fallen flesh. It is contrary to the spirit and desire of the world, and to the satanic influences which operate in a sinful world. It will require continual effort on our part to complete our course faithfully.

It is an uphill road that demands a constant energizing of our mind and will in order that we may not become 'wearied and faint' and drop out along the wayside, or lag behind. How appropriate, and what an encouragement it is to consider Jesus, the one who endured such great contradiction of sinners against himself, and the one who walked the uphill road faithfully. He continued in the way of sacrifice until the opposition of sinners finally led to his crucifixion.

Jesus was not persecuted because of his perfection, but rather because the light of Truth radiated from him into the darkness. Darkness hates the

light, and it was not appreciated by those who walked in darkness. Thus they hated the light giver. As we reflect upon this, we realize that to the extent we follow in his steps and let our light shine, we too will experience opposition. By considering him who endured such great contradiction of sinners against himself, it will encourage us to press forward, following in the footsteps of Jesus and emulating him by letting our light shine out. This may be a blessing and encouragement to others, even though it may result in hatred and persecution.

As we consider the great contradiction of sinners against Jesus, we realize that he suffered unjustly, that his suffering was for righteousness' sake, and not because of any unfaithfulness in carrying out the will of the Father. This appreciation may help us to be patient with those who oppose us because of the light which we may radiate. It will help us moreover to be sympathetic because we will realize that, unlike Jesus, we are not perfect, and that many times because of our imperfections we may have cause for discouragement. Even though we do the best we can, we often come far short of the perfect standard of righteousness which was exemplified in our Lord's earthly ministry. It behooves us to be patient and sympathetic even with those who may manifest themselves to be our enemies.

VALUE OF TRIALS

As we consider Jesus from the standpoint of the opposition which he endured because of his faithfulness to Divine Truth, we are reminded of the apostle's statement concerning him. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in

bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10) We learn the value of trials, and by his faithful endurance of trial Jesus was prepared for the high position which he now occupies in the Divine plan. Thinking upon this carefully helps us to realize what the Scriptures declare, namely that experiences and testings are necessary for all of the Lord’s people, even as they were essential for Jesus. We realize, too, that if we receive trying experiences as we should, being rightly exercised thereby, they will work out for us an everlasting blessing which will redound to the glory of God.

The apostle also reminds us of our responsibilities toward the brethren saying, “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” (Heb. 10:24) How much the Lord’s people need to remember this injunction to ‘consider one another,’ if they would have sympathetic forbearance and love toward the brethren. This understanding of each other, as we walk together in the narrow way, will remind us that our brethren are endeavoring to offer their lives in sacrifice even as we are offering ours. It will impress upon us that we are imperfect and need God’s mercy through the merit of Jesus’ shed blood. They are imperfect and are being dealt with upon the same basis. Therefore, we should be merciful toward our brethren even as we desire that they should be merciful toward us.

Having consideration for others means to think kindly and charitably of them, despite the blemishes which cannot be hidden. These blemishes are not to be held against the brethren, but we are to remember that they are attempting to please God, and

that in their hearts they are striving to do his will, even as we also are endeavoring to do. As we consider our brethren from this standpoint, their unwilling imperfections of the flesh will not cause us to speak evil against them, nor to slander them. It will enable us to be more sympathetic and to encourage and to do all we can for them, even to the laying down of our lives for them.

FREELY YE HAVE RECEIVED

Another point which we do well to consider in connection with our relationship to God is the abundant manner in which we have received blessings from him, blessings of the Truth which have enlightened our hearts, and have revealed to us the glorious attributes of his character. This Truth has pointed us to Jesus as the bread of life, and has satisfied our longings as nothing else could do. These gracious gifts of God to us have brought joy, peace and hope into our lives. We are reminded of the Master's words, "Freely ye have received, freely give."—Matt. 10:8

How freely we have received of God's blessings, and look back to Jesus to note the manner in which he expressed his love to the Father and his interest in his fellowmen. We find that he was like his Father in that he continually gave. He gave to his disciples, and to all men as he had opportunity. He gave instructions to his followers and to others, as well as many other blessings of physical and mental healing, performing miracles oftentimes to do so. What a wonderful lesson there is for us in Jesus' miracles of feeding the five thousand and the four thousand with such small portions of fish and bread.

There is a lesson for us at the present time as we consider the manifestation of the Master's good will toward those of his day who were seeking his blessings. How often we may feel that the work is great, and that the means at our disposal for reaching those who may be searching for the Truth is limited. We may feel that our means are too limited, and too insignificant to accomplish anything worthwhile in the service of the Lord.

Even though we may have the Truth, and have a wonderful message to tell the people, human frailty and shortsighted vision may make us feel that there is no way in which it can be adequately given out. However, the Lord can wonderfully bless the humblest efforts, and multiply the effect of the light as it proceeds from the faithful. The Lord has promised to bless our efforts if we do what we can to give forth the message of Truth. It is important in this connection to realize that there are those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and there are those who need this food which we have to give. We are to consider that in this Gospel Age it is not expected that we shall convert the world, but that only those can be reached who have an ear to hear. We are to do the best we can to tell the good tidings, to give to all the glad message of the kingdom in any and every way we can, whenever and wherever there is opportunity.

Further, we are reminded that Jesus not only provided temporal food for the multitude centuries ago, but now, according to his promise, he has come forth the second time and is dispensing spiritual food, meat in due season, things new and old from the storehouse of his Word. Considering this, let us

rejoice that we have been so highly favored with the honor of sitting at the Lord's table during this harvest period to partake of the bread of life which he has so abundantly dispensed to the household of faith. Let us also be swift to appropriate these promises to our own hearts and apply them in our lives.

TRUSTING IN THE LORD

While we know that God will care for our earthly needs, supplying them according to his wisdom, we are to consider that even more important than this is his care over us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. No matter how fiery the trial, or how difficult the way, we should learn to put our trust in him. "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (I Pet. 5:7) This doesn't mean that we are to be listless or indifferent to our experiences. When we do the best we can, and when we are faithful in bearing witness to the Truth and seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, God will take care of the situation and cause all things to work together for our good. "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

As the Lord's people, considering our place in the Divine plan and God's wonderful care over us, we should remember that we are not to expect him to guide our efforts according to our own wisdom. We are not to expect him to bless our plans, or ask him to see to it that our wills are done. Proper consideration of God and his will should lead to a careful scrutiny of his Word that we may know more and more clearly as the days go by what his will is for

us. Let him guide us in his way, and help us to do the things which he has asked us to do. Approaching the matter from this standpoint, we can have full confidence that he will care for us by giving us wisdom, discernment, strength and patience to carry on faithfully.

This does not mean that we will be released from trial or that we will be spared suffering or persecution, and that our way will be strewn with roses. It does mean that regardless of the experiences through which we are required to pass, we can apply to our hearts the blessed balm of consolation made up of the assurances of his Word. These promises guarantee to us sufficient measure of his wisdom and strength to care for us in every emergency, and in every time of need. The more we consider, the more aware we become of the wonderful and gracious things the Lord has done for us. His blessings to natural Israel were rich, and it was appropriate that Samuel should call upon the Israelites to respond in appreciation and thanksgiving by a course of wholehearted obedience to God's laws of righteousness. But how much more bountiful have been God's gifts to us, and how much more responsibility is placed upon us. We are to respond to God's blessing with all that we are, all that we have, and with all that we hope to be.

God has blessed us richly, and the more we realize what he has done for us, the more we should be determined to give all to him. In the outworking of his great plan, we realize that our course of faithfulness in responding with the sacrifice of everything that we have will result in still further gifts from him. If we are faithful to our High Calling,

these future blessings will include the gift of the Divine nature. This will mean glory, honor, and immortality, and the privilege of joint-heirship with Jesus in his kingdom. It will also include the inestimable privilege of becoming a member of God's own family and enjoying his fellowship. We rejoice in the prospect of being with him throughout eternity and of cooperating with him and with Jesus in all the wonderful works of the ages to come. ■

The Beauty of Jesus in Me

*My life touched yours for a very brief space,
And what, oh, what did you see?
A hurried, a worried and anxious face,
Or the beauty of Jesus in me?*

*Was I steeped so deep in the ways of the world
That you couldn't detect one thing
That would set me apart and show that my heart
Belonged to the Heavenly King?*

*Did I carry no banner for Jesus my Lord,
Not one thing at all that could show
Whose side I am on in this glorious fight?
I am His! But you wouldn't know.*

*Forgive me! And if we should e-er meet again
Upon earth, oh, I pray you will see
No mark of this world, but His banner unfurled,
And the beauty of Jesus in me!*

—selected

Established in Faith

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”
—Colossians 2:6,7

THE TRUE CHILD OF GOD

is admonished to be on the alert to make progress, both in knowledge as well as in grace. In this scripture, the Apostle Paul emphasizes that the followers of the Master should be ‘rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith.’ This scriptural admonition, if wisely received in the hearts of the consecrated Christian, will be of great encouragement to his people now living at the end of this present Gospel Age.

This condition of steadfastness is one in which the consecrated child of God is anchored, and “which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.” (Heb. 6:19) Paul also encourages, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.)” (Heb. 10:23) The Scriptures present to us a broad spiritual balance,

in that they reveal the necessity of true Christian progress, while at the same time emphasizing the importance of being rooted and grounded in the faith—"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."—Eph. 4:14

In our text, the apostle is addressing those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Redeemer, and who, through full consecration to do the Heavenly Father's will, have been accepted as potential members of the body of Christ. These understand that it is the Divine will that through our Lord Jesus—as Head of the church—and his body, will soon establish his kingdom upon the earth. Through that kingdom, he will deliver mankind from the power of sin and death. All those who are in Christ Jesus have received him with this calling and understanding. This is the only message which God has sent through his Word. This is "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—Jude 3

It is these consecrated Christians to whom Paul admonishes that they continue in the faith, not combining earthly philosophy or understanding with this heavenly message. Having received Christ Jesus, and having been accepted as members of his body, they are to realize the ultimate Truth that in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:3) Furthermore, they are to understand that in him, "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." (vss. 9,10) Having thus recognized and accepted him as their master, and heavenly

teacher, they are admonished to continue to make progress in being rooted and grounded in him. They thus place themselves in a position to partake more and more of his wonderful Spirit of truth, realizing that any other course of action would serve to confuse and confound the heavenly message in their minds and hearts.

THE ROOTS OF FAITH

Turning from the figure of a man walking in Christ Jesus as a member of his body, the apostle in our text, (Col. 2:6,7) gives us the illustration of a tree, the root of which goes ever more downward, and the trunk, together with its branches which reach ever upward to obtain that nourishment will give it strength and stability. In this beautiful illustration, which has been taken from our natural surroundings, the Christian life and its relationship to Christ Jesus is seen as the roots of faith that push down deep into the knowledge of the Divine plan, while the branches of character grow higher and higher, developing and maturing the rich fruits of the Holy Spirit of God.

While the Christian is growing up in character likeness to our Redeemer, and the roots of his faith are reaching down into the deep things of the Word of God, he is becoming more established and settled in the knowledge and Spirit of Christ. Paul teaches, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the

world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”— I Cor. 2:10-12

A tree that is well rooted in the earth is able to withstand the violent winds and storms that may come upon it, and so it is with the Christian whose faith has been properly established. He should be so fixed and firmly established in the promises of God, and so filled with the spirit of those promises, that no winds of doctrine can overturn his faith or shake his confidence in the Divine will concerning him. The apostle cautions against a contrary spirit, and to be alert toward those who would otherwise lead the Lord's people astray. “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.”—II Tim. 4:3

It is not a sign of spiritual health and growth for one to be ever looking around for something new and different. When we first learned about the Divine plan, and our blessings associated therein as called to be members of the body of Christ, it was proper that we should be on the alert. We wanted to find the best possible explanation of God and his ultimate design and purpose concerning the human family, and his plan of reconciliation and restitution for the sin-sick and dying human creation. When we were gradually favored by God with a true and better understanding of his glorious plans and purposes, we saw revealed therein the length, breadth, height, and depth of Divine love and the wondrous harmony of the Scriptures. In our hearts, we knew, and rightfully so, that it was the answer to all our questions, even as the psalmist proclaimed, “He satisfieth the

longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”—Ps. 107:9

After God has thus shined into our hearts through the precious word of Truth, and in responding properly to this evidence of his grace, we went on to the next step and presented ourselves in full consecration to do his will. We are assured that as a result of our actions we would be accepted as members of the body of Christ, and also trust that our spiritual vision would be enlarged and enriched.

The plan of God as revealed in his Word furnishes an abundant source for research and study in spiritual things. Let us therefore be more diligent in searching the promises of God for our information and guidance. There is virtually no limit to these glorious promises, and it is by this means alone that we may become established in the true faith. Such looking into the Word of God will help establish us in the proper spirit of the Divine plan and to maintain a clear vision of the Father’s will for us with respect to that plan. Our spirit should be one of deepest gratitude and thankfulness that we have been granted this glorious Divine revelation. It will be by thus following in the Lord’s way that we will find the only true joy and will be able to make progress that is authorized and encouraged in the Word of God.

The Truth of the Divine plan embraces all of the scriptural teachings relative to Christ and his work as well as our own relationship to him as members of his body. We should familiarize ourselves with the many important features of this Truth. This glorious faith which was once delivered unto the saints is firmly founded in the Word of God. No matter how

searching and scrutinizing our study may be, it will cause the Truth to shine out more beautifully and to convince us more than ever how truly wonderful it is in every aspect.

To be established in this faith, we should know what our Lord taught, and why he taught it. We should learn how to connect the different aspects of the Truth into one harmonious whole. In this way, we will become thoroughly furnished, not only in the knowledge of the Divine plan, but in the manner in which that plan is to be a guide in our lives, and with the desire to do the Father's will. Step by step we learn that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and 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 Tim. 3:16,17) It is in the personal application of the Truth that its real importance becomes most apparent.

DOCTRINAL ROOTS

The firmly established Christian is confident of his standing in the Truth because he knows, through a consistent study of God's Word, that the doctrines of Christ to which he has subscribed are firmly established therein. Knowing this, he realizes also that the responsibility for these doctrines is not his, but the Lord's. Being confident of the Divine will for himself, and of the Divine plan to bless all the families of the earth in due time, he is willing to give all of his attention to serving and pleasing the Lord. He is assured of the Lord's guidance and direction.

To boldly stand for the Truth and to uncompromisingly present it to others does not mean that we

are judging and condemning those who may not have the same understanding that we do in spiritual matters. We should be sure first of our own position and to not adopt a compromising policy as described by the Apostle James, as being “double minded,” and therefore “unstable” in all our ways.—James 1:8

Those who are firmly established in the faith once delivered unto the saints, and who have partaken of the spirit of that glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, are therefore in a more responsible position to exercise tolerance toward others who may not be as certain of their Christian beliefs. To be rooted and established in the Truth means that one has found the will and purpose of God. The assurance of his position in the Truth and his standing with the Lord should produce in him an amiable and sympathetic attitude toward those who may not be so richly blessed.

Let us, therefore, seek to avoid all snares and pitfalls that may be set for us by the Adversary in these days of final testing upon the consecrated people of God. We are now living at a time during these closing years of the Gospel Age when faith in God and in his Word is being ignored or challenged, and yet it is a time when the truly consecrated and enlightened children of God have much to strengthen their faith in the wonderful promises of his Word. It is a time for the lifting up of the head in confidence and full assurance of faith rejoicing in the clear vision of Truth with which our returned and present Lord has favored his people. We are living in a most momentous time in the history of the world.

It is a blessed privilege that all of the consecrated may enjoy today. In order for the Lord’s people to

hold up the banner of Truth against a worldly spirit, they will need to be more and more emptied of self, and filled with the Spirit of God and his spirit of love. We become filled with the Spirit of God by continued, energetic and careful study of his Word. It is with an earnest endeavor that we must apply its principles in our daily lives, and we will find that it is the spirit of a sound mind which will give us a sense of balance in relation not only to a proper appreciation and understanding of the Truth itself, but also of all our experiences as Christ's followers.

Being firmly established in the faith and fully convinced of all its many implications insofar as our relationship to the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus is concerned, we will vow to tolerate no deflection on our own part from the course of true fidelity to the Divine will and purpose.

While granting no liberties to ourselves outside of the clear expression of the Divine will for us, we should nevertheless grant full liberty of thought and conscience to others, by leaving them in the Lord's hands. Let us patiently and carefully watch for opportunities to do all in our power to assist and bless others to see the way of Truth more clearly.

We know that the plan of reconciliation and recovery from the penalty of sin and death that remains over all mankind will come to an end in due time. In this wonderful realization, we trust and praise our loving Heavenly Father. The Prophet Isaiah, looking forward to that grand time, says, "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:9 ■

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

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St. Augustine, FL December 10

P. Mali

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CONVENTIONS

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DETROIT CHRISTMAS GATHERING, December 16—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact F. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588

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

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

AUSTRALIA CONVENTION, January 20-22—Marysville, Australia

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

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 16-18—Contact K. Ajise, Registrar, 6925 Gallery Way, Sacramento, CA 95831. Phone: (916) 421-0755

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

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

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

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

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 23-25—Macomb Community College, 14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, MI 48088. Contact F. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588

BOISE CONVENTION, April 27-29—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street, Boise, ID. Contact D. Allers, 2438 Bruins Circle, Boise, ID 83704. Phone: (208) 375-6873

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

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 14-20—University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, PA. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

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

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