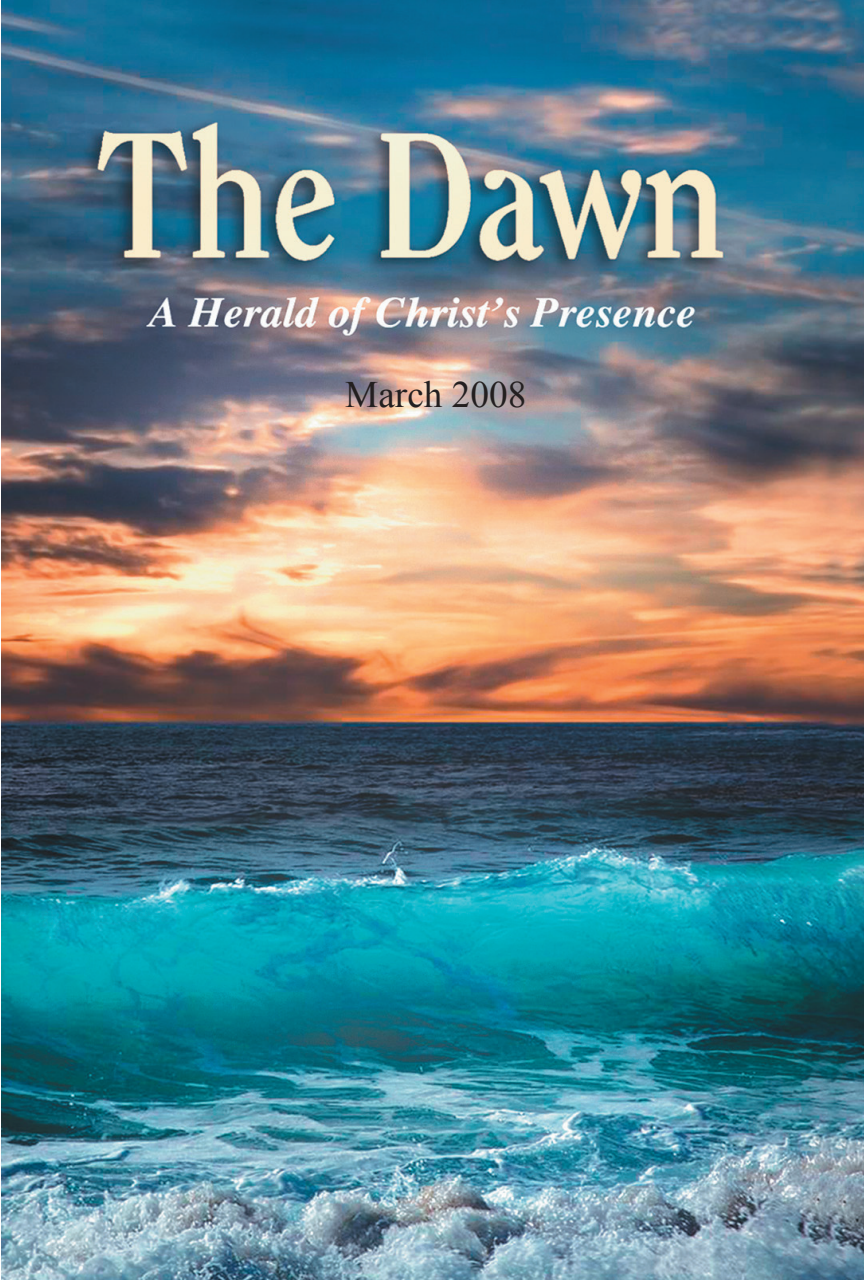


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March 2008



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Global Warming: America's New Stance

*“He that sitteth in
the heavens shall
laugh: the Lord
shall have them in
derision.”*

—Psalm 2:4

IN THIS PSALM, THE AUTHOR

points forward to a time when irreligious heathen men would gather themselves together to consider their affairs on the strength of their own selfish and proud interests, instead of seeking first the counsel and direction of our all-wise and loving Heavenly Father. The Lord will ‘laugh’ and they will be seen by him as being in a state of ‘derision.’ In his Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, Dr. William Gesenius defines the term ‘derision’ [#3932] as meaning (a) to stammer barbarously in a foreign tongue, and (b) as objects of ridicule and scorn.

THE PSALMIST'S WORDS

The psalmist asks, “Why do the heathen rage [tumultuously assemble, *Marginal Translation*], and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall

have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.”—Ps. 2:1-5

SEEKING SOLUTIONS

While contemplating the message contained in our featured scripture text, we recall a major international news event that was being reported during the final weeks of the past year. Worldwide news media began submitting accounts of the events taking place at the United Nations Climate Change Conference that was being held at Bali, Indonesia from December 3-14, 2007. At the conference, representatives from more than 180 nations around the globe were meeting to discuss and take active measures in connection with the subject of global warming. They were to study the effects of global warming and climatic changes that have become a divisive issue among many nations in our modern-day world. The delegates were hoping to effectively address the problems and consider solutions.

After several days of meetings, a breakthrough of sorts had finally been achieved at the conference by the direct intervention of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to encourage delegates to complete what seemed to be a series of hopelessly deadlocked talks concerning the matters at hand. Yodhoyono told the delegates that although meaningful decisions were difficult to agree upon, he pointed out that the human race and planet earth cannot be allowed to crumble because we cannot find the right words to address

the situation. The Secretary-General said that he was disappointed in the progress that had been made, that the hour is late and that it was now time to make whatever recommendations were necessary.

DIFFICULT DECISIONS

After numerous false starts and false hopes, miscommunications and misunderstandings, many of the delegates finally agreed on a road map that would launch negotiations toward a global, comprehensive agreement to address the effects of global warming and climate change. The Bali conference set an agenda that frames future discussions that are designed to take place over the next two years, and promises to set a deadline for the year 2009 to complete the negotiations. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement in which he said that the Bali road map is only a pivotal first step toward an agreement that may possibly address the threat of these vital issues. He emphasized the seriousness of their meeting together and that this was a major defining challenge of our time.

The discussions called on developing nations to take immediate and decisive action to address the effects of global warming and climate changes in a measurable, reportable, and verifiable manner. Representatives pointed out that developing nations, such as China and India, as well as developed countries like the United States, must face a new level of accountability and pressure to reduce one of the major problems concerning the level of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

DAMAGING EMISSIONS

One of the prime developers of problem emissions technology today is Carbon Sciences Incorporated of Santa Barbara, California. They are developing innovative technology that promises to eliminate earth-destroying carbon dioxide (CO₂) from human-created sources and transform it into environmentally friendly carbon products. These products include building materials such as paper, plastics, fertilizer and other industrial applications. Derek McLeish, the company's CEO, addressed the problem of global warming and said that current solutions for dealing with CO₂ emissions from primary sources such as power plants and industrial factories are based on capturing CO₂ gases and then burying them underground or on the ocean floor. He pointed out that this was a very dangerous and shortsighted solution, and that, if not dealt with effectively, it would leave a ticking time bomb for future generations to deal with.

Carbon Sciences Inc. plans to unveil a mobile prototype in January, 2008. This will be installed in a lab truck that can be driven on tour to support the company's awareness and business development initiatives. The prototype will be operational and provide for the mixing of abundantly available rock materials with CO₂ and transform them into a stable carbonate powder. The powder can then be pressed into pieces of writing chalk, thereby completing the process of making a very useful product that can be used in a school classroom.

In addition to carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions that are being studied in relation to global warming and climate change, there are also five others

that are currently being investigated. These are methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆).

DRAWING UP A PROPOSAL

The international representatives at the Bali conference acknowledged that damaging emissions were of vital and immediate concern affecting all nations. However, the process of wording the proposal and clarifying it proved to be difficult and time-consuming. The representative from India spoke on behalf of all of the developing nations and said that alternate wording of the proposal had finally been achieved and agreed upon. The spokesman from Bangladesh then reported that certain language concerning the least developed nations and small island states had also been changed or eliminated, and the delegate from the Philippine Islands spoke concerning the phrase "on the basis of equity" and explained that it, too, had been discussed and changes were made. Many other concerns in drawing up the proposal were also addressed.

When it came time for the representative from the United States delegation to speak, Paula Dobriansky, Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, said that the United States could not accept the formulation that had been put forward. She did say, however, that her country would keep working on the proposals until a possible agreement could be found. In response to the spokesperson's statement, the representative from South Africa then reiterated the fact that developing countries had already voluntarily moved to accept

new obligations concerning their actions on climate change and global warming. He emphasized too that they have done this in a measurable, reportable, and verifiable manner, a concession that only a year ago would have been unthinkable. The South African representative asked the United States to reconsider its position on the agreement. In support of this request, many other developing nations also began to ask the United States delegation to state their reservations separately, and to not block a consensus that was forthcoming from all the other states that were represented at the conference. The delegate from the developing country of Papua New Guinea also challenged the United States to “either lead, follow, or get out of the way.”

Soon after this verbal exchange it appeared that the conference was on the brink of collapse and Paula Dobriansky again took the floor to say that the United States was in favor of a road map and also wanted to be a part of it. She said that her country was also committed to a long-term greenhouse emissions reduction program, and that they would work with other large emitters to reduce global emissions by 50% by the year 2050. She then said that they would move forward with the proposed agreement and join the consensus that the other nations had adopted.

DRAMATIC REVERSAL

This proved to be a dramatic reversal concerning United States policy in connection with the entire subject of climate change and global warming and its disastrous effects on the human race and our planet earth. Man has long ignored the issue and

the need to protect our environment. After accepting the agreement many countries thanked the United States for joining the consensus.

For the first time in the history of climate change and global warming discussions over the past number of years, the United States had come to the table to negotiate a viable solution. Paula Dobriansky, leader of the American delegation, called the historic Bali accord a new chapter in climate change diplomacy, and emphasized that the United States is very committed to developing a satisfactory and long-term greenhouse gas reduction emission program to reach that goal.

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL

Serious efforts to address the growing evidence of global warming and climate change may be noted especially since 1992. At that time, the so-called "Earth Summit" took place under the international environmental treaty produced at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The treaty's aim was to reduce emissions of greenhouse gas in an effort to combat global warming. There were no legal bindings attached to the agreement, but 154 nations voluntarily signed the treaty to reduce atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases and stabilize to 1990 levels by the year 2000. The United States was a signatory to the treaty.

After years of intense and serious international negotiations, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change met at Kyoto, Japan in December, 1997 to establish mandatory emission limits. Nations that had ratified the agreement

were thus committed to reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide and five other greenhouse gases, and the United States was required to reduce its emissions by 7%. During the next several years, nearly all of the original signatories of the Earth Summit conference had ratified the agreement.

When the Bali conference took place in December, 2007 there were 174 nations committed to the agreement, with the United States as the only industrialized nation and Kazakhstan one of the developing nations, being the two signatory nations to the original Earth Summit to have not ratified the agreement. Neither the Clinton nor Bush administrations sent the protocol to the United States Congress for ratification. President Bush stated that it would be too damaging to the United States economy to ratify, and that it did not address major concerns regarding China and India as developing nations.

AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

On January 24, 2006, former United States Vice President Al Gore released a movie that he had been preparing entitled "An Inconvenient Truth." This documented his efforts to raise an alarm on the serious issues of global warming. As a student of climate change and its effects for the past 30 years, Gore wanted to counterbalance some of the misinformation and misunderstanding that had become prevalent in connection with the climate crisis in our world today. The movie presented the latest evidence to demonstrate how the accumulation of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other pollutants of the industrial age are increasing temperatures worldwide.

The movie emphasized the fact that global warming may lead to greatly increased sea levels in the foreseeable future that could inundate major cities such as New York and others that are located along coastal areas. It could produce spasms of extreme weather resulting in larger and more devastating hurricanes and typhoons, global pandemics, and depending on the location, torrential rains or decades-long drought. Changes are now being seen in all areas of the world. Northern polar ice is rapidly shrinking, and virtually all of our mountain glaciers are now melting. The massive ice mound on Greenland is becoming destabilized and the equally enormous masses of ice on islands in the Western Antarctic are also melting.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Al Gore in Oslo, Norway on December 10, 2007 for his strong commitment to arouse awareness of the effects of global warming. His efforts have been reflected throughout a period of many years including his political activity, lectures, books, and especially for his award-winning film “An Inconvenient Truth.” He has also worked in connection with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The Nobel citation proclaimed that Al Gore, former Vice President of the United States, is the single individual who has done the most to create greater worldwide understanding of the measures that need to be adopted. However, he has been criticized by some who question the accuracy of some of his predictions.

A LASTING SOLUTION

Students of the Bible recognize the efforts of fallen man as he struggles to cope and to find possible solutions to some of the changing weather patterns and effects of global warming in our chaotic and turbulent world of today. They thus turn to the wonderful promises of God and look forward with great anticipation to the soon-to-be established kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that will provide the only lasting and righteous solutions.

THE PSALMIST DAVID

Turning to one of the psalms of David, we read, “By awesome deeds Thou dost answer us in righteousness, O God of our salvation. Thou who art the trust of all the ends of the earth and the farthest sea; Who dost establish the mountains by His strength, Being girded with might; Who dost still the roaring of the seas, The roaring of the waves, And the tumult of the peoples. And they who dwell in the ends of the earth stand in awe of Thy signs; Thou dost make the dawn and the sunset shout for joy.”—Ps. 65:5-8, *New American Standard Bible*

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

The Prophet Ezekiel, writing under inspiration of the Holy Spirit of our loving and eternal Heavenly Father, spoke concerning the restoration of the children of Israel. However, in a grander and broader sense, he portrayed the wonderful time of blessing that is in store for the whole human family that will be made available to them during the future kingdom of our Lord and the faithful members of his bride. He wrote, “Thus saith the Lord

GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.”—Ezek. 36:33-36

OUR FEATURED TEXT

We also note the words of hope and inspiration that are further recorded in the message of our featured psalm. Having previously seen that the kings and rulers of earth have sought their selfish counsel against the mighty hand of God and his anointed Son, we noted that he [God] will “have them in derision.” (Ps. 2:2-4) However, God’s ultimate purpose concerning the future blessings that are to be poured out upon his human creation and the perfecting of the earth’s physical environment will be manifest under the administration of his beloved Son’s kingdom that will provide life and peace for all who will obey the Heavenly Father’s righteous laws of truth and righteousness.

In the second psalm, we turn again to read, “Yet have I set [anointed, *Marginal Translation*] my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,

and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth."—vss. 6-10

THE COMING KINGDOM

We have considered briefly some of the wonderful promises of God that have been recorded for our understanding and blessing, and realize that the world now stands on the very threshold of Christ's future kingdom of peace. Under the establishment of that righteous rule, all mankind will be given opportunity to be lifted up from the miry pit of sin and death, and obtain everlasting life here on a perfected earth.

Man will no longer have to confront the issues of global warming and the scenes of turbulence that now must be accepted as a part of our everyday life. During Christ's kingdom, earth's physical environment, together with the violent storms and climatic changes that mark our time, will inevitably give way under the powerful hand of our loving and eternal Father whose ultimate purpose is to bless his earthly creation. Let us faithfully continue to announce the glad tidings of that blessed time that is ever drawing near, and praise our Father for his promised everlasting welfare. ■

CORRECTION TO ERROR IN FEBRUARY 2008 DAWN:

The correct date, for the celebration of the Memorial for 2008, is after 6:00PM on

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

The Ark Comes to Jerusalem

Key Verse: “*David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.*”
—*I Chronicles 15:3*

Selected Scripture:
I Chronicles 15:1-28

THE TIMING OF THIS VERSE

occurs shortly after David had been anointed king over Israel, and had conquered the Philistines who came against him, as God had ordained by his Word. Prior to becoming king, David desired to return the ark to Jerusalem where it rightfully belonged.

Before David's time the ark's abode was frequently shifted. It had been kept among several Levitical families in the border villages of eastern Judah. (I Sam. 7:1; II Sam. 6:3,11) One of these was the household of Abinadab, “They carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart.” (I Chron. 13:7) This event was marked with much joy by David and by all of the people of Israel. Music was played on all types of instruments, and there was singing and great rejoicing. (II Sam. 6:1-6) It was during this journey that the ark was improperly touched by Uzza, and he was struck dead by God. (vs. 7) David was frightened by this experience, and wondered how he would ever be able to complete its return. Due to this uncertainty, the ark was then given to

a member of the tribe of Levi for safekeeping. "The ark of God remained with the family of Obededom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had." (I Chron. 13:14) It is part of God's dealings with those who faithfully serve him to bless them for their willingness to perform service to him.

Following his victory over the Philistines, "David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent." (chap. 15:1) He then gladly went out to personally bring the ark of the LORD from the house where it had been kept. He was so filled with joy that he danced, and the people rejoiced with shouting and the blowing of trumpets. (II Sam. 6:12-15) They brought the ark to Jerusalem, and set it in a tent that David had prepared for it "in the midst of the tabernacle." (vs. 17) Sacrifices of oxen, fatlings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings were made to God.—vss. 12-18

David desired to honor God, and thank him for all that he had given to him. "The LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations." (I Chron. 14:17) He also realized that this time the symbol of Divine presence should be reverently borne according to Divine directions. This is clearly evident in his strict statement, "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever."—I Chron. 15:2

David then gathered together all of Israel in Jerusalem, and "the children of Aaron, and the Levites." (vs. 4) He reminded them of their important role in the sight of God and the nation, "Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark." (vs. 12) Once again, there was much rejoicing surrounding the return of the ark, and this would be remembered as a psalm of thanksgiving, and praise to the LORD God of Israel.—vss. 19-28 ■

God's Covenant with David

Key Verse: *“Thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel: And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth.”*

—I Chronicles 17: 7,8

Selected Scripture:
I Chronicles 17:1-27

WE RECALL FROM OUR

previous lesson that the ark had been returned by David to Jerusalem and continued to be kept in a tent. “I [God] have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another.” (I Chron. 17:5) David was also troubled by this, as evidenced by his words to Nathan the prophet, “I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.” (vs.1) It points again to David’s love for his God, and his constant concern to inquire of the prophets concerning the will of the Heavenly Father.

Although he was a devoted servant, Nathan would be given a word from God, and would be instructed to speak to David

concerning this matter. He was informed that he would not be called upon to build a house for the LORD. "Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in." (vs. 4) We are given the reason, "Because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood." (chap. 28:3) The LORD further explained through his prophet that he had never wished a temple, nor had he commanded one to be built.

These events bring us to the focus of our Key Verse. As though to console David and to insure him that God did appreciate his good intentions, Nathan was instructed to recite some of the many evidences of Divine care and supervision of the king's affairs. David had come from humble beginnings, as a shepherd who had faithfully and bravely taken care of his flock. (I Sam. 16:11-13) He had been made a prince and leader of his people, conquering his enemies, which stood before him. "He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me." (Ps. 18:17) God further assured him that such a blessing would continue with him until his name should be known amongst the great men of the earth. His house would continue its dominance through Solomon, who would be called upon to build to build a temple in Jerusalem. "He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever."—I Chron. 17:12

The LORD also declared that a blessing would come to Israel. One day they would no more be oppressed or scattered by their enemies. This prophecy had a temporary fulfillment under David and Solomon, but it will have its real accomplishment under the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus.

One of the titles of our Lord was the "son of David." (Matt 1:1) This was in harmony with the expectation of all Israel, that ultimately Messiah, the promised seed of Abraham would come from the seed of David and would be an everlasting king. This promise is the "sure mercies of David."—Acts 13:34 ■

God Calls Solomon to Build the Temple

Key Verse: *“Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.”*
—*I Chronicles 28:10*

Selected Scripture:
I Chronicles 28:1-21

the prophet Nathan, and was well prepared for this great task.

Solomon also partook of his father David's religious disposition more than any of his brethren did. His mother also was apparently more in sympathy with the Divine arrangement than were any of his father's other wives. “Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind.” (I Chron. 28:9) The verse ends with a reminder to all that if we turn away from God he will also remove his favor from us. (Ps. 9:10; Hos. 4:1) This shows us that only in proportion as we know God, can we properly trust in and serve him. Further, outward service is not sufficient in our dealings with the Lord

THE NAME SOLOMON SIG-

nifies ‘peaceful,’ and at about the age of twenty he was chosen by God to perform the important work of building the Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord's anointed king should be charged with this important matter since it was a national project and he was their representative and head. He had been guided and educated by

but, the “true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”—John 4:23

It was made clear to all that it was God’s appointed time to build the Temple. He gave to Solomon the great opportunity to serve him, and for the exercise of his intelligence and ambitions along proper and helpful lines. God then gave him the assurance, ‘be strong, and do it.’ We have similar words expressed in the verses, “Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”—Prov. 3:23; 4:23

The LORD also made known his great plans and purposes respecting the future. For Christ—the antitype of Solomon—has been strengthened and approved of the Father. By communion with God in prayer, and through the Word of Truth, our own hearts are kept in love and service to God. It will then provide opportunities in love and helpfulness, and the development of thoughts in accord with the Divine. “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Heb. 11:6

The importance of the Temple is illustrated in the specific directions given by God concerning its construction. God rewarded David’s life of service by allowing him the opportunity to provide to Solomon the design for the building. “The pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, or the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things.” (I Chron. 28:12) Many items of gold were used in the construction and furnishing of the Temple—golden candlesticks, tables, hooks, and basins. The altars, the chariot of the cherubims, and the ark of the covenant were all covered with pure gold. (vss. 13-18) Gold represents things Divine, and is used to represent the covenant that God made with Israel, and that the Temple was God’s design. ■

Fulfillment of God's Promise

Key Verse: *"The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel."*
—II Chronicles 6:10

Selected Scripture:
*II Chronicles 6;
Luke 24*

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF

David, Solomon became king over Israel. God blessed Solomon during his reign, and rewarded him for his good character. "God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor . . . long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge, . . . that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee." (II Chron. 1:11,12) The wisdom and fame of Solomon was made known throughout the world.—chap. 9

"Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD, and an house for his kingdom." (chap. 2:1) He commanded the gathering of the finest materials, and for the best craftsmen to be used in the construction. "The house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods." (vs. 5) The stones and timbers of the Temple were brought to the location and prepared,

shaped, and marked for their exact positions, so that the actual construction was a quiet one, and the parts came together without the sound of a hammer. (I Kings 6:7) This is an illustration of the chiseling, polishing, and preparing of the saints of God in the present life, and the marking of them for their place in his kingdom. God sets the various members “in the body, as it hath pleased him.” (I Cor. 12:18) The work of the first resurrection is also a quiet one, and the world is not aware that it is being accomplished.

After the work of building the Temple was finished, and Solomon had placed in the Temple all of the things which his father David had dedicated, he assembled all of the heads of the people. (II Chron. 5:1,2) Our LORD desired the assembling of the representatives of all of the tribes of Israel for the grand occasion of blessing the Temple. A great festival was held which apparently lasted more than two weeks. This wonderful demonstration of joy was in response to what the people of Israel realized was God’s approval of the house that he had designed as a kind of dwelling house with them. As the ark came forward the Levites sang and chanted. (vss. 11-13) It is fitting that the theme of the celebration and singing was “Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever.”—Ps. 138:8

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John 2:19) We see that God has a plan that involves the temple, and it is illustrated in the recounting of the events concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Luke 24) The temple of God also includes the body of believers—“the body of Christ” (I Cor. 12:27)—and the “habitation of God” through the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 2:22) As Solomon dedicated the Temple, so the church of Christ will be dedicated, formally presented to the Father by his Son. “Ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, . . . I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—II Cor. 6:16 ■

Josiah Renews the Covenant

Key Verse: *“The king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.”*
—II Chronicles 34:31

Selected Scripture:
II Chronicles 34

FOLLOWING THE GLORY

and devotion to God that Israel enjoyed under the reign of Solomon, Israel fell into troubled times. There was much infighting amongst the people and rulers, and “when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, . . . he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.” (II Chron. 12:1) Idolatry became widespread, and the people forsook many of the promises that God had made to them. The difficulties continued for many years; the ten tribes separated from the two tribes, becoming Israel and Judah. The division of the kingdom worked to the advantage of the two-tribe kingdom whose worship of the LORD was centered in Jerusalem.

Fenced cities were built to protect the people from their many enemies, and they had no rest from their enemies. (chap. 14:5-7) This allowed the tribes of Benjamin and Judah to be more humble, and more zealous of the true worship of God and eventually able to resist

idolatry. From this beginning, and after many years of struggle, the faithful Israelites would be gathered out of the ten-tribe kingdom into the two-tribe kingdom. "Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the pass-over unto the LORD God of Israel."—chap. 30:1

In conjunction with Josiah's reformation and cleansing of the Temple, a copy of the book of the Law was found. The long period of idolatry preceding Josiah's work had caused the kings, and subsequently most of the people, to forget the testimony and Word of God. It detailed what blessings would come upon the nation of Israel if they were obedient to God. It also detailed the penalties that would come to them if they neglected the proper service to God and his laws, and became subject to idolatry. In the book of Deuteronomy is a clear statement of this penalty. (Deut. 28) Divine judgments were due which had not yet come to them. In an effort to offset the impending trouble, he desired to make an inquiry on the subject.—II Chron. 34:14-19

The inquiry came to Huldah, a prophetess who gave the LORD'S answer. All of the trouble told in the Law would come to pass because of the idolatrous course that the nation had followed. But the message declared to him that this trouble would not come in his day because of his sincere sorrow concerning the matter as soon as he heard about it.—vss. 21-28

The king did all in his power to bring the nation back into harmony with their God. He proclaimed a general meeting at the Temple, attended it in person, and had the book of the Law read. He desired to point out their shortcomings, and what they should expect. He continued to carry out the work of purging the nation from idolatry. (vss. 29-33) Josiah truly reflected the attitude as expressed by a past king, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."—Ps. 119:11 ■

Our Refuge and Strength

*“God is our refuge
and strength, a
very present help
in trouble.”*

—Psalm 46:1

IN THIS SCRIPTURE THE

psalmist assures us that our loving Heavenly Father has promised to guide and care for his earthly children,

those who have been called for a special purpose. We have his promise that he is ready and willing to help us in our consecrated walk, as a ‘refuge’ and ‘strength’ and as a ‘very present help’ in every time of need. These words take on added meaning as we witness the violent and turbulent world that marks our day, and the closing features of this present Gospel Age. Concerning this, we read, “Will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”—Ps. 46:2,3

HIS SUSTAINING POWER

Throughout the many long centuries of the present nighttime of sin and death, the children of God

have looked to him for his sustaining power to help, and his grace to forgive. This was true in connection with the lives and experiences of the prophets of old who were being guided by his Holy Spirit. It also touched others including Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, and all those who were being used in carrying out his plans and purposes concerning his earthly creation and their ultimate reconciliation and blessing. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—Heb. 11:13

CALMING OUR FEARS

Later, our Lord Jesus was provided for us under the mighty hand of God as the way for our justification. This came through faith in his precious blood, and members of the fallen race were then given the means by which they could have a new standing with the Heavenly Father. These have been comforted with the assurance that, through their faith in Jesus, their sins, having been inherited through Adam's disobedience and weaknesses, are covered, and their imperfect works have been made acceptable to the Father.

During this period of time, Satan, as the great Adversary of man, has relentlessly continued to afflict those who have been called by God, those upon whom the wonderful favor and working power of our everlasting Father has been made manifest. Those who are privileged to walk in newness of life with our Lord have had to face the world and its temptations with increased fortitude and combativeness.

Having thus set upon a course to overcome the wiles of the Adversary, the weaknesses of the flesh, and temptations of the world, they have turned to the ever present help of the Father in their walk of faith.

SATAN'S WILL TO ATTACK

Satan's attacks were particularly directed toward our Lord Jesus—"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) The Adversary was determined to destroy him even at a very early age. He did this by using Herod as a tool to accomplish his evil design. By seeking Jesus' life, he attempted to thwart the eternal purpose of God and his plan to rescue the human family from the ravages of sin and death. His attempt failed, however, only because the Heavenly Father's promised blessing as a refuge and strength was working in connection with his beloved Son, as spoken by the psalmist in our featured scripture text.

JESUS AS A TARGET

Later, when our Lord was lifted out of the waters by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:13-17) and was ready to begin his earthly ministry, Satan was again on hand to try and turn him aside from carrying out the Father's plan and purpose. The scriptural record bears this out. The Gospel account reads, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”—Matt. 4:1-4

FED BY GOD’S WORD

Here we see that, after a long period of time during which Jesus had not eaten and was in a weakened state, Satan quickly saw an opportunity to tempt him. The Master responded by pointing to the experiences of the Jewish people during their forty-year journey in the wilderness. This had been designed by the hand of God to serve as a means to humble and prove his people. (Deut. 8:2,3) In a greater sense, we see that these experiences served in a typical fashion to portray future events and circumstances as recognized by Jesus.

SATAN QUOTES SCRIPTURE

Turning again to the scriptural account, we read, “Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”—Matt. 4:5-7

One of the noted points that marks this particular temptation is that Satan here turns to the Word of God as a means to justify his selfish and evil intentions. In his attempt to quote Psalm 91:11, he failed to quote the psalmist’s words correctly. When he said, ‘He shall give his angels charge concerning thee,’ he left out the important part of the scripture that pointed to the Heavenly Father as a refuge

and strength to our Lord Jesus, and also for his consecrated people, which said, “to keep thee in all thy ways.”

THE THIRD TEMPTATION

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—Matt. 4:8-10

Jesus knew that he had come into the world in fulfillment of the Father’s ultimate plan to rescue the human family from sin and death. He also knew that he must die as a ransom price to save mankind, and he quickly turned Satan away from diverting that Divine purpose. “Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” (vs. 11) In Luke’s account, he wrote, “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.” (Luke 4:13) Truly, the grace and power of the Heavenly Father was with Jesus as a refuge and strength, and a very present help in his time of need.

SEED OF THE SERPENT

Jesus said that those who were stirred to jealousy and hatred toward him were acting in accordance with the will of Satan. He told them, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh

of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44) When speaking about Satan, the Apostle Paul referred to him as the “god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4), and admonished the child of God to renounce the “hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” (vs. 2) The apostle wrote concerning those who continue to walk in the ways of darkness—“If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost [perishing].” (vs. 3) We are encouraged to remain faithful to the written Word of God, and we have the blessed assurance that he will be our refuge and strength and an ever present help when we need him.

MOCKING THE SPIRIT

On the Day of Pentecost, the waiting disciples of the early church were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit. This mighty power of God was manifest to those who were gathered as “cloven tongues” of fire that sat upon each one of them, and the disciples began to speak with “tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4) We read that the group was confounded because every man heard the various tongues “in his own language.”—vss. 5,6

Some among the multitude who had also gathered began to doubt the wonderful working power of God. “They were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.” (vss. 12,13) The apostle then rose to defend the glory of God and the special gift that had come to

them from him. “Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.”—vss. 14,15

THE SPIRIT POURED OUT

Peter was directing his words toward Satan’s seed, those who were charging that they were all drunk. The apostle also identified the event as taking place at the third hour of the day, a time when it was unlikely that such behavior would occur. He then explained to them, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel [2:28-32]; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:16,17) These words foretold the time when the future kingdom of Christ would be established over all the earth, and the power of the Holy Spirit of God would bless them richly with truth and the opportunity of life rights under the administration of justice and mercy toward all.

Peter, continuing to read from Joel’s prophecy, then quoted, “On my servants and on my hand-maidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” (vs. 18) This second part of the prophecy points to the present Gospel Age when the Lord’s disciples, and others who would be his followers during this long period of time, are given the Holy Spirit of understanding. This blessing,

provided for the footstep followers of the Master, serves as a marked promise of the Heavenly Father's care for a very special class of believers during a special period of time. We are thus assured that he is our refuge and strength, and a very present help in every time of need.

PRESERVED BY GRACE

The early years of this Gospel Age are clearly marked by Satan's attacks against the Lord's people. When answering the accusations of his countrymen, Stephen said, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy [Spirit]: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."—Acts 7:51-53

Stephen had been a loyal follower of the Master and was a wonderful witness to the power of God's Holy Spirit but, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." (vs. 54) He suffered martyrdom for his faithfulness and there is no doubt that he willingly stood in defense of the Truth while abiding under the promised strength and ever present help of God. "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."—vss. 59,60

(Continued on page 35)

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We note in the scriptural account that the disciples of our Lord were called Christians first in Antioch. (Acts 11:26) "In these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar." (vss. 27,28) It had become very evident that trials and persecutions were to be a part of the Christian's consecrated walk. Those who had taken up their cross to follow the Master must learn to rely upon his strength and readiness to help them be faithful to their new calling in Christ Jesus. Otherwise they could be turned away from their High Calling.

"The disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." (Acts 11:29-12:2) James was another of the Lord's disciples to suffer martyrdom at the hands of his enemies. However, we may be sure that the Father's loving presence was with him.

"Because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." (vs. 3) Herod had thus responded to the wishes of the Jews who quickly pointed to the Apostle Peter too. In so doing, they again identified themselves as the seed and progeny of Satan. As we noted earlier, Jesus told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the

lusts of your father ye will do.” (John 8:44) However, Peter having been set free from Herod’s prison by the powerful hand of God, is an unquestionable evidence of the Father’s ever present help in the apostle’s consecrated walk. In this case, the apostle’s life was spared. Whatever may be the will of God, we are assured of his promised strength and overruling providence toward those who are walking in newness of life.

In the Apostle Paul’s second letter written to Timothy, he implied that his death was imminent. This was written during his second imprisonment at Rome. Reading from this epistle, he says, “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:6-8

The details of the great apostle’s death are not recorded here, but many believe that he very likely suffered martyrdom at the hands of Nero. The Apostle Paul was a tower of strength to the brethren of the early church who were privileged to personally know him. His untiring ministry and spiritual admonitions have been a great blessing to the footstep followers of Jesus throughout this present Gospel Age. There can be no doubt that he was uplifted by the mighty hand of God throughout his consecrated walk as a refuge and strength from the ever present Heavenly Father.

THE GOSPEL AGE

Throughout this present age, Satan has corrupted the truth of the Gospel message and has led the professed people of God into grievous errors of faith and practice. Although he failed to lure Jesus into an alliance with him, he did succeed with the followers of Christ. Contrary to the will of God they joined hands with the kingdoms of this world, and called it Christendom. Paul wrote concerning Satan, “. . . With all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.”—II Thess. 2:10-12, *New American Standard Bible*

The Lord's people have always had to suffer for righteousness sake, but in their trials they have felt our loving Heavenly Father's presence as their refuge and strength. He has never forsaken his own and, behind what may oftentimes seem to be a frowning providence, he surely hides a smiling face toward those who know and love him. His presence has been a compensating source of strength and joy.

As a further assurance of this blessed promise, we read, “Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”—Ps. 91:9-11

END OF THE AGE

Our featured text seems to reflect the foretold time of trouble that would mark the ending of this present age, and our special day in prophecy. Having been given the wonderful assurance of God's promised strength and refuge on our behalf, we also note the psalmist's words, "Therefore will not we fear." (Ps. 46:1-3) This indicates the events that would surround our Lord's Second Presence and, in this connection, we read, "As he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when shall these things will be?' and 'What will be the sign of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?'"—Matt. 24:3, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

In his answer to the disciples, Jesus informed them that it would be a time when men's hearts would fail them for fear, and that there would be great distress of nations with perplexity, and that the sea and the waves would roar and be troubled. (Luke 21:25,26) The end of the present Gospel Age would witness the disintegration of the entire social order, and with ominous threats it would become even more widespread as the end drew near.

We recognize the seriousness of the world's present situation and we can discern the dangers which are now threatening man-made institutions. The symbolic earth is being removed, and the mountains [kingdoms] are being carried into the midst of the sea as foretold long ago. We understand why these developments are causing the people to look ahead with fear to the destruction that is coming upon the world.

ASSURED OF HIS GRACE

The Apostle Peter also assures the Lord's people of the Father's wonderful care over his children. He wrote, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."—II Pet. 1:19

We have been given knowledge and understanding concerning the wonderful plan and purpose of God. The glorious Truth of the Divine plan of the ages is the light that shines in a very dark world. Let us continue to praise our loving Father for his refuge and strength, and his ever present help in every time of trouble. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MARCH 6—"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound."—Philippians 4:11,12 (Z. '03-10 Hymn 110)

MARCH 13—"As many, therefore, as are perfect, should be of this mind; and if in anything you think differently, God will also reveal this to you; But to what we have attained, let us walk by the same line."—Philippians 3:15-17 (*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) (Z. '01-10 Hymn 312A)

MARCH 20—"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—John 8:31,32 (Z. '03-61 Hymn 260)

MARCH 27—"I pray for them . . . that they all may be one . . . that they may be made perfect in one . . . that the world may know that thou hast . . . loved them as thou hast loved me."—John 17:9,20-23 (Z. '03-79 Hymn 165)

Clothed with the Graces of the Spirit

*“Put on therefore,
as the elect of God,
holy and beloved,
bowels of mercies,
kindness,
humbleness of
mind, meekness,
longsuffering.”
—Colossians 3:12*

THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD never visited the brethren at Colosse, as we are told in his epistle to them. “I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” (Col. 2:1) He points

out that the ecclesia had been the fruitage of the ministry of Epaphras. “As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.” (chap. 1:7,8) God had provided the Colossian brethren with the spiritual guidance and assistance that they needed for their Christian growth and development. We read, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that

ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you.”—chap. 4:12,13

APOSTLE PAUL’S EPISTLE

Paul’s message in our featured text is perhaps more clearly understood when considered from the perspective of a different Bible translation. Turning to the Diaglott, we read, “Be clothed, therefore, as Chosen ones of God, beloved Saints, with Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Humility, Meekness, Patient endurance.” (Col. 3:12, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) The thought of the elect child of God being ‘clothed’ with the fruits of the Holy Spirit is more emphatically emphasized in the Diaglott, and will thus serve as a framework for this lesson.

According to our English dictionary, the word ‘clothed’ means to be covered, or clad, with suitable garments. We wear these garments to protect ourselves from the changing seasons and harsh weather conditions, and also to look presentable when we appear before others. However, this temporal covering is not the object of the Apostle Paul’s message to the brethren at Colosse. As we grow in the knowledge of the Truth and develop a deeper appreciation of God’s Word, we realize that the most important adornments that the Lord’s footstep followers are to wear pertain to the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit of God. He points to the need for our being clothed with mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering [patient endurance].

SPIRITUAL ADMONITIONS

The apostle further admonishes, “bearing with each other, and freely forgiving each other, if any

one for some things may have a cause of complaint; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do you forgive. And besides all these things, put on love; it is the bond of the completeness. And let the peace of the Anointed preside in your hearts, for which you were also called in one body; and be thankful.”—Col. 3:13-15, *WED*

When addressing the Colossian brethren, Paul spoke of them as being the ‘Chosen ones’ of God and as ‘beloved Saints.’ The word saints points to those who are being separated out of the world during this present Gospel Age. They are being called by God for a holy purpose as members of the body of Christ. The apostle speaks of their great appreciation for this wonderful privilege and gives worthy advice as to how they may succeed in their High Calling in Christ Jesus.

Concerning the consecrated followers of our Lord Jesus, we note also the Apostle Peter’s words concerning proper and improper apparel. He said, “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”—I Pet. 3:3,4

Peter cautions us that the outward adorning may lead to pride, and it can cause envy and possibly hinder the sacrificial life of the child of God. The ‘hidden man’ that he referred to is the inward, or spiritual, life of the consecrated follower of our Lord Jesus. It is renewed day by day; and this inward life cannot corrupt, decay, or lose value. It

points to the one who has a meek and quiet disposition, and this mark is of the highest value in the sight of God.

CLOTHED WITH MERCY

Considering these adornments that we are admonished to be clothed with, we turn first to the spirit of mercy. Mercy implies having a sense of compassion, and identifies one who is willing to exercise tolerance toward others. The Apostle Paul has used the expression ‘bowels of mercy’ which emphasizes that this grace of the Spirit is something that has great depth and comes from within our innermost self, rather than being shallow or superficial. We learn from God’s Word that he has a merciful character, and from the Gospel of Luke we read, “Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”—Luke 6:35,36

We are urged to offer help and encouragement to others whenever the opportunity may arise. However, we are not to obligate ourselves beyond what would be reasonable, or to an extreme which could injure our spiritual growth and interests. We should never turn away with a deaf ear from those who may be in need, but we are also not to give away that which could impair our own obligations toward our families. We may give a word of encouragement, a kindly look, or a helping hand when difficulties may arise. These may often be valuable and accepted with a deep sense of appreciation.

We should not hope to gain personally when we offer to help someone. We give what we can, not expecting anything in return. We learn that being kind is of utmost importance, even as God is to the unthankful and unbelieving, regardless of their personal feelings towards him. We are to be merciful toward others with the thought ever in mind that we also have imperfections, and understand that our Heavenly Father has made provisions to cover our imperfections in proportion as we show mercy to others.

Where the interests of the Lord's cause may be involved, it is our duty to act in defense of the Truth, but we are to avoid doing that which might reflect our own personal feelings. We read, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart." (Prov. 3:3) Let us be mindful that mercy takes into consideration the weaknesses, failings, and sufferings of others and should be rendered with sincerity, purity, and uprightness when dealing with others, especially with our brethren. Jesus gave us good advice along this line when he said, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."—Luke 6:37

We are told to bind mercy and truth about our neck, as jewels and ornaments of character for all others to see, and to write them upon the tables of our heart. Writing the Divine character into our hearts in place of the old character, enables us to progress as faithful members of the body and bride of our beloved Lord Jesus. Mercy and truth reflect the character of our Father just as a beautiful gem reflects the glorious light.

One of the four cardinal attributes of our Heavenly Father is justice. We know that he is a God of justice, and we are assured in his Word that, coupled with justice, there is always the matter of mercy. In this connection, it is written, "Justice and judgment are the habitation [establishment, *Marginal Translation*] of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." (Ps. 89:14) Therefore, as we seek to imitate God, let us not think to do so only by imitating his justice, but also by tempering justice with mercy even as he does. We are able only to judge the acts we see in another person. However, God can judge the motive, or the intention, of the heart.

As New Creatures in Christ Jesus, we are not competent to be judges of someone else. We cannot fully comprehend and appreciate the Divine law of love that governs all, and it is quite evident that few can read their own hearts unerringly. We do not know what the thoughts or actions of others may be, and should be careful to give them credit for any good motives they may claim to have. We should not condemn another person because only the Lord knows how to judge their true heart motives. Rather, we should note our own weaknesses and imperfections, and realize how very much we need our Heavenly Father's guidance and help. We thus desire to follow the same rule of love and mercy towards our fellowman, and be willing to forgive others, because heart forgiveness will leave no sting, no animosity, and no grudge. Forgiveness and good will toward all should be the only feeling that we harbor in our hearts, no matter how seriously we may have been trespassed against. The

very basis of Christian principle is love, sympathy, and forgiveness of the faults of others. If we can forgive others for their daily shortcomings, then we also can be forgiven in turn by our loving Heavenly Father. This is the golden rule.

CLOTHED WITH KINDNESS

Kindness identifies one who has a sympathetic and gentle nature. This is another important fruitage of the Holy Spirit, and it is very closely related to mercy. We are admonished to show forth this mark of Christian character development at every opportunity. There is no excuse for any of us to be unkind toward someone else, and the Apostle Paul has so advised. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Eph. 4:31,32) Kindness is thus emphasized as one of the chief elements of love.

Our Heavenly Father is kind toward those who are unthankful, and he is also just toward those who act unjustly. We, too, should always strive to put the kindest interpretation on the words, the actions, and the natural tendencies of one another. This means that we should do unto others as we would like to have them do unto us. By following this golden rule, we learn that it is much better to show kindness and to be a peacemaker than to be a strife maker. Love for our brethren should always be the blessed tie that binds us together and marks our degree of growth in the principles of true Christian grace.

This is manifest when speaking a kind word sympathetically and lovingly, and showing an interest in our brethren at a time when they may be experiencing difficulties. Little acts of kindness should also be extended even to our enemies, so that we might better cultivate this wonderful fruit of the Holy Spirit. We are to be sympathetic and willing to suffer one for another. We learn that kindness and forgiveness must come from our heart, and should be extended even before it is asked for, and as freely as possible.

Concerning a certain occasion, it is recorded, "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matt. 18:21) We appreciate our Lord's loving reply to the apostle. "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."—vs. 22

The influence upon our hearts and lives, when we freely and openly forgive someone who has transgressed against us, will show growth in the wonderful ways of God. The trespasses of others that may be turned against us are nothing compared to our obligations to the Lord. We must forgive each other, because in many things we all fail, and share the same fleshly bodies together with their imperfections, and shortcomings. The larger our attainment of forgiveness, the more pleasing we will be in the Father's sight. Our forgiveness is based on our capacity to forgive others. The merit of Christ's sacrifice is the basis for our own forgiveness through the merit of Jesus' blood. When we realize our own weaknesses it makes us sympathetic with all others. With indebtedness to the Lord for the forgiveness

of our own sins, the more we should seek to copy his glorious character, realizing how beautifully his righteousness is manifested.

God is spoken of as being merciful and kind, and this is recorded in many scriptures. We read, "Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil." (Joel 2:13) Again we read, "He prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." (Jon. 4:2) Let us also strive to be more Christlike in this wonderful grace of the Spirit.

CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY

Humility is the opposite of pride, and describes someone who is low in self-esteem. We are told that we must be clothed with this wonderful disposition. In this connection, the Apostle Peter wrote, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (I Pet. 5:5,6) James also wrote, "He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:6,7) Further to this, he said,

“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”—vs. 10

Humility includes submitting ourselves as far as possible to every reasonable regulation of the country in which we live, and yet have sufficient courage to stand by our conscience that it not be violated. The Spirit of a sound mind dictates that we determine and prove all things according to the Word of God. It means being subject to the Lord and his every ordinance. We should be willing to listen to the humblest of the flock, and be willing to give up our own preferences so far as our best judgment and conscience will permit.

We are to harmoniously cooperate together as one body in humility and meekness, building one another up in love and all of the Christian graces, while striving for the general advancement of the work of the Lord. Sometimes, because all are anxious to serve and are exercising their own independent feelings, there may be different plans and arrangements to consider in the various ecclesias. At times, it may take patience, forbearance, and love on the part of all concerned. Humility must be very childlike, and should dictate that our will never opposes or thwarts the will of God being done in us.

The spirit of humble-mindedness should manifest itself in all things. Our Lord strongly disapproves of pride, and he resists those who harbor it. It is written, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov. 16:18) The self-seeking and proud in spirit could not be trusted by the Lord in any high position, therefore only the humble will share with him in the future inheritance of his kingdom of truth and righteousness.

We must be careful to not only exercise humility, but to always be aware of this particular grace of the Spirit. We must strive to perfect the humbleness of character on a daily basis, and always pray to our Heavenly Father that he might provide us with experiences to develop this worthy grace.

It was pride that led to Satan's choice and course, and the Scriptures are very plain in revealing his ultimate destiny. We read, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer [O day star, *Marginal Translation*], son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell [the grave], to the sides of the pit."—Isa. 14:12-15

The Lord bestows his blessings upon the humble-minded and those who manifest a humble disposition. He gives good things to those who are poor in spirit—the penitent, the meek, the teachable, and the submissive. Jesus taught, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted." (Matt. 23:12) Jesus humbled himself, and is now exalted to the very position to which Satan, through pride and ambition, had so strongly aspired. Jesus never took credit for the things that his Heavenly Father had created and provided. "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way."—Ps. 25:9

When coming to God's Word, it is important to remember that our attitude should be that of the

student and not of the teacher. Putting one's self last is another very important lesson, and we as members of his body are also learning. We are admonished to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace when we come together to study the Divine Word, and to help one another as fellow members of the body of Christ.

The Scriptures provide many examples of humility. Among them we note, "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty; and before honour is humility." (Prov. 18:12) The Apostle Paul, using our Lord Jesus as an example, also said, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 2:3-5

Self-glorification and striving to be important are the greatest enemies to the Spirit of the Lord, and to the attainment of his wonderful blessing. Submitting ourselves to be humble is an indication of true faith, not in ourselves but as evidence of the watch-care of our Heavenly Father and his written Word. When we consider the words in the opening passage of the Lord's Prayer, we are impressed with the fact that our Lord Jesus sought first his Father's will and purpose on every occasion. We are familiar with the words in which he thus instructed us. "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:9,10) All of our strength comes from God, from the simple act of breathing in the breath of life, to the words that proceed from our mouths. All is possible

only by the power and providence of our loving and eternal Father in heaven. This is a sobering thought and realization, especially when we consider the marvelous works accomplished by our Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry.

As a group of the Lord's people living during the closing years of the present Gospel Age, we must be ever alert to his providence, and pray daily that we be not taken into error because of pride or selfishness. This does not mean that we should ignore our talents and abilities, but rather that we should learn to use them as humbly and as faithfully as possible.

The good qualities that others may possess are what we are encouraged to look for, rather than focusing on our own presumed accomplishments. If one of our brethren possesses a quality of character that outshines one of our own, we should be ready and willing to recognize their spiritual growth and rejoice with them. If we cannot speak well of our brother, we are not to speak evil of him. If we look at our own imperfections and compare them with the good qualities of others we shall find ourselves more and more appreciative of them.

God did not seek to force his mind upon Christ, nor is he seeking to force it upon us. Jesus willingly made himself of no reputation and became poor. Our Lord gave up his former glory and honor when he emptied himself and stooped from his high and glorious position at his Father's hand. As the Logos, he humbled himself to take a lower nature, and to do a work that would involve humiliation, pain, and suffering. The Master became a man, was tried and tempted like we are, and experienced the physical

strain of becoming weary, hungry, and sorrowful. In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul wrote concerning Jesus' earthly ministry. He noted, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."—Heb. 5:7-9

Jesus gave his life in sacrificial death to satisfy the requirements of justice, and in doing so he set an example for us to follow. Paul again said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (II Cor. 8:9) We know that our Lord did not merely pretend to be poor, but that he actually became poor as we read. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14) He humbled himself under the mighty hand of his Father.

CLOTHED WITH MEEKNESS

To be meek describes one who endures injury with patience and without resentment. Our Lord, as the Master teacher, spoke of meekness and the possession of a quiet spirit. He spoke of them as marks of Christian growth, and said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall

find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30) This scripture refers to those who are striving to know and serve our loving Heavenly Father. It speaks to those who are heavy laden, despairing, and the brokenhearted. However, these have the advantage that their condition is favorable to the development of the wonderful working Spirit of our Lord.

The footstep followers of our Lord during the present time may occasionally become weary and discouraged with their imperfections, weaknesses of the flesh, and frailties of various kinds. But it is only when earthly hopes become blighted that we learn to reach out to the Lord and seek his providential strength, and receive comfort and blessing from his written Word of Truth. The child of God has peace and rest of mind through the obtaining of a knowledge of God’s plan and his character. The secret of this rest is in the possession of a meek and quiet spirit. Only those who have meekness and lowliness of heart are prepared to humble themselves, acknowledge their own unworthiness, and their need for help. They receive the Lord’s grace and assistance and are strengthened by it.

God has always chosen the meek to carry forward his plans and purpose, and has used them for every great work. This is particularly true in connection with our Lord Jesus’ earthly ministry, but it also holds true with the prophets of old, the Ancient Worthies, the twelve apostles, and others whom he has chosen. It is also true concerning the followers of Jesus during the present Gospel Age. These also strive to set aside their own will and have taken upon themselves the yoke of the Father’s will. We

have our Lord's assurance that we will not be burdened with more than we can bear, and that he will always be with us as the great burden-bearer, assisting us in every step of our consecrated walk.

Some are prone to incorrectly associate meekness with weakness. This may come about when someone is not firm when making decisions or dealing with a certain problem. Those of the world do not have respect for a meek person. Yet, Jesus, who was meek and lowly of heart, invites us to learn of him, and we appreciate the words that he spoke. On one occasion, we read, "Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. 11:25,26) Jesus is here showing his love and appreciation for the Father's great wisdom by not allowing any but those who possess the proper heart condition to see and more clearly understand the High Calling of the church during the present Gospel Age.

The world's view of the wise and the prudent class who are being called during this age is no doubt seen as a life of failure. The Lord's people are seldom seen among the honored and successful class, whether in business, political, or other positions. The word meekness suggests a mild disposition and identifies someone who is not aggressive. When we study our Lord Jesus' life and ministry, we are impressed with the fact that he possessed a meek and quiet spirit and we want to imitate his spirit. In this way, we learn to know the Father as Jesus said. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father:

and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”—Matt. 11:27

How blessed we are to learn that the Son has chosen to reveal the Father to us who are pupils in the school of Christ during this Gospel Age. If it pleased the Lord to make known to us certain features of his glorious purposes, it would be most disrespectful on our part to not feel a deep sense of interest in his plans and purposes and seek to know him. The followers of Christ thus show evidence of having a meek and quiet spirit when they are teachable.

CLOTHED WITH LONGSUFFERING

Longsuffering pertains to someone who endures patiently, and characterizes that quality of self-restraint although confronted with provocation, who is not hasty and does not retaliate. It is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy. It is taken from the Greek word meaning forbearance or patience, and as was previously noted, is translated “patient endurance” in the *Diaglott* translation.

In the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, he wrote, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” (Heb. 6:10,11) After having acknowledged their diligent service to our loving God, the apostle then gave them further counsel and encouragement. “That ye be not slothful, but followers

of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” (vs. 12) Paul stressed that patience was necessary, and used the same word that is translated “longsuffering” in our featured text. They were thus encouraged to exercise faith and patient endurance in the blessed promises of God.

The apostle also used this word when writing to the brethren at Galatia. In his letter, he said, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance.” (Gal. 5:22,23) Again he stressed the need for longsuffering [patient endurance]. In Paul’s letter to the brethren at Ephesus, he also said, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering [patient endurance], forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:1-3) These are important admonitions from the great apostle to greater determination in making our calling and election sure. It will surely require longsuffering in our walk in newness of life, and as we strive to be faithful unto death.

The Apostle Peter also said, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering [patient endurance] of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you.”—II Pet. 3:13-15

CONCLUSION

When we arise in the morning and dress ourselves for the new day at hand, we may sometimes ask ourselves whether we have dressed appropriately. More importantly, however, we must ever keep in mind the apostle's admonitions concerning how we have clothed ourselves spiritually for the day. In the sight of our eternal and loving Heavenly Father, that which is of the most importance to us concerns the adornment of our Christian characters with the fruits and graces of his Holy Spirit.

Having thus considered our responsibilities as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, we should proceed diligently, and strive to put on mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering to properly prepare ourselves for a position in the future kingdom of truth and righteousness under our Lord Jesus. May we all be inspired to greater faithfulness and endurance regarding our wonderful High Calling in Christ Jesus. ■



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South America Report

Bro. Rafael Lopez

GREETINGS TO ALL of you from all of us here in Medellin, Columbia, South America. It is with pleasure that we wish to send to you a report of our activities in relation to the Truth, and at the same time to express our warm appreciation to the Dawn brethren for their prayers and spiritual help, as well as with the Spanish Dawn and other literature.



Bro. Rafael Lopez

Perhaps you know that Columbia has been, for many years, a land of violence and turmoil. Unfortunately, the end does not appear to be in sight. Columbia is a beautiful country, and very rich in tropical fruits, flowers, and the second largest producer of coffee in the world. Those of us who live in this country rely on the Lord for his loving care and protection.

Most of us live in the city of Medellin, which is the second largest city in Columbia. For many years, we studied the Bible and were affiliated with religious organizations in the nominal system. Due to their false teachings and philosophies, we became confused and discouraged. The best we could do was to try to understand to the best of our abilities what we were

reading. However, there were still many things which were not clear to us. We continually prayed to the Lord and he has answered our prayers. By the providence of our Heavenly Father, we came upon a copy of the Spanish *Dawn* (*El Alba*), printed by the Dawn Bible Students in the United States. We very quickly contacted the Dawn, requesting literature. Late in 1996, Bro. Joseph Panucci, along with another brother, came to Columbia to visit us and, by the grace of God, many things were made clear to us. Both brothers also offered us great encouragement.

Since that time, we have had our study meetings two times a week with two groups of brethren that



Bible Students Ecclesia
Medallin, Columbia, So. America

are located in two different locations of the city. In addition to Bible studies, we also review the articles that are presented each month in

the Spanish *Dawn* (*El Alba*). The articles are a help to us in understanding the teachings of the Bible.

One Bible student class is located in the zone of Belen and the other in Envigada. There are some people who live in the zone of Rionegro who are interested in the Truth and we visit them once a week. Two months ago I visited individuals who are interested in the Truth in the city of Monteria, which is a distance of eight hours by bus. By the grace of our Heavenly Father, we clarified many doctrinal points for them. I also promised them that, if it is the Lord's

will, I will visit them again. Also, as soon as they open a post office box, we will have the Spanish *Dawn* and other Biblical literature sent to them.

During the spring of 2007, we were blessed to have Bro. Fernando Duene from the Dawn office in Trujillo, Peru, visit our ecclesia. He stayed for eight days, during which time we discussed many points related to the Truth, and the best ways to promote the Truth in this part of the world. His ministry was a great blessing to us. Along with Bro. Fernando, we visited some isolated people who have expressed interest in the Truth who reside in the Rionero region.

In this country, there are many people who are interested in the Truth, but it is difficult to travel and visit them especially at night because of the terrible and continued violence in the country. Every day there are killings in the cities in which we live, and we must rely on the Lord's providence for his care and protection.

For those of us who live here, it is as it was in the days of Noah. (Gen. 6:11,12; Matt. 24:37-39) The Apostle Paul, in II Timothy 3:1, describes the last days of this evil world as "perilous times," but we stand with the Lord's help and our dear Master on our side. We will continue to stand firm in our vocation and, in the meantime, we will continue to preach the message of Truth in our part of the world. This we do in obedience to the command that our Lord gave us as it is recorded in Matthew 24:14.

With much love we send our Christian greetings to all of our dear brethren in the United States. Also, we express our sincere appreciation to the Dawn for sending Bro. Panucci to Columbia to help us. ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

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

T. Alexander

New York, NY March 30

B. Eckholt

New York, NY March 30

O. B. Elbert

Orlando, FL March 8-10

R. Gorecki

Orlando, FL March 8-10

L. Griehs

Orlando, FL March 8-10

Albuquerque, NM 21-23

New York, NY 30

E. Kalinski

Orlando, FL March 8-10

E. Kuenzli

Columbus, OH March 22,23

B. Montague

New York, NY March 30

D. Rice

Orlando, FL March 8-10

T. Ruggirello

Albuquerque, NM March 21-23

R. Suraci

Orlando, FL March 8-10

G. Tabac

Columbus, OH March 22,23

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 Esther Bruer, San Diego, CA—September 6.

Sister Lois Breese, Seattle, WA—January 21. Age, 93

Sister Deborah (Balko) Sterner, Woodstock, VA—January 22. Age, 56

Sister Lou Brown, Portland, OR—January 23. Age, 93

Brother Virgil Strickland, Louisville, AL—February 3.
Age, 83

CONVENTIONS

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

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 8,9—Holiday Inn, US Hwy 49 at Interstate 10. Contact M. Costelli, 1606 Cypress Lane, Gulfport, MS 39507

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 8,9,10—Hilton Orlando Altamonte Springs, 350 S. North Lake Blvd., Altamonte Springs, FL 32701. Contact S. Jeuck, 471 Kentia Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 834-7592

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, March 21,22,23—Wyndham Hotel Albuquerque, 2910 Yale Blvd. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Phone: (505) 268-8170

COLUMBUS PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 22,23—Ramada Inn East (Airport), 4801 E. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43213. Phone: (614) 861-0321. Contact T. Alexander, 3278 Foxcroft Drive, Lewis Center, OH 43035. Phone: (614) 519-8282

NEW YORK SPRING CONVENTION, March 30—Doubletree Hotel, Mahway, NJ. Contact D. Szybinski. Phone: (212) 998-2095

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5,6—Macomb Community College, 14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, MI 48088. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588

FRESNO PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5,6—Vagabond Inn Executive, 2141 N. Parkway Drive, Fresno, CA 93705. Contact B. Wilson, 2103 N. Price Avenue, #112, Fresno, CA 93705. Phone: (559) 255-2241

GREATER NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 6—Bayview Lodge, Society Road, East Lyme, CT. Contact V. Grillo. Phone: (860) 823-7099

PITTSBURGH SPRING CONVENTION, April 20—Greentree Parkway Center Best Western Inn. Contact C. Byrd. Phone: (412) 734-4702

BOISE CONVENTION, April 25,26,27—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street, Boise, ID. Please contact by April 4, D. Allers, 7558 W. Hathaway Lane, Boise, ID 83714. Phone: (208) 375-6873

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 4—Embassy Suites Hotel, 9300 Baymeadows Road, Jacksonville, FL 32256. Phone: (904) 731-3555. Contact E. Blicharz. Phone: (407) 260-8083

BUFFALO CONVENTION, May 17,18—Holiday Inn, 5440 Camp Road, Hamburg, NY 14075. Contact R. Morin. Phone: (585) 322-7459

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 24,25,26—Holiday Inn, 150 E. Angeleno, Burbank, CA 91502. Contact R. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253

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

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

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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