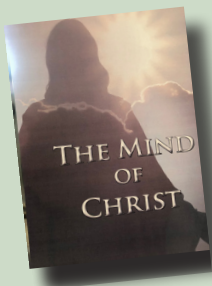




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NOVEMBER 2023



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Artificial Intelligence versus the Mind of God

*“O the depth of the
riches both of
the wisdom and
knowledge of God!
how unsearchable
are his judgments,
and his ways past
finding out! For
who hath known
the mind of the
Lord? or who
hath been
his counsellor?”*
—Romans 11:33,34

ONE OF THE MOST DIS-
cussed topics in today’s world
of technology is Artificial
Intelligence, often referred
to simply by its initials “AI.”
Briefly stated, Artificial Intel-
ligence is defined as the abil-
ity of machines to perform
tasks that are typically asso-
ciated with human thinking
and intellect. Whether we
realize it or not, most of us are
users of AI in some limited

way. When we search the Internet, watch a YouTube
video, shop on Amazon, use voice recognition tools
such as Siri and Alexa, or operate a self-driving car,

we are often influenced, unknowingly perhaps, by Artificial Intelligence.

Such uses, as well as others, can prove to be of assistance to people in today's technology-driven world. However, there are limitations to the value and validity of Artificial Intelligence applications. These limitations stem primarily from the fact that, ultimately, humans are responsible for the decisions made by AI systems. Are these decisions fair, ethical, transparent, and accountable? Humans must take responsibility for any "unintended consequences" from AI systems' failures. In many cases, such shortcomings of an AI application may require only minor adjustments. However, in a worst-case scenario, an AI failure could potentially be catastrophic for an individual or for the masses.

At a more detailed level, the limitations of Artificial Intelligence can best be identified in three ways. First, an AI system, developed and "trained" by humans, is only as good as the initial data it is given to act as its training. AI decisions and actions can be biased or flawed if the data they are provided by their human trainers is likewise biased or flawed. Second, AI lacks emotional intelligence since it cannot factor human emotions, sentiments and mindsets into its decision-making. Third, although organizations are increasingly aware of the need of adopting AI innovation in order to stay up to date with technology, they often fail to approach it from a strategic, business-model, point of view.

The bottom line regarding Artificial Intelligence is that, given the limited and often faulty nature of human reasoning in this present sinful world, faith in the benefits of AI comes with a host of restrictions

and cautions. On the other hand, faith in the Almighty God of the Bible, the Creator of the universe, should be unwavering and limitless. God's supreme intelligence, as well as his perfect character in the use of that intelligence, are not only far above that of any AI application, but also far superior to any human mind which has designed these systems.

THERE IS A GOD

Many people believe that there is a God, although the vast majority of these entertain no definite ideas concerning him and what his designs for his human creation might be. No matter what form it might take, however, in man's heart and mind there usually lingers the desire to worship a higher power.

An intelligent first cause, as opposed to mere chance, is the only reasonable basis behind all creation. The fact of the existence of a God with supreme intelligence is seen in the infinite design of this great universe, including our solar system and man's home, planet Earth. It is seen also in organic and inorganic matter, and in the relationship of the two. It is seen in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, and in the food we eat. Man was not created for the air, nor for the food. These, rather, were designed and prepared for man long before he was created. What a loving and intelligent design this was on the part of an all-wise God and Creator!

The God whom we worship, the God of the Bible, is presented to us everywhere, and on every page of his Word, as a personal God. He has a personality. The Bible reveals that our Heavenly Father thinks, feels, and wills. The fact that he thinks shows that he has an intellect. The fact that he feels proves that he has

sensibilities; and the fact that he wills means that he has character and acts consistently therewith.

Concerning God's intellect, the Scriptures declare, "The LORD God of gods, he knoweth." (Josh. 22:22; Ps. 44:21; Acts 15:18) God, whom we worship, also has sensibilities. He has pity. He loves. (Ps. 103:13) In addition, he exercises his will. Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."—Luke 11:2

God works, but always according to "the counsel of his own will." (Eph. 1:11) He has never found it necessary to consult any of his creatures as to what he should do, or how. This is a fact we might well consider, for we are sometimes prone, in our prayers, to advise God what he ought to do. It is fortunate for all his creatures that he does not take their counsel into consideration.

The Scriptures reveal that originally God alone possessed immortality, which is one of the qualities of a divine being, and when Jesus was raised from the dead the divine nature was bestowed upon him. (I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; Phil. 2:9-11) A good definition of immortality is the one given by Jesus when he said, "As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."—John 5:26

Eternity has to do with existence. God is said to be the first: "I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." (Isa. 44:6) The psalmist testified, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (Ps. 90:2) The Creator will continue to remain the Supreme Being in all his great universe. He has said, "My glory will I not give to another."—Isa. 42:8

THE SELF-SUFFICIENT ONE

Artificial Intelligence is not self-sufficient. It needs thousands, perhaps millions, of pieces of information and algorithms fed into it by its human creators before it can perform any task worthy of mention. The God revealed to us in the Bible, in his very nature is self-sufficient and fully intuitive. He needs no outside assistance or guidance to add to his own personal intelligence. (Acts 17:24,25) He not only does not need any outside help, but he continually bestows his gifts upon his creation. He is the giver of every good and perfect gift.—James 1:17

God is omnipotent. This means he has all power, authority and control. Nevertheless he reveals to us that he has placed certain limits upon his omnipotence. We are told in Hebrews 6:18 that God cannot lie, and in II Timothy 2:13 that he cannot deny himself. In James 1:13 we are informed that God is not tempted by evil. He is a holy and righteous God, and he will not use his power in any way which will violate his other attributes of justice, wisdom and love.

The God of the Bible is the great and supreme architect of all that exists now or that ever will exist in the future, “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.” (Isa. 46:10) He planned it all according to “the counsel of his own will.” (Eph. 1:11) In all that eternity of the past, when he was alone, he might well have been formulating plans and purposes which will require the eternity of the future to accomplish. Our finite minds stagger as we try, even in a small way, to comprehend the God

of eternity and his eternal works. We and all the hosts of heaven are but as little children playing with minute grains of sand on the shores of the ocean of eternity, where before our startled imagination spread the boundless purposes of our God, which are fathomless and immeasurable.

GOD IS OMNISCIENT

Omniscience is defined as the knowledge of all things, and God possesses such knowledge. He perceives all things; he remembers all things. We are glad, however, that associated with the memory of all things he has given us the assurance that there are some things he elects to forget. This, too, is a quality of omniscience. For example, concerning Israel under the New Covenant which he has promised to make with them, God's promise is that their "sin" and "iniquity" he will remember "no more," because Christ's blood has become the basis for the forgiveness of sins.—Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:12; 9:12-28

We are told that all things are naked and revealed before God. (Heb. 4:13) In his perceptive and intuitive powers he has an aptitude for calculation, order, color, weight, size, form, detail, time, place, harmony, construction, beauty, and sublimity. All that he has ever contemplated and thought upon, and all that he will yet envision in the ages of the future, God has the ability to remember to all eternity!

Think of the infinite mind that was able to design everything which exists in his great universe—in the spirit world and in the material world. All are the products of his wisdom and his power, and all are designed in keeping with his justice and his

love. God asked his servant Job, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?”—Job 38:4-6

God also has the quality of omnipresence. It is not necessary for him to literally travel, even if instantly, from one part of the universe to another in order to witness what is happening. Rather, he is able to “see” and “hear” everything, everywhere in his vast domain at all times. (Jer. 23:23,24; Ps. 139:2-12) From this standpoint we are always in the presence of God. How faith-strengthening that should be!

The *Ferrar Fenton Bible* translates Isaiah 43:13, “I existed before time itself.” There was no need for the measurement of time, at least from our limited human conception, when God was alone. However, with the beginning of creation, a unit of value with respect to duration became essential, and God is an exact timekeeper. He is carrying out his plans according to a definite schedule. We are not fully able to understand every aspect of that schedule, for he has not revealed it to us in every detail. When God’s time clock strikes, however, he moves, regardless of who may stand still, or who work in opposition.

In Proverbs 8:22, the *New Living Translation* quotes God’s only begotten Son—Jesus in his pre-human existence—speak of the time when he and the Creator were alone together, saying, “The LORD formed me from the beginning, before he created anything else.” How wonderful to think that when the great Architect and his Son began to execute

the work of creation, they first pushed back the walls of nothingness and created space! Then, out of God's infinite wisdom and great power, he and his faithful Son began to fill the void of space with the constellations of the heavens—galaxies, stars, planets—throughout the entire universe.

GOD'S PLAN REVEALS HIS GLORY

The psalmist wrote, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." (Ps. 19:1,2) Then in the seventh verse David added, "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Thus, while we are able to comprehend something of the glory of the Creator by noting the grandeur of his creative works, it is when we go to his Word and consider the "testimony" of his bountiful designs toward his human creation that we acquire our most intimate knowledge of his glorious character.

God created man in his own image, perfect, and fully able to measure up to the just requirements of his law. (Gen. 1:26) It was eminently proper that the Creator should exact absolute obedience on the part of his intelligent creatures. Since they disobeyed their Creator's law, it was proper and equitable that they be condemned to death, seeing as he had clearly forewarned Adam concerning the penalty for disobedience.—Gen. 2:16,17

The Creator does not cease here, however, with the revelation of his glorious character. Through his divine purpose for human recovery from sin and death his love is displayed: "God so loved the

world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) Jesus came to redeem man from death, and offered himself as a “ransom [Greek: corresponding price] for all.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) To do this, Jesus poured out his own soul unto death, giving his perfect human life for the forfeited perfect life of Adam, who had disobeyed. (Isa. 53:12; Mark 10:45) “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,” that is, all will be given the opportunity to gain everlasting life in Christ’s kingdom.—I Cor. 15:21,22

Beyond this, the full blaze of God’s glory is finally demonstrated through utilizing his power in the resurrection of the dead. The outstanding demonstration of this has already been given, although as yet recognized and fully believed only by a few. This was the resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead. The true followers of Jesus, those who have absolute confidence in the Word of the Lord and its testimony concerning the resurrection, have seen this marvelous manifestation of God’s glory.—I Cor. 15:3,4,20-22; Acts 2:32; 17:31

The Apostle Paul wrote that “Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,” meaning that this unprecedented use of divine power displayed the glory of God, even as all the works of creation “declare” his glory. (Rom. 6:4) The glory of God is likewise displayed in the “first resurrection” of the church of Christ. (Rev. 20:6) Ultimately, all mankind will recognize this evidence of the Creator’s glory.—John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15

Coming even closer to the hearts of the human race, as evidence of the glory of God, will be the resurrection of all mankind from the sleep of death. Jesus stated to Martha while preparing to awaken her brother Lazarus from death, “Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”—John 11:40

Habakkuk 2:14, a wonderful prophecy depicting the results of the reign of Christ in the earth, reads, “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” The Scriptures clearly reveal that one of the principal objectives of Christ’s reign is the restoration of the dead to life, and it may well be that the accomplishment of this by divine power will be one of the mighty works of that kingdom which will contribute to filling the earth with God’s glory.

In summary, God’s mind and intelligence are infinitely superior to that of any human being, to say nothing of any human created form of Artificial Intelligence. Thus, we do well to look to him for guidance and direction in all of life’s affairs. We note this powerful Scripture: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”—Isa. 55:8,9

Thanks be to God that there neither has been, nor ever will be, any “unintended consequences” from the results of divine intelligence. It is based upon the Creator’s four supreme and unwavering character attributes: his foundation of justice, his infinite wisdom, his boundless love, and his almighty power. Indeed, “Faith can firmly trust him, come what may!” ■

The Gospel Open to Gentiles

Key Verses: *“After a lengthy debate, Peter stood up and told them, Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose me to be the one among you through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows everyone’s heart, showed them he approved by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.”*

*—Acts 15:7,8,
International
Standard Version*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 15:1-21

THE OPPORTUNITY OF becoming part of the body of Christ was first offered to Israel. However, as a nation they failed to accept Jesus as their king. Nevertheless, a remnant of Jews believed Jesus was the promised Messiah. (John 1:11,12) Therefore, beginning with the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon his Jewish footstep followers.

It was God’s will that the opportunity of becoming part of the body of Christ would also be extended to Gentiles. After returning from a missionary trip, Paul and Barnabas shared the results of their efforts with the brethren at Antioch. (Acts 14:26-28) While there, “certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no

small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.”—Acts 15:1,2

Their meeting with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem was to clarify whether believers, who were Gentiles, were required to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses. (vss. 3-6) Following a discussion on the matter, Peter addressed the attendees at this conference. He affirmed that God did not differentiate among believers who were fully devoted to him and had received the Holy Spirit, regardless of their background or origin.—vss. 7-11

As a result of this discussion, the Apostles and elders determined that Gentile converts did not need to be circumcised according to the Jewish Law, and only recommended and agreed that they abstain from drinking blood, from sexual immorality, from eating things that had been strangled, and from partaking of food that had been offered to idols. Additionally, a letter of greeting, along with the result of the deliberations in Jerusalem was sent to the brethren in Antioch.—vss. 11-30

There is no Jerusalem conference today for brethren to have differences discussed and resolved in an open hearing which includes apostles. Nevertheless, an appreciation that all who have been baptized into Christ's death, regardless of background, language, ethnicity, or gender, are part of Abraham's seed should greatly assist in the resolution of differences among brethren, if a spirit of seeking God's will prevails.

Paul wrote, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. ... For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”—Gal. 3:16,26-28 ■

Love Fulfills the Law

Key Verse: *“Do not owe anyone anything—except to love one another.*

For the one who loves another has fulfilled the Law.”

*—Romans 13:8,
International
Standard Version*

Selected Scriptures:
*Romans 13:8-10;
I Corinthians 13:1-13*

—Rom. 3:20-24

Elsewhere, Paul pointed out that it was God’s plan from the beginning to deal with his people by faith. (Gal. 3:7-9) Based upon the arguments set forth in the first eleven chapters of the book of Romans, Paul begins chapter twelve by stating, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

In our Key Verse, Paul emphasizes the need “to love one another.” Jesus stressed the importance of this, stating “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

IN THE APOSTLE PAUL’S day, some Jews who converted to follow Christ were insisting that keeping various features of the Mosaic Law was a condition of living in Christ. Paul refuted this error, explaining that no Jew had received life under the Law, which proved that all were sinners and in need of a redeemer. Furthermore, Paul admonished that faith in Christ was the only way to be freed from sin and to gain life.

(John 15:12-14) In these verses the word “love” is a translation of the Greek word *agape*.

In the New Testament there are two different Greek words—*phileo* and *agape*—which have been translated as the word “love.” *Phileo* love is “brotherly love,” or “affection,” and is often based upon an existing relationship or friendship.

Agape love is the highest form of love, which the Scriptures describe as being a God-like, selfless love. (I John 4:8-12) “God so loved [*agape*] the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” (John 3:16) The love prompting our redemption was completely selfless on God’s part. He had not wronged his creature in the sentence of death; nor had man ever done anything for his Creator which could put him under obligation to restore life to his human creation. God’s love prompting to our redemption was divine, selfless, *agape* love.

In Paul’s lesson on love, recorded in I Corinthians chapter 13, he describes it with these words: “Love [*agape*] is always patient ... always kind ... never envious or arrogant with pride. Nor ... conceited ... never rude ... never thinks just of herself or ever gets annoyed ... never is resentful ... never glad with sin ... always glad to side with truth, and pleased that truth will win. She bears up under everything; believes the best in all; there is no limit to her hope, and never will she fall. Love never fails.”—I Cor. 13:4-8, *ISV*

The concluding words of our Key Verse, “the one who loves [*agape*] another has fulfilled the Law,” brings the contrast of “the Law” versus “faith which worketh by love,” into harmonious agreement. (Gal. 5:6) Similarly, Jesus said that loving [*agape*] God as well as your neighbor are the two great commandments on which “hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt. 22:36-40) Additionally, Paul states, “If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, ... love [*agape*] is the fulfilling of the law.”—Rom. 13:9,10 ■

Walking in Christ

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

Selected Scripture:
Colossians 2:6-14

IN OUR KEY VERSES, PAUL

is addressing those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Redeemer. These, having made a full consecration to do the Heavenly Father’s will, have been accepted as prospective members of the body of Christ. (Col. 1:1,2) The apostle had never met the Colossian brethren, but he had learned from Epaphras, a fellow servant of the Lord, of their “faith in Christ Jesus,” their love for “all the saints,” and their “love in the Spirit.” As a result, Paul wrote an epistle to them and also prayed that they

“might be filled with the knowledge of his [God’s] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”—vss. 3-9

Additionally, the apostle prayed that the Colossian brethren “might walk worthy [Greek: appropriately] of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father.”—vss. 10-12

Paul could not be physically present with them, but he writes, “Yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith

in Christ.” (Col. 2:5) The apostle then encourages the Colossian brethren to continue striving to “walk ye in him [Christ].” (vs. 6) Here the word “walk” refers to the manner of one’s life, and includes how we live and behave. Whenever a problem, issue, or question arises, before we make a decision we should ask ourselves the question, “How would Jesus approach this situation, and what would he do?”

One who “walks” makes progress, but it is also important that we walk in the right direction. The Apostle John writes, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”—I John 1:5-7

Elsewhere, Apostle Paul defines how we are to walk in the light, stating that we are to do so “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” and to “walk in love.”—Eph. 4:1-3; 5:2

In our Key Verses, the apostle adds that we should be “rooted and built up” in Christ. On another occasion, he points out that being “rooted” should be based upon love, as he wrote to the brethren in Ephesus: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love [*agape*].” (Eph. 3:17) Paul also explains that being “built up” is to be done “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”—Eph. 2:20

Finally, Paul warns the brethren of Colosse, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, ... and not according to Christ.” (Col. 2:8, *English Standard Version*) Let us each strive to faithfully carry out our “walk with Christ” to the end of our earthly sojourn. ■

Edify One Another

Key Verse: “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.*”
—*I Corinthians*
10:23

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians
10:23-33

THROUGH THE ENLIGHTENING influence of the Holy Spirit of God, we have come “into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) Therefore, the Lord’s followers are left without bondage to any law except that we shall love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbor as ourselves.—Mark 12:29-31

However, our fallen flesh is weak. (Matt. 26:41) Our faulty human judgment tends, at times, to distort our use of this “liberty,” which can result in causing injury to ourselves and others, and not be to the glory of God. Prior to our Key Verse, Paul points out how God had set free the nation of Israel from bondage in Egypt, but that subsequently, because of their lack of appreciation and loyalty to God, he permitted them to die for their offenses. Paul warns that we too, having been set free, loosed from the bondage of Satan, should be very careful how we use our newly obtained liberty in Christ, citing Israel’s poor example as a lesson.—I Cor. 10:1-14

Paul continues with the words recorded in our Key Verse, declaring that while “all things are lawful” to the Lord’s followers under the man-made laws of present nations, nevertheless there are many things that would

be ill-advised and contrary to the spiritual development of ourselves and others.

When Paul tells us that “all things edify not,” he is speaking of those things which would be within our rights, but which, if pursued, would not edify, build up, or profit us or others from a spiritual standpoint. Such things could result in wasting our consecrated time, and if practiced regularly, could even result in our spiritual regression. Our supreme love for God and our love for our neighbor should bind us only to thoughts and actions which would be edifying to ourselves, helpful to others, and be to the glory of our Heavenly Father.

There was a special trial to the brethren in Paul’s day. The custom among many non-Christian worshipers was to offer animals as sacrifices to idols, giving the carcasses to their religious leaders who, in turn, sold them to butchers in the public markets. Consequently, for those who ate meat, it was very difficult to avoid eating meat which had been offered to idols. This became a serious problem, in that some Christians considered it wrong to eat such meat, while others realized the idol was nothing and therefore eating the meat was not wrong.

How loving is the essence of Paul’s advice. “No one should seek his own welfare, but rather his neighbor’s. Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without raising any question about it on the grounds of conscience. ... However, if someone says to you, This was offered as a sacrifice, don’t eat it, both out of consideration for the one who told you and also for the sake of conscience. ... His conscience, not yours.” (I Cor. 10:24-29, *International Standard Version*) Here Paul shows that we should avoid doing anything that might stumble the Lord’s followers.

This noble spirit shows the boundaries of the Christian law of liberty. Our love should be always generous, thoughtful of the interests and feelings of others, and desirous to “do all to the glory of God.”—I Cor. 10:31 ■

Obedience versus Pride

*“Samuel said,
Hath the LORD as
great delight in
burnt offerings
and sacrifices, as
in obeying the voice
of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is
better than
sacrifice, and to
hearken than the
fat of rams.”
—I Samuel 15:22*

THE MEANING OF OBEDI-
ence can be stated in many
ways. It is described by *The
Illustrated Bible Story* by
Story as follows: “Obedience
is doing what you are
instructed to do. We are com-
manded to be obedient to God
in every way, which makes
sense if we really believe that
he knows what is best for us.
Obedience is an ingredient of

our faith because we are convinced that God can teach and protect us, no matter what circumstances he might want us to encounter.”

The principle of obedience to God is illustrated in the Old Testament by this passage. “Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear

him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.”
—Deut. 13:3,4

OBEDIENCE FROM A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

The foregoing words were spoken to fleshly Israel, but the Scriptures are clear that these things were “written aforetime ... for our learning.” (Rom. 15:4) It therefore behooves the footstep followers of Christ to see and apply what the Bible teaches regarding obedience to God in order to prove acceptable to him.

As earthly parents, many of us can identify with the desire to have obedient children. Having brought them into the world, we have much more experience than they and our desire is to guide and protect them from harm by inculcating the principle of obedience. When they are young, generally they acknowledge that we know more than they and thus our instructions to them, when followed, usually bring a sense of security to their lives. As they get older, perhaps they can see some of our imperfections more clearly. Some may want to challenge what we say because they may think they know more than we do in certain matters. As a worst-case scenario, where there is a lack of respect for the parents, they may even disobey the counsel provided and in turn reap the serious consequences of their disobedience.

TWO HEAVENLY SONS

As we look at the Bible, we might contrast the attitude and conduct of two of God’s sons. Of the *Logos*—Jesus in his pre-human existence—it is written. “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. ... Then I was by

him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.”—Prov. 8:22,30-33

Our Lord was always in harmony with God’s will and daily he was his Father’s delight because he continually manifested obedience in all that God would have him do. When our Master came to earth and reached the age of thirty, the Apostle Paul, referring to a prophecy about Jesus from the Book of Psalms, records this. “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”—Heb. 10:5-7; Ps. 40:6-8

As an exhortation to Christians, we read this: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.” (Phil. 2:5-9, *Revised Standard Version*) Thus, we can see the premium the Heavenly Father placed upon obedience and the exaltation his Son Jesus received because of his faithfulness in this regard.

When we contrast our Lord's attitude with that of Lucifer, what a difference there is. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, 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."—Isa. 14:12-14

Lucifer, unlike Jesus, desired to be equal to Jehovah by establishing a rival dominion. As a result of his rebellion and disobedience we read our Master's words attesting to Lucifer's portion after iniquity was found in his heart. "He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18) Thus, we have the results of obedience and disobedience clearly contrasted as demonstrated by the conduct of two Spiritual sons of God, our Lord Jesus and Lucifer—Satan.

PAUL'S COUNSEL

In Paul's writings we find much in the way of spiritual instruction and warnings. When internalized, these will strengthen, safeguard, and ensure the church's sanctification as they are applied to the individual believer's heart and mind. His epistles contain many expressions in these areas as he elaborated upon what Jesus said in the Gospels. The apostle also provided some specifics as to how we can be obedient children of the Heavenly Father.

One such example is found in Paul's counsel to the elders of Ephesus. "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed

therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”—Acts 20:27-30

Through personal testimony, Paul describes his own regimen of discipline for maintaining obedience to God. “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so, fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—I Cor. 9:24-27

In another citation, Paul referred to his own need for applying the things he taught, and through obedience to God, be fully sanctified by those truths. Speaking of himself, he said, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:13,14

Thus, Paul attests there is a mark of character and obedience which has been established as a prerequisite to be achieved before one might gain entrance into the heavenly kingdom. This mark is not merely the avoidance of sin, of suffering for

righteousness' sake, or the manifestation of a dutiful love toward God because he first loved us. It also goes beyond an appreciation of purity and the principles of truth and of a recognition and love of God's character as it is revealed to us. It is even more than loving our brethren, who are inspired by the same hopes, aims and ambitions as we have, yet who struggle as we do with fleshly weaknesses that are common to man.

Beyond all of this, we are to love our enemies. We are not to just tolerate them—refraining from retaliation—yet harboring evil sentiments against them. Rather, we must give evidence of having such a submissive heart that we will appreciate the privilege of willingly drinking from the same cup of ridicule, reproach and suffering which our Master partook of during his earthly ministry. The Scriptures make reference to all of these matters and if we are obedient children of God, we should be able to manifest this same love with enthusiasm.—Matt. 5:11,12,44-48; Rom. 15:3; I Pet. 4:14

EXEMPLIFYING GODLINESS

We are called upon to develop godliness, Christ-likeness and perfect love in our hearts to such an extent that we will have sympathy towards those who would speak evil against us, injure, or spitefully use us in some fashion. Thus we would be proving that we have learned obedience and are striving to endure patiently in the face of opposition.

Are we going to be at this stage at the beginning of our consecrated walk? Certainly not. Are we going to be able always to give a clear outward manifestation of this kind of love and obedience

when we are at an advanced stage of Christian character development? No again. We recognize that because of inherited fleshly weaknesses we will not always demonstrate this by our actions as we would desire. We know, however, that God looks upon the heart, and that he can determine and approve our oft-times feeble attempts along this line because our intent is proper and in accordance with his will. When we reach the mark of perfect intentions, we can rejoice that we have progressed to that extent by God's grace, but we are to remember the apostle's injunction, "having done all, to stand."—Eph. 6:13

Jesus was at the mark of perfect love at his consecration, but he was tested. Throughout his ministry he proved his ability to maintain his perfect standing through faithful obedience and service as he carried out his sacrifice even unto death. With us, it takes considerable experience in the school of Christ before we are able to progress to that point. This being the case, we are forcibly reminded of the need for having on the whole armor of God, that we might be able to successfully resist any attacks from the world, the flesh or the Adversary to divert us from the goal.—Eph. 6:10-18

HIGH THINGS

Paul also exhorts us as follows: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (II Cor. 10:4,5) Additionally, we read from Isaiah 55:9 God's words through the prophet, "As

the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Only as human instrumentalities are led and guided by the Holy Spirit, therefore, are we to hearken unto their words. Thus, Paul directs our attention to the fact that because of our imperfections, sinful tendencies are entrenched in our minds, in our imaginations, and in our thoughts. Sometimes it is a little pride, or selfishness, or the adherence to speculations or false doctrines which have been handed down to us.

Only the Holy Spirit, and the influence of God’s Word, will cast down imaginations, ignorance, unholy ambitions, speculations, and every form of thought which would be detrimental to the New Creature’s growth and development. Furthermore, the “high things” also might relate to a desire for recognition by others. We may wish to shine out among our fellow creatures, to be well thought of, to receive the empty honors of the earth, to have wealth, influence, or to be held in esteem, either by the world or even our brethren. This desire for self-exaltation is a deeply rooted characteristic that is part and parcel of our fallen nature. It must be striven against by hearkening unto the Word of God.

There are many other scriptural instructions about this matter, a few of which include the following. “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” (Rom. 12:3) “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be

unpunished.” (Prov. 16:5) “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”—James 4:6

SELF-INVENTORY

In considering this overall topic of obedience versus pride, it is preferable to view it as a way of taking personal inventory, as opposed to making judgments about others which might be condemnatory. This should be kept in mind because of an important scriptural principle: “Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”—Matt. 7:3-5

Often outward appearances might be deceiving, and we may have made some prejudgments about brethren or even those in the world. They may have seemed aloof, harsh, or unfriendly. Yet, if we take the time to talk with them, we might get a totally different perspective and come to appreciate qualities which were not evident to us on the surface. In contrast to this, we might appear very favorable in public whereas, those close to us might see us in a different light.

Sometimes our circumstances enable us to be engaged in much spiritual activity. We may ask ourselves: “If I am spending most of my time in serving the Lord, is not this what he would want me to do, and how could I possibly be susceptible to feelings of pride?” If we compare ourselves to others whom we think are not doing as much to serve the Lord

as we are, there could be a problem. If we never miss a meeting or a convention, if we write or call isolated brethren, if we engage in regular private study at home, if we are faithful in our witness opportunities, if we cooperate with other brethren in special truth related projects, if we hold an office in the ecclesia or in various Truth related organizations, these are all excellent credentials. However, we must be very cautious about our attitude.

If we testify about what we are doing, it should be done in the spirit of trying to encourage others in serving the Lord because we can learn from one another. Frequently we might not have thought of something else to do in the cause of the Gospel message if we had not received a suggestion from hearing about the activities of others. If, on the other hand, any of us have feelings of “look at how much I am doing to serve the Lord,” then perhaps our expressions might be based upon a motive of receiving approval from others, which is a clear indication of pride.

A Scripture to observe in this connection is as follows. “Beware of doing your good deeds conspicuously to catch men’s eyes or you will miss the reward of your Heavenly Father. So, when you do good to other people, don’t hire a trumpeter to go in front of you—like those play-actors in the synagogues and streets who make sure that men admire them. Believe me, they have had all the reward they are going to get! No, when you give to charity, don’t even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be secret. Your Father who knows all secrets will reward you.”—Matt. 6:1-4, *J.B. Phillips New Testament*

POSSIBLE EVIDENCES OF PRIDE

Additionally, we are not to manifest pride in our ability to comprehend and share God's plan with others. We should feel appreciative of the fact that we are privileged to witness for the Lord, because it was by his grace that we were given the understanding of his plans and purposes. The numerous times we fail to do God's will in many areas should, in fact, remind us of our own inherent unworthiness. Let us ever consider the basis of our privilege to be considered God's ambassadors. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."—I Cor. 1:26-29

Another area which may be an indicator of pride in our hearts is the manifestation of an overly critical spirit. It is very easy to see the faults of others. We should not look down upon others, believing that we are superior to them, but rather let us realize that all of us are imperfect. We all need assistance from the Heavenly Father and more of the Holy Spirit to overcome our many weaknesses according to the flesh. Who among us cannot appreciate the Apostle Paul's words: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the

evil which I would not, that I do. ... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7:18,19,24,25) Let us ever be mindful of our own need for God's mercy and grace in our undone condition. Similarly, let us always entertain thoughts of love and kindness towards others who must restrain their own flesh as we must do with ours.

SOLELY PLEASING GOD

An old fable that has been passed down for generations talks about an elderly man who was traveling with a boy and a donkey. As they walked through a village, the man was leading the donkey and the boy was walking behind. The townspeople said the old man was a fool for not riding, so to please them he climbed up on the animal's back. When they came to the next village, the people said the old man was cruel to let the child walk while he enjoyed the ride. So, to please them, he got off and set the boy on the animal's back and continued on his way. In the third village, people accused the child of being lazy for making the old man walk, and the suggestion was made that they both ride. So, the man climbed on and they set off again. In the fourth village, the townspeople were indignant at the cruelty to the donkey because he was made to carry two people. The frustrated man was last seen carrying the donkey down the road.

We smile, but this story makes a good point: We cannot please everybody, and if we try, we end up carrying a heavy burden. *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) Well-meaning Christians may offer us advice, and much of it is valuable. However, when we try to do everything other believers want us to do, we can easily become frustrated and confused. That is why we need to remember that the ones we must please above all others are our Heavenly Father and his Son Christ Jesus, and we do that by obeying scriptural principles.

As Christians, our prime responsibility is to obey God's Word as outlined in the Scriptures, so that through the Holy Spirit's influence we may develop a character which the Father will approve. The Bible also indicates the spirit of pride is displeasing to God, and we should engage in self-examination to determine the motives for our actions. May we ever keep in mind and strive to emulate the Master's example of humility and obedient submission to the Father's will. Thus, let us walk as he walked and at the end of our course receive the commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matt. 25:23 ■

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 and dear ones.

Brother Jan Litkowicz, Częstochowa, Poland—July 1.
Age, 84

Brother Richard Evans, Portland, OR—September 23.
Age, 94

Sister Joyce Ruparcic, Boise, ID—October 2. Age, 78
Sister Michalina Sablik, Kozy Górne, Poland—October 15. Age, 88

Be Thankful

*“We are bound to
give thanks alway
to God for you,
brethren beloved of
the Lord, because
God hath from the
beginning chosen
you to salvation
through
sanctification of
the Spirit and
belief of the truth.”
—II Thessalonians
2:13*

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE IN the United States will celebrate the national Thanksgiving Day holiday this year on Thursday, November 23rd. It has been set aside as a holiday for most workers, and special services of thanksgiving will be held in many churches across the country to celebrate the occasion. Some will observe the day with the true spirit of thanksgiving to

our Heavenly Father for their many blessings. Others will take the opportunity to gather with family and friends with little thought given to the Lord, the giver of every good and perfect gift to his earthly creation.—James 1:17

TIME FOR REFLECTION

Those who have given themselves in full dedication to serve God count every day as one of thanksgiving for the abundant blessings they receive from him. They have been specially invited by our Heavenly Father to become members of the “bride” of Christ.

(Rev. 21:2,9) In his epistle to the brethren at Thessalonica, the Apostle Paul addressed this special relationship when he wrote, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (II Thess. 2:14) One of the grandest gifts ever offered to anyone since the creation of the world is the high calling in Christ Jesus that has been extended during this age. Those who respond to this invitation are indeed richly blessed, and they realize that it is essential to express thanks to God every day of the year.

The apostle encourages this class of specially called followers of our Lord Jesus by saying, "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."—II Thess. 2:15-17

ULTIMATE BLESSINGS

Considering the wonderful blessings that we have received from the Heavenly Father, we turn to Paul's words which were written to the Hebrew brethren who were also responding to the same high calling. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." (Heb. 3:1) Being a partaker of the "heavenly calling" has been made possible through faith in the precious blood and merit of our Lord Jesus, who was offered on behalf of his footstep followers. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures

of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”—Heb. 9:24

The redemptive merit of Christ’s sacrifice that was presented to the Heavenly Father on behalf of his footstep followers will be made available for the entire human family during his coming kingdom on earth. “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” (John 10:16) The good shepherd, Jesus, shed his lifeblood as a ransom price on behalf of all his sheep. This includes the little flock of faithful followers who are being called during this age, and then the larger flock of humanity who will respond to his voice under the terms of a New Covenant during the kingdom of Christ. (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13) During that blessed time, all hearts will be glad to give thanks and praise to our loving God.

THE FRUIT OF OUR LIPS

When speaking of giving praise and thanksgiving to God, the Apostle Paul says that by Jesus Christ, “let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” (Heb. 13:15) Our “lips” are used as a symbol of speech and communication with others. We communicate and make known the glorious Gospel message by using our lips in this manner, and those who have a desire to hear will respond to the words spoken. Additionally, when going to our loving Heavenly Father in prayer, we pour out our love and thanksgiving directly to him. This may be spoken with our lips or inaudibly expressed in our hearts.

We are thankful for whatever measure of spiritual or temporal blessings that we may have because of God's wonderful and loving providence towards us. As followers of our Lord Jesus, we are privileged to have the eyes of our understanding opened to behold the wondrous beauties of the Scriptures. We trust also in the blessed assurance that God's love will ultimately be manifested to the poor groaning creation in due time. In prophetic words, Hosea spoke of a time when all men would render thanks and praise to God. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." (Hos. 14:2) The psalmist also wrote, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."—Ps. 150:6

CONTINUAL THANKSGIVING

The faithful followers of the Master are encouraged to have a consuming zeal in all that they do in the service of God and to render their heartfelt praise and thankfulness to him continually. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thess. 5:18) "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6) "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:9,10) "Ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing." (II Thess. 3:13) We should always be on the alert to do those things for our brethren that would be for their

highest spiritual welfare and not become weary in these efforts.

FORGET NOT HIS BENEFITS

The Psalmist David wrote, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”—Ps. 103:1-5

These wonderful words express the depth of love, praise, and thanksgiving that David had for our loving Heavenly Father. The word “bless” in the psalmist’s expression “Bless the LORD” includes the thought of kneeling down as an act of adoration. David is thus stressing the appropriateness of humility before the Heavenly Father when offering our prayers and thanksgiving to him. Having a humble attitude toward God is wise counsel and of utmost importance to all of Jesus’ faithful followers. Again, we read, “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.”—Ps. 95:6,7

OUR DEPENDENCE UPON GOD

We are dependent upon our Heavenly Father for all things that pertain to our consecrated walk in newness of life, both temporal and spiritual. In reference to the Lord’s people, we read, “They should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one

of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”—Acts 17:27,28

God extends to us the temporal blessings of life such as sunshine and rain, as well as food, raiment, and shelter. We also receive spiritual food that is necessary for our growth and development in the narrow way. He provides the Holy Spirit of power and of a sound mind for the consecrated class of Christians. (II Tim. 1:7) God also covers us with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, and this robe allows us to have a standing as a New Creature. (Isa. 61:10; Ps. 132:9) If we sin, “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” who is the “propitiation [atonement, expiator] for our sins.” —I John 2:1,2

CORRECTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

One of the things we should be very thankful for is that, when it is necessary, our loving Heavenly Father will discipline our misguided actions and will send experiences for our correction in righteousness. The Apostle Paul explains this very special relationship in his letter to the Hebrew brethren. “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening [Greek: disciplinary correction] of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”—Heb. 12:5-7

As New Creatures in Christ Jesus, our hopes, aims, and ambitions no longer appeal to the flesh

—the outward man that is by nature fallen. By contrast, the spiritual growth of the new man is being developed by the providential care and keeping of our loving God and the work of the Holy Spirit on our behalf. Concerning this transformational process, Paul states, “All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary]; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:15-18

SAVED FROM ADAMIC SIN

We should be ready always to give thanks to God for providing us with Jesus’ sacrifice as a ransom price for our sins. Jesus is the “propitiation,” or atonement, “for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (I John 2:2) We were born into this world to suffer the same sentence of death as all others. The psalmist wrote, “I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”—Ps. 40:1-3

The God of all mercy and grace is permitting his consecrated people to endure difficult trials and

besetments as they walk in newness of life and as they sacrifice their humanity in the Lord's service. We understand that these experiences are necessary in order to be a joint-heir with Christ Jesus in the administration of his kingdom. These hardships of the narrow way prove and test their loyalty to the Heavenly Father. They are necessary to consume the dross of the old fleshly nature and to establish in their hearts the character likeness of their Master, Christ Jesus. Even while undergoing these trying experiences, they have much to be thankful for. In spite of it all, they live a richer, fuller, and more satisfying life than the most successful and contented people of the world.

A LIVING HOPE

By the Lord's unlimited grace, we have a true and lasting hope in this present world of confusion and chaos. The Apostle Peter spoke of this as a "lively," or living, hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen,

ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”—I Pet. 1:3-9

Our Heavenly Father has taken us into his own confidence and has revealed his ultimate plan and purpose for the restoration and reconciliation of the poor groaning creation. We are especially thankful to know that he is presently selecting from among the world of mankind a group of faithful followers of his Son, our Lord Jesus, to be the kings and priests in his millennial kingdom which we believe is drawing ever nearer.—Rev. 1:6; 20:6

A FAMINE FOR TRUTH

During the closing years of this present Christian age, the poor, groaning, human creation continues to put its trust in political leaders who speak of peace and brighter days under their leadership, even in the midst of world trouble and turmoil. Religious and spiritual leaders likewise have little in the way of satisfying answers, nor messages of comfort to give the people. The world has been passing through the prophetic troubled waters of a corrupt and dying society which has been largely based on human selfishness and pride. (Ps. 46:3) They long for a better time and day, but are unaware of the nearness of Christ’s promised kingdom of righteousness, peace, and security that will be administered under his control.

The Prophet Amos spoke of the famine for truth that would accompany the end of this age. “The days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a

thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.”—Amos 8:11-13

A FEAST OF TRUTH

In contrast to the present famine of the Word of the Lord found in general throughout the world, divine power is being exercised on behalf of those, one here and one there, who genuinely hunger and thirst for truth and righteousness. We read of our Heavenly Father’s loving care on behalf of his consecrated people, “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” “He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.”—Ps. 103:5; 107:9

During the closing period of this present Gospel Age we have been sumptuously fed and watered with the refreshing and soul-satisfying portion of the riches and promises of God’s wonderful Word of Truth, spoken of by Jesus as “meat in due season.” (Matt. 24:45) The Prophet Isaiah adds, “The LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”—Isa. 58:11

ENLIGHTENED WITH TRUTH

This knowledge is refreshing to those of the Lord’s dedicated followers who are living during this present time, and we take new courage and hope as we see this “present evil world” passing

away. (Gal. 1:4) It gladdens our hearts even as we see the present distress of nations. Present darkness will soon give way to the glorious kingdom of light that will be ushered in to bring blessings to all the families of the earth. All men will be enlightened by the true light of Christ's kingdom during his righteous reign.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:20-25; I Cor. 15:21-26

The Prophet Joel spoke of God's promise to give the world his Holy Spirit at that time, saying, "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. ... And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance." —Joel 2:28,32

GLAD TIDINGS COMING

Ere long the human family will receive the promised Spirit of God spoken of by the prophet. Through its holy influence upon their hearts and minds, mankind will benefit from the blessings promised under Christ's kingdom. The masses of the people will then voice their praise and thanksgiving unto our loving God for his ultimate plan and purpose to bless his human creation.

At that time, the New Covenant will be operational, governing mankind in peace, righteousness and equity for all. Then, the people will be lifted up from the miry pit of sin and death that marks our present world. "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness;

the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:8-10

RENDERING OUR THANKS

We are thankful that a special day each year has been set aside to render thanksgiving and praise to God. It is a reminder of our humble position as we stand in awe before the great Creator of our world and the entire universe. Our lives should be full of heartfelt thanks every day of the year for the countless blessings that we receive from our loving Heavenly Father. We especially thank him for the privilege we have to take advantage of the many opportunities to seek understanding and grace, and to grow in the knowledge of truth and righteousness.

Thanks be unto our loving Heavenly Father for delivering us out of the realms of darkness, ignorance, and superstition, and for providing us the manifold blessings of enlightenment and peace. May we praise him for calling us to be members of the bride of Christ and granting us the unspeakable joy of joint heirship with his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the future administration of his righteous kingdom. “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.—Ps. 100:4

■

Education in the School of Christ

*“Grace and peace
be multiplied unto
you through the
knowledge of God,
and of Jesus our
Lord, According as
his divine power
hath given unto us
all things that
pertain unto life
and godliness,
through the
knowledge of him
that hath called us
to glory and
virtue.”*

—II Peter 1:2,3

IN GENERAL, EDUCATION

is associated with the acquiring of knowledge—much knowledge, accurate knowledge. However, in order to obtain an education, we find it necessary, additionally, that there be receptivity, sensitiveness, a sincere response, and conscientious use of knowledge as it is received. That “knowledge is power,” is a familiar proverb. Human wisdom has found this to be true. The difference between the various strata of human soci-

ety and the advantage each member is able to obtain is usually closely related to the extent of an individual’s education and energy in making use of it.

Society today is not alone in recognizing the great advantages resulting from knowledge. In our opening text, the Apostle Peter speaks of “the

knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” Jesus said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) Paul says that the Gospel of Christ “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,” and again, that he would be willing to forego all the advantages of his human life in order that he might know Christ, that is, gain an intimate acquaintance with him and share his experiences.—Rom. 1:16; Phil. 3:8-11

The prophet says of Jesus, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.” (Isa. 53:11) Jesus, pointing out the difference between himself and others and the great advantages he enjoyed, said, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee.” “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:25,3) Paul, pointing out the ultimate unity and perfection of the body of Christ, says that the purpose of all the gifts to the church is that they may “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” (Eph. 4:13) Thus we see that the ultimate unity of the church is to be based upon the same knowledge of God and the same faith in him that Jesus manifested in his life among men, and which were the foundation of his life and character.

KNOWLEDGE NOT ENOUGH

Knowledge, however, is not enough. In addition, it must be used properly. Jesus not only said that his followers would be made free if they “know the truth,” as previously quoted, but also, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” (John

13:17) Peter, who states in our opening verses that we have been given a knowledge of God, adds in the same chapter, “If ye do these things ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Pet. 1:10,11) Paul not only declares that the Gospel is the means by which we obtain salvation, but again with reference to the Gospel adds, “Through which you are being saved, if you retain a certain word I evangelized to you.”—I Cor. 15:2, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

The importance of using the knowledge of God and his Word of Truth, and of obeying them, cannot be overemphasized if one is to obtain the education that God intends. In the pages of history, we find many illustrations of knowledge gained and the lamentable failure to use it properly. Going back to Eden, we find God’s instructions to our first parents both definite and clear to the effect that if they ate of the forbidden fruit they would die. (Gen. 2:16,17) When Eve was approached by Satan through the serpent, she indicated her thorough knowledge of God’s instruction. She said that it would be impossible for her to partake of the forbidden tree, because if she did, she would lose her life. However, Eve let doubt enter her mind, and when Satan lied about the results of her eating the forbidden fruit, she permitted his lie to take the place of the truth and supplant the warning which God had given. She, therefore, fell into sin and became liable to its penalty.—Gen. 3:1-6

The nation of Israel is another illustration of failure to make use of knowledge. Paul, speaking of his nation, said they had much advantage every

way, “chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom. 3:2) However, the apostle further explains that their knowledge was not “mixed with faith in them that heard it.” (Heb. 4:2) The Prophet Hosea foretold the rejection of Israel centuries before it occurred. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.” (Hos. 4:6) Notice that the prophet says they had rejected the knowledge given to them, and they had forgotten the law of God. We may be certain that this is the underlying reason for failure in any servant of God, namely, that he has not used, or not obeyed, the divine instructions given to him.

THE GREAT EDUCATOR

God is the Great Educator and has designed his plan with the object in view of preparing his creatures for the greatest usefulness and happiness in the eternal life promised to the loyal and obedient. From one point of view, it might appear that the education of the human family was interrupted by the temptation in Eden and their coming under the penalty of death. From one standpoint this is true; as, since the fall, relatively few have obtained more than a glimpse into God’s great attributes of wisdom, justice, love, and power.

However, God has overruled the opposition of Satan and the fall of the human family into sin and death in order to open up to them other and higher branches of learning. First has come their experience

with evil and its consequences. Later, during the world's thousand-year kingdom of righteousness, they will have experience with truth, justice, and uprightness. Thus, first evil, and then good, will be learned. This higher education will include the development of such qualities as patience, meekness, generosity, sympathy, and self-sacrificing love. At the present time, we cannot imagine conditions in a perfect earth, where the inhabitants are pure and holy, and in which these qualities have opportunity for development by practice and personal experience.

A considerable period of time, including both successes and failures, is required to gain an education, whether now in the case of Jesus' footstep followers, or in the coming kingdom of righteousness for the world of mankind in general. A variety of experiences are necessary in acquiring knowledge, especially as it may be used in the development of a noble character. In general, successes are the result of putting knowledge into practice according to God's principles of righteousness, and contrariwise, failures are the result of the improper use of knowledge.

One of the gains resulting from obedience to divine principles is an ever clearer understanding of righteousness, holiness, and how they are exemplified in God and in his Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. The Apostle Paul indicates that the ability to properly apply knowledge comes only to those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."—Heb. 5:14

On the other hand, failure to obey and to have one's "senses exercised" to put knowledge into practice, results in weakness of character and the loss

of spiritual development. The psalmist says, "What hast thou to do to ... take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee?" (Ps. 50:16,17) The Apostle Peter declares that one who fails to add the graces of the spirit to their foundation of faith "is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (II Pet. 1:9) Notice here the apostle says that failure to make use of knowledge in the building of character will result in blindness and forgetting the fundamental fact that one was purged from his old sins.

FAILURES ILLUSTRATED

There are many illustrations in the Scriptures of the failure to properly use knowledge. As already noted, to Adam and Eve the Lord clearly stated that the penalty for sin would be death, and when pronouncing the sentence upon them after their transgression he confirmed that they would return to the dust from whence they were taken. (Gen. 3:17-19) Yet, only a few centuries later we find that some of their posterity, the inhabitants of Egypt, practiced the slaying of servants and animals, and burying them, together with a supply of food, in the tombs of their kings. Here we see that as mankind became more and more out of harmony with God, further degenerate, their understanding of God's principles, including the penalty for sin, was lost.

The corrupting nature of sin is illustrated in the fact that the first death recorded in the Bible is the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. The same thought is suggested in the history of Satan himself, for we are told that he was perfect in his ways

until “iniquity was found” in him. (Ezek. 28:15) Indeed, all the horrible evils afflicting the human race can be attributed to Satan as “the god of this world.” (II Cor. 4:4) Another example of the corrupting influence of sin is given by the Lord in his prophetic words recorded in Matthew 24:48,49. Here an “evil servant” is described as first beginning to smite his fellow servants, then eating and drinking with the drunken. Such a pattern we have seen throughout much of Christian history, even down to the present time at the end of the age. In these we see the same sequence: first, a departure from the principles of justice, righteousness, and brotherly love; and then, growing out of that failure to properly apply knowledge, the loss of light and the development of doctrinal errors have followed.

These experiences should forcibly impress this great lesson upon all the Lord’s people and cause us to be very alert and sensitive to the Lord’s Word. We should be diligent in our study and application of its principles in our own life. This should then lead us to accept as elders and teachers only such as are humble and obedient to not only the Word of Truth, but also to its spirit. “Knowledge alone makes people self-righteously arrogant, but love that unselfishly seeks the best for others builds up and encourages others to grow in wisdom.”—I Cor. 8:1, *Amplified Bible*

The special education which the followers of the Lord are receiving during the present Gospel Age is obtained in what we are accustomed to speak of as the school of Christ. In some universities they give special attention to the preparation of those

who are to occupy positions for the instruction of others. Such schools have often been known as “teachers’ colleges.” These correspond well with the special instruction which is being given to the followers of the Lord during the present time—those who are being prepared to be associated with him in the great work of reconciliation during the Messianic kingdom.

The Scriptures clearly indicate that all mankind are ultimately to know the Lord from the least unto the greatest, and that they are to have the law of God written not only in their minds but also in their hearts. (Jer. 31:33,34) That is, they will not only fully understand the law of God, but they will also grow up to a condition in which they will love the law of God and his principles with all their heart. The understanding and love of these principles are being developed in Jesus’ footstep followers during the present age. At the same time, however, their education contains additional features. Just as teachers must not only thoroughly master their subject, they must also be able to instruct other students later in life. They must learn the art of teaching, so that they will be able to effectively transmit their knowledge to future pupils.

PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The occasion for this special education is the fact that God has designed that in the “dispensation of the fulness of times” he is to regather in Christ all things. (Eph. 1:10) That is, all who will accept are to be brought back into harmony with God through the ministrations of the Messianic kingdom, in which Christ and the church will participate.

From this standpoint it is apparent that the chief purpose and work of the centuries since Pentecost has been the education of the consecrated followers of Christ. With this thought in mind, how full of meaning is the apostle's exhortation to the Corinthian brethren, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (I Cor. 15:58) It is interesting to note the meaning of the two words "work" and "labor" in this verse. The work is spoken of as "the work of the Lord," in which we have the privilege of engaging. As the apostle exhorts, we should be very diligent in the carrying out of this work, "abounding in the work of the Lord."

The Greek word translated "work" in the foregoing verse means "business or employment" (*Thayer's Greek Definitions*) and is the same word which the apostle uses in writing to the Thessalonian brethren when he says that he remembers their "work of faith." (I Thess. 1:2,3) Evidently, therefore, the work of the Lord is a work of faith. It is the development of faith in each of the body members of Christ, and the exercise of those members along the lines of faith, building up themselves and exhorting one another to the life of faith. —Jude 1:20

The word "labor" has quite a different thought. This word is also translated "trouble" and "weariness." It is used by the apostle in the text referred to above from I Thessalonians 1:3, where he says that he remembers not only their "work of faith," but also their "labor of love" and their "patience of hope." Because these three actions on their part

gave him great confidence with respect to them, he is assured of their election of God. Here we have the apostle's thought that the faithful overcomers of the present age will be so appreciative of the Lord's work that they will engage in it to the extent of enduring trouble, weariness, sacrifice and suffering in order to cooperate with him in their course of education for future service.

What a beautiful picture is painted by the thought of working and laboring. At present the Lord's people are cooperating in the education of themselves and the other members of the body of Christ, often through difficulty and trial. However, the results of this work of education will continue with them beyond the veil. Then they will have the privilege of cooperating with Christ Jesus in his mediatorial kingdom for the reconciliation of all the families of the earth and bringing them to human perfection and harmony with God and his principles.

GOD WANTS FINISHED PRODUCTS

It is a blessed experience to go to the school of Christ and to be enrolled as a student, but God's great object is not merely the present work of educating his people, but their graduation and future work on behalf of the world of mankind. God is interested in what we may speak of as "finished products," and so must our interest be also. As Paul says, writing to the Corinthian brethren, "and this also we wish, even your perfection." (II Cor. 13:9) The apostle's interest in the development of the church was a beautiful, selfless one. He was interested in their completion, their full development in

the likeness of Christ; and it was an entirely secondary concern as to whether he or another was the instrument God would use in that work. Note his words as recorded in I Corinthians 15:9-11: "I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."

There is a very helpful lesson for all of the Lord's people in these words of the Apostle Paul. As with him, so our concern is to be only for the development of the character of Christ in ourselves and in the brotherhood; and whether God uses one instrumentality or another for the accomplishment of that work is immaterial. We are to be as happy if the Lord uses someone else to accomplish his good purposes as if he used us. In any event, as the apostle expresses in the passage just quoted, it is the grace and power of God which accomplishes the divine purpose in the hearts of his people. Any servant of the Lord used to render a helpful service and to give a good example to the brethren must feel as the apostle states he did in an earlier portion of this epistle. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."—I Cor. 3:6

Progress in the school of Christ and development in his likeness involves exercise, experience, and activity along various lines. For instance, one of the avenues of service in connection with the work of God is that of preaching the Gospel of the kingdom.

(Matt. 24:14) Another is laboring in the Word of Truth, that is, personal study of the Scriptures. (II Tim. 2:15) A third is the exhortation and encouragement of the brethren. Paul says that we are to exhort one another daily, lest any be "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3:13) Another avenue of activity and exercise is the judgment of self. The apostle says that if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged, but that if we fail to do so, the Lord will take us in hand and chasten us that we may not be condemned with the world.—I Cor. 11:31,32

Still another means for our growth and maturity in knowledge is association with one another and taking part in the affairs of the brotherhood. This includes suitable activity in connection with meetings of the Lord's people and in all the interests of the church, including care to see that the collective testimony of our gatherings is in no way injured by teaching or conduct contrary to the Word and the spirit of the Truth. In all of these avenues of activity the followers of Christ are to be vitally interested and as fully engaged as possible.

In our spiritual education, we must be careful to see that we are engaging in a rounded, complete work; that we are paying the proper attention to all aspects of the Christian life; and that we are using the Scriptures for the purpose for which they were given, namely, to prepare the man of God "unto every good work." (II Tim. 2:21) The spirit of the Lord, which is the spirit of a "sound mind," will guide us in the proper division of our time among these various lines of endeavor. (II Tim. 1:7) Paramount to this is the importance of daily studying

the Scriptures, realizing that we are to live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4) The degree of our devotion and time spent in the study of the Lord’s Word will be revealed in our lives, in our speech, and in our ability to contribute to the spiritual welfare of the Lord’s consecrated people.

We are to keep in mind that the Christian life is an intensely personal matter, and realize the force of the Apostle’s words: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run their very best to win, but only one receives the prize? Run your race in such a way that you may seize the prize and make it yours!” (I Cor. 9:24, *Amplified*) In other words, we are to consider our relationship to the Lord in the school of Christ as an individual student. We are to be completely devoted to him and to make his Word and his spirit our guide and constant occupation.

What a glorious privilege we have of being educated in the school of Christ, to have the benefit of his instruction and example. If faithful, devoted students, we are being prepared therein for our privileges and responsibilities in the future as kings and priests and judges. Let us be daily faithful in this endeavor! ■

“Teach me your decrees, O LORD:

I will keep them to the end.

Give me understanding

and I will obey your instructions;

I will put them into practice with all my heart.

Make me walk along the path of your commands,

for that is where my happiness is found.”

—Psalm 119:33-35 New Living Translation

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

L. Griehs

San Diego, CA November 18,19

K. Humphries

Milwaukee, WI November 4,5

B. Keith

San Diego, CA November 18,19

M. Kerry

San Diego, CA November 18,19

B. Montague

New Haven, CT November 12

San Diego, CA 18,19

D. Rice

Milwaukee, WI November 4,5

J. Slavich

Milwaukee, WI November 4,5



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 2—"It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good."—I Samuel 3:18 (Z. '01-317 Hymn 313)

NOVEMBER 9—"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."—Galatians 5:17 (Z. '03-424 Hymn 183)

NOVEMBER 16—"She hath done what she could."—Mark 14:8 (Z. '99-78; '00-378 Hymn 23)

NOVEMBER 23—"Ye have need of patience, [cheerful endurance, constancy] that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—Hebrews 10:36 (Z. '01-117 Hymn 197)

NOVEMBER 30—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age."—Matthew 28:20 (Z. '01-155 Hymn 70)

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 4,5—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email: debfarchione@aol.com

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 12—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—NEW CONVENTION LOCATION—Elks Lodge, 175 School Street, Hamden, CT 06518. Contact M. Lacombe. Phone: (203) 910-3091 or Email: merrilylacombe@hotmail.com

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 18,19—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Brand. Email: blatbrand@aol.com

IBADAN THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 2,3—IN PERSON ONLY—Ibadan Place of Fellowship, Coca Cola Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

CHICAGO NEW YEAR CONVENTION, December 31, January 1—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Doubletree by Hilton Lisle Naperville, 3003 Corporate West Drive, Lisle, IL 60532. Contact C. Martire. Phone: (312)925-5434 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 13,14—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Fountain Hills Community Center, 13001 N La Montana Drive, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268. Contact A. Mengos. Email: samengos@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL CONVENTION, January 26-28—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Charlton. Email: randscharlton@bigpond.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 18,19—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Phone: (916)923-1100. Contact J. Freer. Phone: (916)879-4655 or Email: shootingln@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 2-4—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Winter Park Lodge, 1495 Grand Road, Winter Park, FL 32792. Contact J. Slavich. Phone: (407)494-8421 or Email: JohnSlavich@gmail.com

Hast Thou a Message?

*Hast thou a message for thy fellow men,
Of hope and cheer?
Fear not to utter it by voice or pen,
For God is near,
And He shall strengthen and defend thee when
Vain critics sneer.
There are upon the battlefield of life
The faint and weak,
Who struggle on amid the perils rife
The goal to seek;
And if a word will help them in the strife,
Then boldly speak.
Thy voice may feeble be, thy speech uncouth
To ears refined,
But if a spark fresh from the forge of Truth
Glows in thy mind,
It may, when fanned to flame, enlighten both
The wise and blind.
A kindly look, a sympathizing word,
Are germs of power;
Like tiny seeds dropped by a careless bird,
They bloom and flower,
And through the years to come are seen and heard
In some dark hour.
—Poems of the Way*

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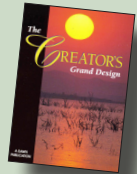


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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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 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

