

The DAWN

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Gun Violence— God's Plan to Stop It

***“They shall beat
their swords into
plowshares, and
their spears into
pruninghooks. . . .
They shall sit every
man under his vine
and under his fig
tree; and none
shall make them
afraid: for the
mouth of the LORD
of hosts hath
spoken it.”
—Micah 4:3,4***

AS THE WORLD ATTEMPTS to chart a path for its guidance in the year which has so recently begun, it does so with fear and misgivings. The package of unresolved troubles that the old year left on the doorstep of 2016 makes an unwelcome gift. Although the intentions of many are likely admirable, the difficulties of today seem to be outside the ability of the world's governing authorities to resolve. Beyond this, there is no way of knowing what additional and perhaps unanticipated problems the months ahead will bring forth.

In the United States, one of the many unresolved problems from past years is that of gun violence. Although most all will agree that gun violence is a major problem, governmental leaders and much of the American population are polarized in their

view of how to deal with it. This has resulted in a renewed, and hotly-contested, debate concerning gun control. Ironically, this debate seems nearly as impassioned as many of the motivations behind the crimes which are committed with guns and other weapons.

RECENTLY IN THE NEWS

Adding fuel to the ongoing arguments about gun control, during the first week of the new year, President Barack Obama announced several executive orders designed to expand background checks and place more restrictions on firearms sold under certain circumstances. The main focus of the President's plan is to implement tighter rules on sales by unlicensed dealers, such as those who sell online and at gun shows. Those new rules would require such dealers to obtain a federal seller's license and also to check the backgrounds of all their buyers.

As expected, opponents of the President's announcement claim that such action undercuts the Second Amendment "right to bear arms," by making it harder for law-abiding citizens to obtain firearms. Many also assert that it is simply another method whereby the government can increase its control of American's private lives, and thereby further limit freedom.

Still others argue that the government would do better by focusing more on earlier and better detection, and improved treatment of those with mental illness which causes them to be dangerous. This assertion, while certainly having validity, only emphasizes an underlying question: Is the problem

of gun violence rooted in the character of the person who commits a crime, or in the weapon that is used to carry it out?

On the one hand, a gun, sword, knife, or any other weapon is an object incapable of murdering or maiming anyone unless it is used for that purpose by the hand of a person wielding it. Conversely, it is clear that the sole purpose of the manufacture of any firearm or other weapon, aside possibly from its use as a hunting device, is to kill or injure another person when utilized. So, we ask again, wherein lies the problem—with the weapon, or with the user?

ONLY BY GOD'S WISDOM

It is not our purpose to take sides in the gun control debate, nor even to enter its confines. When we look into the Scriptures and see God's eternal purposes, we realize that fallen man's futile attempts to resolve the problems of violence, murder, war, and to control the weapons used in these activities, will not succeed, regardless of which side of the debate one espouses. Only God's wisdom and power can solve this and the many other severe problems facing today's sin-sick and weary world.

Viewing mankind's experience on earth thus far, one fact is clear. Every one of the billions who have ever lived on this planet has died. It is also no doubt true that the vast majority have died for reasons other than the attacks of guns, bombs, swords, or other weapons. Many, in fact, would be inclined to say that most people die "from natural causes." While this sounds logical, perhaps, to human reasoning, it is not what the Scriptures say.

A MURDERER

The Word of God informs us that death, in all forms, has existed among mankind because they have been the victims of “murder,” committed by none other than Satan. Jesus stated that the devil was “a murderer from the beginning,” and “there is no truth in him. . . . he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John 8:44) The Scriptures further confirm that “the Devil, and Satan,” are one and the same as “that old serpent,” who plotted murder against our first parents.—Rev. 20:2

The “murder” of Adam and Eve was not done with a gun, sword, or any other tangible weapon. Rather, as suggested in the above words of Jesus, Satan’s weapons were lies and deceit. By subtly using these against our first parents, he convinced them that they would somehow benefit, and not die, from disobeying the clear and simple commandment of God, and so they partook of the forbidden fruit. The dying process beginning immediately, Adam and Eve eventually succumbed to Satan’s murderous attack, dying and returning unto dust, “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”—Gen. 2:17; 3:19

The entire human race, all who have come out of the loins of Adam, have subsequently died. The Apostle Paul states the matter simply, “In Adam all die.” (I Cor. 15:22) All have gone into the grave, whether from weapons of war, the violence of guns, the slaying of swords, or from the “natural causes” of sickness and disease. All have experienced this great human tragedy because of the one who was a “murderer from the beginning.”

RECOVERY OF VICTIMS PROMISED

Thankfully, our loving Heavenly Father has infinitely more power than Satan. In due time, God will destroy this murderer of the race—"the devil that deceived" mankind. (Rev. 20:10) Just as importantly, God also has unending love for his human creation, and has made provision for man's recovery from death by means of the ransom sacrifice of his "only begotten Son." (John 3:16) As a result of this provision of the ransom, Jesus' promise will surely come to pass, that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth."—John 5:28,29

Under the righteous arrangements of Christ's earthly kingdom, the remainder of Paul's words quoted earlier will come to pass for those who "come forth" from the tomb. Just as "in Adam" all have died, all "in Christ shall . . . be made alive," through heart obedience to the divine laws then in effect throughout the earth.—I Cor. 15:22

DEATH ALSO THE WAGES OF SIN

At this juncture, it is essential to note that although Satan was guilty of using the "murder weapons" of lies and deceit in the Garden of Eden, our first parents also bore responsibility. They sinned against the commandment that God had given them, which included his statement of what the penalty would be for disobedience—death. The Scriptures elsewhere are clear on this matter, stating, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," and "the wages of sin is death."—Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 6:23

While all of Adam's posterity have fallen victim to death as a result of Satan's actions so long ago, they have also inherited the sinful nature to which our first parents fell as a result of disobedience. Here again, God's Word is plainly stated, as spoken by Paul in the Book of Romans: "There is none righteous, no, not one." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for . . . all have sinned."—Rom. 3:10,23; 5:12

The depths to which fallen man has entered into sin has varied greatly among individuals and groups throughout the ages. Many have, in fact, lived righteous lives to the extent of their ability to do so, but even these have not been perfect. We are reminded of two of God's faithful Old Testament servants, Moses and David, both of whom were used greatly to accomplish the Lord's purposes. Yet, the record of the Scriptures makes it clear that they made mistakes and were guilty of sin. In the New Testament, Peter and Paul were apostles of Christ and key instruments used to establish the Early Church. They too, however, were not perfect. Paul testified of his own sinful nature and the resulting struggle he engaged in daily, saying, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7:25) Indeed, all of God's people down through the ages who have striven to live righteously have no doubt echoed the sentiments of Paul.

Others of mankind, however, have fallen deeper into sin, and in some cases, have taken on the characteristics which Satan himself possessed—

lying, deceit, and even a murderous heart. Such depth of sin which would result in man killing a fellow human being did not come about simply because he discovered an implement which could be used as a weapon, and then decided to use it to commit murder. Regardless of the physical implements used in such heinous acts—whether swords, knives, guns, bombs, or even bare hands—the greater weapons have been those sinful characteristics in the heart and the mind, which have somehow taken root and produced such evil acts.

CAIN—FIRST RECORDED MURDERER

An example of this circumstance is found in the experience of Cain and Abel, recorded in Genesis 4:1-15. This is the first recorded murder committed by man toward a fellow human being. Upon merely reading the Genesis account, it might appear that Cain killed his brother Abel in a sudden fit of rage due solely to God's acceptance of Abel's offering rather than his. In this rage, he perhaps found some implement close at hand, and almost without thinking committed the unthinkable act of murder.

We believe, however, there was much more going on in the mind and heart of Cain which led ultimately to his slaying of Abel. In the New Testament, the Apostle John discusses the vital importance of brotherly love among the followers of Christ. He states that the "children of God" and the "children of the devil" are manifest by their striving to do righteously and to love their brother, or by their failure to do so. (I John 3:10) In this context, John then cites Cain, saying that the children of God should be "not as Cain, who was of that wicked

one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."—vs. 12

We note the order of John's statements concerning Cain and Abel. He first says that Cain was "of that wicked one." Evidently, because of an increased measure of mental and heart depravity, over a period of time he had taken on some of the evil characteristics found in the Adversary. Then, John says, having already harbored these qualities and meditating more and more upon them, Cain "slew his brother."

The apostle summarizes by stating that Cain's "works were evil" while Abel's were "righteous." The "works" of Abel that God considered righteous did not consist merely of the offering he made of the "firstlings of his flock," nor did they begin with that act. (Gen. 4:4) The Apostle Paul indicates that it was "by faith," already established in the heart of Abel, that he "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and by that exhibition of previously developed faith "he obtained witness that he was righteous." (Heb. 11:4) Indeed, Abel's acceptable offering prefigured the sacrifice of Jesus, which Paul says spoke of even "better things than that of Abel." (chap. 12:24) Yet, it was not just this one act which made Abel righteous in God's sight, but rather the heart of faith which he had developed over a period of time, and which he outwardly demonstrated by his offering.

Cain's "works were evil" in the same manner. The evil characteristics which gradually took root in his heart, and his apparent lack of faith in God, evidently caused him over time to lose love for his

brother. Quite possibly, he saw the contrasting qualities of faith and love evident in Abel's character, and the resulting blessings which seemed to come upon him. By and by, Cain's lack of love grew to envy and hatred, perhaps to the point where he was tempted by Satan to do harm to his brother. Finally, God's rejection of his offering and acceptance of Abel's provided the decisive motivation for Cain to act. God warned him that "sin lieth at the door." (Gen. 4:7) Yet, Cain's poisoned heart could not hold back, and he carried out the supreme act of hatred for his brother—murder.

Nothing is said concerning the weapon Cain used to carry out the slaying of Abel. This is because the lesson of key importance lay not with the outward implement used, but with the inward character developed. Thus it has been true down through the ages to our day. The outwardly visible tools of murder or other acts of violence have been of many kinds. However, the overriding cause of such acts traces itself to the evil nature which Satan first exhibited, and then by man's disobedience, to the more or less sinful character attributes which have passed down from one generation to the next.

HUMAN VENGEANCE NOT AUTHORIZED

After slaying Abel, God said to Cain, "thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed . . . ; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." (Gen. 4:10-12) Cain replied, saying that this punishment was more than he could bear, and "every one that findeth me shall slay me." (vss. 13,14) Then God made an interesting, but important, statement. "The LORD

said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.—vs. 15

God set forth a great truth with these words. Cain had committed murder, and was to receive punishment according to the righteous will of God. However, it was not up to anyone of mankind to avenge the killing of Abel by slaying Cain. To further emphasize this important lesson, God said that anyone who might thus slay Cain would receive seven times the punishment he had been given. He even “set a mark” on Cain which gave indication to all who would see him that it was a gross violation of God’s law to seek vengeance against him.

This principle is set forth throughout the Scriptures. Referring to the Old Testament, Paul said, “We know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.” (Heb. 10:30; Deut. 32:35) The Apostle also emphasized this same point to the followers of Christ, saying, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves: . . . for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”—Rom. 12:19

GOD’S VENGEANCE LEADS TO RECOVERY

From the foregoing consideration, it is clear that God’s recovery plan for mankind, previously spoken of in our lesson, must include provisions in addition to the benefits which will accrue to man from the ransom, rising from the dead, and being rid of Satan’s evil influence. These are all vital elements of man’s restoration, but a further key is

the necessity for man's heart and character to be changed from its present sinful nature and resulting propensities to righteousness—that which Adam possessed before he disobeyed, plunging himself and all his progeny into sin and death.

This feature of man's recovery will also take place during the period of Christ's kingdom. Upon receiving the benefits of the ransom, and being raised from the sleep of death, a great education process will begin. This program will be for a two-fold purpose—first, to remove forever the sinful, even murderous, traits of character which have plagued fallen man throughout his existence; and second, to put in their place the righteous character elements encapsulated in the godlike quality of love.

This being God's purpose, his "vengeance" is not to be for mankind's destruction or eternal suffering, but to teach and guide them toward loving harmony with one another, and with their Creator, in whose "image" they were originally made. (Gen. 1:26,27) As part of the kingdom arrangements, God will establish a "New Covenant" in the earth with mankind. Under this arrangement he states, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more . . . saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD." God will then "forgive their iniquity, and . . . remember their sin no more."—Jer. 31:31-34

ISAIAH'S TESTIMONY

In Isaiah chapter 59, the prophet provides a beautiful glimpse of God's plan for man, correlating

the need for a measure of vengeance with its intended purpose of bringing man back into his favor. Paraphrasing in part, Isaiah first says that God “saw that there was no man” who could provide for man’s redemption. However, his only begotten Son—“his arm”—came to earth as man’s Redeemer and “brought salvation.” Continuing the prophecy, Isaiah states that God “put on the garments of vengeance, . . . According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, . . . he will repay recompence.”—vss. 16-18

The prophet then turns his focus to God’s ultimate purpose, saying in the very next verse that the same ones who have received the needed measure of recompence “shall . . . fear [reverence] the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun.” Concerning Satan—“the enemy, . . . the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him [*Strong’s Concordance*: make to flee away]. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.” Both the footstep followers of Christ of the present Gospel Age—heavenly Zion—and all the remainder of mankind—symbolized here as Jacob—who “turn from” sin in the coming earthly kingdom, will receive the full benefits provided by the “Redeemer.”—vss. 19,20

Isaiah’s prophecy concludes with God’s words of assurance that these things will surely come to pass. “As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed,

saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.” (Isa. 59:21) As stated by God through the prophet in another place, “My word . . . that goeth forth out of my mouth . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”—Isa. 55:11

Let us then rejoice as we look forward to the time when swords, spears, guns, and bombs, will all be forever put away—beaten “into plowshares . . . and pruninghooks” (Mic. 4:3) May we also delight in the prospect of having the character “weapons” of lies, deceit, hatred, and malice, found in fallen man, replaced with the holy qualities of kindness, gentleness, peace, and love. (Gal. 5:22) Indeed, God will fulfill his promise to mankind that, whether from guns or hatred, “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land.”—Isa. 60:18 ■

*I am waiting, ever waiting,
for the brighter, better day,
Just beyond the clouds and shadows,
that surround my lonely way;
For a day of light and gladness,
such as earth has never known,
When in equity and justice,
Christ shall reign on David's throne.*

*Now the world is full of suffering,
sounds of woe fall on my ears,
Sights of wretchedness and sorrow
fill my eyes with pitying tears.
'Tis the earth's dark night of weeping;
wrong and evil triumph now;
I can wait, for just before me
beams the morning's roseate glow.
—Hymns of Dawn, A Better Day*

2016 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 21, 2016.

A complete Memorial Service is available for isolated brethren, or for any who wish to have it.

The audio cassette tape, CD, or DVD can be purchased for \$6.00. All are also available free on loan, from:

Dawn Recorded Lecture Service
199 Railroad Avenue
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Please place your order by April 11, if possible.

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

FEBRUARY 4—"Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."—Revelation 18:4 (Z. '00-3 Hymn 177)

FEBRUARY 11—"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."—Matthew 5:11,12 (Z. '94-368 Hymn 261)

FEBRUARY 18—"The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."—Deuteronomy 13:3 (Z. '98-40 Hymn 114)

FEBRUARY 25—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Matthew 4:4 (Z. '02-246, 248 Hymn 186)

Passover

***Key Verse: “This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”
—Exodus 12:14***

***Selected Scripture:
Exodus 12:1-14***

year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.”—Exod. 12:1-4

In preparation for Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage, each Jewish family was instructed to select a lamb “of the first year” from the flock, without spot or blemish. They were to kill it on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, and sprinkle its blood on the door posts and lintels of their homes. By being obedient to God's

FOLLOWING A SERIES OF nine plagues upon Egypt, God gave Moses and Aaron instructions regarding a tenth and final plague that would effect the release of the Israelites from their captivity. The keeping of these instructions became known to the Jews as the Passover celebration.

“The LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the

instructions, and remaining inside their houses when the death angel would “pass over” during that night, the Israelites would be spared.—vss. 5-13

Our Key Verse reminds us that God desired the Jews to keep “this day” as a remembrance of the first-borns’ deliverance that was brought about thousands of years ago in Egypt. Their deliverance resulted in the subsequent liberation of the entire nation, and Jews around the world continue to commemorate the Passover.

However, the nation of Israel failed to realize that the Passover and other features of the Law Covenant were designed to be a “schoolmaster,” and bring them to an acceptance of Christ. He was the true Passover “lamb,” who was sacrificed on their behalf to take away sin.—Gal. 3:24; I Cor. 5:7,8; John 1:29

Consecrated believers during this Gospel Age have appropriated to themselves the value of Christ’s atoning blood and have entered into a covenant relationship with God. Paul speaks of “the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and . . . the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Heb. 12:23,24) As members of the antitypical firstborn, the Spirit begotten alone have been passed over from the plague of Adamic condemnation resting upon the remainder of mankind. The blood of sprinkling represents the merit of the ransom sacrifice that has been imputed on behalf of the church. This provides each consecrated believer justification by faith in Christ through the cleansing power of his blood.

What a magnificent opportunity has been provided for the church, the antitypical firstborn. They will assist Christ Jesus in blessing all the families of the earth during God’s soon to be established Kingdom, and liberating all mankind from their long bondage to sin and death. ■

The Feast of Weeks

Key Verse: *“Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.”*
—*Leviticus 23:16*

Selected Scripture:
Leviticus 23:15-22

VARIOUS TYPICAL CEREMONIES involving the nation of Israel prefigured God’s arrangement whereby ultimately all mankind will have an opportunity for salvation. This will be either to reign in heaven with Christ, or to be subjects of a kingdom with the prospect of living on earth in a restored paradise.

Following the Passover on the 14th of Nisan, as mentioned in our previous lesson, the Jews were instructed to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. “On the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.”—Lev. 23:6

Additionally, on the 16th of Nisan, the day after the feast-Sabbath, a “sheaf,” or handful, of barley was waved “before the LORD.” This marked the beginning of the barley harvest, which would just precede the larger wheat harvest soon to come.—vss. 9-14

“Ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete.” (vs. 15) Our Key Verse indicates that the next day, “after the seventh sabbath,” there was to be a special grain offering dedicated to God for the harvesting of Israel’s wheat. This Feast of Weeks occurred fifty days after

the barley sheaf was presented.

Of great importance regarding all of these commemorations by Israel is the fact that they had spiritual significance. The waving of the barley sheaf on the 16th of Nisan typified the resurrection of Christ Jesus following his crucifixion. Additionally, fifty days later, when the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were presented to God, two “wave loaves” of bread were “baken with leaven” for this purpose. (vs. 17) These picture the Little Flock and the Great Company, who would be viewed as the firstfruits of this Gospel Age.

The Day of Pentecost occurred fifty days after Christ’s resurrection and was manifested by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon consecrated believers. (Acts 2:1-4) This marked the start of the development of the heavenly phase of God’s kingdom. Christ was the “first” of the firstfruits class. However, members of his “body” who follow his footsteps and are presented in sacrifice as an offering for sin are also included as being firstfruits.

The operation of the Holy Spirit during this Gospel Age, begun at Pentecost, is for the purpose of assisting consecrated believers to live a righteous life of sacrifice. This is to prepare them to be associated with Christ in God’s kingdom to bring about blessings and the restoration of the human family. God’s purpose is that man be brought into harmony with righteous living such as existed in the Garden of Eden before sin and death occurred as a result of Adam’s disobedience.—Rom. 5:19

Peter also spoke of a future operation of the Holy Spirit that would come upon “all flesh.” (Acts 2:17) Mankind at that time will not experience a change in nature from earthly to spiritual, but will be greatly blessed—there will be no more tears, sorrow, pain or death.—Rev. 21:3,4 ■

The Day of Atonement

Key Verse: “He shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.” —Leviticus 16:16

Selected Scripture: Leviticus 16:11-19

describes the actual sequence of steps Aaron had to follow in applying blood on the mercy seat to effect atonement for sin.—vss. 6-15

Our Key Verse affirms that after the application of the blood of the goat, which was treated in the same manner as the blood of the bullock, the sin offering was completed. The nation of Israel was typically cleansed from their past sins and restored to their relationship

FOLLOWING THE DEATH of Nadab and Abihu for offering “before the LORD” in violation of what God had commanded, specific instructions were given to Moses concerning how carefully and reverentially Aaron should approach the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. Otherwise, he, too, would die for failing to obey God’s commands.—Lev. 16:1,2

Following this, God gave instructions as to how Aaron should carry out the observance of Israel’s Day of Atonement. This included bringing a bullock as a sin offering as well as two goats and one ram to complete the offering of atonement. (vss. 3-5) A series of detailed procedures

with God for the ensuing year.

Although there are many details connected with the historical account of the Day of Atonement, it is evident that this ceremony which was required by the Law of Moses to be observed on an annual basis no longer is performed. “Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt. 5:18) There is presently no Jewish high priest performing the rituals described earlier in this lesson because those ceremonies were typical of something much greater. Were such not the case, they would not have ceased.

After our Lord left the heavenly realm, he became a human being. As a perfect man, he became the antitypical bullock at the age of thirty. He laid down his life in sacrifice for the purpose of redeeming mankind, offering himself to eradicate sin. As recorded by Paul, our Lord explained, quoting from Psalm 40, that God had no pleasure in the various offerings of animals for sin, and that these typical sacrifices were set aside in order that Christ might be established as the real sacrifice for sins.—Heb. 10:4-9

On the basis of this, Christ gave his life as a “ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:6) His consecrated followers—body members—have their sins covered through the merit of his precious blood. Thus, they are accepted by God and counted as the antitypical Lord’s goat class. These now have an opportunity to share in the offering that ultimately will eradicate sin.

What a great privilege will follow for those faithful in following the Master’s example. All such will receive a heavenly reward and will be intimately associated with Christ in blessing mankind. “They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6 ■

The Feast of Booths

Key Verse: *“Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”*
—**Leviticus 23:42,43**

Selected Scripture:
Leviticus 23:33-43

convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.”—Lev. 23:33-36

This annual feast of rejoicing was to be a perpetual occurrence. On the first day of its observance each year, the people were to take the branches of various trees and make temporary shelters—booths—as their

AS WITH OTHER PROMI-
nent festivals, the Feast of Booths—or Tabernacles—had a literal application that pertained to the Jewish people, but also a symbolic fulfillment that was far more comprehensive. This commemoration was also known as the “feast of ingathering,” and was associated with the fall harvesting of grain, wine, and oil.—Exod. 23:16; Deut. 11:14

“The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy

dwelling for the remainder of the feast week.—vss. 40,41

Our Key Verse explains that this festival was to serve as a reminder of how God had sustained the Israelites in the wilderness. He did this for a period of forty years, during which they had no permanent place in which to dwell.—Neh. 9:21

A broader fulfillment of this celebration is suggested by the following prophetic words of Zechariah. “The LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. . . . And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. . . . And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”—Zech. 14:9,14,16

The context of the foregoing places its application in the future, when God’s kingdom is established on the earth. Gratitude will be expressed by all the obedient members of the human family, and they will forever render praise and honor to the Heavenly Father and Christ Jesus. This will be the time when there is a “new heaven and a new earth,” and the “holy city, new Jerusalem,” will be manifested to all who love God’s holy arrangements.—Rev. 21:1,2

Continuing, we read concerning that day: “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—vss. 3,4 ■

The Sheep and the Goats

“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

—Matthew 25:34

THE PARABLE OF THE

sheep and the goats is recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. It is the concluding portion of Jesus’ reply to his disciples’ question, when they inquired, “What shall be the sign of thy coming?” (chap. 24:3) The opening words of the parable—“When the Son of man shall come in his glory”—establish it to be part of the answer to the disciples’ question and one of the signs of his “coming”—*parousia* in the Greek text, which has the meaning of “presence” or “being along side.”

The presence of the Son of Man in “glory” during his Second Advent is in contrast with his First Advent, during which his presence was in humiliation and suffering. However, when Jesus was raised from the dead, he announced that “all power” had been given to him “in heaven and in earth.” (chap. 28:18) He was then exalted to the “right hand of the

throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) It is this divine, glorified Jesus who returns for the ultimate purpose of establishing his kingdom for the blessing of all people.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 28:14

The signs of the Master’s Second Advent, or presence, do not all appear at once, just as the signs of his First Advent did not all occur at the same time. We believe that, upon his return, Jesus first reckons with and rewards his faithful footstep followers. These “enter . . . into the joy” of the Lord, and are made “joint-heirs” with him. (Matt. 25:21; Rom. 8:16-18) Thus, in presenting the final sign of his Second Presence—the parable of the sheep and the goats—Jesus specified that these highly exalted “holy angels” would be with him. This is in harmony with Jesus’ promise to his faithful followers, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.”—Rev. 3:21

ALL NATIONS

With the faithful overcomers of the Gospel Age exalted to glory, and with Jesus on his throne, the divine plan of redemption and restoration moves into its final phase, which is the offering of restitution to “all the families of the earth.” The parable states that the people of “all nations” are gathered before him, and “he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.”—Matt. 25:32,33

Being a parable, it is well to guard against endeavoring to understand these words too literally. The people of all nations will not be gathered before the throne of Christ’s glory in one specific location,

with the “goats” herded to the left and the “sheep” to the right. The thought is, rather, that the people of the whole world will be taken into active consideration by the Great Judge of all, and that, through the agencies of his kingdom, he will deal with them for their development with the intent of determining their worthiness or unworthiness of everlasting life.

We are informed that this judgment “day,” or period, will be a time when the “inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Acts 17:31; Isa. 26:9,10) However, those who are evil at heart, and willfully persist in continuing in the way of disobedience, will not learn righteousness in that “land of uprightness,” nor will they recognize and “behold the majesty of the LORD.” These are the ones in the parable who are represented symbolically by the “goats on the left.”

DOMINION RESTORED

The “kingdom” mentioned in our theme text, which the “sheep” are informed that they are to inherit, is the same as stated in Genesis 1:26-28. It is man’s dominion over the earth which is the kingdom that was lost because of sin. The ultimate purpose of Christ’s return and Second Presence is the restoration of man to life and to his lost dominion. Jesus promised this very thing, saying, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10) Peter, likewise, stressed the same point when he said that “the heaven” had received Jesus “until the times of restitution of all things, which,” he added, “God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20-21

The “all things” to be restored to those of the human race who prove worthy include life as well as the lost dominion. The parable states that the sheep class enters into “life eternal.” (Matt. 25:46) Jesus made provision for this at his First Advent by dying on Calvary’s cross, “the just for the unjust.”—I Pet. 3:18

SINNERS DESTROYED

God is unchangeable, and the “wages,” or punishment, for sin will always be death. (Rom. 6:23) The “goats” of the parable represent the incorrigibly wicked during the world’s coming judgment day period. Having been provided a full opportunity during that time to turn to righteousness, but willfully refusing to do so, these hear the sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”—Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10,14

Fire is used in the Bible as a symbol of destruction. “Everlasting fire” would denote everlasting destruction. In verse 46, it is described as “everlasting punishment.” Peter, when speaking of those who fail to take advantage of the opportunities afforded them during the “times of restitution,” refers to this punishment as being “destroyed from among the people.” (Acts 3:23) Thus, we see harmony in the understanding that, just as the “sheep” and “goats” of the parable are symbolic in their meaning, so also is the use of the phrase “everlasting fire.”

THE SHEEP

In the parable, the “King” said to the “sheep,” who were “on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you

from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” (Matt. 25:34-36) The “sheep” are surprised at this, and inquire when they had rendered all these good services.—vss. 37-39

The King’s reply to their inquiry states, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (vs. 40) The expression, “these my brethren,” denotes that the King is speaking of those on the scene. These will be the people of the restored world of mankind at the close of the thousand-year judgment day period.

Jesus will be instrumental in awakening the world of mankind from the sleep of death, and in restoring the willing and obedient to human perfection. The Heavenly Father, however, will become the Father of the restored world of mankind—the sheep of the parable—when the kingdom is turned over to him at the close of the Millennium. (I Cor. 15:24,28) He is also Jesus’ Father. Thus, restored mankind will be “the least” of Jesus’ brethren, while his followers of the present Gospel Age, having been previously exalted to divine glory with him, will be the greatest.

CONTRASTING CHARACTERS

The sheep of the parable demonstrate their worthiness of everlasting life by their loving interest in, and solicitude for, those about them. Food, drink, shelter, companionship, clothing, health, sympathy, and love, epitomize a fairly complete cross section of human needs. The sheep sense these

needs of their fellowman, and do what they can to assist in supplying them. It becomes part of their character to do this, to such an extent that they do not realize they are performing deeds so pleasing to the King. They learn and practice the way of love, and at the end discover that they are worthy of inheriting the dominion of earth which our first parents forfeited through their disobedience to divine law.

The “goats,” on the other hand, do not display the qualities of divine love. Their outlook is selfish, so they do not enter into the spirit of Christ’s kingdom, and do not cooperate with its agencies for the general welfare and blessing of the people. They do not learn righteousness, and continue in the evil ways of the selfish world in which they had formerly lived. Consequently, they are cut off from life.

THE GREAT KING

Jesus is the great King referred to in the parable. He is the one who, together with his joint-heirs—the church class of this Gospel Age—will administer the just and righteous laws of the kingdom period, man’s judgment day. We know that there will be no misjudging of the people. No mistakes will be made. Concerning the King who will sit upon “the throne of his glory,” the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; . . . and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge

the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: . . . And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.”—Isa. 11:2-5

With the work of the judgment day complete, the purpose of Christ’s return and Second Presence will have been fully accomplished. The work symbolically described in this parable will be the final sign of his *parousia*. Many of the earlier signs of the Master’s presence are already visible, but this final evidence is still future. It will not come about until all the true followers of Jesus have proved their worthiness to live and “reign with him,” and are exalted in the “first resurrection” to sit with him “upon the throne of his glory.”—Rev. 20:6; Matt. 25:31

With joy, the sheep of the parable will join in the proclamation, “Say among the [nations] that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”—Ps. 96:10-13 ■

*“Justice will rule in the wilderness
and righteousness in the fertile field.
And this righteousness will bring peace.
Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever.”
—Isaiah 32:16,17, New Living Translation*

A Message to Remember

***“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”
—John 10:27,28***

THE SERMON ON THE

Mount given by our Lord and recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7 is widely held by believers to set forth needed guidelines and behaviors for Christians during this present Gospel Age. In the previous chapter we read, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand.” (Matt. 4:17) Those who would heed this admonition of Jesus give evidence of a readiness to receive the further instructions contained in the lessons herein to be considered.

The first portion of the Master’s discourse addresses a series of “Beatitudes,” or blessings. They illustrate the transformation of character to be manifested by those who would be acceptable to God as participants with Christ in his kingdom, and the “blessed” condition of all who are thus developed.

HUMILITY

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:3) Poverty of spirit was exhibited by Jesus to the degree that he willingly submitted to his Father’s will in every particular, and was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2:7,8) This quality was in direct opposition to the pride exhibited by Lucifer, whose desire was to be exalted “above the stars of God” and “be like the most High.” (Isa. 14:12-14) Those who would become associates with the Master during his glorious reign must first acknowledge their spiritual insufficiency and need of redemption. As they humbly acquiesce to the instructions found in God’s Word they will then have their hearts revived and begin to walk in righteousness.

SYMPATHETIC MOURNING

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” (Matt. 5:4) This trait might well be illustrated by having compassion toward others who are experiencing grief, as contrasted with having feelings of self-pity resulting from personal difficulties and adversity. When he saw the sorrow and despair of family and friends at the death of Lazarus, “Jesus wept.”—John 11:35

Prior to his crucifixion, Jesus “beheld the city” of Jerusalem, and “wept over it.” (Luke 19:41) He mourned because the people of Israel—his brethren—had little appreciation for the special divine blessings that would have been theirs as a nation of kings and priests. He knew that because of their hardness of heart, this grand offer was being withdrawn. (Matt. 23:37-39) For the footstep followers

of Jesus, there are many opportunities to enter into the sorrows of others and offer them comfort, as preparation for the future work of helping to wipe away mankind's tears in the kingdom.

MEEKNESS

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:5) The Lord invited those who would be his disciples to emulate him along this line of character. Later he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—chap. 11:28-30

The Master showed his meekness by being gentle and approachable in his dealings with children, publicans, sinners, and all with whom he came in contact. Even when he was shamefully treated, he did not retaliate. Peter stated, concerning Jesus, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”—I Pet. 2:23

Christ's followers are also called upon to suffer for righteousness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, they will be enabled to manifest a meek and gentle character. A worthy admonition for all consecrated believers is: “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, . . . patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.”—II Tim. 2:24,25

DESIRE FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matt. 5:6) The Scriptures declare concerning Jesus, “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” (Heb. 7:26) The footstep followers of our Lord are being selected to be a part of this heavenly priesthood and, therefore, must “hunger and thirst after righteousness” in order to be made pure and acceptable for this role.

Although covered by the imputed robe of Christ’s righteousness, spirit-begotten believers are not actually perfect in the flesh. They repeatedly need to go to the throne of heavenly grace for forgiveness of their trespasses. Nevertheless, they are required to strive against their inherited weaknesses and sinful propensities. These followers of the Master must love “righteousness” and hate “iniquity” to such a degree that their heart intentions will always strive for holiness of thought, word, and deed.—Heb. 1:9

THE MERCIFUL WILL OBTAIN MERCY

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt. 5:7) Those who will share in the work of restoring mankind during the kingdom must be very merciful. As kings and priests, they will be dealing with fallen mankind, who will need great assistance to recover from the sinful condition in which they entered the tomb. The order of that time will be justice, tempered with mercy, so that the human family can be educated in righteousness under the mediatorial rule while being brought up to perfection.

The Gospel Age saints have been objects of divine mercy. Each has been invited to undergo a transformation process from their sinful condition to become “a new creature . . . in Christ.” (II Cor. 5:17) If rightly exercised by their experiences, they ultimately will become part of that sympathetic high priest that will be empowered to extend mercy to the entire human family during the reign of righteousness.

PURITY OF HEART

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8) The impact of the Holy Spirit upon the consecrated believer is such that it drives away worldliness, deception, or anything that reflects an unholy attitude. Complete purity of the flesh cannot be attained in this life because of human imperfections. Through the redemptive merit of Christ’s sacrifice, however, the followers of Jesus strive against their weaknesses and blemishes, thereby attesting to the true desire of their will and heart.

As the prospective body members of Christ see the holy standard of thought and conduct as exemplified in the Scriptures, they will wage a vigorous warfare against sin in their flesh. They will seek assistance repeatedly from the throne of heavenly grace to demonstrate that their intentions are in harmony with the will of God and all his arrangements. The awesome prospect of actually seeing the Heavenly Father in glory is almost unspeakable, and will only be attained by those whose heart loyalty towards righteousness is unwavering.

PEACEMAKING

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” (Matt. 5:9) The Lord’s followers are to “seek peace, and pursue it” in their lives. (Ps. 34:14) They may especially rejoice in the opportunities provided whereby they can help to calm troublesome situations, as opposed to engendering strife. There are many ills and injustices in the world over which consecrated believers have very limited impact. However, there will be times when a word of reconciliation may appropriately be interjected, both among brethren and others outside the fellowship.

“A word spoken in due season” may prove to be invaluable in bringing calm to a situation that otherwise might get out of control. (Prov. 15:23) The lessons learned and applied on this side of the veil in such development of character will stand the more than overcomers in good stead as they fully engage in the ministry of reconciliation during the glorious Millennial reign of Christ.

JOYFUL ENDURANCE OF PERSECUTION

“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, . . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” (Matt. 5:10-12) The ability to manifest this attribute gives evidence of a high degree of spirituality. Revilings and false accusations are always unpleasant to the flesh. It is only the New Creature that can appreciate such treatment, because it realizes that to endure evil for Christ’s sake is an evidence of loyalty to

God and is credited as “bearing his reproach.”—Heb. 13:13

The concept of unmerited suffering by consecrated believers is further expanded upon in Scripture: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: . . . But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”—I Pet. 4:14-16

OTHER THEMES

After Jesus provided the Beatitudes, he continued to speak, touching on various subjects. He said that the disciples of Christ are to be “the salt of the earth,” in that their lives should have a preserving influence upon the world, which otherwise would be even more depraved than at present. (Matt. 5:13) If footstep followers of Jesus fail to live out the high character standards exemplified in the Beatitudes, however, their testimony would have little positive impact upon mankind. Similarly, Christians are to be the “light of the world,” just as Jesus was that “great light” that came into the world. Individually and collectively, consecrated believers are called upon to let their “light so shine before men” and by their good works, emulate the character of the Master and glorify the Heavenly Father.—vss. 14-16; chap. 4:16

Another theme found in the Sermon on the Mount relates to Christ and the Mosaic Law. Concerning the Law, Jesus said, “I am not come to destroy, . . . but to fulfil.” (chap. 5:17,18) He was faithful in

keeping its every feature perfectly, and in laying down his humanity in sacrifice, thus “nailing” the Law “to his cross.” (Col. 2:14) As a result, all who accept the terms of discipleship, the Jews first and later the Gentiles, would have an opportunity to become a part of the spiritual seed of Abraham, through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.—Matt. 16:24; Gal. 3:27-29; Gen. 28:14

A high standard of righteous living would be required to participate in this arrangement. Jesus said, “Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:20) This is evidenced by the fact that Jesus’ teachings on such matters as anger, adultery, and divorce, were of a higher order than those proclaimed by the Pharisees.—vss. 21-32

The Pharisees held to the letter of the law, knowing that killing others was forbidden, and such an act would require the offender to be brought to judgment. (Exod. 20:13; 21:12) Jesus, however, equated anger and hatred with murder, even if they do not lead to actual killing. Additionally, the calling of one’s brother a “fool” was an extremely serious matter that could lead to dire consequences for the offender. Thus, improper feelings towards one’s brother should be promptly settled, because failure to do so and harboring ill will could not be acceptable to the Lord. In looking at all these issues, although Jesus’ ministry occurred prior to Pentecost, it is evident these lessons were meant for Christian believers, begotten of the Holy Spirit.

The Mosaic Law also prohibited adultery. (Exod. 20:14) Jesus stressed inward purity and the need to crucify any such desires even if the actual act was not committed. (Matt. 5:28) Continuing, he said, “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell”—that is, destruction. (vs. 29) A disciplined life of self-control is emphasized as needful for the followers of Christ and seems to be the point made regarding the Master’s instruction to “cut . . . off” offending members of one’s body.—vs. 30

As part of the Law, divorce was permitted because of incompatibility. (Deut. 24:1-4) Here again, the Master introduces a higher standard for his disciples, in which he forbade divorce except in the case of “fornication,” even though he did not command that divorce must occur in such an instance. His instructions also prohibit marriage or remarriage to anyone previously found guilty of adultery. (Matt. 5:31,32) Additional considerations regarding these topics are found in some writings by the Apostle Paul.—I Cor. 6:9-11; 7:8-17,39

Another issue addressed in the Sermon on the Mount was that of using oaths to emphasize the truthfulness of statements made. The Jews knew from the Law that one should not take God’s name in vain, but evidently attempted to circumvent the third commandment by swearing by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or even one’s head. (Matt. 5:33-36) For Christians, oaths should be unnecessary as there are no circumstances under which it would be proper to tell a falsehood. We read, “Above all things, my

brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”—James 5:12; Matt. 5:37

The teaching of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was well established in the Old Testament, although authority for meting out retribution lay in the hands of established authorities rather than the individual. (Matt. 5:38; Exod. 21:24; Deut. 19:21) When injury is inflicted upon a follower of Christ, he may use any lawful means to obtain redress, but it would violate the spirit of the Lord to “render evil for evil.” (I Thess. 5:15) However, the example of removing one’s self from harm’s way is well illustrated by Paul’s appeal to have his case heard by Caesar rather than to return to Jerusalem and stand trial there, which undoubtedly would have resulted in immediate physical harm or death.—Acts 25:9-12

Jesus taught that a key evidence of a regenerated heart is the ability to love one’s enemies. Additionally, he called upon his disciples to “do good to them that hate you.” (Matt. 5:43-45) Both of these qualities are impossible to achieve without receiving divine aid through an increasing measure of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and by patiently endeavoring to imitate Christ. By studying the principles of truth outlined in the Scriptures and noting the selflessness of Jesus in laying down his life to benefit all mankind, disciples who obediently follow in the Master’s footsteps will take increasing pleasure from each evidence that they are overcoming the spirit of the world, the flesh, and the adversary. Such a growth will indeed motivate them to fulfill

these commands as evidence of their supreme love for God.—vs. 48

Matthew chapter 6 commences with a reminder that unselfishness is absolutely necessary to receive divine favor. (vss. 1-4) The act of giving to others in sincerity and without desiring public approval, in contrast to seeking commendation from fellow men, is an evidence of heart purity. Jesus saw that this quality was obviously lacking in the hypocritical religious leaders of the Jews, who he said “sound a trumpet” when doing their alms.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Verses 5-13 are devoted to Jesus’ instructions concerning the subject of prayer. Such petitions, he says, should not be in the form of “vain repetitions,” as practiced by some. Prayer is a privilege, and instruction concerning the basis for acceptable prayers is necessary. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.”—James 4:3

Jesus gave an example of a proper form of petition that is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is characterized by simplicity, brevity, and reverence. It first acknowledges the sovereignty of God and ascribes honor and praise to the Creator. This is followed by an expression of confidence that divine authority will be manifested in the establishment of a kingdom on the earth, and the conditions that will obtain here will be in harmony with the righteousness existing in the heavenly realm.—Matt. 6:9,10

After giving priority to God’s interests, all personal needs are presented, acknowledging dependence upon our Heavenly Father for sustenance. (vss. 11,12)

Although “daily bread” is usually associated with temporal provisions, the need for spiritual food to sustain consecrated believers should be the main intent of this request. In requesting forgiveness, emphasis is again placed upon the quality of mercy that should be manifested by Christians towards others who may offend. The inability of the Lord’s people to perform perfectly in their actions and a continual need to seek divine forgiveness for transgressions should help to cultivate compassion and sympathy for others.

In view of personal weaknesses and failings under trial, believers may pray “lead us not,” or abandon us not, in such situations, acknowledging that only from God comes grace sufficient for the occasion, not from one’s own strength. Similarly, recognition that there is an evil one is a reminder not to trust to self but to call upon the Lord for safety and deliverance.—vs. 13

LAYING UP TREASURES

Beginning with verse 19, and for the balance of Matthew 6, we find some of the most powerful teachings of the Lord with respect to laying up earthly versus heavenly treasures. Anything that man values becomes a treasure to him. These may include wealth, fame, earthly friendships, power, family relationships, social distinction, and material belongings. Those who would be disciples of the Master are required to place their attention upon heavenly treasures to which the spirit of sanctification will lead.—vss. 19-25

There are some very worthwhile earthly treasures that might be pursued. However, inasmuch as

one cannot “serve two masters” simultaneously, such desires must be subservient to fulfilling the terms of discipleship, which involve self-denial and cross-bearing. (Matt. 16:24) The Apostle Paul could confidently claim at the end of his course that a crown of righteousness awaited him because he had set his affections upon the things above, and had “fought a good fight.”—II Tim. 4:7,8

As an impetus to prevent anxious care on the part of his followers, Jesus gave as an example the fact that the birds of the air did not worry that God would not provide for their needs. (Matt. 6:26) It should be noted, however, that was not a prohibition against putting forth effort to secure things needful for oneself and one’s family. Yet, the concept of going to extraordinary means to obtain future personal security apart from God is well illustrated in the parable of the rich man, who knew no limits to his care over earthly things, but ultimately lost all in death.—Luke 12:16-21

In a further illustration, Jesus pointed to the “lilies of the field,” which rely solely on God for their existence, yet exceed all of Solomon’s elegant apparel in beauty. Similarly, instead of striving for an accumulation of material goods, disciples of the Lord should “seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” and all other necessary things would be provided according to the Father’s will. The Lord in his earthly sojourn followed that course unto death. His followers, if faithful, will do the same.—Matt. 6:28-34

JUDGING OTHERS

In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus gives explicit instructions to the household of faith that they should not judge others. (vss. 1,2) The word “judge” as used in these verses includes among its definitions such meanings as punish, condemn, and avenge. Recognizing that it is impossible to read anyone’s heart, or to be certain of the motives behind someone’s deeds or words, it should be apparent that fault-finding or rendering harsh judgment of others gives evidence of lacking mercy. Knowing that “there is none righteous, no, not one,” how important it is to remove the “beam” from one’s own eye before attempting to remove a “mote,” or speck, from the eye of another. (vss. 3-5; Rom. 3:10) As with the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, this admonition is especially for brethren in Christ, rather than the world of mankind who are not seeking to follow in the footsteps of the Master.

It is possible, however, and scripturally appropriate, to make certain judgments or to exercise the spirit of discernment without condemning or speaking evil of others. Two such examples would include examining the doctrinal teachings of leaders and determining who are qualified to be class servants. (I Tim. 3:1-13; I John 4:1) Additionally, the ecclesia has the responsibility of making determinations if major disputes between brethren have occurred, or if serious trespasses require corrective action.—Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:9-13

Following the Master’s reference to judging, he provides a lesson as to the importance of diligence in seeking God’s assistance through the guiding influence of his Holy Spirit. (Matt. 7:7,8) It is

quite humbling to seriously consider the many lessons found in the Sermon on the Mount. All honest-hearted followers of Jesus will find that they come short of attaining these high standards of righteous conduct in various areas. Nevertheless, his disciples are encouraged to seek God's ways through persistency in study and prayer. The Lord gives assurance that the loving Heavenly Father will reward such efforts far beyond what an earthly parent would do for his child.—vss. 9-11

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” (vs. 12) This verse, commonly known as the Golden Rule, expresses the means by which those in the school of Christ can examine their own actions, especially with regard to their fellow brethren. When the meaning of this passage is internalized, the Lord's people will be aided in their Christian walk. They will keenly realize the pain they would experience if the situation were reversed, and their brethren were condemning or speaking evil of themselves. How sobering it is to realize the stringent requirements of the narrow way.

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.” (vs. 16) Earlier it was noted that judging others in the sense of condemning them is unmerciful. Nevertheless, as the outward “fruitage” of fellow brethren is seen, those who have the spirit of discernment should be able to determine whether others display the spirit of sacrifice and whether their fruit reflects the qualities contained in the Beatitudes. If they bring forth “good fruit,” and their teachings and example are in accordance with Scriptural principles, they

may be supported and encouraged. If their fruitage manifests the works of the flesh, the Lord will reject them. A noteworthy standard for contrasting “works of the flesh” with the “fruit of the Spirit” is set forth with clarity by the Apostle Paul.—Gal. 5:19-23

“UPON A ROCK”

The Sermon on the Mount concludes with a description of those who build “upon a rock.” (Matt. 7:24,25) This rock is Christ Jesus, who has set forth the necessary doctrinal foundation, faith structure, and character likeness to be developed as revealed in God’s Word. This contrasts with those who build upon the “sand” of human traditions, theories, and false doctrines, which do not have a sanctifying effect, nor can stand up to the storms of testing and trial.—vss. 26,27

As the Gospel Age nears its close, there are increasing trials and tests upon all who profess to be the Lord’s followers. Only those who are in full heart-harmony with the Lord’s will shall stand these tests and be rewarded appropriately. Others who have not properly appreciated the high standards and privileges of discipleship will be exposed, in fulfillment of the prophet’s words, “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” (Isa. 28:17) As we apply the lessons Jesus taught in his Sermon on the Mount, and as expanded upon in other related scriptures, may our daily conduct reflect that we are “doers of the word and not hearers only.”—James 1:22 ■

Paul Encourages the Hebrews

***“Consider him that
endured such
contradiction of
sinners against
himself, lest ye be
wearied and faint
in your minds.”
—Hebrews 12:3***

THE EPISTLE TO THE

Hebrews contains much vital information concerning the typical significance of the Tabernacle which God instructed Moses to build in the “wilderness”—particularly as to its services and its priesthood. It also places the promised “New Covenant” in its proper position in the divine arrangement. It is a valuable epistle so far as numerous doctrines of the plan of God are concerned.

In addition to these typical and doctrinal features of the book, also woven in its pages is a message of encouragement to the “Hebrews” to whom it is especially addressed. According to the Apostle Paul, who we believe is the author of this epistle, these Hebrews had not been making progress in the truth as they should. Paul speaks of them as “dull of hearing,” to which he adds, “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the

oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”—Heb. 5:11,12

Paul’s method of encouraging these brethren to a more steadfast and progressive appreciation of the truth was first to assure them of its source, showing that it had come to them from the God of Israel, through his beloved Son, whom they had accepted as the Messiah, and to whom they had dedicated their lives. He calls their attention to this divine origin of the Gospel in the first chapter of the epistle.

Its opening verses read, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”—Heb. 1:1-8

In no better way could the apostle emphasize the great weight of authority that supports the Gospel than to remind us of the highly exalted position of God's beloved Son, through whom the Heavenly Father has spoken to us. We know that the holy angels occupy an important place in the service of God, but they have not been exalted to the high position to which Jesus has. Later in this chapter, Paul speaks of the angels as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." How much this service of the angels means to every follower of the Master. Yet, the Heavenly Father has never said to any of these, "Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (vss. 13,14; Ps. 110:1) However, he did say this to his Son, who at his resurrection from the dead was given "all power . . . in heaven and in earth."—Matt. 28:18

THE CHANNEL OF TRUTH

This highly exalted one is the channel of truth for the Lord's people during the present Gospel Age. He has spoken to us through his own personal ministry, and he speaks to us through his inspired apostles and prophets. This is the reason it is so vital to adhere to what we have learned from him. The apostle was leading up to this very point, for he begins the next chapter by saying, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation;

which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”—Heb. 2:1-3

Paul realized that the Hebrews to whom he wrote this letter had to some extent already let these things “slip”—that to a degree they had already neglected this wonderful truth which they had received from God’s highly exalted Son. As we have already quoted, they had need to be taught again the “first principles of the oracles of God,” so now he was encouraging them to a renewed effort, lest the great truths of the Gospel be allowed to slip from them entirely.

SUFFERING NOT EASY

It would seem from various statements in the epistle that there was one overriding reason the faith and zeal of the Hebrew brethren were showing signs of decline. As a result of espousing the cause of Christ they had received a great deal of persecution—some of which, perhaps, they did not expect. Paul explained to them that this was in reality quite in harmony with the divine purpose. As followers of Jesus, they were his brethren, called to the same glory to which he had been exalted, but that the pathway to this glory was one of suffering.

On this point he wrote: “For it became him, for whom are all things, . . . in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto

thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.”—Heb. 2:10-13

While the Hebrew brethren were now showing signs of laxness, this was not true of them when they first accepted the Gospel message. At that time they even received their trials and persecutions with steadfastness and joy. In chapter 10, Paul reminds them, “Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”—vss. 32-34

THE “FORMER DAYS”

From this passage, it is clear that when these Hebrew brethren were first enlightened they endured much affliction, and took joyfully the plundering of their goods. Some of them had been locked in stocks and exposed to public view as they endured the insults of passers-by. Others became companions of those thus used. In other words, they voluntarily let it be known that they were friends and brethren of those who were held in the “gazingstocks,” thus sharing their suffering with them. This revealed a remarkable degree of zeal for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren.

However, this was in the beginning. At that time they took joyfully these experiences, knowing that

they had “in heaven a better and an enduring substance.” So Paul urged, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” (Heb. 10:35,36) The use of the word “therefore” in this passage suggests that the Hebrews were indeed showing an inclination, through laxity, to discard their confidence. Hence, Paul encouraged them to hold on to their faith for, as he had said earlier in the chapter, “He is faithful that promised.”—vs. 23

“A LITTLE WHILE”

Like all the brethren in the Early Church, this Hebrew group looked for the return of their Messiah to set up his kingdom. The general impression then was that this great event in God’s plan would take place soon. Perhaps, however, more time had already gone by than they had expected, and they were becoming discouraged on this account. So Paul continued, “Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (vs. 37) Here the apostle was referring to essentially an entire age in the plan of God as “a little while,” and was encouraging the Hebrews to maintain their faith, hope, and zeal, and to continue their submissive endurance of suffering. After all, the waiting time was only as long as their individual lives.

Do we not have a somewhat similar test of faith at the present time? We believe that “he” who was to come has indeed come in his Second Presence, yet we are still laboring on this side of the veil. In

the Lord's providence, however, it is our privilege to be associated with the harvest work which has been taking place in the years since the Master's return. Yet, this work has extended over a much longer period than many of us had supposed that it would. Therefore, we too need to watch lest we cast away our confidence. We also have need of patience, that after having done the will of God in devoting ourselves to him and to the Messianic cause, "we might receive the promise."

GOD NOT UNRIGHTEOUS

The early zeal of the Hebrews is also shown in chapter six of this epistle. Paul spoke of this, saying, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end."—vss. 10,11

A mere "first love" enthusiasm for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren is not enough. (Rev. 2:4) Paul set the right pattern for the Hebrews and for us when he wrote that they should show that same initial diligence "to the full assurance of hope unto the end." This is the real test of Christian faithfulness. It is not so much what we have done to serve the Lord in the past, but it is important that today, and in all the days to come, we continue zealously and faithfully in his service. Only those who do this can hope to receive the glorious reward which the Lord has promised, which is to be associated with Jesus in his glorious kingdom to bless all the families of the earth.

“STRONG CONSOLATION”

In a further effort to build up the faith and zeal of the Hebrew brethren, Paul cites God’s dealings with faithful Abraham. (Heb. 6:12-17) He refers to God’s promise to bless all the families of the earth through the seed of Abraham, and reminds us that when he proved faithful by showing his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering, God confirmed his promise to him by an oath. Thus, “by two immutable things,”—his promise and his oath—“in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”—vss. 18-20

This was strong consolation indeed for those Hebrew brethren. It reminded them of Abraham’s faithfulness under severe trial, and of the trustworthiness of God who had made the promise to him. This was one of the Messianic promises of the Old Testament, and the Hebrews had accepted Jesus as their Messiah. Now they were reminded that suffering was involved in the inheritance of this wonderful promise, and that if they were to be among the “many sons” brought to glory with Jesus, they also would need to patiently endure. This would be possible by having their spirits strengthened by the “strong consolation” provided by God through his faithfulness to Abraham.

This same great truth, centered in the oath-bound promise to Abraham, should be a great

consolation to us while we wait for our deliverance, if faithful unto death, into the heavenly kingdom. We think it is significant that Paul should use this great fundamental truth of the Gospel in his efforts to encourage the Hebrews and us. Speculative interpretations of non-essential details of Scripture will not do this. Only the fundamentals of the Creator's divine plan and purpose can furnish the courage we need in order to face the trials entailed in suffering with Christ on this side of the veil.

The Christian should learn early in his walk in the narrow way that serving the Lord with the expectation of sharing in Christ's glory requires faithfulness to the end of life. Paul reminded the Hebrews of this, writing, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (Heb. 3:14) The "beginning" of the Christian's confidence must be held "unto the end" of our earthly sojourn. Anything we may have done in the past loses its importance if our faithfulness now does not measure up to what it formerly was. This is Paul's great lesson to the Hebrew brethren and to us. Only cheerful endurance to the end will lead to a "crown of life" and "glory . . . honour and immortality."—Rev. 2:10; Rom. 2:7

FAITHFUL HEROES OF THE PAST

To further encourage the Hebrew brethren, Paul reminded them of the faithfulness of those who in past ages had endured many sorts of trials, yet did not permit these to swerve them from their dedication in the service of their God—the God

of Israel. These examples of faith are brought to our attention in the eleventh chapter.

Let us note what Paul says concerning one of those faithful servants of old: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."—Heb. 11:23-27

In verse 1 of this chapter, Paul defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Moses had this sort of faith, and it gave "substance," or reality, to the things which God had promised. He had "evidence" also of those blessings which God had assured, even though to the natural eye they were often "not seen." Seemingly, this was one of the problems of the Hebrew brethren. Their faith had weakened and they could no longer "see" the great features of God's plan in their clear perspective. Their afflictions and persecutions had cast a veil over God's promises, and without sufficient faith to be able to see through this veil, their progress in the narrow way had been impeded, even set back.

Paul speaks also of those faithful ones of the past who "had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings,

yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”—Heb. 11:36-40

Notice that these faithful ones of the past did not in their day receive the promise—that is, the fulfillment of that which God had promised. Yet they endured faithfully unto the end of their life. Indeed, God blessed them with strength to endure, and thus encouraged them in their pathway of faithfulness. However, as to the future rewards in the resurrection, these remained invisible to them, and they could rejoice in God’s future promises only by the eye of faith.

Have not all the Lord’s people been subjected to this situation? Even now, in the harvest of the Gospel Age, and in the time of Christ’s Second Presence, our faith in God’s promises is what lifts us up. Christ’s presence is an invisible one, and while we observe the old world tottering to its fall to make way for the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” we see it all upon the basis of faith in the promises of God’s Word. (II Pet. 3:13) If our faith is weak, our zeal will lag, and instead of being rejoicing Christians we may well experience a measure of disappointment that our waiting seems to have been stretched out over

so long a period of time. Surely it is true of all the Lord's people that we have need of patience!

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Beginning the twelfth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, he writes, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."—vss. 1,2

In the previous chapter, Paul had surrounded the Hebrew brethren with "a cloud of witnesses" in order to encourage them to a more steadfast faith and zeal. Now, in view of these encouraging examples from the past he urges them to "lay aside" the weights of worldly care. He exhorts them to cast behind the sin of unbelief and lack of faith, which did so easily beset them. Indeed, Paul is encouraging all of the Lord's dear people along these lines, that all might "run with patience the race" set before them.

The apostle then presents the greatest of all "witnesses"—our Lord Jesus—"the author and finisher of our faith." He says that the joy which was set before the Master encouraged him to such an extent that he could endure the cross, and despise the shame. This joy was set before Jesus by the promises of the Heavenly Father. One of these is recorded in Psalm 16: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine

Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (vss. 10,11) According to Paul’s testimony, Jesus had now entered into the “presence” of his Heavenly Father, and was at the “right hand of the throne of God.”

Paul admonished the Hebrew brethren to consider Jesus, who “endured such contradiction of sinners against himself,” lest they become weary and faint in their minds. (Heb. 12:3) The “contradiction” of sinners against Jesus cost him much suffering, and finally resulted in death. How could the Hebrew brethren expect anything different, especially since Paul had explained to them that “many sons,” including them, were being brought to glory by the same pathway of suffering in which Jesus walked? How appropriate it was that they—and we likewise—consider him.

Then the apostle adds, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” (vs. 4) Here blood is used as a symbol of life poured out. The Hebrew brethren, in former days, had taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, being made a gazingstock, and suffering in other ways. They had also been faithful in the Lord’s service, but they had not yet completed their sacrifice as Jesus had—they had not yet “resisted unto blood.”

A KINGDOM PICTURE

Paul’s encouragement to the Hebrews reaches a climax later in the twelfth chapter. Beginning with verse 22, he presents a symbolic picture of the kingdom in which the Hebrew brethren hoped to

have a share. Here he was setting joys before them, even as Jesus had joys set before him to help him bear the cross. We quote this symbolic description of the kingdom without comment: “Ye are come [by faith] unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”—Heb. 12:22-24

After the many admonitions to faithfulness, and the warnings, some of which we have quoted, Paul returns to his premise which he established at the beginning of the epistle—that we should be faithful to the Truth because of the great weight of its authority as vested in Jesus. He says, “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.” (vs. 25) Finally, Paul provides one more faith-inspiring promise, saying, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence.”—vs. 28 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Enos Mingo, Homabay, Kenya—January 17.
Age, 37

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

IMMORTAL SOUL

DawnBible: The position you have outlined from scripture makes so much more sense. (*When a Man Dies*) It is far more logical than anything I have heard about an immortal soul that goes “somewhere” after death.

Thank you for your careful review.—website

A SIGN FROM GOD

DawnBible: I have just sent off for 4 of your booklets. I hope you send all 4 to me because they have something in common (*How God Answers Prayer*) with what I am going through right now in this time of life.

I would love to talk to you about what I’m going through, maybe you could be of some help to me. I know this was a sign from God to see your books, so he must have sent you into my life for a reason.—website

PLAN FOR ALL

DawnBible: I am currently engaged in the *Study of the Scriptures* and I find it amazing, and I am seeing the plan that Jehovah God has for all the world. Thank you.—OR

MATERIALS A LIFE LINE

DawnBible: Thank you for all the resources here—the recorded lectures, all the audios, *The Dawn* magazine.

I am sick and shut in and the Dawn is a life line. Thank you there at the Dawn.—OH

FOOD AT THE RIGHT TIME

DawnBible: May God bless all and each person who have contributed to this great work.

The truth that we learn from this website is indeed food at the right time. I am giving the link to everyone I know.—South Africa ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

B. Keith

<u>Australia</u>	Sydney	February 6
Anglesea	January 22-25	
Melbourne	29-31	

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

M. Balko

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

O. B. Elbert

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

R. Gorecki

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

L. Griehs

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

S. Jeuck

Jacksonville, FL February 21

B. Keith

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

E. Kuenzli

Atlanta, GA February 14

H. Montague

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

R. Sconyers

Jacksonville, FL February 21

B. Siwak

Sacramento, CA
February 12-14

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CONVENTIONS

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

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 12-14—

Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact K. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 967-0635 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 5-7—

Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32822. Phone: (407) 851-6400. Specify "Florida Bible Students" to receive special rate through February 25. Other information, contact R. Sconyers. Phone: (407) 923-8067 or Email: rsguitarman59@gmail.com

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 12,13—

Holiday Inn Gulfport Airport, 9515 Highway 49, Gulfport, MS 39503. Contact: M. Costelli. Phone: (228) 861-2822 or Email: michael@simpkins-costelli.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, March 25-27—

Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

PAN-AMERICAN CONVENTION, March 25-27—

The Presbyterian Women's Centre, Akokobi, Legon, Accra, Ghana. Contact: H. Montague. Phone: (516) 485-1041 or Email: montags3ny@aol.com

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 16,17—

Quality Inn of Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48003. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, April 30-May 1—Brighton Community Center, 555 Brighton Street, Brighton, MI 48114. Contact J. Kienast. Phone: (248) 496-5611 or Email: jenkienast@gmail.com

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 28-30—Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Avenue, Aurora, IL 60506. Contact L. Larson, 5445 W. 149 Street, Oak Forest, IL 60452. Phone: (708) 535-2066, (708) 341-2067 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 28,29—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. For room reservations (subsidized rate of \$55/night ending April 20), contact N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5246 or Email: npnekora@aol.com. Other information, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com. Please place LABible in the subject line of the email.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 12—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

PRINCE ALBERT AND SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1-3—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK Canada S6V5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or Email: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 16-21—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com