

# The Dawn

*Herald of Christ's Presence*



# The DAWN

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# The Certainty of the Resurrection

***“I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead.”***

**—Acts 26:22,23**

**The assurance of a resurrection** is one of the very prominent themes in the Bible, and thus it should be, else the promises of God would be of no effect. However, it is first necessary to fully discern the nature of death if one is to understand why there must be a resurrection of the dead. The Bible tells us that death is a condition of oblivion—non-existence. (Eccles. 9:5,6,10) When the

perfect man Adam sinned, he incurred the penalty for sin, which was death. (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12; 6:23) The condition of death was described by God in this way: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3:19) There was no mention of an afterlife or of a “soul” not subject to death.

Adam was destined to go out of existence eternally except for the love and mercy of God which was expressed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His resurrection was a guarantee that God's plan of a resurrection for all would become a reality. The Apostle Paul in his sermon on Mars' Hill said that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."—Acts 17:31

### **Jesus' Resurrection Necessary**

It was vitally important in the plan of God that Jesus die as the ransom for Adam, but it was equally necessary that he be resurrected out from the condition of death. A dead Christ, or Messiah, would not be able to fulfill the wonderful promises of God's Word, such as contained in Isaiah 9:6,7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." The disciples expected this promise to be fulfilled at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry, and that is why they were so discouraged and despondent when Jesus died on the cross. They did not understand that this was part of the Heavenly Father's plan.

On the first day of the week, the third day after Jesus was crucified, he appeared to two of his disheartened disciples who were on their way to Emmaus. (Luke 24:1,21) They thought him to be a

stranger. As they conversed, he mildly rebuked them for not discerning this important part of the Lord's arrangement, saying: "Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:25-27) During the subsequent forty days the disciples came to accept and believe the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but it was not until after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them that they fully understood the importance of the resurrection in God's plan of reconciliation. This was demonstrated by Peter's sermon recorded in Acts 2:14-36.

The word resurrection is not found in the Old Testament, but the doctrine is taught by many plain statements of Scripture. In Job 14:13-15 we read: "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! ... Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." The Prophet Isaiah wrote: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isa. 26:19) The Prophet Hosea wrote: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."—Hos. 13:14

## **Promise to Abraham**

The absolute certainty of a resurrection was illustrated for us in an incident that demanded a resurrection in order for a divine promise to be meaningful. We are speaking of God's promise to Abraham recorded in Genesis 22:15-18. It will be remembered that God had promised Abraham a son who was to be born of Sarah. (Gen. 17:19) Abraham had waited many years for this promise to be fulfilled, for it was to be through this seed that all the other promises God had made to him were to be brought to pass. Yet the account tells us that when Isaac was a young man God asked Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering. (Gen. 22:1,2) Abraham's faith in God's promises was such that he believed God would resurrect Isaac from the dead, if necessary, in order to fulfill them.

This confidence was demonstrated in Abraham's words to those left behind at the foot of the mount when he instructed the young men, "abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." (vs. 5) The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 11:17-19 confirms this thought: "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." We note that in this picture God was represented in Abraham and Jesus was represented in Isaac. All of the promises of God to the world were centered in Jesus. It was necessary for Jesus to live

if he were to carry out these promises, by resurrecting him from the dead.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. They endeavored to trap Jesus by inventing a preposterous situation that made one woman the wife of seven deceased husbands. The question to our Lord was, in the kingdom whose wife shall she be? Jesus answered, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." (Matt. 22:23-30) Jesus was simply pointing out that in the kingdom there would be no marriage, and therefore the situation invented by the Sadducees had no meaning. However, Jesus saw an opportunity to point out the error in the Sadducees' doctrine when he said, "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."—vss. 31,32; Exod. 3:6

The Sadducees knew that the patriarchs had been dead for centuries, and they also realized that Jesus knew this. They were forced to acknowledge that, if God was true and dependable, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have to be brought back to life if they were to enjoy once again this promised relationship with God.

## **A Prophet Like Moses**

In Deuteronomy 18:18,19 Moses repeated the words of God to him concerning the kingdom which will function under a new mediator and a new covenant

arrangement. “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”

The Apostle Peter in Acts 3:21-26 applies this prophecy by Moses to the kingdom, calling it the “times of restitution of all things,” and stating that this wonderful time was spoken of by God through the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Then he reminded his audience of the original prophecy spoken by Moses. This wonderful sermon of Peter’s was given on one of the porches of the Temple. Among those in the audience were the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees. When Peter concluded his sermon with this statement, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities,” the captain and the Sadducees were angry. They were angry because Peter claimed that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and that through him all who were in their graves would be resurrected in order to benefit from “the times of restitution.” The account continues: “And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”—Acts 4:1,2

## **Prophetic Features of the Law Covenant**

We are told in the Scriptures that many features of the Law Covenant given to the nation of Israel prefigured future events. (I Cor. 10:11; Heb. 10:1)



We find that this is especially true of the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, which was a part of the Law. In this chapter the Lord gave Moses instructions concerning the feasts which the nation was to observe. On the fourteenth of the first month they were to slay the Passover lamb, and on the fifteenth, they were to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to last seven days. (Exod. 12:6; Lev. 23:5,6) The Israelites departed from Egypt "on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover." (Num. 33:3) After they came into their land and had a grain harvest, the Lord instructed Moses that they were to perform an additional rite. We read: "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." (Lev. 23:10,11) The "sabbath" here mentioned was the holy convocation that marked the first day of the feast of unleavened bread.

As part of the ritual, the priest would go out among the fields, select the grain that was ripe, gather a bundle and tie it into a sheaf. He would return and at the altar would wave the sheaf before the Lord as an offering of the firstfruits of the harvest. This act marked the beginning of the grain harvest, which was to last fifty days.—vss. 15,16

This feature of the feast was marvelously prophetic in the case of Jesus. It was incumbent upon Jesus to keep the details of the Law perfectly. The fourteenth of Nisan began at sunset, and sometime after midnight Jesus was arrested in the Garden of

Gethsemane and delivered to Caiaphas and then to the Romans. (Matt. 26:47-75; 27:1-26) The account in Mark states that he was crucified the third hour, approximately 9:00 a.m., still the fourteenth of Nisan. Jesus was on the cross until the ninth hour, which was approximately 3:00 p.m., and he died. (Mark 15:25-37) Thus, Jesus died on the same day, the 14th of Nisan according to Jewish reckoning, that Israel's Passover lambs were slain. Paul confirms this connection, saying, "Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us."—I Cor. 5:7, *New Living Translation*

Jesus' body was placed in a sepulcher before sundown on the fourteenth of Nisan. (Luke 23:53-55) The body lay in the sepulcher the entire next day, from sunset to sunset, which was the Sabbath, or fifteenth of Nisan. (vs. 56) Then very early in the morning—the first day of the week, or sixteenth of Nisan—the women came to the sepulcher and found that Jesus had been raised from the dead. (Luke 24:1-6; Mark 16:1-6) Thus Jesus became the "firstfruits" of the spiritual harvest and the "firstfruits of them that slept" in death—that is, the firstfruits of the resurrection. (I Cor. 15:20) We might think of the Jewish priest fulfilling the rite of waving the sheaf before the Lord early in the morning of that sixteenth day of Nisan, at the same time Jesus was fulfilling the Law by being resurrected from the dead.

## **Paul's Detailed Testimony**

In the Apostle Paul's day, as in ours, there was skepticism concerning the resurrection of the dead. To address this he wrote the fifteenth chapter

of I Corinthians to show that the promised resurrection was an essential and integral part of God's plan of salvation. In the opening verses of the chapter Paul reminds the church at Corinth that the message he declared to them was the Gospel [Greek: a good message], and the first and foremost part of that message was the death and resurrection of Jesus. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."—I Cor. 15:3,4

The apostle then presents the resurrection of Jesus as a fact because he was seen by the apostles and then by more than five hundred brethren, the greater number of whom were still alive at the time of Paul's writing. Last of all, the risen Lord was seen by Paul himself on the road to Damascus. (vss. 5-8) In verses 12-19 Paul demonstrates that the entire doctrine of the resurrection hinges on the resurrection of Jesus, and because he was raised all who are in their graves will also be raised from the dead. If Jesus had not been raised, then all—even his disciples and followers—would still be in their sins. For even though Jesus died to take Adam's place in death, it was necessary for him to live again in order that he might appear in the presence of God to present the value, or merit, of his ransom offering into the hands of divine justice.

The apostle concludes this part of his argument saying: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Jesus] came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in

Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive,”—that is, all will be given an opportunity, by means of obedience, to gain everlasting life. (vss. 20-22) The resurrection will be according to a set plan, Paul continues: “Each in his proper order, a first-fruit Christ, afterwards those who are the Christ’s in his presence.” (*vs. 23, Young’s Literal Translation*) Christ means anointed, and the apostle is saying that the anointed footstep followers of Jesus will be resurrected first. This is logical and reasonable since they will be associated with Jesus in the kingdom as kings and priests. (Matt. 19:28,29; Rev. 20:6) Then the subjects of the kingdom, all who are in their graves, will come forth from the tomb so that they might have an opportunity for life.—John 5:28,29, *YLT*

## **Fleshly Bodies and Spiritual Bodies**

Then Paul says: “But some man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? ... That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in

incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”—I Cor. 15:35-44

In this statement by the Apostle Paul several illustrations are used, all of them pointing out the fact that in the resurrection there will be more than one kind of body, specifically, those with bodies of flesh and those with spirit bodies. The kind of body that each individual will have depends on what is sown in death. The “it” that the apostle speaks of in verse thirty-eight is the personality or character that the individual develops in this life. The vast majority of the human race will have a character that will be best suited for a life here on the earth. They, therefore, will have a body of flesh. In the kingdom the earth will be a glorious place in which to live, and those who attain to everlasting life here on the earth will praise God eternally for his favor and blessing.

However, during the present time, since Pentecost, some have learned of a higher provision for life made possible through the blood of Jesus. Responding to the call to walk in his footsteps, they are invited to transform their minds and affections from the things of the earth and set them on things of the spirit. (Rom. 12:1,2; Col. 3:1-3) These, during the course of their Christian walk, transform their minds by the study of God’s Word. Applying its principles in their lives to the point that they develop a spiritual mind, which is the character that they sow in death, these will receive a spirit body in the resurrection.

The apostle concludes his explanation of the resurrection by stating that those who are resurrected to a spirit nature are granted immortality. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." (I Cor. 15:53,54) The thought of the text is that when the work of the present age is completed and all of those who are to be of the divine nature have been resurrected, then the prophecy in Isaiah 25:6-10, which Paul quoted in part, will come to pass. This is a prophecy of the kingdom and the blessings that will flow to the human race when they are returned from the dust of the ground in the resurrection.

"He [God] will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." (Isa. 25:8,9) Let us, then, rejoice in the certainty of the resurrection, spoken of by the prophets, by Jesus, and by the faithful apostles. Praise be to God for this understanding! ■

*"He remembers His covenant forever,  
the word which He commanded,  
for a thousand generations."  
Psalm 105:8, New King James Version*

# God's Prophet Threatened

**Key Verse:**  
*"Therefore now  
amend your ways  
and your doings,  
and obey the voice  
of the Lord your  
God; and the Lord  
will repent him of  
the evil that he  
hath pronounced  
against you."  
—Jeremiah 26:13*

**Selected Scriptures:**  
*Jeremiah 1:6-10;  
26:8-15*

**The phrase "speaking truth to power"** was highlighted in the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the mid-20th century. However, the concept it embraces, which encourages individuals to speak out against authority even when it might be difficult or risky, has been around for thousands of years. The concept is even found in the Bible, perhaps nowhere more forcefully than Jesus' response to Pontius Pilate, who had authority to condemn him to death. Responding to Pilate's query to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."—John 18:33,36,37

Today's lesson features another example of "speaking truth to power" found in the life of the Prophet Jeremiah. Called to be a prophet at a young age, Jehovah assured

Jeremiah that he would indeed prophesy to the people of Judah despite being called a youth. The Lord said, "Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. ... Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."—Jer. 1:7,9,10, *American Standard Version*

Throughout the Bible we find a pattern of Israel rejecting and, in some cases, killing the prophets sent by Jehovah. Messages calling for repentance, warning of divine judgment, exposure of hypocrisy and false righteousness and contradictions of popular beliefs and actions were sufficient provocation for the people to threaten Jehovah's handpicked messengers.

When Jeremiah prophesied against the city of Jerusalem and Israel's Temple, "then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears." Jeremiah responded, "Do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city. ... Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death."—Jer. 26:11,14,15,24

May the example of Jeremiah's mission of "speaking truth to power" be an encouragement for each of us to confidently preach the Gospel when it may not seem popular. Our message has been personally delivered by Jesus: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."—Matt. 28:19,20, *Revised Standard Version* ■



# Evil in the Land

**Key Verse:** *“This thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.”*  
—Jeremiah 7:23

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Jeremiah 7:1-11,  
21-23*

**The command in our Key Verse** is a brief restatement of those found in Exodus 19:5, Leviticus 26:3-12, and Deuteronomy 5:33. If Israel would keep the commandments of Jehovah they would live and prosper in the land they had been given. This was true even after Israel was divided into the northern tribes of Israel and the southern tribes of Judah. Obedience was always the most important requirement of the covenant between God and his chosen people, not sacrifice. Having

once again fallen into worship of false gods, the people of Judah sought safety from Jehovah’s judgment by coming to the Temple and offering sacrifice.

In today’s Selected Scripture we read Jehovah’s word spoken through the mouth of Jeremiah, which stated that obedience was superior to Temple sacrifice: “Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words and say, This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD! If you really change your ways and

your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever. But look, you are trusting in deceptive words that are worthless. Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, We are safe—safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD.”—Jer. 7:2-11, *New International Version*

These powerful words show that no religious observances or Temple sacrifices would yield benefits if Judah did not amend their evil ways. None could claim an interest in free salvation while practicing known sin or living in neglect of recognized duty. This was the evil in the kingdom of Judah that Jeremiah spoke out against. They thought that the Temple they profaned would be their protection by proclaiming, “This is the temple of the LORD!”

This warning against claiming God’s favor without obedience to his Word is as true today as it was in Jeremiah’s day. We cannot live six days in disobedience each week and then claim salvation on the Sabbath in a church building, asserting Christ is there to save. “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid,” Paul said. (Rom. 6:1,2) The cross of Christ, along with sincere efforts to obey, form the most effectual remedy to such poisonous sentiments. The Son of God gave himself for our transgressions to show the excellence of the divine law, but also the evil of sin. (Rom. 7:13) Let us never think that we may do wickedly without consequences. ■

# A New Covenant Promised

**Key Verse:** *“This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, 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.”*  
—**Jeremiah 31:33**

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Jeremiah 31:27-34**

## **After being delivered from**

Egyptian bondage, God promised that Israel would be “a peculiar treasure ... above all people,” “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation,” if they would obey his voice and keep his covenant. (Exod. 19:5,6) Upon hearing these words, “all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.”—verse 8

Despite promising obedience to their covenant, the people of Israel repeatedly broke their vow. As a result of their disobedience, in our lesson Jeremiah speaks to

both the houses of Israel and Judah of a New Covenant that will be established in the future. (Jer. 31:31) This covenant will be superior to the first, as God will write it in their hearts instead of on stone tablets. The Apostle Paul explains the purpose of the original covenant—“the law”—was not to provide salvation, but to be a temporary measure designed to guide people to the ultimate salvation found through faith in Jesus Christ.

“Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.”—Gal. 3:21-24, *English Standard Version*

This New Covenant Jeremiah prophesied of will require a mediator to reconcile the estrangement between God and Israel due to disobedience. Moses was the mediator of the original covenant, but God has provided his only begotten son, Jesus, to be the better mediator of this new and better covenant. (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22,23; I Tim. 2:5) The New Covenant will first be with Israel but will eventually include all mankind during Christ’s thousand-year kingdom. (Rev. 22:17; 20:6) It will require obedience by each person who would take advantage of the New Covenant’s offer of life.

During this present time God is calling out a people to become the bride of Christ for the purpose of blessing all people in the Messianic kingdom. “It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:5-7, *New International Version*) The development of the church class is not being done under the New Covenant with the aid of a mediator. Rather, the Apostle John tells us, “we have an advocate [comforter or helper, not a mediator] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”—I John 2:1

Let us be faithful to our hope of bringing the entire human race back into harmony with the Heavenly Father through the New Covenant.—Rev. 21:1-5 ■

# Recovery Foretold

**Key Verse:** *“In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord.”*  
—**Jeremiah 33:13**

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Jeremiah 33:1-13**

heart. He gently leads  
Isa. 40:11, *NIRV*

Israel's problems often grew from self-centered shepherds appointed by God: “As surely as I live, says the Sovereign LORD, you abandoned my flock and left them to be attacked by every wild animal. And though you were my shepherds, you didn't search for my sheep when they were lost. You took care of yourselves and left the sheep to starve.”—Ezek. 34:8, *New Living Translation*

**Today's Key Verse refers to** Jehovah's relationship with the nation of Israel, his chosen people. Israel had vowed to remain obedient under a covenant of laws and ordinances in exchange for divine care and blessing. They were cared for by God as a shepherd tends his flock. David wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.” (Ps. 23:1, *New International Reader's Version*) The Prophet Isaiah proclaims this same relationship between the Creator and his chosen people: “He takes care of his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have little ones.”—

Not all of Israel's shepherds, however, ignored instructions from Jehovah. Many prophets were faithful in telling the people that God would one day send a shepherd who would reestablish Israel's place once again among all the nations. "Then I will appoint over them one shepherd and he will feed them, a ruler like My servant David; he will feed them and be their shepherd."—Ezek. 34:23, *Amplified Bible*

Faithful Israelites who were paying attention to God's messengers knew David prefigured the coming Messiah. Mary, Jesus' mother, quickly understood when an angel appeared before her with news she would be giving birth to a special child: "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David."—Luke 1:31,32, *New International Version*

The word "telleteth" in our Key Verse means to number. Jeremiah's message is that Israel, though they have sinned greatly, will once again be counted as the sheep of Jehovah. Paul states the Gospel is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek [Gentile]." (Rom. 1:16) This verse, along with others such as Acts 13:46 and Romans 11:25,26, highlight the fact that God's plan for salvation involves a priority for the Jewish people, as they were the first recipients of the divine promises and covenant. However, they were not Jesus' sheep which he spoke of in John chapter 10.

In answering their question as to whether he was the Messiah, Jesus said, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."—John 10:24-29, *NIV* ■

# Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson

***“When the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge.”  
—Judges 2:18***

**For a period of several** centuries after the death of Joshua there were no definite governmental arrangements in Israel. The record is that during this time everyone did what seemed “right in his own eyes.” (Num. 33:52-56; Judg. 21:25) For the most part the trend was toward

unrighteousness and worshiping false gods. As punishment for their evil ways, God permitted the Israelites to be oppressed by their enemies, whom they had not completely driven out of the land of Canaan as he had commanded. (Judg. 2:13-15) “Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.” (vs. 16) In this article, we will examine the lives of three faithful judges—Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

Gideon was the fifth judge of Israel. When first mentioned he is visited by an angel while threshing

“wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites,” who had oppressed Israel for seven years. The angel said to Gideon, “The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.” (Judg. 6:11,12) Gideon’s reply to the angel was not too enthusiastic. It was difficult for him to see how, under the circumstances, it could be said that the Lord was with him, or, in fact, with any of the Israelites. He asked the angel, “If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”—vs. 13

This reply does not necessarily indicate that Gideon doubted the assertion of the angel, but it perhaps was simply his way of getting further information. Gideon reasoned that if God performed miracles in the past to deliver his people, he should be able to do so again, and he wanted to be assured that this would be the case. The Lord replied to Gideon through the angel: “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” This assurance did not convince Gideon, for he replied, “Wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”—vss. 14,15

Here Gideon displays the characteristic humility which has been possessed by all whom the Lord has used in his service. His family was poor, and evidently circumstances were such that Gideon had been made to feel that he was of little importance in the family, hence his surprise and hesitancy



when the Lord indicated him to be his choice for a deliverer of his people. God reassured this humble man, saying to him, “Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.” (Judg. 6:16) When assured by the Lord, “Surely I will be with thee,” even the humblest and the weakest of men become valiant and courageous if they have faith in him, but Gideon’s faith needed bolstering. He did not doubt the Lord, but he wanted to be sure that it was the God of Israel who was communicating with him; so he again replied, “If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me.”—vs. 17

Then Gideon asked the angel of the Lord not to depart “until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee.” The messenger promised to remain. “Gideon went in, and made ready a kid [a young goat], and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it.” (vss. 18,19) Then the messenger of God said to Gideon, “Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the LORD departed out of his sight.”—vss. 20,21

The angel of the Lord had appeared to Gideon in human form. The miraculous manifestation of divine power and the sudden disappearance of the heavenly messenger made Gideon realize with whom

he had been speaking. Then he said, “Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die.”—vss. 22,23

## **Baal Worship Destroyed**

Now that Gideon had been assured that the Lord’s blessing was with him, he was ready to proceed with the task of liberating the Israelites from the Midianites. A necessary preparation for this was the destruction of Baal worship in the land. This was a severe test upon Gideon, for his own father had established an altar for this heathen worship.

The angel of the Lord said to him, “Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove [sacred trees used in idol worship] that is by it: And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.”—Judg. 6:25,26

Gideon carried out these instructions. He utilized the help of ten of his servants “and did as the LORD had said unto him.” He carried out the instructions at night because he feared the reaction of his father’s household and thought it would be best to have the act completed before they discovered it. Gideon did not underestimate the violent reaction of the Baal worshipers. When the “men of the city” learned what had been done and that Gideon was responsible, they demanded that he should die.—vss. 27-30

They made this demand of Gideon's father, Joash. However, Joash, though he had established the altar of Baal and the grove which his son had destroyed, replied to those who demanded Gideon's life, "Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."—Judg. 6:31

Joash had evidently been impressed with the fact that Baal had been unable to prevent the destruction of his own altar. Wisely his sympathies were moving toward Gideon, and his confidence in the God of Israel was mounting. "On that day," Joash called his son "Jerubbaal [Hebrew: let Baal contend], saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."—vs. 32

## **An Army Assembled**

An immediate crisis developed. The record is that "then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon." He blew a trumpet, and the men of his father's household were gathered to him. He also sent messengers "throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them." (vss. 33-35) Things were moving rapidly, and Gideon soon found himself surrounded with an army ready to follow his leadership in an attack upon Israel's enemies. For one who had been considered least in his father's house, this must have been a rather overwhelming turn of events

for Gideon; and it is no wonder that he felt the need of further reassurance from the Lord.

“Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said.” (vss. 36,37) The Lord was patient with Gideon and honored his request. The next morning, when he examined the fleece, it was thoroughly soaked, containing, as the record states, “a bowl full of water,” while the ground around it was dry. This should have been very convincing, but still Gideon was not fully satisfied. To make doubly sure, he reversed the conditions, asking the Lord on the second test to let the fleece remain dry and the dew fall on the surrounding ground.

Gideon realized that he was asking a great deal, and he said to God, “Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once.” Again the Lord honored Gideon’s request, “for it was dry upon fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground.” (vss. 39,40) Gideon, it should be remembered, lived at a time in Israel’s history when the nation had drifted into idolatry, and for years they had been oppressed by their enemies. He had little or nothing in the way of personal experience or observation upon which his faith in the Lord could rest. Like Moses after his forty years in Midian, Gideon needed assurance in various ways that he had been called to deliver his people.

It was this very lack of self-assurance that enabled the Lord to use Gideon so marvelously. However,

there was another lesson the Lord wanted him to learn, which was that he should not depend upon the strength of numbers. God told him that the army which he had mustered was entirely too large. "The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."—Judg. 7:2

The original size of the volunteer army that placed themselves at the disposal of Gideon was thirty-two thousand. Under the Lord's instructions he told his men that any among them who were afraid should return to their homes. "And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand." (vs. 3) Then the Lord said unto Gideon, "The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I shall say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go."—vs. 4

The test was a simple one. "Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink." Only three hundred out of the ten thousand lapped the water, "putting their hand to their mouth," and thus were able to alertly watch as they drank. These three hundred were to constitute the entire army which Gideon was to lead against the Midianites.—vss. 5-7

## **Further Strengthened**

A tremendous army of Israel's enemies had camped in the valley of Jezreel. No doubt Gideon

needed some further assurance that such an array of armed strength could be routed by a mere three hundred men. "The same night" the Lord instructed Gideon to take with him Phurah, his servant, down into the camp of the Midianites, "and thou shalt hear what they say." The Lord told him that what he heard would give him courage for the attack which was to be made later.—vss. 9-11

This visit to the ranks of the Midianites was made by night, and was unobserved by their watchmen. "When Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host." (vss. 13,14) Overhearing the account of this dream and its interpretation gave Gideon the assurance he needed that the little band of three hundred whom God selected to be his army could actually rout the Midianites. Returning to his soldiers, he said, "Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."—vs. 15

Gideon's three hundred soldiers had been given no weapons, but now he gave each one a trumpet, an earthen pitcher, and a lamp, or torch, to be placed within the pitcher. It is doubtful that any other army in the history of mankind has been thus equipped. Although the record does not say so, there can be little doubt that Gideon's method of fighting and plan of attack were directed by the Lord. Furnishing

them with their weapons, Gideon separated his troops into three groups, deploying them on the sides of the hills surrounding the host of Midian encamped in the valley below. Gideon took his place with one of the little companies.—Judg. 7:16

He instructed all to do as he did. When he blew his trumpet, they were to blow theirs. Simultaneously they were to break the pitchers, which were being used to conceal their torches. Then they were to shout, “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.” (vss. 17,18) The Midianite who earlier interpreted the dream of his fellow had said, “This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon.” Probably many of the Midianites had heard about this dream and its interpretation; so when they heard the shout of the three hundred, they would surely think the dream was coming true.

Apparently there was more involved in Gideon’s strategy than appears on the surface. Small though his army was, he had them deployed in such a manner as to virtually surround the camp of the Midianites. Ordinarily only the captains of an army would be sounding trumpets and carrying torches, and for the Midianites to hear three hundred trumpets sounding and see three hundred flickering torches surrounding them on all sides would certainly give the impression that they were being attacked by a tremendous army. Today we might term such a strategy as “psychological warfare.”

As the three hundred all blew their trumpets, broke their pitchers, held their torches, and shouted “the sword of the LORD, and of Gideon,” fear and panic spread through the ranks of the enemy. “The LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow,

even throughout all the host.” (vss. 19-22) As the Midianites attacked each other they fled. The Israelites pursued, finally capturing and slaying their princes and kings. (Judg. 7:23-25; 8:1-21) Israel’s victory was complete.

Gideon is one of the humblest and at the same time ablest statesmen of the Bible. When the angel of the Lord first spoke to him, he explained that he was the least of his father’s house, and he maintained this spirit of humility. He heard the Midianites use the expression, “The sword of Gideon,” but when he instructed his little army to use this as a battle cry, he added God’s name, and put it first: “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”

When his victories were complete, “the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian.” Here again, however, Gideon’s humility and proper perspective are manifested. He replied to this request, saying, “I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you.” (Judg. 8:22,23) Thus again did this faithful judge in Israel keep the Lord before his people, emphasizing that only by obedience to him could they expect to remain free and prosperous.

The results of Gideon’s example and faithful judgeship lasted only as long as he lived. “As soon as Gideon was dead, ... the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side: Neither shewed they kindness



to the house of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel.”—Judg. 8:33-35

## **Jephthah and His Daughter**

After the death of Gideon and the wickedness of his son Abimelech, a series of judges were raised up by the Lord to direct the affairs of Israel, but little or no information is given concerning them until we come to Jephthah, a son of Gilead. Jephthah is introduced as being a mighty man of valor, but he was ostracized by his brothers because he was the son of a “strange woman,” and he “fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob.”—Judg. 11:1-3

Jephthah’s ability as a leader and militarist was apparently recognized even by those who thought themselves socially superior. When Israel became sore oppressed by the Ammonites, the elders sought out Jephthah and asked for his help, promising him the leadership of the nation after he defeated the Ammonites. Jephthah reluctantly accepted and was victorious, just as other military generals previously had been when the Lord’s blessing was upon them.—vss. 4-32

However, Jephthah’s name is prominent in the sacred record not because of his military expertise, but because of a vow which he made to the Lord in anticipation of the victory which would be given to him by divine help. The vow was that whatever first came out of his house when he returned from the battle would be offered to the Lord in sacrifice.—vss. 30,31

When Jephthah did return from the battle, his young daughter, an only child, was the first to come

out from the house to meet him. The account says, "It came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back."—vss. 34,35

Among the noble of Israel, the making of a vow before the Lord was a very serious thing. Solomon wrote that it is better not to vow, than to vow and not to pay. (Eccles. 5:4,5) Jephthah held this viewpoint; and while his vow proved to be much more costly than he had expected, having entered into such a solemn obligation, he saw no way of changing it. His daughter did not rebel. She understood the situation and asked only for two months in which, as the record states, "I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows." Jephthah granted this request. After the two months "she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and she knew no man."—Judg. 11:36-39

It is generally supposed that Jephthah actually offered his daughter in sacrifice, as a bullock or goat would be offered. Indeed, a casual reading of the *King James Version* favors this viewpoint. However, the rendering of verse 40 from *Young's Literal Translation* seems to give a different thought. It explains that the daughters of Israel went yearly "to talk to the daughter of Jephthah, the Gileadite, four days in a year."

This, verse 39 explains, became "a custom in Israel." Jephthah's daughter must have remained alive, else the women of Israel could not have talked with her each year. Examining the record more

carefully, it becomes apparent that what really happened was that the girl remained a virgin throughout her entire life, which, from the viewpoint of the Israelites, was a tremendous sacrifice for the father to ask of her.

This thought is evident from the record. When Jephthah explained his position to his daughter, and she asked for two months' grace, she did not request these two months in order to prepare for death, as some commentators explain, but in order to bewail her virginity. (Judg. 11:37) When she returned, and her father "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed," it is explained that "she knew no man." Jephthah was one who was led of the "Spirit of the LORD." (vs. 29) As such, he would not have made a vow to offer his daughter as a sacrifice, for this was forbidden by the Mosaic law.—Deut. 12:29-31

After his victory over the Ammonites, Jephthah found it necessary to put down a rebellion of the Ephraimites within Israel. Their rebellion was largely due to the fact that they claimed Jephthah had not requested their help in the conquest of the Ammonites. Their claim was not true, and Jephthah successfully put down their rebellion. Nothing else is recorded concerning the life of Jephthah—only that his period of judgeship lasted for six years, and he died.—Judg. 12:1-7

## **Samson the Mighty**

After Jephthah's death a number of other judges served the nation of Israel, but they are merely mentioned in the record. The next judge who is given prominence is Samson, the son of Manoah.

He was raised up to be a judge because, as had been the case on previous occasions, “the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD.” As punishment, “the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years.”—Judg. 13:1

Samson’s mother had been barren, and an angel appeared and announced to her that she would have a son. Manoah, her husband, was not present when this occurred, and he prayed that he might also see this visitor, who had not as yet been recognized as an angel. This request was granted, and during the interview with the angel, Manoah offered a kid in sacrifice upon a rock, and as it burned the angel ascended from them in the flame. Then they knew they had been visited by an angel, which impressed upon them the great importance to Israel of the son who would be born to them. He would be, as the angel had explained, one who would “begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”—vss. 2-24

In keeping with the Lord’s instructions, from infancy Samson’s head was not shaved, for his parents were instructed that he was to be a lifelong Nazarite. Under the terms of the Jewish Law, as recorded in Numbers 6:1-21, a Nazarite was one who was separated from the people and devoted exclusively to the service of the Lord, either for a limited period of time, or for life. One of the outward characteristics of a Nazarite was his uncut hair.

Samson is noted for his great strength. At the same time, however, according to the standards of the New Testament, his personal life is not to be commended. Nevertheless, at heart he evidently was loyal to God, so that in the Book of Hebrews he is named as one of the ancient heroes of faith, as

was also Gideon and Jephthah, previously considered.—Heb. 11:32

Though Samson was married, sometime later he met and “loved a woman ... whose name was Delilah.” (Judg. 16:4) After being pressed by her, he revealed to Delilah that the secret of his strength was in his hair. (vss. 15-17) We are not to suppose from this that there was some mysterious way in which strength flowed from his hair to his body. The thought seems to be that as long as he retained his hair, the emblem of devotion to God, he was given power by the Lord to accomplish the mighty feats of strength recorded concerning him.

Learning the secret concerning Samson’s hair, Delilah took the opportunity, while he slept, to have a man cut it off. Probably this would not have been permitted by the Lord had Samson not been breaking his vows of dedication to God in his flirtations with Delilah. With his hair gone, the Lord withdrew his support, and the Philistines captured Samson, put out his eyes, and cast him into prison.—vss. 19-21

Since Samson, with the strength which the Lord supplied, had vexed the Philistines so long, they gloried over the fact that they now had him under control. They made doubly sure that he would not escape from them by binding him with fetters of brass. To celebrate this victory over the mighty Samson, the lords of the Philistines gathered together to offer sacrifices to their god, Dagon.—vss. 23,24

This gathering was in their heathen temple, and it was a great assembly. “The house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while

Samson made sport.” (vss. 25-27) What a humiliation for the mighty Samson!

The situation soon changed. Samson’s faith came to the rescue. His hair had begun to grow again, and he asked the Lord to assist him once more, that he might avenge himself against the Philistines. The account of what followed is well known. Bracing himself between two of the pillars which supported the roof of the building, he pushed them asunder, “and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.”—vss. 22,28-30

Here again we must assume that it was strength specially given by the Lord that brought down the temple of the Philistines. All the exploits of strength on the part of Samson were just as much miracles as was the destruction of the walls of Jericho or the parting of the Red Sea. Just why the Lord chose to manifest his strength through a man, we may not know, except that it helps to illustrate that our God is in no way limited in the methods he can use to accomplish his purposes.

## **Future Judges**

Christ and his faithful followers of the present age will be the judges in that future time of judgment. (Acts 17:31; I Cor. 6:2) Just as Israel came under bondage to its enemies because of disobedience to divine law, so all the world is now in bondage to sin and death—Jews and Gentiles alike. However, in God’s due time he will raise up these judges who have been prepared in advance for this great responsibility, and through them all the willing and obedient of mankind will be delivered from death. It is a glorious prospect! ■

# Walking by Faith, not by Sight

*“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”*  
—II Corinthians 5:7

**In Paul’s second letter to** the church at Corinth, a most important lesson is found in our opening verse. The Lord’s followers are to “walk by faith, not by sight.” A few verses earlier Paul begins by stating, “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [Greek: temporary residence] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”—II Cor. 5:1

Here Paul describes the Christian’s present sojourn on earth as being a “tabernacle,” or temporary condition. He then contrasts this with a prospective, future eternal life in heaven, likening it to a permanent structure, a “building of God ... not made with hands.” Indeed, our present earthly life is a relatively short span of time compared to a future of eternity. A realization of this is a great assistance, giving us a proper perspective concerning each experience we have at the present time.

In the previous chapter Paul highlights this perspective, writing, “This light, temporary nature of

our suffering is producing for us an everlasting weight of glory, far beyond any comparison, because we do not look for things that can be seen but for things that cannot be seen. For things that can be seen are temporary, but things that cannot be seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:17,18, *International Standard Version*

Paul then uses the illustration of clothing to teach an additional lesson, writing, “In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” (II Cor. 5:2) Here the expression “to be clothed upon” refers to the apostle’s earnest desire to be faithful to the Lord, in order to be granted an eternal, spiritual body. Paul then identifies a necessary requirement which must first be met at the present time in order to be granted a future, spiritual body; and thus he uses the qualifier, “if so be,” in verse 3. “If so be that being clothed [Greek: *enduo*] we shall not be found naked.”

## **Put on Christ**

In the New Testament the Greek word *enduo* is used on several occasions when referring to putting on a literal garment. (Matt. 6:25; Mark 1:6; 15:17) However, in our lesson and elsewhere in his writings, Paul uses this Greek word in a higher, spiritual sense—to describe our development of a Christlike character, to “put on” Christ. (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27) Elsewhere, he explains that to “put on” Christ includes the development of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness, and unselfish agape love.—Col. 3:12-14



We believe these elements of Christian character are what Paul is referring to in II Corinthians 5:3 when he writes concerning "being clothed." A lack of development in these fruits of the Holy Spirit in our character is likened to being without clothing, which Paul describes as being "found naked." It is noteworthy that the Apostle John, using the same illustration of nakedness, particularly warns the Lord's followers living near the close of the present age.—Rev. 3:17; 16:15

Paul continues, "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest [Greek: pledge] of the Spirit." (II Cor. 5:5) God grants to the consecrated at the present time a measure of his Holy Spirit as a pledge, or assurance, of the future grand and glorious results for which they are hoping, striving, and praying for in their daily walk of faith.

"Therefore we are always confident [Greek: of good courage], knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." (vs. 6) Herein is a warning. To be "at home in the body" denotes feeling contented with present conditions, including our own spiritual development. To have such an attitude may indicate that we are not living as near to the Lord as we should.

Whereas Paul stated concerning his own development, "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 3:13,14

## **Walking by Faith**

How are we to “walk by faith,” and “not by sight?” First, by continually reading and studying the Word of God. This is how we learn and remember his principles of righteousness, and have fresh in our minds the many blessed promises which the Heavenly Father has given to us as we seek to please him.—Ps. 119:97-104

Our Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit, “the spirit of truth,” would be sent by the Father upon his people. This was to be a holy power and influence to help guide and direct Jesus’ followers by providing them a greater understanding of the writings and teachings in both the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is of great assistance to us in walking by faith and not by sight.—John 15:26; 16:7,13

Additionally, we learn to walk by faith and not by sight by striving to take everything to God in prayer, seeking to know his will respecting all of life’s matters, and asking him to direct our thoughts, words, and conduct. (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 4:2) During the Prophet Jeremiah’s second imprisonment, the word of the Lord came to him, saying: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee.” (Jer. 33:1-3) God’s answers to our petitions to him may come in various ways. They may come to us as we read and study the Bible, from our meetings together with fellow brethren, through divine providential overruling in our life, or through the combination of some or all of these ways.

We should also continually commit our mind to God, asking him to guide our judgment and reason. (Prov. 3:5,6; Jer. 17:7,8) Then, we should go forth

and use these qualities as best we can, always looking for his providential leading and direction. In short, we cannot day by day follow the Lord except as we are willing to walk by faith and not by sight. This is the test which is placed upon each of the Lord's footstep followers.

## **Beware of Corrupt Teaching**

Earlier in his letter Paul warned there would be many who would attempt to "corrupt the word of God," whereas Paul himself earnestly strived, with "sincerity," to speak and teach about Christ. (II Cor. 2:17) One corruption being taught by some is the false idea that the Lord's followers are so much under God's protection that all of their non-spiritual matters should prosper—that is, they should have abundant financial resources, many material possessions, good health, success in business, and immense popularity. Such false reasoning suggests that believing in Jesus assures one to have earthly favors now. Concerning this, what do the Scriptures say? What is the Bible record regarding the experiences of Jesus, the Apostles, and the early church?

## **Promises to God's People**

During Old Testament times, God promised the Israelites earthly blessings if they observed and followed his commandments. Such promises included freedom from diseases, material prosperity, and peace from their enemies. (Exod. 15:26; Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-11) These temporal blessings, however, were an illustration of the terms and conditions which will prevail on earth during God's promised kingdom, which will soon be established

throughout the whole earth during the Messianic Age.—Isa. 35:5-10; 65:21-23; Joel 2:18-27

During the present Gospel Age, however, the Lord's followers are not promised earthly material blessings, nor freedom from illness. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his disciples, saying: "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, 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."—Matt. 5:10-12

Here Jesus clearly did not promise his followers that they would be materially blessed, nor that they would be immune from trials and difficulties. Instead, he admonished that his people should expect to be persecuted and falsely accused for his sake; and that when this happens, they should "rejoice, and be exceeding glad." From a natural, human standpoint, this is nearly impossible to do. However, from a spiritual standpoint, it is possible through the promises given to us in the Scriptures, indicating that the results of such trying experiences, if we are rightly "exercised thereby," will ultimately lead to a glorious, eternal blessing.—Heb. 12:11

Satan would like to have us walk by sight, and not by faith. He would like to have us continually tempting God, requiring some outward demonstration of divine favor and protection, instead of accepting the testimony of his Word and, with implicit trust, walking by faith. God has arranged that his prospective spiritual family should learn to walk by

faith. Therefore, he gives to each of us individual trials of faith, which frequently permit suffering and disadvantage in earthly affairs. Our Heavenly Father purposely allows this in order to develop and test our loyalty and obedience to him, and to his principles of righteousness.

## **Paul's Experiences**

Later in his letter Paul recounts some of his Christian experiences, which undoubtedly were both physically and mentally difficult. (II Cor. 11:23-30) The apostle did not consider himself disowned of God under such experiences. Instead, he gloried in them as part of the sacrifice he was willing to make for the Lord's sake. Elsewhere Paul wrote, "we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ... experience; and ... hope," because difficult experiences help to develop in us a Christlike character.—Rom. 5:3-5

Further on in his letter Paul recalls the words which the Lord gave to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." The apostle then states, "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."—II Cor. 12:9,10, *English Standard Version*

When we feel self-confident, trusting in self and our own abilities, this is dangerous because we are actually becoming proud, which weakens our faith. (Prov. 6:16,17; 16:5,18) In Paul's first letter to the Corinthian brethren, he identifies the nation of Israel in Old Testament times as being an important illustration, stating, "These things happened

to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction. ... Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.”—I Cor. 10:1-12, *ESV*

The more we recognize our own weaknesses and inabilities, and increase our reliance upon the Lord for grace, help, guidance, and strength, the more we will “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”—Prov. 3:5,6

## **Apostle Peter’s Admonitions**

The Apostle Peter spoke concerning the experiences that the Lord’s followers should expect, writing, “When ye do well, and suffer for it,” and “take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.” (I Pet. 2:19,20) He points out, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (vss. 21-23) Jesus suffered much for having done only good.

Later Peter states, “if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye,” and “if the will of God be so,” be ready to “suffer for well doing.” (I Pet. 3:14,17) He further writes, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of

Christ's sufferings. ... If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you. ... If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Pet. 4:12-16

As the Lord's dedicated followers, when we go through difficult experiences, we should not think of them as peculiar, as though "some strange thing happened" to us. Rather, we should remind ourselves that corresponding trials have happened to all the prospective members of the body of Christ since Pentecost, and these will continue until the final members of the church have each been tested, polished, accepted, and glorified.

When experiencing oppositions in the home; persecution from former friends, neighbors, or others; if we suffer financial disaster, poverty, sickness, pain, or physical accident; in all of these things the Lord's people are to be content, conscious of the Father's love and providential care in respect to their every interest.—Phil. 4:12,13; I Tim. 6:6; I Pet. 5:6,7

Having full confidence while going through difficulties is a part of the development of faith. To be assured that we are children and "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," and to have faith in the Heavenly Father's oversight, while at the same time suffering difficult experiences permitted by divine providence, is a severe test of faith. (Rom. 8:17) We must walk by faith and not by sight, if we are to be eventually accepted as part of Christ's "little flock." (Luke 12:32) Let us then receive with confidence, love, and trust, whatever benefits or troubles the Lord's providence may permit to come

upon us. Let us profit from them, learning the needed lessons contained in each experience.

Paul writes, “No trial has assailed you except what belongs to man; and God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tried beyond your ability; but with the trial, will also direct the issue, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Cor. 10:13, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) If the fire becomes so hot that to go any further would injure or destroy us spiritually, the Lord will prevent this, because “he knoweth our frame.” He is “gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.”—Ps. 103:14; 145:8

## **Experiences of Jesus and the Early Church**

God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, was “one tested in all respects.” (Heb. 4:15, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Therefore, it should not be our expectation to be spared difficulties, including experiences such as loss of honor amongst men, suffering slander, or being less than prosperous financially, compared to others. (II Cor. 6:1-10, *ESV*) We should remember that our Master willingly “made himself of no reputation,” and “though he was rich, yet ... he became poor,” in his desire that others “might be rich” in faith and, if faithful unto death, become joint-heirs with him.—Phil. 2:7; II Cor. 8:9

Frequently the apostles and early church members had difficult experiences. Timothy’s “often infirmities,” Paul’s “thorn in the flesh,” and Epaphroditus’ sickness “nigh unto death,” were various physical ailments that came about due to their faithfulness in serving the Lord. Similarly, such experiences are also permitted now upon the Lord’s



faithful followers.—I Tim. 5:23; II Cor. 12:7; Phil. 2:25-27,30

## **Types of Suffering**

We should distinguish, however, between suffering for righteousness' sake and suffering for wrongdoing. The Apostle Peter admonishes, "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." (I Pet. 4:15) Paul further points out that the doing of evil things may result in deserved personal suffering coming to us.—Phil. 3:18,19

On the other hand, when, in our best judgment, we see a door of opportunity open to us by God's providence, we should enter into it zealously and self-sacrificingly. If, then, it results in physical or social suffering, which others might consider as the consequences of foolishness, let us "not be ashamed," but instead let us "glorify God" on behalf of such afflictions, rejoicing to have been "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." —I Pet. 4:16; Acts 5:41

If illness or disease comes to us which is not a result of sinful or selfish behavior, we should endeavor to receive such experiences with patience and thanksgiving, realizing God has permitted us to have these experiences. Furthermore, we should strive to learn the spiritual lessons from such trials, including the need to have more compassion and sympathy for the poor groaning creation. During Jesus' First Advent, it is recorded numerous times that he was "moved with compassion" for others.—Matt. 9:35,36; 14:14; 20:34

God has not promised to miraculously repair our mortal human body. Such miracles would likely be

injurious to us spiritually, because they would lead us to walk by sight, and not by faith. Instead, God justifies us by faith, while leaving us, physically, imperfect. We should constantly remember that his dealings with us at the present time are not according to the flesh, but as “a new creature,” and that our “flesh profiteth nothing.” (II Cor. 5:17; John 6:63) We have dedicated our flesh to being used up in serving and obeying the Lord, even unto death. Therefore, our chief concern must be to develop our spiritual New Creature—the new mind, will, and character, reflecting the image of Christ.—II Cor. 3:18

Jesus miraculously fed the multitudes. Should we therefore expect to be miraculously fed? On the contrary, just as our Lord Jesus, the head of the New Creation, refused to call upon divine power for his own personal comfort or protection, neither should we as his followers. (Matt. 4:2-4; 26:53) Our Lord never prayed for deliverance from natural troubles, but cheerfully endured them as a part of his sacrifice; and so we must do also.

## **Life's Experiences**

While God's Word is the basis for all our instruction, yet it is not our only source of knowledge. There are various lessons to be learned through the many different events of our life. God's providences lead us into these experiences in order that we may develop spiritually. Our experiences and providences cause us to think, appreciate, study, and ask ourselves: “What does this experience mean?” “What spiritual lesson should I learn from it?”

God has called us with a “heavenly calling,” to receive, if faithful unto death, divine, spirit life.

(Heb. 3:1; II Pet. 1:4) Our hoped-for eternal destiny is not that of an earthly nature. The real object and purpose of our call is to fit and prepare us to be God's New Creation, superior to men and to angels. As we grow to appreciate the full scope of God's plan, we see a reason why God is permitting us to have trials and adverse experiences now. Our Lord Jesus was to be a merciful High Priest; hence, if such experiences and sufferings were necessary for him, how much more are they needed for our spiritual development.—Heb. 5:8,9

### **The Result of Trials**

A metallurgist tries metals and “proves” them. He does this by heating the metal to a high temperature and then adding a flux, a substance which facilitates the removal of impurities from the metal. So too, the Lord proves each of his followers in order, if we are rightly “exercised thereby,” to take away the impurities in our character, by the experiences he permits us to have. (Heb. 12:5-11; Deut. 13:3) As the impurities in our heart and mind become apparent to us, we will more and more cooperate with God in their elimination. Let us remember, too, that it is not necessarily true that the one having the most trying experiences has the most impurities. Jesus had more trials than any of his followers, and yet he was perfect.

Tests are also permitted to prove the degree of our faithfulness to God, and to see how much we are willing to endure for “his sake.” Thus, true Christians grow in holiness, being sanctified through the Truth. (John 17:17,19) The word “sanctify” embodies the thought, “to make holy.” (Lev. 20:7-8)

God's truths have a sanctifying power in the heart because they fill the longing of our innermost desires. Every day of our lives should make us more sanctified, more fit for God's service in the future.

Paul explains, "This light, temporary nature of our suffering is producing for us an everlasting weight of glory, far beyond any comparison." (II Cor. 4:17, *ISV*) Let us remember that, while going through difficulties and trials, the brightness of our future will depend upon the heart and character development we attain now, at the present time, as a result of our "walk by faith, not by sight." ■

### ***Please, Lord***

*Lord, endow me with strength to face*

*Life's biggest griefs and ills,*

*And give me also grace to bear*

*Life's little cares and chills.*

*Oh, make me patient, loving, kind—*

*Please grant me, Lord, a quiet mind!*

*—Carol Kittinger Hindle*

## **OBITUARIES**

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

Sister Gloria Zendler, Detroit, MI—August 30. Age, 82

Sister Hildegard Adler, Nakło Śląskie, Poland—August 31. Age, 93

Sister Carolyn Fiorillo, Portland, OR—September 14. Age, 83

# Report on the 2025 German Bible Students General Convention

*In May and June of this year, the Dawn was pleased to have Brother Timothy and Sister Dawn Krupa visit brethren in Germany and Austria, as well as attend and serve at the German General Convention in Korbach. We believe their report on the ensuing pages will be a blessing to our readers, as we consider the sentiments of Psalm 133:1, which speaks of “how good and how pleasant” it is for brethren throughout the world to dwell together in the unity and bonds of Christ.*

**Our first German convention** was in the 1970s. That convention was held in Bad Herzfeld. Many of the German Bible Students we met in those first visits have now passed away, and we continue to make new friends on every visit.

This year the gathering was in Korbach. About 50 friends met together, and around 25 participated via the Internet. The convention was held, as

usual, on the weekend of Pentecost, approximately 7 weeks after the Memorial of our Lord's death. That weekend is a national holiday in Germany, and the convention started on Saturday and ended Monday at noon.

Somewhat like the well-known Day of Pentecost in the Book of Acts, the brethren gathered were from multiple countries. Some had recently moved to Germany, others moved there many years ago, and some were born there. The homelands represented this year included Germany, Poland, Austria, Romania, Netherlands, France, United States, India, Sri Lanka, Moldova, and we have probably missed a couple. The country of Ukraine was represented via the Internet. The convention was translated into multiple languages as we gathered. We encourage you to consider attending this convention, and can almost guarantee that there will be many there who speak your language!

## **Prior to the Convention**

Before the convention we traveled a bit around Germany and Austria to meet with a few of the larger ecclesias. It was a significant spiritual highlight to visit and meet with the brethren in Vienna, Austria, once again. There were about 20 brethren at the Sunday meeting, and our fellowship included a family new to our particular brotherhood of Bible Students. This dear couple had a previous experience in Bible study with a large organization that had some correct ideas of God's plan but were significantly controlled by a "headquarters" way of thinking. Their desire for a more personal way of studying God's plan led them to search the Internet

for some of the foundations of the beliefs they appreciated, but they desired to see what the thinking was prior to that organization taking control.

This led them to the current publishers and printers of the book, *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, written in the late 1800s. Additionally, they were looking for a study group that would allow freedom of thought in their personal Bible study. The first step was getting copies of the book mentioned above.

That publisher now was in Orlando, Florida—the Dawn Bible Students Association, publishers also of this magazine. The next step for this family was to be part of studies online with the Orlando Bible Students ecclesia. In a short amount of time it became evident that it would be more reasonable to be in contact with some who were closer geographically and time-zone wise to where they lived. That was a group of Bible Students in Germany. This worked well since German is also the national language of Austria.

The next step after meeting the German Bible Students was finding out that there were Bible Students in Vienna, Austria. There was a caveat to this, however, in that the Vienna Bible Students, because of their national backgrounds, held all of their meetings in the Polish language. Our new family did not speak Polish, and that initially was a barrier to any joint meetings in Vienna, but even that has now changed. This past July, the Vienna Bible Students held their first meeting in the German language! For us personally, the time we spent with our new friends in Vienna, was the highlight of this year's trip.

## **The 2025 German Convention Held in Korbach**

The remainder of this report is a brief summary of the presentations made at the convention. (We are reporting what was presented, without any personal opinions. We did enjoy all the presentations.)

### **Motifs of the Chagall Windows in the Fraumunster (Zurich) Church and Their Connection with God's Plan**

The five stained glass windows by the renowned artist Chagall are labeled for their individual subjects: Elijah, Jacob, Christ, Zion, and the Law. The first window is interpreted that "Elijah shall come before Messiah." This is also frequently understood that the final members of the body of Christ will be completed before the great tribulation. (II Kings 2:1-18) The other four windows can be interpreted to show the different processes during the earthy kingdom, focusing on the work of Christ and his associates.

### **Paul—from Persecutor to Role Model**

Saul of Tarsus was a zealous Pharisee who changed himself into an apostle of faith and grace. He became a spiritual father to many through revelation, suffering, journeys, letters, tears, and consolation. We are not to just admire this transformation but to do likewise, with the same goal "to recognize Christ—and in him everything."

### **Lessons from the Wandering in the Wilderness**

The desert wanderings of the Israelites were not a mistake, but a place of preparation. In the desert we are not forgotten, but shaped. The apostle describes that time as a time of "bitterness" and a



“day of temptation.” Hebrews chapter 3 also says they were tested for obedience and heart character. The apostle warns us, “When you hear God’s voice today, do not close yourselves to his speaking, as in the day in the wilderness.”

Hebrews chapter 4 says the message of salvation was of no use to Israel because they did not believe what God said. “Non-hearing” can manifest itself as being dissatisfied, anxious, doubtful, and materially minded.

## **Panel Discussion—**

### **Watchman, How Far Is It in the Night?**

We are all in expectation of God’s kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.” As we watch, we think of the watchman. It is his job to be alert during the night. So we ask, “How far is it in the night?” Several questions were considered in the panel discussion.

### **What challenges do we face in society as we wait?**

We are the salt of the earth. We are the light of the world. (Matt. 5:13,14) We are to walk in wisdom toward those who are outside. (Col. 4:5) Above all, we are to have fervent love for one another. (I Pet. 4:8) We expect “the wicked shall do wickedly.” (Dan. 12:10) We know that “in the last days perilous times shall come.” (II Tim. 3:1) However, “Let not your heart be troubled.”—John 14:1

### **What is the current state of freedom of assembly?**

Generally, there is freedom to assemble worldwide, but we see instances where that is changing. In these times the freedom rights of many have increased, yet the emergence of authoritarian systems

also is possible. The current war in Ukraine shows how quickly situations can change. We need to be thankful for present opportunities to meet and not neglect those occasions.

One of the aspects of the nations being “angry” could be a restriction of liberties. (Rev. 11:18) Things like compulsory military service and restrictions in moving from one country to another are evidence of this.

### **What is happening in Israel and the Middle East?**

Jeremiah chapter 30 prophesies, “It is a time of trouble for Jacob; yet he will be delivered from it.” Psalm 83 lists the nations surrounding Israel who say, “Let us destroy them.” Zephaniah 2 says, “Gaza will be abandoned,” and the borders of Israel are prophesied to be expanded.

As time progresses, more and more biblical passages become understandable, and in retrospect they then become clear. Jeremiah 30:17-22 speaks of better times for Israel.

### **Sarah—a Heroine of Faith**

Only two women are mentioned in Hebrews 11. One of them is Sarah. She had the same father, Terah, as Abraham. So, we would say she was Abraham’s half-sister. Sarah was barren, and in the culture of her day that was a serious issue and something that would haunt her for most of her life. For the women of that time to be barren resulted in humiliation, a sense of rejection, and a feeling of being abandoned by God.

Sarah was ten years younger than Abraham. She died at the age of 127, compared to today’s life

expectancy for a woman, which is 85. If we use that ratio in the events of Sarah's life, we might get a better feeling for the stage she was at in any point of time. For instance, when Sarah was 65, she would have the physical age equivalent today of 43.

Sarah's beauty was exceptional. Pharaoh was upset with Abraham for saying Sarah was his sister. In Genesis 12:19 Pharaoh says, "Why did you say, She is my sister? Therefore, I took her as my wife." We do not know what exactly happened between Sarah and Pharaoh, but the situation was serious enough that because of this misunderstanding, Pharaoh gave Abraham sheep, oxen, donkeys and camels, as well as male and female servants.

It must have been a nagging mystery for Sarah to wonder what was meant by the promise God made to Abraham about having a multitude of descendants when she, his wife, was barren. It took immense courage and self-sacrifice for Sarah to offer her servant, Hagar, to Abraham as a substitute to create descendants.

About 13 years later the miracle happened. At the age of ninety years, Sarah had a child, Isaac. The years of humiliation ended. Sarah had the joy of watching her promised son Isaac grow up and live for 37 years.

Our lesson from Sarah is a great example of living with humiliation, daily, for many years. She fully earned her title of heroine of faith, and she deserves our greatest respect.

## **Living Hope Through the Resurrection**

There is a unique hope born from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the book of Job the question is asked, "If a man dies, will he live again?"

This story is the confirmation that God's plan, resulting in life, is stronger than death. Christ did not rise from the dead by his own power, but by the power of God. Our hope is that the same God will also raise us from the dead.

Let us rely on this living hope—not as a theory, but as an inner confidence that lifts our gaze, gives comfort, and shapes our whole life.

### **Go and Do Likewise—the Mercy of Christ**

The subject is the parable of the Good Samaritan. This parable invites us to see and understand the heart of Jesus. Christ has mercy on us, so how can we not do likewise and show mercy toward others? We must pay attention to the heart and feelings of our Master and learn from them.

### **The Lord Has Helped Us This Far**

What have we done with the time we have been given? Have we seized the opportunities to serve the Lord? Have we taken our resolutions seriously? We should reaffirm our vows. Psalm 121 states, "Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord."

The time available for us is extremely precious. Ephesians chapter 5 counsels us, "Look carefully how you walk ... making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Galatians chapter 2 adds, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God."

Those who walk the path of righteousness are usually poor in worldly goods. In II Corinthians chapter 4 we read, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

Each of us should take stock of our lives, primarily in spiritual terms. If we have made progress, we should rejoice. If we feel that we have shortcomings, then we should be unhappy, not in the sense of discouragement, but with a firm determination to work to improve ourselves.

### **Closing—a Meal that Lasts**

Soon we will step out, back into our everyday lives. Before we part, something special happens—we share a piece of bread. We call it our closing Love Feast. It is a sign of brotherly love, an expression of the fact that we care, share, and bless each other.

We do not know when we will see each other again, but this shared morsel of bread reminds us: we belong together, not through external forms, but through love.

Amen. ■



## **WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS**

**OCTOBER 2**—“Forgetting those things which are behind.”—Philippians 3:13 (Z. ’04-23 Hymn 192)

**OCTOBER 9**—“Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?”—Matthew 8:26 (Z. ’04-60 Hymn 307)

**OCTOBER 16**—“He maketh the storm a calm.”—Psalm 107:29 (Z. ’04-60 Hymn 349)

**OCTOBER 23**—“Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”—Matthew 20:27 (Z. ’04-140 Hymn 275)

**OCTOBER 30**—“No man can serve two masters.”—Matthew 6:24 (Z. ’01-61 Hymn 213)

## ***Saviour, Lead Us***

*Saviour like a shepherd lead us;  
Much we need thy tender care;  
In thy pleasant pastures feed us  
For our use thy fold prepare:*

*Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast bought us thine we are.  
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast bought us thine we are.*

*We are thine; do thou befriend us,  
Be the guardian of our way:  
Keep thy flock, from foes defend us,  
Let us never go astray,*

*Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.  
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.*

*Thou hast promised to receive us,  
Poor and needy though we be;  
Thou hast mercy to relieve us,  
Grace to cleanse, and power to free:*

*Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
We have fully turned to thee.  
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
We have fully turned to thee.*

*Fully let us have thy favor,  
Fully we would do thy will;  
Blessed Lord and only Saviour,  
With thy love and likeness fill:*

*Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.  
Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.*

*—Hymns of Dawn*