

The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence

APRIL 2021





People of the Bible

*“Now these things happened to them as
an example . . . for our instruction.”
1 Corinthians 10:11*

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The DAWN

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AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung e. V., Postfach 3, 64396 Modautal

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167 USA

INDIA: The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

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Honor, Shame and Glory

*“As they heard
these things, he
added and spake a
parable, because he
was nigh to
Jerusalem, and
because they
thought that the
kingdom of God
should
immediately
appear.”
—Luke 19:11*

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 4, THE

Christian world will commemorate the resurrection of Jesus. One week prior to this, many will observe what is known as Palm Sunday, in remembrance of Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem. It was on this occasion that he was hailed as King by his friends and followers, when they “took

branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (John 12:13) It was a moment of high honor in the life of Jesus. The Pharisees, in their selfish jealousy, were greatly disturbed by the situation, and said, “Behold, the world is gone after him.”—vs. 19

The royal, or kingly, promises of God had all been made to the nation of Israel. It was to this nation that Jesus came in fulfillment of these promises.

For this reason, it was essential that he should present himself formally to the nation as king. Indeed, it had been foretold that he would do this, and it was essential that the prophecy be fulfilled. (Zech. 9:9) Jesus' disciples and friends were highly elated over this experience, for to them it meant that the Messianic kingdom was soon to make its appearance in power and great glory.

Jesus' followers, however, did not understand at that time the series of events that must take place before the Messianic kingdom could be set up. As Jesus said to two of them after his resurrection, they had been "slow of heart to believe" all that the prophets had spoken, that he would first have to suffer and die, and only then would he "enter into his glory."—Luke 24:19-26

Just prior to his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus had related to his disciples a parable, which, had they comprehended its meaning, would have taught them not to expect the kingdom at that time. It was the parable of the pounds. The opening words of the parable state: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us."—Luke 19:12-14

This is the parable referred to in our opening text—the one which was given for the very purpose of alerting the disciples to the fact that the "citizens" of king Jesus, the Jewish nation, would hate him, and would not have him rule over them. Thus, for the time at least, the intended purpose of the parable

was not accomplished. Later, just a few days before Jesus' death, the disciples began to realize, through the compelling logic of events, that their king was hated, and that he might indeed be killed. They now seemed to remember vaguely that the parable had said the king would go away, and later return. This is evident when they came to Jesus on the Mount of Olives, and asked, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming [Greek: *parousia*, or presence], and of the end of the world [Greek: *aion*, or age]?"—Matt. 24:3

This seems to indicate that for the moment, at least, they had grasped the idea that Jesus was going away, and that he would return at some future time. However, their spiritual vision was not entirely clear, for when Jesus subsequently was put to death only days later, they were scattered and perplexed.

If the disciples had not been "slow of heart to believe," they would have known not only that Jesus was going away, but that he would be taken away from them by death. At about the same time as when his friends hailed him as king, and the Pharisees became concerned that the whole world had "gone after him," certain Greeks sought an audience with the Master. The disciples reported this to him, and his response was, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."—John 12:20-24

These words must have sounded strange to the disciples. Doubtless they thought that their Master was already in the process of being glorified. Had

not the crowd shouted, “Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord?” Jesus knew, though, that this was not his real glorification. Before he could actually be glorified, he must die as the Redeemer of the world, for otherwise, like the “corn of wheat,” he would remain alone. Conceivably, through the exercise of divine power, Jesus could have established his kingdom at that time. Had he done so without dying to redeem the human race from death, however, he alone would have eternal life, while all his subjects would continue to die.

A few days later, on the night before his death, Jesus explained to the disciples that he was going away to “prepare a place” for them, and added, “Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” Answering on behalf of the confused disciples, Thomas said, “We know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” (John 14:2-5) Thomas’ reply clearly showed that, here again, the disciples had not yet grasped the fact that Jesus was to die, be raised from the dead, and be glorified as a divine being, nor did they yet know the way to glory, although they had been invited to follow him.

Only a short time earlier the mother of James and John had asked if her two sons could sit, one on Jesus’ right hand, and the other on his left hand, in his kingdom. Jesus explained that to share his glory it would be necessary to drink his “cup” of suffering and be “baptized” with him into death. (Matt. 20:20-22) James and John said they were willing to go through these experiences. Their understanding of what was implied was evidently vague, however, since as we have just seen, only days later

Thomas admitted that they did not truly know the “way” to the place of glory to which Jesus was going.

“IF I BE LIFTED UP”

In another effort to prepare his disciples for the fact that he would be taken away from them in death, Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” To this the people answered, “We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?” (John 12:32-34) The wording of the above passage seems to indicate that those who asked this question were not Jesus’ disciples, yet they understood from his remark that he expected to die.

As the people remarked, however, they understood from the Old Testament that Christ, the Messiah, would not die, but would continue forever. The disciples had accepted Jesus as Christ, so they, too, were sure that he would not die. As a result, their great faith in him as being the Messiah of promise was one of the things which tended to obscure from them the meaning of all that he said relating to the fact of his death and the establishment of his kingdom at a later time. The disciples were confused by what seemed to them a “hard saying,” and hence were unable to see and appreciate its fuller unfolding.—John 6:60

The Messiah will, indeed, abide forever, but first it was necessary that he should die to redeem those over whom he would reign. It is true, as stated in Isaiah 9:6,7, that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end,” but before he

could draw all men unto him it was necessary that he be lifted up upon the cross to die, the “just for the unjust.” (I Pet. 3:18) Thus it was that although Jesus’ disciples loved him dearly and would gladly have given their lives to save him from death, yet when he came to the end of the way, “all the disciples forsook him.” That is, none of them were able to understand the significance of what was taking place. —Matt. 26:56

Shame and ignominy were heaped upon the Master. He was derided, blasphemed and beaten. A crown of thorns was pressed upon his bleeding head. On the cross he was further ridiculed, but one of the thieves being crucified with him noted the inscription at the top of the cross stating that Jesus was a king. Grasping at a straw of hope, the thief said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” —Luke 23:42

How clearly the Master had the whole situation in mind! In the parable he had shown that he would go into a “far country,” and upon returning he would establish his kingdom. Now, although he was dying, he possessed unbounded faith in his Father’s plan. He knew that he would receive the promised kingdom, and that its control over the affairs of men would reestablish paradise conditions worldwide. He knew that even the dead would be raised and have an opportunity to enjoy the blessings of that kingdom, and that the thief would thus have the same prospect. Grasping this occasion to give a witness for the Truth, even as he was dying, Jesus replied to the thief, “Verily I say unto thee this day: With me, shalt thou be in Paradise.” —vs. 43, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

Jesus' final words on the cross were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"—that is, my life. (vs. 46) Thus died the king of glory. All nature seemed to join in the mourning. The ground shook, the sky was darkened, and so were the minds of his trusting, and now bewildered, followers. (Matt. 27:51; Luke 23:44,45) The one whom they so surely thought would live forever had died. It was a grim and confusing climax to that series of events which had crowded into his last few days and, paradoxically, began with his riding heroically into Jerusalem as king, accompanied by the cheers of the people, his disciples and friends. They had honored and exalted him, but now his enemies had killed him.

NOW GLORIFIED

True to God's Word, and to Jesus' own testimony prior to his death, he rose again on the third day, and was exalted to sit at the right hand of the throne of his Father. (Ps. 110:1-7; Rom. 8:34; Matt. 16:21; Phil. 2:8-11) Shortly after the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter related the entire matter most eloquently. Speaking to those who had witnessed the miracle of healing a man lame from his birth, he said, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."—Acts 3:13-15

After his resurrection Jesus himself announced, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

(Matt. 28:18) However, he did not then exercise that power by establishing the long-promised kingdom. Instead, and as he had foretold in the parable, after he appeared to his disciples a few times over a period of forty days, he “went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” (Acts 1:1-3; Luke 19:12) Jesus commissioned his disciples that, during this intervening time, they were to be his witnesses throughout the entire world, proclaiming the fact that, in due time, he would return to establish his kingdom, through which all the families of the earth would be blessed.—Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 3:20-25

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting disciples to empower them properly to represent their absent Lord. By its enlightening influence, great truths stated to them by Jesus, and outlined by the prophets, became understandable. They now saw clearly what Jesus meant by “taking up their cross” and following him into death. (Matt. 16:24) How could they, prior to this, know the meaning of dying with Jesus when they did not believe he would die? Their only thought then was that they would reign with him, and that his reign was imminent.

Now the disciples knew that they would have to drink of his “cup” and be baptized with his “baptism” in order to prove worthy of reigning with him. Thus, they began to preach this to those who had ears to hear. They no longer had any illusions that the kingdom would be immediately set up. They knew that Jesus had gone into the “far country” of the parable, even heaven itself; and as all their hopes of life and glory centered in his promise to return,

they looked forward to his “glorious appearing,” while daily they presented their bodies a living sacrifice in his service.—Tit. 2:13; Rom. 12:1

Soon after the apostles fell asleep in death, the church began to lose sight of the glorious hope of the Master’s return. Ignoring his teachings on the subject, many tried to imagine that the kingdom of Christ was merely a holy influence in the lives of believers. Thus, they concluded that when the whole world became believers, his kingdom would have fully come. Others ambitiously endeavored to exercise kingly authority through the arm of civil power. Between these two blinding errors, the hope of Christ’s return to set up his kingdom was lost by the vast majority of his professed followers.

Jesus expected that matters would turn out this way and related a number of parables in which he foretold these misinterpretations of the kingdom hope. Speaking of his return, he asked whether he would, when that time came, “find the faith upon the earth.” (Luke 18:8, *Young’s Literal Translation*) Many still profess to believe in his teachings, but they have little hope that divine power will actually be used to establish his kingdom. Millions this year, as every year, will go to church on April 4 as a token of their belief that Jesus was raised from the dead, unmindful of the fact that God’s power did not cease to operate for the ultimate blessing of mankind when that mighty miracle was performed.

Yet this is the real essence of the resurrection story to all who know the plan of God and have confidence in his ability to perform all his good pleasure. The fact that Jesus, the Messiah of promise, was killed did not interfere with the outworking of

God's plan. Likewise, neither do twenty centuries of bloodshed among the nations, and divisions, strife, and persecution among the professed people of God, mean that the fulfillment of his kingdom promises has failed, or has been delayed.

To us the risen Christ is a sure token that all of God's good purposes will come to pass! Today, the fulfillment of prophetic signs provided to us in the Scriptures indicate that Jesus' invisible return has occurred, and that his kingdom is very near. Truly, then, our hearts should burn within us as we meditate on the kingdom theme, discuss it with one another, and proclaim it to the whole world. As shown in the parable, it is after the king's return that he reckons with his servants, and it is our privilege now to prove our worthiness of reigning with him by faithfully using the opportunities and privileges which he has entrusted to us.

The commission Jesus gave to his disciples to preach the Gospel is just as binding upon us as it was upon them. When the women first met the risen Lord by the empty tomb, the instruction of the angel to them was, "Tell his disciples." (Mark 16:7) Thus, today, our message still is, "The Lord is risen indeed." (Luke 24:34) By this greatest of all miracles, the Heavenly Father manifested his ability to perform all his good pleasure. Now we can bear witness to the fact that God's miracle-working power will continue to operate for the establishment and manifestation of the Messianic kingdom, and that the hope of the world does not rest in the frustrated plans and efforts of the institutions of men.

When the women bore the glad tidings of Jesus' resurrection to the disciples, their message was at

first looked upon as “idle tales.” (Luke 24:11) It is still thus with the majority of those to whom we bear witness. Some believe, however, and as the continued failure of human plans becomes more and more apparent, greater numbers will perhaps give ear to the tidings that soon God’s good will toward all the families of the earth will be revealed by the “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”—Rev. 22:1

Therefore, let us continue to tell the glad tidings in every way we can. Cooperatively, let us continue to tell it over the printed page, radio, television, the internet, and other forms of electronic media. Individually, let us be on the alert to use every opportunity afforded us to share the glorious Gospel of the kingdom message with our families, neighbors and friends. Never before have there been such golden opportunities for making known the glad tidings worldwide.

It was difficult for the disciples in Jesus’ day to realize that the kingdom was not then immediately to appear, but no longer is this true. The fulfillment of many prophecies indicates that Christ’s kingdom “is near, even at the doors.” (Matt. 24:33) The wrath of the enemies that slew Jesus has been overruled by God for the redemption of the world, and he has been raised from the dead and glorified. He no longer remains in the “far country.” Even now he is reckoning with his servants and has served his household “meat in due season.” (vs. 45) Therefore, let us not hold back from proving our worthiness of being “glorified together” with him, that we may live and reign with him in his kingdom, for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Rom. 8:17; Rev. 20:4,6; 21:1-4 ■

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise.

O, how can words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare
That glows within my inmost heart?
But thou canst read it there.

Through all eternity, to thee
A grateful song I'll raise,
And my eternal joy shall be
To herald wide thy praise.

—*Hymns of Dawn*

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 Christiane Brychcy, Lamorlaye, France—February 21. Age, 77

Sister Ruth Ranik, Freinsheim, Germany—February 22. Age, 82

Sister Louisa Wolfe, Portland, OR—February 22. Age, 84

Sister Maria Matuszko, Przychojec, Poland—February 26. Age, 76

Brother Adam Kozak, Olsztyn, Poland—March 4. Age, 86

Sister Marcy Marten, Chicago, IL—March 4. Age, 94

Brother Eugeniusz Szarkowicz, Przychojec, Poland—March 6. Age, 85

The Arm of the LORD

Key Verse: “*He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*”

—*Isaiah 53:5, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 53:1-12

mankind. So it was that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”—II Cor. 5:21, *NKJV*

God’s “Arm,” Jesus, became a sin offering for us. This is especially remarkable considering that “when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”—Rom. 5:6-8, *NKJV*

The Bible’s message of salvation is precious to us. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we

THE IMAGERY DEPICTED

in our Key Verse cannot fail to deeply touch every sincere Christian heart. The Prophet Isaiah foretold the great work of atonement accomplished through our Lord Jesus’ sacrifice on behalf of fallen humanity. The Adamic race was broken, mired in sin, gravely flawed, and in desperate need of a Savior. Jesus, by contrast, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, fully capable of being the Savior who would redeem

the Savior who would redeem

the Savior who would redeem

the Savior who would redeem

stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2, *NKJV*) We understand that our being at peace with God is completely dependent on Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf. This, we believe, is the fruitage of Jesus’ being “wounded for our transgressions” and healing us “by His stripes.”

Some hold that our healing pertains to physical disease. However, there is a higher, spiritual fulfillment which we esteem as more important—a healing manifested in the renewing of our minds and the cleansing of our hearts. (Rom. 12:1,2) Being at peace with God, “let us continue to come near with sincere hearts in the full assurance that faith provides, because our hearts have been sprinkled clean from a guilty conscience, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.”—Heb. 10:22, *International Standard Version*

Not all can grasp the blessedness of a relationship with Christ in the present time, “for not all have faith.” (II Thess. 3:2, *NKJV*) “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” (Eph. 2:8) Faith is a gift that comes from God. Yet, “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isa. 53:6) As indicated in this verse, we see that the Gospel message includes salvation for all—Christians in the present age of faith, and the remainder of mankind in God’s coming kingdom on earth.

God’s kingdom will surely come to pass in his due time. “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:9-11, *NKJV*) “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities.” (Isa. 53:11, *NKJV*) Then our report shall be believed by all, when the “Arm of the LORD” is revealed to them. ■

Ezra Confesses the People's Sins

Key Verse: *“O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as it is this day. Here we are before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!”*

—*Ezra 9:15, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Ezra 9:1-15; 10:1-17

him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.”—vs. 13, *NKJV*

Now the burden of standing up for the sake of righteousness fell upon Ezra. The people of Israel had intermarried with pagans. Worse still, many of the Levites, entrusted with teaching the Word of God, had committed the same act of disobedience. Well might Ezra have gotten on his pulpit and shouted, “Shame on you! You should have known better. I have not sinned like you have.” However, Ezra did not take this course of action. As he

THE KEY VERSE MAGNI-

fies the power of two small words, “we” and “our.” Ezra was a priest of Israel, of the Levite tribe, and a direct descendant of Levi through Phinehas. The heritage Ezra received from his ancestor was quite impressive. Phinehas had turned back the hand of the Lord from consuming the children of Israel as punishment for their tolerance of idolatry and immorality. (Num. 25:1-11) God then promised to give the priestly line to Phinehas: “It shall be to him and his descendants after

prayed to God for help in this dilemma, he humbly included himself with his people Israel. “We” are before you, in “our” guilt.

His words are noble and instructive—ones that we should take to heart as we bear witness to the Gospel. Reflect on the parable Jesus spoke in addressing this theme. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me a sinner! I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”—Luke 18:10-14, *NKJV*

Ezra realized his own sinful nature and acknowledged the fact that his fortunes were interwoven with those of his countrymen. May we recognize that we are also sinners by nature. We are forgiven, but not perfect. Our fortunes are entwined with our brethren, members of the “body of Christ.” We should “have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”—I Cor. 12:25-27, *NKJV*

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (I John 1:7-9, *NKJV*) May we bear in mind Ezra’s example of humility and sympathy as we labor on behalf of our brethren in Christ. ■

Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem

Key Verse: *“Then I said to them, You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.”*
—**Nehemiah 2:17,**
English Standard Version

Selected Scripture:
Nehemiah 2:1-20

the wall, mustering their confidence and hope.

The lesson is one that we will greatly benefit from if we put it into practice. Berating and accusation are not successful motivators. The best leaders are those who lead from the front and acknowledge the value of those that follow them. Morale is lifted and hearts are warmed when a true leader affirms, “We are in this together. Working collectively, we can accomplish our goal.”

Prior to this meeting with the officials of the city, Nehemiah did not reveal the purpose of his visit. Having

OUR KEY VERSE ECHOES

the theme put forth in the previous lesson about Ezra. With masterful statesmanship Nehemiah addressed the leaders of Jerusalem: “You see the trouble we are in.” He did not lay accusations upon them, holding them alone as being responsible for the failure to secure Jerusalem by repairing the city wall. Rather, Nehemiah used inclusive language that ameliorated any guilt on the leaders’ part, showing instead an attitude of compassion. He also reassured them that, together, they could build

been sent with the blessing of Persian king Artaxerxes to repair Jerusalem's defenses, he was a model of discretion in his conduct. Note his testimony: "I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. ... And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. ... I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work."—Neh. 2:11-16, *New King James Version*

Nehemiah went out to examine Jerusalem's ruined condition in the nighttime. He was accompanied by just a few men. He told no one what his intentions were. The lesson we take from this is characterized by the admonition that we should not thrust others' failures into their faces by making a public scandal of them. We are not to lay bare the problems of our countrymen, our family, or our brethren for all to see.

Perhaps the noble-minded Nehemiah treasured this proverb, "By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked. He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, But a man of understanding holds his peace. A talebearer reveals secrets, But he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter." (Prov. 11:11-13, *NKJV*) The mouths of the wicked love to speak evil, and to be talebearers who say things that should not be said, which degrade their neighbor. Nehemiah did none of these things. He knew that a man of understanding must be discreet in his speech. He believed that one who has a faithful spirit should wisely conceal such matters. May we follow the noble principles exemplified by Nehemiah in assisting God's people out of their difficulties.■

Jeremiah's Plea for Israel

Key Verse: “*Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old.*”
—**Lamentations 5:21, English Standard Version**

Selected Scripture:
Lamentations 5:1-21

OUR KEY VERSE IS JEREMIAH’S

plea for divine deliverance. The preceding chapters of Jeremiah’s Lamentations reveal how profoundly destitute Zion had become. “How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.

She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies. Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress. The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the festival; all her gates are desolate; her priests groan; her virgins have been afflicted, and she herself suffers bitterly.”—Lam. 1:1-4, *ESV*

We are instructed by Jeremiah’s plea to God. Note that he did not say that the people of Israel and the inhabitants of Zion should pull themselves up by their bootstraps and make themselves *0*is favor. No amount of self-sacrifice and personal penance can restore the spiritually sick

back to the favor of God. Jeremiah's approach goes to the proper source, when he asks the Lord, "restore us to yourself," and reinstate your favor "as of old."

When we feel distant from our Creator, we may wisely use Jeremiah's approach. We must realize that there is nothing we can do of ourselves to restore God's favor or grace to us. The temptation is to think that perhaps if we put a bit more money into the donation box, hold the door for an elderly person, or double up on good works, that by these our closeness with God will flourish once again. We reflect on the words of the grand old hymn, Rock of Ages:

Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone;
Thou hast saved and thou alone.
In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.

It is only through the cross, and by the power of Jesus' shed blood, that we stand in God's grace. We must not diminish that fact by attempting to justify ourselves. The penitent sinner's only hope is in God's mercy. We stand before God in Christ, and Christ alone.

The words of the psalmist resonate deeply within us. "Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning. ... For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption."—Ps. 130:1-7, *New King James Version*

We cherish the thought that because God is forgiving and merciful, we can approach him in reverence. Let our plea, as Jeremiah's, ascend to God on behalf of ourselves and on behalf of our brethren in Christ. ■

“Lovest Thou Me More than These?”

*“Simon, son of Jonas,
lovest thou me more
than these?”
—John 21:15*

ACCORDING TO THE
Gospel record, Jesus
appeared five times to
various ones of his fol-

lowers and disciples during the first eight days which followed his resurrection. Then, possibly for a few weeks, no additional appearances are recorded. During this time, the disciples would likely have discussed among themselves their situation. Their hopes and prospects of the Messianic kingdom perhaps became somewhat vague and indistinct as the days and weeks passed.

Evidently Jesus' delay in giving another post-resurrection appearance was for the purpose of testing the faith of his followers, especially the eleven remaining apostles, and to prepare them for receiving additional, important lessons. After they waited for some time in Jerusalem with no more appearances of Jesus, the apostles may have then recalled the words he spoke the night before his

death, after they left the upper room and walked to the Mount of Olives, when he said to them, “After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.” —Matt. 26:30-32

The apostles may have also remembered the message which an angel of the Lord had given at the tomb on the day of Jesus’ resurrection to Salome, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James. The angel had said to them, “Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here ... But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.” (Mark 16:6,7) Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the next appearance of Jesus to his disciples is that which is recorded as taking place at the “sea of Galilee,” also known as the sea of “Tiberias.” —John 6:1; 21:1

As men in the prime of life, the apostles must have felt that they should be engaged in some worthwhile activity, rather than continuing to remain idle. During his ministry, Jesus had called several of them from their fishing nets to be “fishers of men,” and they had left all to follow him. (Matt. 4:18-22; Luke 18:28) However, Jesus had died, and was subsequently raised from the dead on the third day. He was now a spirit being, whom they could not physically see most of the time. From their limited perspective, things had changed after Jesus’ death and resurrection. They may have wondered, “What should we preach?” or “How can we tell others of our hopes in our king who has been crucified, and although he has risen, he cannot be physically seen by others?”

A RETURN TO FISHING

According to the scriptural record, seven of the apostles, under the leadership of Peter, determined to reenter the fishing business. (John 21:2,3) This was one endeavor in which they had experience. As had probably been their previous custom, after dark they took their boat to go fishing, "and that night they caught nothing." This was the very circumstance Jesus was waiting for. He wished the disciples to reach the extremity of thinking and reasoning on the matter of his resurrection and what they should do now, in order to prepare them for the lessons he was about to give.

On this occasion, when the apostles reengaged in the fishing business, the time had come for the risen Lord to demonstrate two things. First, he desired that the apostles know he had a further mission for them to perform in connection with "fishing for men," which they had not yet accomplished. Second, Jesus wanted to demonstrate to them that the divine power he had prior to his death and resurrection, and which had provided for their necessities during the three and one-half years of his ministry, was still his and would be exercised in their interest if they continued to obey him.

It is important to notice that although Jesus, resurrected as a spirit being, could not be seen most of the time by the disciples during the forty days prior to his ascension, he could hear and see them. Therefore, all the disciples' plans, arrangements and discussions among themselves were fully known to him. By miraculous power, exercised in some manner unknown to us, the risen Lord hindered fish from going into their nets that night. Not

knowing the true situation, the disciples were likely quite disappointed.

Here is a lesson for all of the Lord's people. We do not know, at times, what is for our best, spiritual interest. Certain things which we may want and desire to grasp, considering them to be good, might really be to our disadvantage spiritually. Blessed are they who are able, by faith, to pierce the gloom of every trial, difficulty and perplexity, realizing that "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—II Tim. 2:19; Rom. 8:28

THEY TOILED ALL NIGHT

In the dawn of the morning, Jesus appeared to the disciples as a stranger standing on the shore of Galilee. He called out to them and inquired if they had any fish. From the boat they replied that they had toiled all night and caught nothing. Then the stranger suggested they cast their net on the other side of the ship. Although such a suggestion must have seemed foolish to a group of experienced fishermen, they did as the stranger suggested. Immediately their net filled with a large number of sizeable fish, so much that even these seven strong fishermen were unable to draw it into the boat and were obliged to drag it ashore.—John 21:4-6,8,11

The apostle John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved," was the first to reason that this stranger on shore was, in fact, the resurrected Jesus. He said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Peter, whose heart was no doubt still burning as he remembered his own weakness in denying his Lord three times during

Jesus' last night on earth, could not wait for the boat to take him to the shore. Instead, he immediately jumped into the water and swam to shore as fast as he was able, to have another opportunity to see and speak with Jesus. When the other disciples reached the shore with their net full of fish, they found not only Jesus, but also some bread and fish cooking over a fire. (John 21:7-9) Thus, the first lesson for the disciples was the reassurance that they were still under the Lord's care and supervision.

Jesus then said to them, "Come and have breakfast." The disciples ate with their Lord and Master, whom they recognized not by his physical appearance, nor by seeing nail marks on his hands and feet, but instead by the miracle which he had just performed. "None of the disciples dared ask him, Who are you? They knew it was the Lord." (vs. 12, *English Standard Version*) Although the rest of the conversation the apostles had with the Lord while eating together is not reported, John recorded the important words which Jesus addressed to Peter following the meal.

PETER WISELY AND GENTLY REPROVED

Jesus questioned his beloved disciple, addressing him not by his new name, Peter, but by his old name, "Simon, son of Jonas." (John 21:15) Perhaps it was an intimation to Peter that he had not manifested in the last few weeks the rock-like qualities implied in his surname "Peter," because he had chosen to leave the work of the Gospel and instead pursue again the fishing business. Jesus' first question to Peter was most pointed. Referring to the boats, nets, and other things related to the fishing trade, the Lord asked, "Lovest thou me

more than these?" In essence Jesus was questioning Peter, "You started out to be my disciple, but what place do I have now in your heart? Is it still essential for you to serve God and preach the Gospel, or is it more important to go back to fishing?"

Peter's answer was prompt, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus then responded, "Feed my lambs." That is, take care of my little ones instead of pursuing the fishing business. Then Jesus asked a second time the same thing, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter gave the same reply and our Lord responded, "Feed my sheep." Give your thought, attention, and care to them, rather than to the fishing business.—vss. 15,16

Jesus then asked Peter a third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter "was grieved" with being asked a third time, "lovest thou me?" It seemed to imply doubt on the Lord's part, and perhaps the third time this question was asked, it reminded Peter that he had denied Jesus three times. It touched a very tender spot in the apostle's heart. We may be sure this was not done by our Lord, even in this delicate manner, with any intent to injure or discourage Peter, but rather for the purpose of helping him. Peter's confession this time was even stronger: "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus again said to him, "Feed my sheep."—vs. 17

AGAPAO AND PHILEO LOVE

The words translated as "lovest" that Jesus used in his questions to Peter on these three occasions were not the same each time. In the New Testament there are two different sets of Greek words which

are all often rendered by the English word “love” in many translations of the Bible. One set is comprised of the words *agape* [noun] and *agapao* [verb], and the other set consists of *philadelphia* [noun] and *phileo* [verb]. When Jesus questioned Peter the first two times, he used the verb *agapao*, which means to love in the highest sense—the strongest and purest love, a selfless love. However, the third time Jesus questioned Peter he used the word *phileo*, which denotes the manifestation of love in the sense of affection, brotherly kindness, and friendship, much like the feelings one has for family and close friends.

Peter, in all three of his answers, used the word *phileo*, thus declaring his personal affection and friendship toward Jesus. Perhaps, because of his denial three times in knowing the Master and his decision to return to the fishing business, Peter refrained from claiming the highest love, *agapao*, which our Lord used in his first two questions to him. This might be an indication of Peter’s humility, after having denied knowing the Lord three separate times. If so, then Peter had learned an important lesson, no longer to boast about his own strength and confidence, but rather to be aware of his weaknesses. Jesus’ use of the word *phileo* the third time he asked the question especially grieved Peter. By changing the word, Jesus may have implied, “Peter, are you sure that you have even an affectionate or brotherly love toward me?”

PHILADELPHIA LOVE ILLUSTRATED

Love, as denoted by the words *phileo*, or *philadelphia*, can be thought of as that type of love

which is given in the hope of receiving it in return. As such, it may have the tendency toward the seeking of one's own interest. One example of this kind of love is that which is exercised by a parent toward a child, and the child toward a parent. Such a love is, of course, quite proper and needful. However, it can sometimes be based on, to some degree or another, self-interest. A scriptural example of this is found in these instructions of Jesus to his followers: "He that loveth [*phileo*: have affection for] father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth [*phileo*] son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37) Jesus' point in these words was that, while affectionate love toward our family members is indeed appropriate, it must not exceed our love for him, else we can never follow him faithfully as "overcomers."

Another lesson Jesus gave concerning *philadelphia* love is: "He that loveth [*phileo*] his life shall lose it." (John 12:25) Indeed, it is our privilege to love life, in the sense of appreciating it and being unwilling to destroy it or waste it foolishly. However, those who have become followers of Christ and who have pledged to walk in his footsteps, even unto death, realize that they have already surrendered their human life. They have exchanged it for the hope associated with the transformation of their heart and mind to become like Jesus. If faithful unto death, this high, heavenly hope will be realized, and they will receive the divine nature as a spiritual being. (Rom. 2:7; Rev. 2:10) We are no longer to be controlled by *philadelphia* love toward earthly life, but instead must strive to develop *agape* love, a

selfless love which makes us willing, yea even glad, to lay down our life in the service of God. In this regard, the Apostle Peter exhorts us to add to “brotherly kindness” [*philadelphia*], the highest form of love, *agape*, which does not seek its own interest.—II Pet. 1:7

AGAPE—SELFLESS LOVE—ILLUSTRATED

The love which God had in providing for mankind’s redemption from sin and death was not *phileo*, because he had not wronged mankind when the sentence of death was pronounced upon Adam and all his subsequent posterity, due to his disobedience. Mankind, likewise, did not do anything for the Creator which would have put him under obligation to love mankind in return. Instead, God’s love which provided for our redemption was *agapao*, or *agape*, selfless love. As we read in John 3:16, “God so loved [*agapao*] the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” The Apostle Paul also describes God’s love for the human race, writing: “God commendeth his love [*agape*] toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”—Rom. 5:8

The kind of unselfish love which God exemplified is that which he sets before us as the highest standard or “mark” toward which we must develop, if we would gain the heavenly prize. This perfect standard is impossible for our fallen human flesh, but is attainable by our renewed minds, wills and hearts. It is expressed well in the words: “Thou shalt love [*agapao*] the Lord thy God with all thy heart, ... soul, ... strength, and ... mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”—Luke 10:27

The objective of God's instructions, training and correction is to transform our character into his likeness, as represented by this word *agape*. "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." (I Tim. 1:5, *New International Version*) "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (I John 4:16) Every appearance of the word love in these verses is from the Greek *agape*.

MANY CHARACTERISTICS OF AGAPE

In the Apostle Paul's wonderful discourse on *agape* love, he describes its many facets. (I Cor. 13:1-13). In these verses the Greek word *agape* is referred to as "charity" in the *King James Version*. However, in nearly all other translations, it is more properly rendered "love." Paul begins by explaining that *agape* love "suffereth long"—that is, it exercises forbearance and patience. (vs. 4) Elsewhere, he writes that we should "be patient toward all."—I Thess. 5:14

In another place, Paul points out Abraham as a great example of patience and longsuffering, stating, "After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." (Heb. 6:15) We recall that Abraham waited twenty-five years before God's promise was fulfilled that his wife Sarai would bear him a son. (Gen. 12:1-7; 17:19; 21:1-5) This was just one example of the many manifestations of patience and longsuffering in the life of this faithful one of the Old Testament. The Apostle Peter tells us that God is "longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—II Pet. 3:9

Returning to Paul's words in I Corinthians chapter 13, he continues by saying that *agape* love is kind. (I Cor. 13:4) Jesus explains that God "is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." (Luke 6:35) Thus we see that kindness and mercy are important aspects of the selfless love which descends from God, and which is shown by his plan to redeem mankind from sin and death.

Agape love "envieth not," in other words, it is not jealous. It "vaunteth not itself," or as the *J. B. Phillips New Testament* reads, "is neither anxious to impress" others. (I Cor. 13:4) In harmony with this, Jesus pointed out that such a love will not motivate his true disciples to do alms, pray, or fast in order to be seen by others. (Matt. 6:1,2,5,16) Paul states further that *agape* love is "not puffed up," that is, proud. Earlier in his epistle the apostle admonishes: "That no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"—I Cor. 4:6,7

Additionally, Paul tells us that *agape* love "doth not behave itself unseemly," and "seeketh not her own" interests. Rather, it is interested and concerned for those beyond just ourselves and our close circle of family and friends. (I Cor. 13:5) Furthermore, this unselfish love "is not provoked." (*Revised Version*) In other words, it does not become irritated, nor bad-tempered. Instead, such a love makes allowances for the weaknesses of others and thereby is forgiving of others, just "as Christ forgave" us. (Col. 3:13) It is also a love which "thinketh no evil." One possessing such a love will not suppose or "surmise" evil about others.—I Tim. 6:4

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Agape love “rejoiceth not in iniquity,” injustice, unrighteousness; but instead “rejoiceth in the truth.” (I Cor. 13:6) One practical example of “rejoicing in iniquity” is participating in gossip or idle talk about others, which oftentimes results in damaging, or possibly even destroying, their reputation. Even if we are only a listener to gossip or idle talk, we are still, to that extent, a party to such wrong behavior. Gossip is an “iniquity,” an injustice, because those being talked about are usually not present and therefore unable to defend themselves. Such conversations, often falsely considered innocent “information sharing,” are usually destructive in nature and, therefore, should be considered as unrighteous behavior. The Scriptures are clear in warning us against this practice.—Lev. 19:16; Prov. 26:20,22; II Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:29; I Pet. 4:15

Let us, rather, strive to daily put into practice the words found in the Psalms, to “set a guard” over our mouth and “keep watch over the door” of our lips. (Ps. 141:3, *NIV*) The psalmist also wrote, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful,” but instead, finds that “his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”—Ps. 1:1,2

Finally, the Apostle Paul says that *agape* love “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” (I Cor. 13:7) Such all-encompassing love does not have restrictions. It is not love which merely pays back in return for

what someone has done for us, nor is it a love which waits for someone else to love us first. It is completely selfless, without any conditions or “strings” attached. A love that bears, believes, hopes and endures “all things” in accord with God’s character and plan is indeed the highest form of love.

JESUS’ WORDS TO PETER

On the morning when our risen Lord was on the shore of Galilee, he gave the following prophecy to Peter, “Truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” (John 21:18,19, *NIV*) These words seem to indicate that Peter would die by crucifixion when he was old. Most importantly, it meant that Peter had not been rejected by the Lord, but on the contrary, would have the privilege to suffer for the truth, and for the cause of Christ. After Jesus spoke these things, he then said these final words to Peter, “Follow me,” which he did, faithfully, to the end of his life.

Just as Peter did, let us also develop reliance upon God’s wisdom in all of our experiences, even on occasions when we may not understand why God has permitted certain things to come upon us. We may rest assured of God’s love, wisdom, and power. (Rom. 8:28) Let us trust God, even when we cannot trace him, and be “content: ... for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. 13:5) May the sentiments of our heart and mind be like the words of the well-known hymn:

He leadeth me, O blessed thought! O words with
heav'nly comfort fraught!

Whate'er I do, wher'er I be, Still 'tis God's hand
that leadeth me.

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom, Some-
times where Eden's bowers bloom,

By waters still, o'er troubled sea, Still 'tis his hand
that leadeth me.

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine, Nor ever
murmur or repine,

Content whatever lot I see, Since 'tis my God that
leadeth me.

And when my task on earth is done, When by thy
grace the vict'ry's won,

E'en death's cold wave I will not flee, Since God
thro' Jordan leadeth me.

He leadeth me! He leadeth me! By his own hand
he leadeth me.

His faithful foll'wer I would be, For by his hand
he leadeth me.

—*Hymns of Dawn*, #87, "He Leadeth Me"

Let us daily apply to ourselves the question which
Jesus asked Peter, "Lovest [*agapao*, selfless love]
thou me more than these?" May we likewise increase
our efforts to develop this highest form of love by
demonstrating in our daily life each godlike quality
outlined by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians, chapter
13. Finally, let us continue to cultivate a close, per-
sonal fellowship with our Heavenly Father and
with our Lord and master Jesus Christ, which will
enable us to make this affirmative statement, that
we love them both more than lands or houses,
boats or nets, parents or children, husband or wife,
or self.—Ps. 45:10,11; Matt. 10:37-39; 19:27-29 ■

The Mysteries of God

*“The secret things
belong unto the
LORD our God: but
those things which
are revealed belong
unto us and to our
children for ever,
that we may do all
the words of
this law.”*
—Deuteronomy
29:29

TWO IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS are emphasized in our opening text, which are the words of Moses. First, we are reminded that “secret things” belong to God, which means there are certain aspects of his plans and purposes that he has not revealed through his Word, and which, therefore, are

not necessary to our understanding at the present time. Second, God’s purpose in revealing certain things pertaining to his plans and purposes is “that we may do all the words of this law,” or to us, all the words of the “gospel of Christ.”—Rom. 1:16

God says, through the Prophet Isaiah, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. ... For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as

the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”—Isa. 55:8-11

The above passage emphasizes that God’s purpose in sending forth his word is to reveal whatever portion of his “higher thoughts” he desires his people to know. His purpose in giving such knowledge is that something might be accomplished thereby, and he thus assures us that his word will indeed accomplish all that he pleases. As far as the individual child of God is concerned, the most important accomplishment of the Father’s word is in his own heart and life. Jesus prayed on behalf of his followers that they might be “sanctified,” or made holy, by God’s word.—John 17:17

David wrote that the secret of the Lord is for those who fear, or reverence him, adding that “He will make them know His covenant.” (Ps. 25:14, *New American Standard Bible*) This suggests that one of God’s covenant promises is to reveal the secret of his plan to those who reverence him. This does not imply that the Lord reveals to his faithful people all that they might like to know. When the disciples asked Jesus, “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Jesus replied, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.” (Acts 1:6,7) Here was a “secret” which God did not then reveal to his people.

MYSTERIES REVEALED

Jesus said to his disciples, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 13:11) This does not mean that all the mysteries pertaining to the kingdom are revealed to the followers of Jesus during the present age, but only those which they need to understand in order to know and to do the will of God.

The Apostle Paul speaks of himself as one of the "ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." To this he adds, "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (I Cor. 4:1,2) Thus, an understanding of the mysteries of God's plans imposes responsibility, and only by being faithful in the discharge of those responsibilities can we be pleasing to the Lord. Faithfulness as stewards of the mysteries of God calls for self-sacrificing zeal in making known those mysteries to others.

The apostle also wrote, "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."—I Cor. 2:7-10

Regardless of how faithful we may be in declaring the mysteries of God, none will be able to understand them except those to whom they are revealed by God. We may proclaim these secrets from the housetops, yet they will remain secrets to all but

one here and one there. In all, it is a “little flock,” to whom it is the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom during the present age. To these, however, he is pleased to reveal some of the mysteries of the kingdom.—Luke 12:32

MANY MYSTERIES

In I Corinthians 13:2 the Apostle Paul speaks of understanding “all mysteries,” meaning, of course, all that the Lord had been pleased to reveal to him. This expression, nevertheless, indicates that there is more than one aspect to what he refers to in another place as, “the mystery of the gospel.” (Eph. 6:19) Important among these is “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” To this the apostle adds, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Col. 1:26,27

Through the prophets of the Old Testament God had set forth the “hope of glory” for the Messiah, who is Christ of the New Testament. Peter mentions this, explaining that it was the Spirit of God in and through the prophets which “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”—I Pet. 1:11

Prior to the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the “sufferings of Christ” constituted one of the mysteries of God’s plan which was not generally understood. Even Jesus’ closest disciples expected him to immediately set up the Messianic kingdom, not realizing that it was necessary first that Christ should suffer and

die before he would “enter into his glory.”—Luke 24:26,27

The hearts of two of the disciples burned within them as the risen Lord unfolded this mystery. Doubtless all his followers experienced the same joy when they realized that the death of Jesus was not a miscarriage of the divine plan and purpose, but that it was necessary so that mankind might be redeemed from death.—vss. 31,32

There was a further aspect to this mystery which the disciples did not understand prior to Pentecost, which was that the foretold sufferings of Christ would also include the experiences of his footstep followers. It was this further feature of the mystery that Paul wrote about, saying, “I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf. And with my own body I supplement whatever is lacking on our part of Christ’s afflictions, on behalf of His body, which is the church.” (Col. 1:24, *Amplified Bible*) It is because those who are a part of his “body” have the privilege of suffering with Christ that they have the same hope of glory. That same hope which enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame heaped upon him by his enemies is shared by his body members, lest they “be wearied and faint” in their minds.—Heb. 12:1-3

Concerning this mystery Paul further wrote, “We are members of his body. ... For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph. 5:30-32) For those to whom this mystery has been revealed, it is not complex or difficult to understand. The knowledge of the church’s relationship to Christ explains, for example, why

his faithful followers of the present age have been permitted to suffer. It also reveals why the kingdom of Christ was not established at the time of his earthly ministry.

This understanding further explains why the world has not yet been converted to Christ. By understanding this mystery, we know that God's purpose for this age has not been the conversion of the world. Rather, it has been to gather out from the world those who, by divine providence, hear the call to discipleship, accept it, and prove their faithfulness by suffering and dying with Christ.

THE GENTILES ALSO

There is another aspect to the mystery of "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is that in this blessed and vital relationship with Christ, believing Gentiles share even as do believing Jews. Paul wrote to the brethren at Ephesus concerning this: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."—Eph. 3:1-6

Paul was very appreciative of the fact that God had selected and empowered him to preach this great mystery of the divine plan to the Gentiles. He

wrote, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."—Eph. 3:8,9

To us there is nothing mysterious about the fact that Gentiles should be accepted into the fellowship of the body of Christ. However, the situation was quite different at the beginning of the Gospel Age. Prior to that time the Israelites were the chosen people of God. God had said to these, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth."—Deut. 7:6-8; 14:2; Amos 3:2

When Jesus sent his disciples into the ministry he specifically told them not to go to the Gentiles. (Matt. 10:5) Even though after his resurrection Jesus broadened his commission to his disciples, telling them that they were to be his witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth, it was difficult for the Jewish disciples to grasp the "unsearchable riches of Christ," which included the opportunity for believing Gentiles to be fellowheirs with them.

To assist Peter in grasping the broadening of this mystery, the Lord gave him the wonderful vision of a sheet let down from heaven filled with all sorts of "unclean" animals. Later, by the Lord's further providence, Peter went to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile, where he presented the Gospel. There the apostle witnessed a manifestation of the Holy Spirit coming upon the believing Cornelius and his household. Concerning the significance of this, Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of

persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”
—Acts 10:9-35

The revelation of this mystery to Peter that now Gentiles, through belief and dedication, could be fellow heirs with Jewish believers, was a great help to him in his ministry of the Gospel. Throughout his first epistle he not only continued to emphasize that the true disciples participate in the foretold sufferings of Christ, but also that Gentile believers share this opportunity to prove worthy of the promised Messianic glory.—I Pet. 2:20,21

Peter wrote, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (I Pet. 2:9,10) In “time past” the Gentiles were not considered as part of the “people of God,” but now they had this privilege along with believing Jews. Furthermore, they all, Jews and Gentiles, had “obtained mercy.” This is one of the revealed mysteries of the Gospel, being closely associated with the mystery that Christ is not one member, but many.—I Cor. 12:12-14,27; Gal. 3:28

MYSTERIES—BUT NOT MYSTERIOUS

The mysteries of the kingdom which are revealed to the Lord’s people are to them no longer unknown, but understandable facts concerning the divine purpose for the salvation of the world of mankind from sin and death. It is important to realize this, and to rejoice that things which are revealed now

belong to us to understand and to be our inspiration and joy.

These revealed mysteries of God's plan are not mysterious. It does not require specially trained minds to understand these truths. Some may have the mistaken notion that the "deep things of God," cited earlier, refer to that which is complex and difficult to grasp, but this is not the case. If it were true, then the Heavenly Father would have called only those with brilliant minds.

Nevertheless, while God's revealed mysteries are easily grasped by those to whom he has given his Holy Spirit, there are almost limitless opportunities in the Scriptures for study in order to become more familiar with all the glorious truths which he has now supplied for us as spiritual food. However, the fact that every aspect of revealed truth is established and supported by many statements of God's word does not make that truth mysterious, nor more difficult to understand.

All the glorious truths of God's plan which he has revealed to his people in this harvest period at the end of the age are simple, and easily understood. How marvelously these simple truths shine forth in their lustrous beauty as one after another the assurances of God's word are associated with them! In harmony with this, the Apostle Paul warned that the minds of the Lord's people should not "be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."—II Cor. 11:3

Jesus said to the religious leaders of Israel, "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true." (John 8:17) It is in keeping with this detail of his own law that our Heavenly Father,

through his word, has established every point of truth with respect to his plan of salvation, not by two witnesses only, but by many. For example, how many times we are told, in one form of words or another, that “the wages of sin is death,” and that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. 6:23; Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:4,20; Gal. 6:7,8; I John 5:11,12

Think also of the many Scriptures the Lord has provided to give us a firm foundation for faith in that glorious truth that Jesus Christ “by the grace of God should taste death for every man,” that he “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (Heb. 2:9; I Tim. 2:3-6) We can mention one after another of the vital aspects of God’s plan and note how substantially each one is supported by God’s witnesses, the Holy Scriptures.

In addition, the Heavenly Father has furnished a wide array of illustrations, examples, or “types,” and “shadows,” all of which help us to understand the simple doctrine of his Word more clearly, and make its study ever more refreshing and stimulating. (I Cor. 10:11; Heb. 8:5) Certain individuals in the Old Testament are specifically referred to in the New Testament as examples, or typical, of someone greater in the outworking of God’s plan. For example, both Moses and David are mentioned in the New Testament as pointing forward to Christ. (Acts 3:20-22; Luke 1:32) Isaac, too, is spoken of by Paul as being “typical” of Christ and his church.—Gal. 3:16,27-29; 4:28

This does not mean, however, that all the personalities of the Old Testament are typical of individuals or groups with whom the Lord deals at a later time.

Yet, they are examples of faithfulness to the Lord, if indeed they were faithful; and those who were unfaithful serve as warnings against following their example.—I Cor. 10:6-10

How beautiful and inspiring is the devotion of God's people reflected by that long list of faithful ones mentioned in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Some of these, and their activities, we know pointed forward typically to greater things to come through Christ. All of them, though, serve as a "cloud of witnesses" by which, as we meditate upon their faithfulness, we are inspired to greater diligence as we endeavor to be faithful to the Truth by which we are guided in the doing of God's will.—Heb. 12:1

We are wonderfully blessed that the Lord has provided us with all these aids to faithfulness! They do not complicate the simple truths, but are designed to help us apply them in our daily lives, and thus to be conformed more and more to the image of God's dear Son. (Rom. 8:29) Let us not get the notion that only complicated and hard to understand explanations of the truth comprise the "deep things," or "strong meat," of the Word.—I Cor. 2:10; Heb. 5:14

It is this mistaken idea that, throughout the centuries, has led to many of the unreasonable and contradictory traditions with which the professed Christian world is plagued. When proponents of these theories are asked to explain their beliefs and provide scriptural support, the response often given is: "That is one of the mysteries which we are not supposed to understand."

It is certainly true that among the high thoughts of God there are many things our finite minds are

unable to fully comprehend. These are the “secret things” which belong to God. However, those things which he has revealed to us, we can know and claim as our own. They are simple and understandable. Frequently we find that even children are able to grasp and appreciate the basic truths of God’s plan.

REASONING TOGETHER

In Isaiah 1:18 God asks us to reason together with him, but not on a level that is beyond our comprehension. In extending this invitation the Heavenly Father states the subject, saying, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Here God is assuring us that our sins, “red” stains though they may be, can be made “white” through the arrangement which he has provided for this purpose.

When we “reason together” with the Lord on this point, the Scriptures reveal that this great blessing comes to us through the merit of the shed blood of Christ. (I Pet. 1:18,19; I John 1:7; Rev. 1:4,5) This is not mysterious to us, but rather the result of reasoning upon the simple and harmonious statements of the Bible.

“BLESSED BIBLE”

May our rejoicing in the revealed truths of the Bible increase, as day by day, through our study of its pages, we discover scriptural promises which give us additional assurance concerning the precious truths of God’s plan. In the familiar hymn, Blessed Bible, the poet writes that the “precious Word” is a “boon most sacred from the Lord.” It is given to us as the channel through which he reveals those

otherwise hidden things of his plan which he wants us to know.

In the last verse of the hymn, the poet speaks of the Bible as a “mine,” deeper than any mortal can go; “Search we may for many years, Still some new, rich gem appears.” Surely, we will never cease to find in the Bible nuggets of simple truths which harmonize with, and support, the great fundamentals of the divine plan and purpose. These “new, rich gems” are often precious promises of God which we had not noticed before, or perhaps had forgotten, though they were in his word all along.

If our search for treasures in the word of God is properly conducted, we will be built up more and more in our most holy faith. If, on the contrary, we spend our time searching for the mysterious, or for “new light,” we are apt to find ourselves more and more confused, and far from being established in those revealed truths, the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” These revealed and simple truths which have been so graciously made known to us constitute the Gospel of Christ, which is “the power of God unto salvation.”—Rom. 1:16 ■

“Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—Romans 15:4-6, New American Standard Bible

The Times of the Gentiles

“Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”
—*Luke 21:24*

JESUS’ PROPHECY CONCERNING the treading down of Jerusalem was part of his answer to the disciples’ question, “When then will these things be?” Additionally, they asked, “What will be the sign

of thy presence, and of the consummation of the age?” (Luke 21:7; Matt. 24:3, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Jesus’ answer to these questions implies that the time when Jerusalem would no longer be “trodden down” by the Gentiles was to be at the end of the age, a period identified by Jesus as the “harvest” earlier in his ministry. (Matt. 13:39) Further implied is that the invisible return and resulting second presence of the Messiah would be a reality when the “times of the Gentiles” came to an end.

In this prophecy, the city of Jerusalem is used by Jesus as a symbol of the nation of Israel. Jerusalem was the capital city of Israel, and would, therefore, properly stand for the nation. Toward the close of Jesus’ ministry he said to the religious rulers of Israel, and through them to the nation, “O Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”—Matt. 23:37,38

Jesus’ expression, “trodden down,” is evidently a reference to the fact that Israel at the time of his First Advent was not a free nation, and had not been for hundreds of years. The nation had lost its national independence six centuries earlier when its last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar and the people taken captive to Babylon. Seventy years after this, under a decree issued by King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire, the people were permitted to return to their land, but they were still subject to Gentile authority.—II Chron. 36:11-21; Ezra 1:1-3

The Medo-Persian Empire later gave way to the rising power of the Greeks, and the Grecian Empire, in turn, eventually came under the domination of the Romans. Throughout this entire period, Israel was subject to each of these Gentile powers, being “trodden down” to a greater or lesser degree, and at the time of Jesus’s earthly ministry was under the rule of the Roman Empire. In his prophecy Jesus took note of this, and foretold that Israel’s experience of the previous six centuries would continue until the end of “the times of the Gentiles.”

A MEASURED TIME

The Greek word translated “times” in our opening text denotes a “measure of time,” also a “fixed and definite time.” (*Thayer’s Greek Definitions*)

Various statements of Scripture, as well as specific, defining events in recorded history, mark for us, we believe, the beginning and the end of this period in Israel's history.

The Scriptures further indicate that this was to be a period of national punishment upon Israel due to their disobedience to God, and would entail their loss of national independence. Through Moses, God had entered into a covenant with Israel in which he promised to protect and bless the nation commensurate with their fidelity to him. The people were warned by God of the disciplinary punishments which would come upon them if disobedient. Furthermore, in the event that they did not learn their lesson from these, and continued in their wayward course, a more drastic and long-lasting punishment was prophesied.

We quote from Leviticus 26:12,14,16-18: "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. ... But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; ... ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; ... And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."

These words of God given to Israel through Moses were stated with a degree of finality which makes it apparent that the "seven times more" was to be a lengthy punishment upon Israel that would come upon the nation because their sins had come to the full. It was to this situation that the Prophet Ezekiel evidently referred centuries later when he said to

Israel's last king, Zedekiah, "And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."—Ezek. 21:25-27

It was the kingdom arrangement of Israel which came to an end with the overthrow of Zedekiah. It then ceased to function. It was overthrown until, as the Prophet Ezekiel stated, "he come whose right it is," to whom God would "give" his kingdom. This, we believe, is a reference to Christ. Since it was with Zedekiah's overthrow that Israel's long and final period of punishment began, it also signaled the beginning of the time during which "Jerusalem" would be trodden down by the Gentiles.

FURTHER CONFIRMATION

It was Nebuchadnezzar and his armies that overthrew Israel's last king, Zedekiah, and took the people to Babylon. Among these captives was Daniel who, while serving in the Babylonian government, became one of the outstanding holy prophets of God. Daniel was used by the Lord to focus attention on the great development which occurred in the divine purpose and plan when King Zedekiah of Israel was overthrown. In God's providence, this is brought to light in connection with a dream given to Nebuchadnezzar, and recorded in Daniel 2:28-45. When the king awoke from his sleep he was troubled by his dream and sought the help of "the magicians, and the astrologers, and

the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans,” to recall his dream and also to give its interpretation. (Dan. 2:1,2) None could give him any help, and it was then arranged that Daniel should be given an opportunity to try.

With the Lord’s help Daniel was able to relate the king’s dream to him, together with its interpretation. Daniel said that in the dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a great human-like image having a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, trunk and thighs of brass, and legs of iron. The feet and toes of this image were made of iron and clay. In his dream the king then saw a stone cut out of a mountain without hands, which smote the image on its feet. The image fell, was ground to powder and then blown away. The dream concluded with the king seeing the stone, which had smote the image, grow until it became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.—Dan. 2:31-35

In his interpretation of the dream Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.”—vss. 37,38

Here is a remarkable statement. It indicates that now, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar, would be a period during which God would exercise his will in the affairs of men through Gentile rulers rather than the kingdom of Israel, which Nebuchadnezzar himself had overthrown. Daniel explained further that the kingdom of Babylon would have successors, three

in number, as represented by the silver, brass, and iron of the image. These are easily identified historically as Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Confirming that this was part of God's arrangement, it was in the days of the Roman Empire that Paul wrote, "The powers that be are ordained of God."—Rom. 13:1

Let us not conclude from this, however, that God blessed the rulerships of these successive empires, or that he sanctioned everything they did. It is simply that throughout the centuries God permitted them to maintain a semblance of law and order in that part of the world in which he was accomplishing various purposes, often "behind the scenes," so to speak. These purposes related to the grand future time when eventually the one would come "whose right it is," and to whom God would give his kingdom, to be established forever upon the Earth.—Matt. 6:10

THE INTERPRETATION

Gentile nations had existed from the dawn of history. Powerful among these were Egypt, Assyria, Syria and Babylon. Under Nebuchadnezzar Babylon had become supreme, conquering that last island of resistance, which was Israel. Even so, the Medes and Persians were threatening, and finally overthrew Babylon. It is clear, then, that the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream did not represent the mere fact that Gentile nations were now to exist, for this would have been no special change in the status of the world's governments.

Much more than this was involved in the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's image, as Daniel reveals in his interpretation. "The God of heaven hath given thee a

kingdom,” Daniel said to the king, and added, “Thou art this head of gold.” (vss. 37,38) This was a new development. God’s kingdom of Israel was overthrown, including their last king, Zedekiah, and now he had given dominion to a Gentile ruler. Here again is indicated the beginning of the “times of the Gentiles.”

Doubtless the Gentile nations generally knew of the dangers involved in attacking Israel, but now the king of Babylon had overthrown Israel’s ruler, and taken the people captive. Instead of Nebuchadnezzar being punished for this, or even destroyed, the God of Israel had said through one of his own prophets, “The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom. ... Thou art this head of gold.”

Not long after this Nebuchadnezzar said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30) For this show of pride God removed the kingdom temporarily from Nebuchadnezzar. The record reads, “While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”—vss. 31,32

When the king had been properly humbled his reason returned, and he extolled the God of heaven, and, as he said, “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk

in pride he is able to abase.” (vss. 34-37) This experience served to further impress Nebuchadnezzar with the fact that Israel’s God, the “King of heaven,” was taking notice of his behavior, and teaching him lessons when it was necessary to do so. This, in turn, would more firmly convince him that the God which Daniel worshipped had indeed given him a kingdom.

The Prophet Daniel became highly placed in the government of Babylon, and when it was overthrown he maintained his exalted position under the Medo-Persian rulers. Under these circumstances it would seem highly probable that some of these Gentile kings would be impressed with the fact that Israel’s God was in some manner overruling in their affairs. Cyrus, in fact, announced, “The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem.”—Ezra 1:2

How true, then, was Daniel’s prophecy to Nebuchadnezzar, “After thee shall arise another kingdom,” to whom the same statement would apply, “The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom.” (Dan. 2:39,37) The Bible does not fill in the record of the four centuries just prior to the First Advent of Jesus. However, during that time the Greeks gained power and overthrew the Medo-Persian Empire, and then came the powerful Roman Empire, to which Israel was subject when Jesus came.

Thus we have the succession of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, as pictured by the gold, silver, brass and iron of the image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. Secular history likewise confirms the existence of these four major empires during the last six centuries before Christ. The intent

of Daniel's prophecy is that the same fact would apply to all these—namely, that the God of heaven would give them a kingdom. Indeed, as we have noted, Paul wrote that Rome, the “powers that be” in his day, had been ordered by God.

The symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's image did not end fully with the legs of iron. There were also the feet and toes mixed of iron and clay. This pictures a weakening and dividing of the power of the Roman Empire, which we also know to be historically exactly what happened. The iron-like strength of civil authority was gradually diminished by the mixing of it with ecclesiastical power, aptly represented by clay. We should expect that this concept of government, a mixture of civil and religious authority, would with the passing of centuries, become grossly distorted, and it did. It was this ideology that eventually was much hailed in Europe as the “divine right of kings.”

Thus, briefly, we have traced the “times of the Gentiles” down through the centuries. Now it is but proper to ask as to when this long, but “measured” period, would end. Although we can deduce from various Scriptures a specific calculation of its length, for our present consideration we will confine our discussion to evidence provided by historical world events since the early part of the twentieth century which point, we believe, to the end of this period described by Jesus in our opening text.

As we have seen, the period during which Jerusalem would be “trodden down” was designed by God as a time of punishment upon Israel, during which they would be ruled by Gentile kingdoms and empires. Additionally, we know that the year 1914 was one of the major turning points of history. Let us

examine what occurred then, and since, pertaining to and associated with the “times of the Gentiles,” and with the nation of Israel.

NATION REBORN

First let us recall the words of our text, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” If the year 1914 is associated with the end of the “times of the Gentiles,” we should see some evidence of a changed status of the Jewish people at that time, and since. History confirms this to be the case. Here it is important to point out that the precise “end” of this period would merely signal the beginning of changes and events which then take place, not the completion of those events. Thus, we should not expect too much to occur in the one year of 1914.

The First World War began in 1914. It was a destructive and devastating war, but out of that struggle came a change of attitude on the part of some of the great powers toward the Jewish people. There was the Balfour Declaration issued in November 1917, later implemented by the League of Nations, declaring the right of the Jewish people to build a national home for themselves in Palestine, the land that was promised to their forefathers by God.

So far as human wisdom can determine, it would appear that had it not been for the First World War and certain world conditions associated therewith, the official declaration of the right of the Jewish people to a homeland would never have been made. The Jewish people were quick to follow up and take advantage of these changed conditions, although many difficulties arose, some of which have not yet been overcome.

Subsequent to the First World War, it seems that Great Britain made agreements with some of the other nations in the region of Palestine which were in conflict with commitments they had made to the Jewish people. This eventually led to the issuance of the infamous British White Paper in 1939 severely limiting the right of Jews to purchase land in Palestine. Soon after came the atrocity of the Jewish Holocaust under the fascist rule of Nazi Germany and Hitler during World War II.

In the aftermath of this second world conflict, it became of great importance for Jews who survived the Holocaust that they seek refuge in another land. Naturally, their hearts turned again toward Palestine. The situation became more tense as underground warfare increased between returning Jews and surrounding Arabs. Finally, the British withdrew their army of protection from Palestine, and soon the Arabs were defeated by the Israelites. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel, and the nation was re-born. In quick succession one after another of the great powers recognized Israel, and in due course it became a member of the United Nations.

While there were many years of controversy and conflict involved, it was the First World War, beginning in 1914, which set up the circumstances, put the wheels in motion, and finally led to the establishment of Israel once more as an independent state, no longer subject to other nations. To be sure, Israel is a small nation and does not yet possess all the land promised in the Bible. It is also true that Israel has engaged in many wars and conflicts since 1948 in order to maintain her status as a nation. She has

struggled to improve her position, even as other nations have done. Some seventy-three years later, however, and more than a century after World War I, it is clearly evident that Israel is no longer “trodden down” by the Gentiles.

Thus, when we recognize that Jesus, in his prophecy pertaining to Jerusalem and the “times of the Gentiles,” was not referring to the buildings and walls of the city, but to the nation symbolized by that ancient capital, it becomes evident that the “times of the Gentiles” are now fulfilled. That fulfillment, we believe, was in 1914, as evidenced by the many subsequent events summarized in the foregoing paragraphs.

DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS ENDED

We have already noted that the division of the old Roman Empire was pictured by a mixture of iron and clay which Nebuchadnezzar saw in the feet and toes of the image. These, we believe, represented the powerful monarchies of Europe which had existed for many centuries and were still the dominant powers in the world at the outbreak of the First World War. They were controlled by hereditary ruling houses, the offshoots or “toes,” of the old Roman Empire. These monarchies asserted that God had authorized them to rule, claiming the theory of the “divine right of kings.”

If, however, the “times of the Gentiles” ended in 1914, together with the further events resulting from the First World War, we should expect to see changes in this old Roman Empire setup, and certainly we do. No one today thinks of any country in Europe as a segment of the Roman Empire. The “divine right of kings” concept of government no longer exists,

nor is anyone recommending a return to this form of rule as a solution to the world's problems.

The prophecy states that when the stone smote the image, the gold, silver, brass, and iron were broken to pieces "together." (Dan. 2:35) The four empires involved in this prophecy, however, each fell separately at different times, not together. In fact, the relatively small remnants of many of these nations still exist today, but they are no longer viewed as a "great image," such as Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. That these empires would fall "together" suggests that there would be something common to all of them which would continue throughout the entire "times of the Gentiles," and not be destroyed until the "stone" smote the image on its feet. This commonality was the decree, "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom." That mandate, fulfilled successively by Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome, has now ended.

This in turn would mean, Daniel explains, that, "In the days of these kings [represented by the toes of the image] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Dan. 2:44) This indicates that regardless of the ebb and flow of present world conditions, in which peace is promised today and war threatened tomorrow, the meaning of all the chaotic years since 1914 is that the God of heaven is setting aside human rulership in preparation for the manifestation of the kingdom of the Messiah. It is that kingdom only which eventually will establish God's will in the Earth, even as it is now in heaven. For that kingdom, let us continue to pray!—Matt. 6:10 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

O. B. Elbert

Online Broadcast of Convention
Highland Park, NY April 10

R. Goodman

Online Broadcast of Convention
Albuquerque, NM April 2-4

L. Griehs

Online Broadcast of Convention
Albuquerque, NM April 2-4

D. Rice

Online Broadcast of Convention
Albuquerque, NM April 2-4

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 1—"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."—Mark 14:38 (Z. '03-119 Hymn 183)

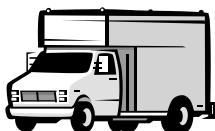
APRIL 8—"If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him."—Hebrews 10:38 (Z. '95-93 Hymn 348)

APRIL 15—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."—Luke 23:46 (Z. '99-128 Hymn 347)

APRIL 22—"I say unto you, that every idle [unprofitable or pernicious] word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."—Matthew 12:36 (Z. '96-32 Hymn 145)

APRIL 29—"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him."—Psalm 91:15 (Z. '96-31 Hymn 330)

MOVING?



If you are moving, please let us know six weeks before you move so that we can change the address on your Dawn subscription.

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Numerous conventions in coming months will not be held in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these, however, will have an online broadcast alternative. Listed below are the details which the Dawn has been made aware of concerning upcoming conventions. Please contact the brethren shown in the listings to find out the status of a convention, and also how you can attend an online broadcast if one is planned.

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 2-4—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Thomassen. Email: srbt@juno.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 10—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Koterba. Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 1,2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. Johnson. Email: beckystevej@aol.com

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 29,30—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact C. Martire. Email: christina.martire@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 6—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@comcast.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19,20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wojcik. Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive
power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength,
and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

*And every creature which is in heaven,
and on the earth, and under the earth, and such
as are in the sea, and all that are in them,
heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory,
and power, be unto him that sitteth
upon the throne, and unto
the Lamb for ever and ever.”*

—Revelation 5:12,13

Come, let us join our cheerful songs
With angels round the throne;
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues,
But all their joys are one.

Worthy the Lamb that died, they cry,
To be exalted thus:
Worthy the Lamb, our hearts reply
For He was slain for us.

Jesus is worthy to receive
Honour and power divine;
And blessings, more than we can give,
Be, Lord, for ever Thine.

Let all creation join in one
To bless the sacred Name
Of Him that sits upon the throne,
And to adore the Lamb.

—British Bible Students Hymnal

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 55

