

The End Of The World

***“Thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.”
—Isaiah 45:18***

IT WAS NOT TOO LONG ago that many preachers in Christianity preached a ‘doomsday’ doctrine. It was a concept based on the question asked by our Lord’s disciples, “What shall be the sign of thy coming (Greek *parousia*, presence), and of the end of the world?” (Matt. 24:3) Later the Apostle Peter wrote, “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be

burned up.” (II Peter 3:10) This text was used to prove that the end of the world would be the time when the earth would be destroyed by fire. We don’t hear this doctrine preached as much, though many believe that it will happen. They expect the good believers in Jesus to be carried away in the ‘rapture’ to heaven when it happens.

The reason why doomsday, as a teaching, does not occur as frequently as it did 100 years ago, is because Bible students have been successful in disseminating a more accurate knowledge of Bible teachings. For example, the Greek word translated “world” in Matt. 24:3 is the Greek word, *aion*, meaning ‘age’ or ‘period of time.’ Hence, our Lord’s disciples wanted to know when the age of this present evil world would end. Also Bible students have made known that the Bible is not contradictory. In Ecclesiastes 1:4 the statement is plain, “The earth abideth for ever.” Also, in their studies, they have found that fire is used as a symbol of destruction. The Bible often uses symbolic language to describe events to come.

SEVERE WATER SHORTAGE

The strange turn of events is that scientists and well-educated men, who are specialists in their fields of knowledge, have now become the

prophets of doom. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the span of three weeks earlier this year there appeared three articles in the *Los Angeles Times* that forecast doom for many peoples, and destruction of life upon earth. The first of these appeared on March 23 and said:

“More than 2.7 billion people will face severe shortages of fresh water by 2025 if the world keeps consuming water at today’s rates, the United Nations warned in a report marking World Water Day.

“Worldwide, about 5 billion people will be living in areas where it will be difficult or impossible to meet all their needs for fresh water, creating ‘a looming crisis that overshadows nearly two-thirds of the Earth’s population,’ the report said.

“The report was released in Vienna by the International Atomic Energy Agency, a nuclear watchdog organization leading the United Nations’ effort to draw attention to the world’s water crisis and urge the launch of a ‘blue revolution’ to conserve supplies and develop new ones.”

GLOBAL WARMING DISASTER

The second appeared on April 3 commenting on the Senate’s failure to pass a stricter fuel bill, and that global warming would continue with disastrous effects. The reporter wrote:

“How ironic. As Washington lawmakers were complaining late last month that soccer moms would be deprived of minivans if the nation adopted tougher fuel economy standards for SUVs and other vehicles, chunks of ice the size of Delaware were breaking away and disintegrating in Antarctica.

“The collapse of ice shelves as thick as 640 feet in the coldest continent on Earth is more evidence of global warming, scientists suggest. Many experts insist that to protect the environment and slow the warming trend, vehicle emissions of carbon monoxide—a gas linked to global warming—must be reduced.

“Vehicles with poor fuel economy generally produce more carbon monoxide than those with better economy that are driven the same number of miles each year.

“The United States Senate had a chance to take a big step to promote better fuel economy, but the senators dodged it.

“The fuel economy bill advocated by Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Senator John F. Kerry (D-MA) and Senator Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC) would have required auto makers to manufacture vehicles that would have a fleetwide average of 36 miles per gallon by 2015.

“That would have represented a 38% increase from the 26-mpg average that has been in place more than two decades. It also would, over time, have eliminated exemptions that currently allow light trucks, including sport utility vehicles, to meet a lower average of only 20.7 mpg.

“What did get approved was an alternative bill— considered more friendly to the auto industry—that directs the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to set fuel standards. Those standards would be based on their impact on vehicle safety, jobs, and the country’s dependence on foreign oil.

“The measure was touted by Senator Carl Levin (D-MI) and Senator Christopher S. Bond (R-MO). It was Bond who worried about the fate of soccer moms.”

The writer of the article, at the end, made his own personal comments, saying:

“But back on the issue of the environment, scientists say that as temperatures rise, ice shelves in Antarctica continue to collapse with staggering speed. Years from now, the collapse of these shelves could lead to a rapid rise of the sea level.

“I must admit I’m more worried about the consequences of global warming and melting icebergs than whether or not the neighborhood soccer mom, or anyone else, has a big enough minivan or sport utility.”

Note: There is an error in this reporter’s article. He refers to the concern scientists and experts have about the emissions of carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide is a product of incomplete combustion and is lethal. Carbon dioxide is a product of complete combustion and is the gas linked to global warming.

DISASTROUS COLLISION

The third article appeared on April 8 and told of a huge asteroid spinning in space that could hit Earth with a force that could cause the end of all life on earth. The article reported:

“The greatest known threat to Earth from outer space is an asteroid barreling through the universe named 1950 DA. It is six times the size of Morro Rock asteroid and capable of ending life as we know it.

“We are safe for the time being. So are our great-grandchildren. And theirs. The space rock has a roughly 1-in-300 chance of smacking the planet with the force of millions of tons of TNT and kicking up enough dust to choke off life with a nuclear winter-on March 16, 2880.

“‘This is not something to worry about,’ said Jon Giorgini, a Jet Propulsion Laboratory engineer who led the team that analyzed the asteroid and published its findings in this week’s issue of the journal *Science*. ‘That’s 35 generations away.’

“Rather than being seen as a potential disaster, the finding comes as something of good news in a field better known for ominous forecasts of planetary disasters. More than 1,000 large asteroids capable of hitting Earth are circling through the solar system. Only 576 have been identified.

“‘We know this thing could not hit until 2880. We can certify the safety,’ said Steve Ostro, a JPL astronomer who studied the asteroid using radar telescopes. ‘This is one object we’re not losing sleep over.’

“1950 DA is about two-thirds of a mile wide. The projected impact date falls on a Saturday. Talk about ruining a weekend.

“Its impact would generate enough energy to burn forests, spawn huge tidal waves, and turn the skies black. But it is far smaller than the asteroid, or comet, that helped wipe out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. That one was about 10 miles across.

“Typically, astronomers can predict the track of an asteroid for 100 years—and can’t say much about what will happen after that. So many factors tweak an asteroid’s path—from sunlight to the gravitational tug of stars—that peering further into the future becomes impossible.

“‘There are many uncertainties and they grow with time,’ Ostro said. The JPL team was able to push forecasting limits to nearly 900 years using a blend of good fortune, detailed radar observations, and an awful lot of math.

“The good luck came in 1950, when the asteroid was observed for 17 days through an optical telescope. To optical telescopes that collect light,

dark asteroids are barely perceptible specks. But enough information can be gained from these rough observations to pinpoint their location relative to nearby stars.

“After that sighting, the asteroid was lost to science. It was not sighted again until December 31, 2000, when an astronomer at Arizona’s Lowell Observatory—who was working instead of ringing in the New Year—saw the asteroid and deemed it a new discovery. Further analysis showed the asteroid was good old 1950 DA, which had eluded telescopes as it looped toward the solar system’s outer reaches.

“The sightings so many years apart meant astronomers at JPL could discern the current orbit of the asteroid. But the team needed to know more about the rock’s position and the rock itself.”

The article then went on to describe the additional tests that were performed with a radar telescope and the multitudinous mathematical calculations made to arrive at the conclusion which predicts a possible striking of the earth in 2880 by this asteroid.

WATER SHORTAGE PROBLEM SOLVED

How real is the severe water shortage predicted by the International Atomic Energy Agency through the United Nations? Such water shortages, in our time, may occur in different parts of the world. The Lord originally set in motion a remarkable method of supplying water for mankind. The vast oceans on earth have a tremendous amount of water. The water is salty and needs to be distilled from the salt. This is accomplished by the sun evaporating water which is carried by winds inland where it condenses and forms clouds. These clouds are cooled and release their water as rain. As Solomon wrote about the rivers of earth which receive this water from the rain, “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.” (Eccles. 1:7) Returning to the sea, these waters are reevaporated, and the cycle is repeated. It is like a perpetual motion machine.

Weather patterns play an important part in this process. If a huge storm occurs and too much water comes down at once, flooding and hurricanes can occur adding to man’s woes. If there is a drought and the rain falls in the ocean directly, man does not benefit from that rain. The Scriptures indicate that our Lord Jesus is able to control the weather. During his

earthly ministry a tempest blew upon the Sea of Galilee as our Lord and his disciples were crossing the sea in a ship. Jesus was asleep when this occurred and the disciples became frightened and thought they would perish. They awoke Jesus, who criticized them for their lack of faith, and then rebuked the winds and the sea so that a great calm occurred. They did not hear his criticism of them but stood in utter amazement saying, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”—Matt. 8:27

This capability of our Lord Jesus and his Heavenly Father to control the weather is the reason that in the kingdom any nation that fails to obey his instruction “to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.” (Zech. 14:17) In that kingdom there shall be an ample amount of water for everyone.

THE GOOD OF GLOBAL WARMING

How serious is the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to cause global warming? Will it have the disastrous effects predicted? The warning of global warming and its effects have been put forth by the scientific community for over twenty years. Global warming has released more land for farming in the colder areas of earth. This has been beneficial. The United States Department of Agriculture has run experiments to demonstrate that increased carbon dioxide in the air has caused plants to grow faster. This too has been beneficial as the world needs more food. To date, we have not observed the disastrous effects predicted by scientists of global warming.

One of the effects predicted is a rise in the sea levels to cause coastal floodings. The melting of ice in Antarctica is supposed to do this. To date, there have been no reports of radical changes in the coastlines of Earth. Changes in weather patterns are also forecast. But such are constantly occurring, and as we have seen demonstrated by our Lord Jesus when he was on earth, these can be controlled by the Heavenly Father and will be in his kingdom.

How much increase will God permit in the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere? We don't know and will have to wait and see. Less use of fossil fuels for energy and more use of solar energy will certainly reduce the emissions of excess carbon dioxide. This balance is completely in our Father's hands. The remarkable balance in life upon earth of carbon

dioxide is constantly occurring as all animals (including man) exhale carbon dioxide and all green plants absorb it to make necessary food. The atmospheric content of carbon dioxide will be controlled by our God.

WILL A COLLISION OF EARTH WITH AN ASTEROID REALLY OCCUR?

How threatening to all life upon earth is the possible impact of asteroid 1950 DA? Would such a disaster occur in 2880, during the 1,000-year reign of Christ? It would be utterly foolish to believe that this could happen. As explained in the article on this asteroid, a number of factors can alter the course of this asteroid. These are its mass, shape, color, spinning orbit, heat absorbed or reflected from the sun, and gravitational pull of Earth and other planets. As suggested by the one who called attention to this article, all that needs to happen is to have God give it a slight nudge to make it go out into outer space. We can be assured that a tragic impact of Earth by this asteroid, or any other asteroid, will not occur because God has mandated that the 'earth abideth forever.' As Isaiah has written, "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else." (Isa. 45:18) This is the God that says earlier in Isaiah 45, "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." (vss. 11,12) When we ask of things to come concerning his 'sons,' he reveals to us his wonderful plan of the ages. How blessed we are to know God's plan concerning mankind, and the blessings he has in store for them.

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Wisdom Brings Happiness

Key Verse: “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.”
—***Proverbs 3:13***

Lesson Scriptures:
Proverbs 3:13-18;
4:1-9

Background Scripture:
Proverbs 3; 4

WISDOM HAS BEEN DEFINED as knowledge applied toward the doing of God’s will in the daily experiences of life. Our Key Verse states that the man who finds such wisdom will attain happiness. This happiness is not according to the flesh, but that which is in the spiritual mind as it grows and develops into the maturity of character exemplified in Christ. It is a happiness of knowing that we are striving to do God’s will to the best of our ability, and that he, in turn, is supervising this very work. Paul says, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of

his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13) It is a happiness of peace in all circumstances. Paul further states, “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:7

In the verses of our lesson, a number of illustrations are given to point out the importance of wisdom. Proverbs 3:14,15 states that wisdom is of more value than silver, fine gold, and rubies. Although these precious metals and stones have great value, the wealth that they bring is transitory. It only lasts as long as this fleshly life, “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” (I Tim. 6:7) Wisdom, though, is likened by Jesus to heavenly treasure, which will last eternally. Notice his words, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”—Matt. 6:19-20

Our lesson continues by assuring us that wisdom will give us “length of days.” (Prov. 3:16) It is also likened to a “tree of life.” (vs. 18) Both

of these statements point out the eternal benefits that accrue to those who develop this quality of character. The ‘length of days’ spoken of is not those of this present sin-shortened life. It is, instead, speaking of a hope of eternal life. All who attain eternal life, whether on earth or in heaven, will need to have developed wisdom either now, or in Christ’s coming kingdom. To all such it will be a ‘tree of life,’ a source of life-giving sustenance to their heart and mind which will serve them for all eternity.

Proverbs 4:1-5 stresses that wisdom doesn’t just happen. It must have its beginning rooted in the understanding of God’s character, plans, purposes, and teachings. “Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law. For I was my father’s son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.” Notice such words as ‘instruction,’ ‘understanding,’ ‘doctrine,’ ‘my law,’ ‘my commandments,’ ‘words of my mouth.’ All of these are tied to the thought of wisdom. It cannot be based on error, but must have Truth as its only source.

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Do the Right Thing

***Key Verse: “My son,
keep thy father’s
commandment, and
forsake not the law of
thy mother: Bind them
continually upon thine
heart, and tie them
about thy neck.”***

—Proverbs 6:20, 21

Lesson Scripture:

Proverbs 6:16-28

Background Scripture:

Proverbs 6:16-35

OUR KEY VERSES PROVIDE a stark contrast to the things previously mentioned (vss. 16-19) as hated by God. First, he addresses us as sons, pointing out the close personal relationship that he desires to have with his people. We are told by the Apostle John, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: ... Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” (I John 3:1,2) The Key Verses continue by telling us that we should obey God’s commandments and laws, just as a child is expected to obey the instructions of their father and mother. The obedience spoken of is not out of duty or fear of

punishment, but rather ‘upon thine heart.’ Obedience should become a part of our innermost motives and thoughts, symbolized by the heart. God’s law is also to be tied ‘about thy neck.’ Something that is tied about the neck is noticeable to others. Our adherence to God’s law should be noticed by all those with whom we associate, whether they be family, coworkers, brethren, neighbors, or even our enemies. We should not, however, display our obedience in a holier-than-thou manner. This would give evidence of pride, one of the very things previously stated in our lesson that God hates. Obedience should be humble, noticed by others as stated concerning the apostles, “They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”—Acts 4:13

Concerning God’s law, Proverbs 6:22 says, “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.” In other words, God’s law, if striven for and followed after, will be a guiding and protecting force in every moment of life. Such was the condition of the nation of Israel as long as they abode

under God's law. It guided and protected them through every difficulty, helped them gain victories over their enemies, and even provided for their fleshly needs and sustenance. It was only when they disobeyed and failed to keep his laws that they lost the keeping power of God's providence and protection, until they repented and were brought back to a fuller measure of favor.

Verse twenty-three of our lesson states, "The commandment is a lamp; and the law is light." What a beautiful symbolism is here shown! A lamp shedding forth light helps one to see the path. Without light one is likely to stumble and fall over the rocks and other impediments lining the pathway, or worse yet, walk off the designated path altogether, becoming hopelessly lost in the dark. God's commandments, his Truth as contained in the Holy Scriptures, is the light that guides our path. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."—Ps. 119:105

The last part of verse twenty-three says, "Reproofs of instruction are the way of life." God realizes that we are weak and fall short, and so he has arranged our life such that we are continually given experiences which, if properly accepted and acted upon, provide valuable instruction leading to "life and godliness."—II Pet. 1:3

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Say the Right Thing

Key Verse: *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”*

—Proverbs 15:1

Lesson Scriptures:
Proverbs 15:1-4, 7, 8;
17:4-10

Background Scripture:
Proverbs 15; 17

SAYING THE RIGHT THING in the right way is no easy task for us as fallen human beings. The Apostle James informs us that of all the parts of the body, the tongue is the most difficult to bring under control. He says, “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.” (James 3:2) Yet, as difficult as it is to bring our words under control, our lesson clearly indicates that it is necessary to do so if we are to be a successful follower of the Lord. Not only must we control our tongues, but

we must also use them in a positive and uplifting manner.

The Key Verse points out how words should, and should not, proceed out of our mouths. We should all desire to give an answer to others according to the precepts of Truth. However, there are different ways we can do this. We can speak the Truth harshly, berating others for their lack of understanding or appreciation of it, answering them railing for railing, strife for strife, angry word for angry word. This method of speech is totally out of harmony with the character of God and his Son, Christ Jesus. Even if we are correct in our statements, we are so incorrect in our methods and spirit that God will look upon the entire matter with displeasure. By contrast, we can speak the Truth softly, although with firmness and resolve, and perhaps turn away the opposition of those who might speak evil against us. Even if wrath remains in the hearts of those who hear us, we have the assurance that God is pleased with such a response on our part.

Our lesson points out some of the character qualities, both good and bad, that are revealed through the things we say. Proverbs 15:2-4 states, “The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness. The eyes of the Lord are in every place,

beholding the evil and the good. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit.” Here the tongue that is spoken of as wise and wholesome dispenses knowledge and life-giving sustenance to its hearers. The mouths of fools and those who speak perverse things, however, only bring folly and damage the spirit of those who hear such words. Notice that verse three reminds us that God is ever watchful of the things that we say, seeing what is good and what is evil.

Further in our lesson, Proverbs 17:4-10 gives us numerous lessons pertaining to the tongue. These verses tell us that it is wrong to speak evil of the poor or to express gladness over the troubles of others. (vs. 5) It is also wrong to even give ear to those who speak evil. (vs. 4) Verse nine states that it is much more pleasing to God that we forgive and forget when offended by others, rather than dwelling upon the matter or repeatedly bringing it up in conversation. To do so, the verse states, would be to risk the loss of the friendship of those who, most likely unknowingly and unintentionally, caused the offense.

Let us ever be mindful of our words, and the heart motives from which they emanate. As Jesus told us, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”—Matt. 12:34

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Who Cares for the Poor?

***Key Verse: “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.”
—Proverbs 19:17***

***Lesson Scriptures:
Proverbs 19:17;
22:1-4, 8, 9, 16, 22, 23;
23:10, 11***

THOSE WHO ARE POOR can be divided into two categories. First, there are those who are poor as regards the fleshly needs of this life. Second, there are the poor or humble in spirit, regardless of their material wealth or lack thereof. These are those who realize their undone condition before God and have a sincere desire to be brought into his favor. It is to this latter class that our lesson primarily relates. Although it is certainly to our credit to help the materially poor to the extent of our ability, we realize according to Jesus’ words that “The poor always ye

have with you.” (John 12:8) The time for dealing with those of meager means, both who have lived in the past, and in the present, will be the coming righteous kingdom of Christ. In the meantime, we have the privilege of seeking and helping those who are the poor in spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 5:3

The Key Verse points out that those who are engaged in seeking after and helping the poor, or humble, of heart, are in reality helping their own standing before God and will be rewarded according to their deeds. This should be natural for the child of God, for we all were once alienated from his favor due to our inherited sinful condition. It is reasonable for us to desire to help others, remembering our own previous undone condition, and that we are still the product of God’s great mercy and grace. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”—Eph. 2:8

In reality, true riches do not come from the material things of this world. Proverbs 22:1 and 4 state, “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. ... By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life.” The

‘good name’ and ‘favour’ spoken of in verse one is not that which comes from man, but that which is from God. We are to seek his favor, and to have a good name in his eyes. In these we will have something far better than silver or gold, which perish. We will instead have laid up for ourselves “treasures in heaven,” eternal riches. (See Matt. 6:19-21) He has shown his great love for all without respect to their riches, or lack thereof, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) He has also assured us that in due time “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”—Acts 24:15

Proverbs 22:9 of our lesson reminds us to be generous, to share our bread with others. Bread is a symbol of Truth, and we are to tell it to others freely. To withhold generosity and keep this spiritual food for ourselves only, or to just share it with others already rich in God’s sight, would be considered robbery. (See verses 16,22,23) Rather, let us follow the example of Proverbs 11:25, “The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.”

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Paul's Letters to Christians at Rome and Corinth

THE BOOK OF Acts is the last historical book of the Bible. With the exception of Revelation, which is largely prophetic, the remainder of the New Testament is made up of epistles, or letters, written by different apostles to various congregations of the Early Church, and some to individuals. This article will examine the letters of Paul to the churches at Rome and Corinth.

While there are many and varied thoughts set forth in the epistles found in the New Testament, each one seems to have been prompted by a special need which the writer discerned and which he endeavored to supply. Thus each of these letters has a main theme to which all its subject matter is directly or indirectly related.

Paul's letter to the brethren in Rome indicates that this congregation was made up partly of Jews who had accepted Jesus as their Messiah, and partly of Gentile converts to Christianity. As we noted in our review of the Book of Acts, this situation created a problem for both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

The issue in the Roman church was similar to that which troubled the brethren in other places. The Jewish Christians, accustomed to thinking of their relationship to God in terms of their Law and its ordinances, found it difficult to recognize Gentile converts to Christ as really being in the favor of God unless they consented, at least, to circumcision of the flesh.

Gentile converts, on the other hand, never having been under the Law, readily grasped the idea of their freedom in Christ, and resented the thought of being brought under the bondage of the Law in deference to their Jewish brethren. Paul had not as yet been in Rome, nevertheless he learned of the situation there and, in keeping with his apostolic responsibility toward the church, wrote "*The Epistle to the Romans*," in an effort to help the brethren see the way of the Lord more clearly.

The theme of the epistle is the manner by which a Christian may know that he is in harmony with God, and enjoying the privileges of the Gospel of Christ which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Rom. 1:16) Paul touches upon this theme at many points throughout the epistle and by various forms of expression.

In chapter five, verse one, he refers to it as ‘justification.’ In chapter eight, verse one, he describes it as a condition in which there is “no condemnation.” In verse sixteen of the same chapter he speaks of it as the ‘witness of the Spirit’ that we are the “children of God.” In verses thirty-three and thirty-four, also of the same chapter, he becomes eloquent on the point, and declares, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

In chapter twelve, verses one and two, he reaches the climax of his lesson, and shows that nothing short of a full, sacrificial devotion to God, through Christ, can, during this age, place one in a position of favor before the Lord. Paul says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The rest of the epistle presents the details of God’s will for the consecrated Christian.

Closely related to this leading theme of the epistle is Paul’s presentation of the fact that both Jews and Gentiles are sinners in God’s sight, and that the only means of approach to him is through the merit of the shed blood of Christ. It was the Law, some features of which the undeveloped Jewish Christians in Rome were seeking to impose upon Gentile converts, which had brought the Jews under condemnation. The Gentiles, on the other hand, by nature also stood guilty before God because, although never having been given a written law by him, they “are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.”—Rom. 2:14,15

Thus, as Paul presented it, “all the world may become guilty before God.” (Rom. 3:19) The Jewish Christians realized, in a sense, that they needed Christ, yet felt that they also should at least practice circumcision; but in the fourth chapter Paul corrects this false impression. He points out to them that Abraham was justified by his faith before he was circumcised, that it was not circumcision that gave him justification before God, but his faith in the promises of God. How much more, therefore, would this be true of Christians, both Jewish and Gentile.

In order to impress upon his readers the ineffectiveness of the Law as a medium of justification and salvation, Paul relates his own disheartening effort to gain a standing before God by keeping the Law. This personal touch of the epistle is found in the seventh chapter. In verse twenty-four he likens the Law to a dead body to which he was chained, and cried, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Then, in the next verse, Paul points to the true way of justification and life, saying, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord,” that is, I thank God that through Jesus Christ I can be delivered from death. Then the eighth chapter begins with the assurance, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” For a truly marvelous presentation of God’s grace through Christ to every consecrated Christian, we suggest a rereading of chapter eight. Every line is beautiful and reassuring.

Throughout the early chapters of the epistle, Paul is particularly severe toward his fellow countrymen because of their slowness in grasping the fullness of Divine grace through Christ. Judging from the opening verses of the ninth chapter, it would almost seem that he feared they would infer that he was prejudiced against his own people, so he assured them that this was not so. He wrote, “I speak the Truth in Christ, I do not speak falsely, my conscience co-attesting with me, in a holy Spirit, that I have great Grief and Unceasing Anguish in my heart, on account of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the Flesh; (for I myself was wishing to be accursed from the Anointed one.)”—vss. 1-3, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

These opening verses of the ninth chapter introduce what might be considered a parenthesis inserted in the main theme of the epistle, dealing

with the position of the natural descendants of Abraham, the Jewish nation, which rejected Jesus as their Messiah. The climax of this brief presentation is reached in chapter eleven, where Paul shows that although Israel was temporarily cast off because of unbelief, and did not obtain the great prize of joint-heirship with Jesus, they are yet to attain salvation.

In this chapter, Paul likens the great Oathbound Covenant with Abraham concerning the blessing of all the families of the earth through a “seed” to an olive tree, the natural branches springing from its trunk being the Jewish people at the time of Christ. He shows that, because of unbelief, most of these natural branches were broken off, and that Gentile branches were being grafted in to take their places.

Thus he reasons that this great loss of natural Israel led to “the reconciling of the world,” an opportunity, that is, for Gentiles who accept Christ to be reconciled to God, and by being grafted into the Israelitish olive tree, become joint-heirs with him in his kingdom. (vss. 12-22) But the time is coming, Paul adds, when natural Israel will be received back into Divine favor, and adds, “If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the [Gentile] world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?”—vs. 15

Speaking of Israel’s blindness with respect to Jesus being their Messiah, Paul explains that this would continue “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in,” adding, “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion [symbol of Christ and his completed church] the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” (vss. 25,26) That will mean, as Paul asserts, ‘life from the dead.’ It will then be time for the resurrection of the dead to begin.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Paul wrote two letters to the church at Corinth. They are generally referred to as I and II Corinthians. An important fact in connection with all the apostolic letters of the New Testament is that they are addressed exclusively to Christians, never to the world in general. Their subject matter is not suitable for unbelievers, and any attempt to apply it to such distorts its meaning. Notice the opening salutation of I Corinthians. “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that

in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”—vss. 1-3

Although Paul addresses the brethren in Corinth as the church of God, and speaks of them as being ‘sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints,’ his letter to them indicates that they were far from being mature Christians. The epistle was written, in fact, to correct wrong practices among the Corinthian brethren and to point out the way of the Lord more clearly.

In the tenth verse of the first chapter Paul comes to the point of one of their difficulties, saying, “I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” The reason for this admonition appears a few verses further on where he says, “Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”—vss. 12,13

In other words, a sectarian spirit of division was creeping into the church at Corinth, and one of the objects of Paul’s letter was to help the brethren see how wrong it was, how unchristian. A considerable portion of the epistle is directly or indirectly related to this problem. Much of the twelfth chapter is a setting forth of the oneness of the body of Christ, showing that while individuals in that body may be given different opportunities of service, they are all parts of the one body. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,” Paul wrote.—vs. 13

The thirteenth and fourteenth chapters point out the way of love, and how this godly principle should rule in the church, enabling all its members to work together in one spirit. There is service for all in the body of Christ, and when love is ruling in Christian hearts all of its members will work together harmoniously to the glory of God.

The opening verses of chapter six reveal that the brethren were plagued by difficulties among themselves, considered by them so serious that they were bringing each other into the civil courts to obtain justice. Paul corrects this also, and in doing so, reminds the reader of one of the future services to be enjoyed by those who will be associated with Jesus in his

kingdom. He writes, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”—vss. 1,2

Among some of the other problems which Paul endeavored to solve for the Corinthian brethren in this epistle were along domestic lines. (1) The proper attitude of converted slaves toward their masters, (2) the attitude of masters towards slaves, (3) whether or not to eat meat offered to idols, and (4) whether those serving the church in spiritual matters can properly expect the brethren to provide their material needs.

In this last connection, Paul explained that while according to the Law a workman was worthy of his hire, and that it was not proper to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn, nevertheless he was not taking advantage of this, but was providing for himself. To do this Paul worked as a ‘tentmaker.’—I Cor. 9:7-15; Acts 18:1-3

Paul referred to this when he wrote that he kept his body under, or, as the Greek text states it, “I browbeat [*American Standard Version*, buffet] my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”—ch. 9:27

Apparently some of the brethren in the church at Corinth were quite immature along doctrinal lines. In the fifteenth chapter of the epistle Paul asks, “How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (vs. 12) The Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, and perhaps some of these living in Corinth had accepted Christ in a measure, but still held to their unbelief regarding the resurrection.

Whatever the reason, Paul devoted this entire chapter to the subject of the resurrection. He showed first that Christ was raised from the dead; that if this were not true our faith would be vain. He showed that the death and resurrection of Jesus opened the way for the resurrection of all the dead. “As in Adam all die,” he wrote, “even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—vs. 22

Paul then explained the order in which the resurrection will take place—“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” Properly translated, this last expression would read, ‘Afterward they who become Christ’s during his presence.’—vs. 23

Verses twenty-four through twenty-eight reveal that the period of Christ's presence, during which the general resurrection will take place—following the 'first resurrection' of the church, the 'firstfruits'—is the time of his kingdom reign. Christ must reign, Paul asserts, until he has put all enemies under his feet, and "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—vs. 26

The glorious consummation of the Divine plan for the reconciliation of the lost world to God is beautifully stated in verse twenty-eight, which reads, "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Incidentally, what more definite proof could we have that the Heavenly Father and his beloved Son are not one and the same person!

SECOND CORINTHIANS

A considerable portion of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, even as the first, is devoted to local conditions in the church at Corinth, although the approach is somewhat different. In his first letter, the apostle condemned the church in a very forceful manner for their various wrong viewpoints and practices. He told them that they were sectarian, that there was fornication among them, that they were wrong in appealing to the civil courts to settle difficulties among themselves.

It seems that Paul learned that this letter had made the brethren feel very "sorry." Nevertheless, it was a godly sorrow which, as he says, "worketh repentance." (II Cor. 2:2; 7:10) The letter had a salutary effect for which the apostle was glad. In his second letter, without in any way indicating that he regretted anything he had said in the first epistle, he nevertheless manifestly endeavored to heal any wounds it might possibly have caused. The letter reveals the largeness of Paul's heart, and his sincere desire to see all the brethren work together in unity, peace, and brotherly love.

Chapters three through six are, in a general way, devoted to a very important doctrinal aspect of the Divine plan, particularly as it relates to the church's participation with Jesus in what Paul describes as the "ministry of reconciliation." He introduces this lesson by referring to the ancient tables (or tablets) of the Law which were given to Moses, and

shows that they were typical of the “fleshy tables of the heart” which he describes as the “epistle of Christ.”—II Cor. 3:3

Moses was mediator of that original Law Covenant, and Jesus and the church will be the Mediator of the New Covenant which was foreshadowed by the Law Covenant. Just as Israel was taught the Law contained on those original tables of stone so, through the church, Christ will teach the people the law of the New Covenant. Thus Paul refers to the church as being “able ministers of the new testament [covenant].”—vs. 6

This writing of the ‘epistle of Christ,’ antitypical of the tables of the Law, is being accomplished, Paul wrote, by the Spirit of God. The former he refers to as being “of the letter,” and the latter “of the spirit.” The former was a ministration of death because, not being able to measure up to the requirements of the Law the Jews were brought under condemnation. But the ministration of the Spirit, Paul writes, “giveth life.”

This, indeed, is the design of God in connection with the New Covenant—through its terms all mankind will be given an opportunity to receive life. Not that the law of that covenant will be any less perfect, but because the blood of Jesus by which it will be sealed will be efficacious to cleanse the people from unrighteousness.

This is still future. Speaking of the glory on the face of Moses’ countenance when he came down from the mountain bearing the tables of the Law, Paul compares it with the glory which will be associated with the inauguration of the New Covenant, and shows that the church will share in that glory with Jesus, as ‘able ministers’ of the New Covenant. He says that the former glory “had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.”—vss. 10-12

Paul’s use of the word ‘hope’ indicates that the ‘glory’ he is speaking of, the glory of being associated with the inauguration of the New Covenant, is yet future. We do not hope for that which we already possess. Paul speaks of this hoped-for glory as one which excelleth. He uses this hope of glory as an encouragement in affliction when in the next chapter he writes, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—II Cor. 4:17,18

In the opening verses of chapter five the apostle continues this same means of encouragement finally getting back to the subject of the church’s part in the ministry of reconciliation. In the opening verse of chapter six, he speaks of this as our being “workers together” with the Lord. Throughout the remainder of this chapter he exhorts to Christian faithfulness in order that “the ministry be not blamed.”—vs. 3

It would seem that some in the church at Corinth were questioning Paul’s appointment by the Lord to be one of the apostles, so through most of chapters eleven and twelve he presents evidence to substantiate his position of authority in the church. Chief among these were the many ways in which he had had the privilege of suffering for Christ and the fact that the Lord had favored him with special visions which enabled him to understand clearly the great plan of God, and thus to minister it effectively to others. In one of these visions he was caught up to the “third heaven.”—II Cor. 12:2

Dawn Bible Students Association

Our Invisible Helpers

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”
—*Psalm 34:7*

BOTH THE OLD AND NEW Testaments say much about the ministry of angels, and give us considerable information concerning their nature and capabilities. We know, for example, that they are of a higher order of creation than man; for David informs us that man was made “a little lower than the angels.” (Ps. 8:5) In the New

Testament we are told that when Jesus was raised from the dead he was made “better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (Heb. 1:4) Thus we know that they are higher than man, but lower in nature than the highly exalted Jesus.

Contrasting further the nature and glory of Jesus with the angels, Paul writes, “Of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.” (Heb. 1:7,8) Again speaking of the angels, Paul says, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”—Heb. 1:14

Jesus also referred to the angels in their role as servants, or ministers, to assist God’s people here on the human plane of life. He said, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 18:10) This indicates a very close, even intimate relationship between the angels and our Heavenly Father, particularly as it is concerned with their care of his people. Since they always behold the Father’s face it is evident that they are fully informed regarding his will for his people, and, in shaping our experiences, know exactly what sort of events will best accomplish the Divine will in us.

When Peter drew his sword in an effort to prevent Jesus’ arrest, the Master said to him, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than

twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:52,53) A legion is six thousand, so Jesus was telling Peter that his Father would send more than seventy-two thousand angels for his protection should he ask for help. What a picture of protective strength this presents to us! A single angel in one night destroyed a mighty Assyrian army that was encamped around Jerusalem. (II Kings 19:35) If one angel was capable of delivering God’s people from the hand of a large army, think of the protection Jesus could have had by being surrounded by ‘more than twelve legions’ of them!

Jesus did not request the help the angels could have given him to prevent his arrest, for he knew that it was the Father’s will for him to die as the world’s Redeemer, and he delighted to do his Father’s will. However from Psalm 68:17,18 it is evident that the angels were available to assist Jesus. Verse seventeen of the psalm reads, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even [many—*Marginal Translation*] thousands of angels: the lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.” The Apostle Paul quotes the eighteenth verse of this psalm in Ephesians 4:8 and applies it to Jesus’ resurrection. The indication is that the ‘many thousands’ of angels participated in some manner in that greatest of miracles.

David declares that the Lord was among the angels ‘as in Sinai.’ Deacon Stephen, in his defense before the Jewish Sanhedrin, said that the nation received the Law at Sinai “by the disposition of angels.” (Acts 7:53) Paul reveals the nature of their service in the giving of the Law, saying, “The word spoken by angels was stedfast,” that is, they were God’s spokesmen.—Heb. 2:2

With many thousands of the angels in the service of administering the Law on Sinai, can we not visualize the meaning of Paul’s dramatic description of what took place—“Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.”—Heb. 12:18,19

How the angels accomplish the tasks assigned to them in caring for the Lord’s people during this age of faith we cannot know, because they are spirit beings and therefore invisible to human eyes. We know, however, that in ancient times, when it was the Lord’s will for them, they

were able to materialize and appear in human form. The Bible's first specific mention of an angel tells us that one of them spoke to Hagar, Sarai's maid, and communicated important information to her. The account does not indicate whether or not this angel appeared to Hagar in human form, but he did converse with her. He told her that she was with child, and to return to her mistress.—Gen. 16:7-11

The angel named Hagar's unborn child Ishmael—"because the Lord hath heard thy affliction." Here we have an illustration of what Jesus said concerning the angels, that they behold the face of our Father in heaven. This angel, in speaking to Hagar, was representing the Lord who had given him all the information concerning the situation. This reveals his close association with the Lord. Hagar named the angel, "Thou God seest me." (Gen. 16:13) Whether or not she saw the angel, Hagar knew that the angel saw her, and thus is emphasized one of the reassuring facts concerning their ministry to us. They see and know every situation of our lives, and being fully acquainted with God's will for us, are able to shape our experiences to accomplish the desired end.

A WAY OF ESCAPE

An angel spoke to Abraham just when he had his knife raised to slay Isaac as a sacrifice, in keeping with God's instructions. The angel said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." (Gen. 22:12) God had severely tested Abraham's faith and loyalty, and now an escape had been provided.

It was probably through an angel that the promise of a "seed" was first made to Abraham. (Gen. 12:7) He waited many long years for the birth of Isaac, and there were additional years of waiting while he grew to manhood, so we can quite understand his feelings when the Lord asked him to give up this precious miracle child.

The Lord's people now have similar tests. The terms of discipleship include willingness to give up father, or mother, or sister or brother, or husband or wife—indeed, all our own people, if need be. In our consecration we agree to these terms, and we should not be surprised if we are put to the test. Severe trials develop along other lines. Often we are confronted with situations which to the flesh are frightening; but we need not fear, for we have the promise that the Lord will, in his own due

time, provide a way of escape. And God's providence is in the hands of his ministering angels.

Our privilege is to go forward in the narrow way, never halting, and never circumventing the path of duty as the Lord reveals it to us. It may seem dark around us; some formidable obstacle may loom up in front. God may hide his smiling face, but still it is for us to go forward. And we can do this in the certain knowledge that when the trials become too difficult, the angel of the Lord which 'encampeth round about' us will take over and bring deliverance.

VICTORY IN BATTLE

The Israelites, after crossing Jordan into the promised land, were, by the angels, given a signal victory over their enemies. The account is recorded in Joshua 5:13 through chapter six. In this instance, one of the angels, identifying himself as the "captain of the host of the Lord," materialized. At the time the angel appeared, Joshua "was by Jericho," evidently close enough to be inspecting its defenses with the view of determining how best to proceed in the capture of this powerfully walled city. Then he saw a "man" standing "over against him." Under the circumstances, Joshua took no chances. He immediately challenged the 'man,' inquiring, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"

The angel replied, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Whether we think of the angelic hosts as being 'more than twelve legions' in number, the 'many thousands,' [*Marginal Translation*] of Psalm 68:17, or the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" mentioned in Revelation 5:11, it is certain that a 'host' of them were on hand for the overthrow of Jericho; and their 'captain'—prince, as the margin states—appeared personally to Joshua to outline the strategy for the assault.

We all remember that strategy. Israel's army was to march around the city once each day for six days. On the seventh day, seven priests, marching ahead of the ark, were to have "trumpets of rams' horns," and as the seventh encirclement of the city was completed the priests were to blow the trumpets. This was to be the signal for a great shout by all the people. With this shout, the angel told Joshua, the walls of the city would crumble and fall—and it happened as foretold.—Josh. 6:2-5

Efforts have been made to explain this miracle. It has been suggested that the tremendous vibration set up by the shouting of so many people caused the walls of the city to crumble. The simple fact seems to be that the host of angels were on hand to destroy Jericho's walls. If the angels could produce all the convulsions of nature which occurred on Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law, causing even the mountain itself to quake "greatly," surely it would be an easy matter for them to destroy the man-made walls of Jericho.—Exod. 19:18

The blowing of trumpets by the priests, and the shouting of the people, played an important part in the overall strategy. For one thing, it would help to strike terror into the hearts of the people within the city, confusing them so completely that Israel's army could easily march in and take possession. But the real victory can be credited to the presence of the angels, and to the leadership of the captain of the host of the Lord.

The situation is much the same with us. As spiritual Israelites we, too, have our enemies, formidable enemies which confront us as 'walled cities' standing in the way of our progress toward the kingdom. Ours is a fight of faith and our strongest enemies are invisible. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," Paul says, "but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Eph. 6:12

The Lord has graciously provided an armor to enable us to fight against our enemies. It is an armor of Truth, for our battleground is in the mind. Satan is ever trying to break down our defenses against Truth and righteousness, and always confronting us with hindrances to progress in the narrow way. The Lord, in addition to providing us with an armor, has also outlined the strategy for battle.

If we are as faithful in the use of all the Lord's provisions as we can be, and obey his instructions to the letter, we still would not be victorious except for that help which is provided by the ministering angels. Israel's shouts played a part in the victory at Jericho, but without angels the city would not have been conquered. Thus without the Lord's help, administered by the angels, we could not be "conquerors." (Rom. 8:37) It is only as we are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," that we can be assured of victory.—Eph. 6:10

ARE YOU DISCOURAGED?

Gideon was interviewed by an angel, and the experience highlights another situation in which the ministering angels are assisting us in times of need. The account is found in Judges 6:12,13. At the time, Israel was besieged by their enemies, the Midianites. The nation had no army for defense, and there was no one, seemingly, capable of doing anything about the unhappy situation.

Then it was that an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon to explain that the Lord had selected him to deliver his people. The first announcement of the angel was, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." To this Gideon replied, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

This ministry of an angel occurred at a time of discouragement. Probably at one time or another all of the Lord's people become somewhat discouraged by unhappy circumstances which they are unable to change. Often for one to be assured at such a time that the Lord is with him merely emphasizes the cause of discouragement, as it did with Gideon. In effect he said to the angel, How can you say that the Lord is with me, and with Israel, when you know that the Midianites are ready to make slaves of the whole nation, and that there is nothing we can do to prevent it? It is all very well, Gideon said, to talk about miracles of the past, but how does that help us, for the Lord is doing nothing to deliver us from our enemies?

The angel then assured Gideon that the Lord had selected him to deliver his people, "Have not I sent thee?" was the Lord's message through the angel. But still Gideon was not convinced. He asked, "Wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." It was very important that Gideon thus recognize his own insufficiency, for only such can the Lord use.—vss. 14,15

Probably one of the reasons the Lord permits us to fail, and to have other trying experiences which bring discouragement, is that we might learn this lesson of our own insufficiency. But here again the angels are

supervising. Beholding the face of our Father, they know exactly when and how to begin changing things. When the Father says that his child has learned the necessary lesson in humility and the need of Divine help and guidance, the dark clouds of discouragement are seen to part, and again the Father's beaming countenance is smiling upon him. Gideon, we know, by following the instructions of the Lord, delivered Israel from the hands of the Midianites. The Lord was with him!

THEY OPPOSE OUR WILLFULNESS

Another manner in which the angels minister to us is illustrated in the experience of Balaam, the man who was asked by a heathen king to place a curse upon the Israelites. The account is found in Numbers, chapters twenty-two to twenty-four. In this record, we are reminded that one of the ministries of the angels is to place hindrances in the way when those whom they are assigned to serve are taking a wrong course.

Balaam was not an Israelite. He was a Gentile, but apparently he had respect for Israel's God. Jude's reference to him indicates that he was a man who, up to a point, could be influenced by the offer of material reward for his religious service. This is quite apparent when we study the facts concerning him.

The circumstances were these: Israel had defeated and destroyed the Amorites. Balak, the king of the Moabites had taken note of this and was fearful of what might happen to his own people. So he conceived the idea of requesting Balaam to place a curse upon the Israelites, which, as he supposed, would prevent them from continuing their victories. With this in mind, he sent messengers to Balaam to request this service, offering a very high reward.

These messengers were the "elders of Moab and the elders of Midian." (Num. 22:7) They carried with them the "rewards of divination." Apparently Balaam was noted for being able to place curses upon people, but when he was approached by these messengers and asked to curse the Israelites, he hesitated. Instead of accepting the reward at once, which is doubtless what he would like to have done, he asked the messengers to remain overnight with him, promising that he would give them the answer in the morning. This was a grave mistake. We should never invite temptation to remain, but settle the issues involved at once.

Meanwhile the Lord spoke to Balaam, probably through an angel, and said, “Thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.” (vs. 12) Balaam relayed this message to the messengers whom Balak had sent, and they returned with the information to him. But Balak was not satisfied. He decided to negotiate on a higher level. He sent “yet again princes, more, and more honourable than they.” (vs. 15) He increased his offers of reward. His message to Balaam was, “Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say.”—vss. 16,17, *New International Version*

The prospect of honor and high position is often alluring even to the Lord’s people, and it was to Balaam, yet he still hesitated. Again he asked the messengers to remain overnight to give him an opportunity to find out from the Lord what he should do. He respected Israel’s God and feared to go contrary to his wishes.

That night the Lord, doubtless through an angel, spoke to Balaam again, and said that he should go with the messengers, with the restriction, “The word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do.” (vs. 20) This ‘word,’ which the Lord wanted Balaam to pronounce, turned out to be one of blessing. (Num. 24:1-10) But Balaam at the time did not know this, selfishly believing that he had received permission to curse the Israelites. He was determined to get the reward offered by Balak, and was glad, the next morning, to saddle his donkey and start on the way “with the princes of Moab.”—Num. 22:21

He had God’s consent to go, but the Lord saw what was in his heart, that his chief concern was the reward which he was to receive for cursing Israel, so “God was very angry when he went.” (vs. 22, *NIV*) He had not gone far when the donkey upon which he was riding “turned off the road and into a field.” (vs. 23, *NIV*) Balaam then smote the donkey and attempted to steer her back into the road.

When she turned out of the main road, the donkey was in a vineyard, between two walls serving as climbing places for the vines. When Balaam smote the donkey again in an attempt to make it return to the road, the animal lunged against one of these walls, injuring Balaam’s foot. Then Balaam smote the donkey the third time. The donkey, unable to go forward, fell down under Balaam. By this time Balaam was really angry, and he smote the donkey again.

Then the donkey started to talk to Balaam, and asked if she had not always been faithful in his service. Balaam had to admit that this was so, and then the Lord opened his eyes and he saw what the donkey had been seeing—he saw the “angel of the Lord standing in the road.” (vs. 31, *NIV*) The angel allowed Balaam to continue on with the messengers, but warned him only to say what the Lord gave him permission to say. Evidently Balaam in his selfish desire for reward, had read into the Lord’s former instructions, more than had been intended, hence the angel’s interference.

The lesson for us is clear and important. In our Christian lives we are prone at times to decide that we want to do certain things, or have certain matters go our way, and are quite insistent about it. We may, like Balaam, presume that the Lord’s instructions mean our own interpretation of them, which frequently is in keeping with our own preferences according to the flesh.

But in our endeavor to proceed with what we have selfishly decided is the Lord’s will, we find hindrances in the way. If it is something which has to do with the home, we blame someone in the family for interfering with our plans. If in business, we blame our partners. If it is in the ecclesia, and our suggestions are voted down, we assume that one or more of the brethren are plotting against us.

Just like Balaam, we blame the ‘donkey’ for hindering us in our way instead of seeing the ‘angel’ whom the Lord has sent to prevent us from taking a course which would be displeasing to him, and an injury to ourselves. It is also true that, at times, when we are willfully determined to pursue a certain course, the Lord might permit us to do so, only to find later that we were wrong and that he lovingly prevents us from going too far with our selfish notions.

How thankful we should be that the angel of the Lord which encampeth round about us, hinders us from spiritual catastrophe by not allowing us to have our own way! May we always look for the angel which stands in the way.

IN EVERY TIME OF NEED

Thus we see that the ministration of the angels covers our every time of need. When the trials are severe and hard to bear, they give us help, and deliver us from that which would be too great to bear. As we war a

“good warfare,” (I Tim. 1:18) the ministering angels assist us, thus assuring us of victory.

When we are discouraged, the angels appear with evidences of the Lord’s blessing which give us a new hold on the promises of God, and we again go forward with rejoicing.

When, in ambitious moments we may foolishly embark on a course of self-will which is pleasing to the flesh, the angels put roadblocks in the way. And while our first reaction is to blame people and things which are apparently causing our frustration, the Lord ultimately opens our eyes and we see the ‘angel’ and recognize that in his love he was preventing us from continuing in a wrong course.

These, and other lessons may be gleaned from the manner in which God used the angels during Old Testament times. The narratives of the New Testament were introduced, by the announcement of the birth of Christ by an angel, with a whole host of them singing “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”—Luke 2:1-14

The New Testament introduces the age of faith, when the angels no longer appear in human form, but nevertheless their ministration is just as effective. They are mentioned in connection with Jesus, after his temptation in the wilderness at the outset of his ministry. The angels delivered the apostles from prison, a notable case being when Peter was brought forth from bondage the night before he was scheduled for execution. (Acts 12:1-11) The climax of this wonderful experience came when the “iron gate” which stood between Peter and freedom “opened to them of his own accord.” Actually, of course, it did not open of its own accord. It was the angel of the Lord who opened it, but thus it seemed to Peter.

And so it is with us! Almost daily the Lord’s people are confronted with ‘iron gate[s]’—situations which prevent progress. We approach them, often in fear and discouragement, only to find that they open of their ‘own accord.’ Let us have faith to believe that these experiences are not mere coincidences, or accidental, but that they are in the hands of the angels, and being controlled according to the Father’s wishes, in order that we might be properly strengthened, comforted, warned, and at times, prevented from going astray.

When Peter walked out of the prison that night he “came to himself” and realized then an angel had delivered him. In the Lord’s own due time we will pass through the final “iron gate,” into the full and glorious liberty of the sons of God. Perhaps when we “come to ourselves” on the other side, we will look up and see the angel, or angels, who have ministered to us throughout the years of our earthly pilgrimage. What a glorious meeting that will be! Then we will know as it is not possible to know now, what it has meant for the “angels of the Lord”—these spiritual, unseen helpers—to be “encamped round about us,” and we will thank God for the daily deliverances, and for the final deliverance in which they will have had a part.

Dawn Bible Students Association

God's Kingdom Nation

***“Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”
—Matthew 21:43***

THE WORDS OF OUR text were addressed by Jesus to the religious rulers of Israel. The preceding context reveals why he prefaced his statement with the word ‘therefore.’ First, there is the parable of the householder, the one who planted a vineyard, “and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.”—Matt. 21:33

Later, “when the time of the fruit drew near,” the householder sent his servants to the husbandmen “that they might receive the fruits of it.” (vs. 34) But the husbandmen “took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.” (vs. 35) Then the householder sent other servants, but they were treated the same way.

Wishing to give the husbandmen whom he had appointed a further opportunity to show good faith, the householder then sent his son, saying, “They will reverence my son.” (vs. 37) “But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said . . . This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.”—vs. 38

After relating the parable, Jesus asked his hearers what they thought the householder would do to the husbandmen who were so unfaithful to the trust he had bestowed upon them. They replied that he would “miserably destroy those wicked men,” and then would entrust his vineyard to others who would “render him the fruits in their seasons.” (vs. 41) Jesus then asked them if they had not read the scripture, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.”—vs. 42

Immediately following this we find the words of our text beginning with the word therefore. The nation of Israel, heeding the example of its religious rulers, was taking the same position as the unfaithful

husbandmen of the parable, and was likewise rejecting the ‘stone’ which was to become ‘the head of the corner.’ Therefore the kingdom was to be taken away and given to another nation, a nation ‘bringing forth the fruits thereof.’

A similar parable is related in Isaiah 5:1-7. Here we are told that “the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.” (vs. 7) In the parable as presented by Isaiah, the vineyard is laid waste by the Lord because it brought forth nothing but wild grapes, not the luscious fruit of righteousness which the Lord expected, the reason for this failure ostensibly being the unfaithfulness of the husbandmen to whom the Lord had entrusted the care of the vineyard.

Both parables indicate that for the nation of Israel much was at stake in God’s dealings with them. Our text reveals that it was nothing less than the opportunity of participating with Jesus in the rulership of the long-promised Messianic kingdom. Exodus 19:5,6 declares that if the Israelites obeyed the commandments of the Lord and were faithful to him, they would be a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” All of God’s dealings with them were designed to help them qualify for this exalted destiny.

CRUSHED HOPES

The final test came when Jesus presented himself to the nation as Messiah and King. That they might be prepared to receive him, John the Baptist was sent as a forerunner, announcing, “The royal majesty of the heavens has approached.” (Matt. 3:2, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Even with this help the nation failed in its final test. A few individuals qualified. John explains this, saying of Jesus, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”—John 1:11,12

The others stumbled over the “stone,” just as the prophet had foretold. (Ps. 118:21,22) It was this text which Jesus quoted and applied to himself, explaining that whoever “shall fall” on this stone “shall be broken,” and that on whomsoever the stone fell, he would be ground “to powder.” (Matt. 21:44) This, of course, is highly symbolic language, but it indicates that those who stumbled over Jesus, and in turn felt the weight

of his rejection of them, being unworthy to be joint-heirs with him in the kingdom, would have their exalted hopes crushed.

Matthew 21:45 shows that the chief priests and the Pharisees knew that Jesus was speaking of them, that they were the ones who were to be replaced, the kingdom being taken from them, and given to others. Inasmuch as the people followed their leadership, the whole nation of Israel came under the decree, “Your house is left unto you desolate.”—Matt. 23:38

While these historical facts concerning the nation of Israel are important in relationship to the Divine plan, even more vital to us is a proper recognition of the reason leading up to the rejection of God’s ancient people from the chief place in the kingdom which was offered to them. Their final failure was but a continuance of those object lessons mentioned by Paul, which, he says, were written “for our admonition.”—I Cor. 10:11

GOD’S NATION

In our text the Greek word translated ‘nation’ means a race, or tribe. The Jewish race is the family of Abraham, and in the Old Testament many other families are spoken of as nations—the Hittites, the Amorites, the Jebusites, and others. So Jesus’ reference to a nation might well be narrowed in meaning to the thought of a family, specifically of the Divine family, the “household of faith.”—Gal. 6:10

This family is made up of the children, or sons of God. That the hope of the kingdom has been given to these is clearly shown by the Apostle Paul. He wrote, “The Spirit [of God] itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:16,17

The Apostle Peter also identifies the nation to whom the kingdom was given when taken away from those to whom it was first offered. As though explaining Jesus’ reference to the stone which the builders rejected, and also those referred to by the Master as the nation to whom the kingdom would be given, Peter quotes the prophecy of the rejected stone, and then adds, “But 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.”—I Pet. 2:7-10

Clearly the reference here is to Gentile believers—not all Gentiles, but those who accept Christ and dedicate their lives to following in his footsteps. However, the opportunity is not limited to Gentiles, for individual Israelites according to the flesh may also qualify; indeed, the first thus to qualify were those Israelites who accepted Christ, and to whom he gave the power to become the sons of God.

The new nation is new in the sense that it is a faith “seed,” or family, made up of New Creatures in Christ Jesus. It matters not what their nationality may previously have been. Paul stresses, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:27-29

The natural descendants of Abraham took for granted that they were the promised ‘seed’ of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed. They could have been had they qualified under the terms of faith and obedience which the Lord laid down. But this great privilege was taken from them, and given to a new spiritual family, made up of individuals from all races according to the flesh. They are all begotten by God’s Spirit, and bound together in one family by the cords of faith and love. These, irrespective of race or color, are now the real seed of promise, the nation to whom the kingdom has been given.

INGRAFTED BRANCHES

In Romans 11:1-21 Paul presents essentially this same lesson, using the olive tree and its branches as an illustration. He refers to the descendants of Abraham as the natural branches in this tree, and notes that many of them were broken off because of unbelief. Then he speaks of “wild” branches which are grafted into the tree to take the places of those broken off. Thus he shows that by faith the ‘wild’ branches—those not previously the people of God—become partakers of the “fatness” of the tree. They inherit the exceeding great and precious promises which once belonged exclusively to the natural posterity of Abraham.

These are Abraham’s seed, however, upon the basis of faith. Continued faith and obedience are essential in order to maintain their position in the

Divine arrangement of the seed. Paul wrote, “If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”—vs. 21

GOD’S MERCY

We can thank God for his assurance that the rejection of Israel as the exclusive heirs of the kingdom promises does not imply their loss of opportunity of salvation through the Redeemer, Christ Jesus. Paul explains that after the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in”—that is, after the full number designed by God to be associated with Jesus as joint-heirs in his kingdom, have been called from the world and fully prepared to reign with Christ—then, “all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.”—vss. 25-27

Following the completion of God’s nation to which joint-heirship privileges of the kingdom are given—when this new race, or seed, will live and reign with Christ—all Gentiles will likewise be given the opportunity of salvation. Paul states, “Israel [according to the flesh] hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.”—Rom. 11:7

Israel sought to be the Messianic nation, the seed of promise, hence the channel of blessing to all the families of the earth. The promises of God justified the nation’s hopes along this line. However, in addition to these promises being conditional upon faith and obedience, they contained implications with respect to God’s plan of salvation which the Israelites did not perceive; namely, that the seed of blessing was to be a spiritual, not an earthly, seed.

It is this feature of the Divine plan that is referred to by Paul as a “mystery,” a mystery which he describes as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) This is simply another way of stating the thought of Romans 5:2, that through Christ we have “access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

The Apostle Peter words the same thought a little differently, saying that unto us are given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) These promises belong to the sons of God, the family, or nation, to which the kingdom is given.

John wrote, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2,3) This Gospel Age family of God are to be like Christ, who, when he was raised from the dead, was highly exalted above angels and principalities, and was made the express image of the Father’s person.

As Jesus thus partook of the glory of God, so those to whom he gives power, or authority, to become sons of God, will likewise be exalted. Those of the Jewish nation who accepted him and espoused the Messianic cause were the first to be identified with this new and ‘holy nation.’ Throughout the entire age, the call of the Gospel has continued to go out to Jews and Gentiles alike. The invitation is to accept Christ as one’s personal Redeemer and Savior, deny self, and follow him into sacrificial death.

This invitation is described by Paul as the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14) It is a ‘high’ calling because those who are faithful to its terms—faithful even unto death—will receive a wonderful “prize,” the prize of joint-heirship with Jesus in his kingdom, to live and reign with him a thousand years.

Throughout past ages this aspect of the Divine plan remained a mystery. Besides, little did the posterity of Abraham realize that Gentiles would become fellow heirs of these glorious promises. This also remained a mystery until God’s due time came for revealing it.

What a privilege it is now to be “partakers of the heavenly calling.” (Heb. 3:1) But the conditions attached to this calling are exacting, and only through faithfulness even unto death may we hope to attain that for which we have been apprehended. Paul sounds a timely warning of this by reminding us that since many of the “natural branches” (Rom. 11:21) in the olive tree of promise were broken off because of unbelief, those who have been grafted in to take their places can also be broken off, and for the same reason. He says, therefore, “Be not highminded, but fear.”—Rom. 11:18-20

BRINGING FORTH FRUIT

In our text Jesus said the kingdom would be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. These, of course, are the fruits of righteousness—evidences of faith in the promises of God, and of humble and loyal

obedience to all the terms associated with them. As we have seen, God's new nation, or race, is made up of those who, during the Gospel Age, become his "sons," his children, and Paul emphasizes that one of the conditions of sonship is that "we suffer with him."—Rom. 8:14,16,17

Suffering with Christ implies faithfulness in representing him as his ambassadors. Simply to believe in Christ is not enough. To rejoice in all that he means to us is not sufficient. He has commissioned his followers to be the "light of the world," (Matt. 5:14) and if we let our light shine we will find, as Jesus did, that the darkness hateth the light, and that those who walk in darkness will oppose the Truth and those who proclaim it. This is, however, one of the conditions of sonship—'if so be that we suffer with him.'

When the Apostle John wrote, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God,' he added, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (I John 3:2,3) The 'purity' here mentioned by John is God's own standard of righteousness, his will for his consecrated people. It means unqualified devotion to every precept and example of Truth and righteousness set before us in the Son of God. They are all summed up in the word love—unselfishness.

If we root out selfishness from our hearts, and seek to be filled and controlled by the principle of Divine love, we will find ourselves in full harmony with what Jesus referred to as "these sayings of mine" contained in his sermon on the mount. (Matt. 7:24) We will love our brethren, neighbors, and enemies. We will bless those who persecute us, and pray for those who spitefully use us. As the Heavenly Father bestows his blessings upon the just and the unjust, causing the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon all alike, so we will be impartial in our treatment of all, and thus be "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. 5:48

SACRIFICING PRIESTS

Peter's reference to those who compose God's holy nation of this Gospel Age to whom the kingdom is given, is preceded by his explanation that we are "built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (I Pet. 2:5) Here, then, is another condition of being part of God's holy nation—it is that we are expected to offer sacrifice.

This was foreshadowed in God's dealings with ancient Israel. The priests of Israel were ordained to offer sacrifice, and now we are, as Peter says, "an holy priesthood," and also "a royal priesthood." (vss. 5,9) Israel's priests offered animals—bulls, goats, rams—in sacrifice, but we offer ourselves. Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Rom. 12:1

"IF YE DO THESE THINGS"

In Peter's second epistle he again reminds us of the conditions attached to the heavenly promises of God. These promises are 'exceeding great and precious,' he tells us. By them we are made 'partakers of the divine nature,' but not irrespective of our faithfulness in bringing forth the 'fruits' of the kingdom.

In the third chapter of this epistle Peter says that we look for "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (vs. 13) Indeed, the promises of God give us authority to hope that, if faithful, we will be a part of that 'new heavens.' So, in view of this, Peter writes, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness?"—vs. 11

'What manner of persons ought ye to be?' Peter asks. He has outlined this 'what manner' in chapter one. After reminding us of the precious promises of the Divine nature, he says that we should give "all diligence," to add to our faith "virtue," "knowledge," "temperance," "patience," "godliness," "brotherly kindness," and "charity"—love. These are the fruits for which the Lord is looking in the lives of all who have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Peter confirms this, saying that "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."—vss. 8,9

Israel according to the flesh lacked these things, which was one of the contributing causes of the blindness which prevented them from accepting their Messiah and meeting the conditions of joint-heirship with him. Now that this opportunity has come to us let us be sure that we do

not lack these things, but that in humility and in full surrender to the Divine will, we allow the Spirit of God to work in us to will and to do his good pleasure, bringing forth these fruits of righteousness, the fruits of the kingdom.

We have been called and chosen for the high position of joint-heirship with Christ—Peter calls it our “calling and election.” (II Pet. 1:10) But those who will actually be partakers of the Divine nature and the glory of God, those who will sit on the throne with Christ, those who will be with him to reign a thousand years, must not only be “called, and chosen,” they must also be “faithful.”—Rev. 17:14

This being “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10) is what Peter describes as making our ‘calling and election sure.’ He admonishes us to ‘give diligence’ in order to do this. No halfhearted followers of the Master will be successful in making their calling and election sure. Only those who, like Paul, from the heart are able to say with enthusiasm, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:13,14

Peter says that if we give all diligence in doing “these things” we “shall never fall.” What a glorious assurance! God wants us to make our calling and election sure. It is his ‘good pleasure’ that we have an abundant ‘entrance’ into the kingdom. Because of this he will supply our needs in our struggle against the Devil and his wiles, give encouragement when we might become discouraged, wisdom to know his will, and the needed help to do it.

Surely the prospect for those to whom the Lord has given the kingdom is a glorious one. The nation to which it is given will soon be completed. Will we be in that nation as kings and priests to reign with Christ a thousand years? We will ‘if’ we give all diligence to make sure our calling and our election to that glorious position.