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## HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

*The impact of the birth of Jesus has changed the course of history so much so that throughout the entire civilized world even time is reckoned from his birthday, upon a B.C. and A.D. basis. Yet, from one standpoint, the most extraordinary thing arising out of the birth of Jesus is the fact that up until now, practically nothing in connection with the high hopes of peace and joy and life which have been centered in him have as yet been realized. Despite this, however, the whole world continues to commemorate the birth of the "Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6*

*It is nearly two thousand years since the angel said to those shepherds on the Judean hills, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10) Almost twenty centuries have come and gone since that heavenly choir sang the refrain: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Under ordinary circumstances, had claims of this sort failed of fruition for as many as fifty years, they would have been forgotten, but the angelic message of peace and goodwill is sung with as great enthusiasm today as ever.*

*The song of the angels is by no means forgotten. Two global wars in one generation have not silenced it; nor has the din of battle by the ever-warring factions of Christ's professed followers caused the world to forget the angels' song. And it is well that this is so, for the song has not lost its meaning, nor does the long-seeming delay in its fulfillment indicate that the divine purpose in the birth of Jesus has failed*

## Christ Is Born

**A**BOUT OCTOBER 1ST, nearly two thousand years ago, an angelic announcement to a group of shepherds watching their flocks by night signaled an outstanding step forward in the outworking of the divine plan of salvation. We read that "the angel of the LORD came upon them, and the glory of the LORD shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:9-14



Previous to this, the coming of the Messiah was in the realm of promises, so one of the very important aspects of this message of good news is the fact the Messiah was born that day. The word Gospel means good news, and Paul informs us that the Gospel was preached before to Abraham when God promised this ancient friend that through his "seed" all the families of the earth would be blessed. (Gal. 3:8; Gen. 22:18) Paul identifies Jesus in this connection as the promised "seed." (Gal. 3:16) It was good news to Abraham that his progeny would be the channel of blessing to all mankind. However, this was good news which was based merely upon a promise. Later this promise was confirmed by God's oath, but it was still only a promise.

Later this promise was confirmed to Isaac, and to Jacob, but it was still only a promise. Shortly before his death, when pronouncing blessings upon his twelve sons, Jacob proph-

esied that out of the loins of Judah there would come one who would be called Shiloh, a peaceful one, and that unto him would the gathering of the people be. (Gen. 49:9,10) This was another promise of the coming of a Messiah, one to whom the people would be gathered, and through whom they would receive the blessings of peace.

Moses, in his day, clung to these wonderful promises that the God of Israel would send a great one, a messiah, to bring deliverance to his people, and a blessing to all mankind. Evidently the mother of Moses, while caring for him in the court of Pharaoh, told her child of the promise to father Abraham, and what it implied, for we read that when he was come to years he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of [*Margin, 'for'*] Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."—Heb. 11:24-26

Christ is the New Testament name for Messiah, and Moses evidently understood God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob to mean that he would send a Messiah, and he gladly cast in his lot with the people of God to whom these promises had been made. Later, after the Law had been given to Israel at the hand of Moses, he was instructed to say to this people that the LORD would raise up unto them a prophet like unto himself, and that all would be called upon to hear and obey that prophet. (Deut. 18:18, 19) In the New Testament this is applied to Jesus during the period of his second presence.—Acts 3:22,23

## MANY PROPHECIES

Isaiah prophesied that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son," and that his name would be called Immanuel. (Isa. 7:14) Another of Isaiah's prophecies reads, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. upon the throne of David. and upon

his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

Again Isaiah prophesied concerning the coming Messiah: “There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove [*Margin*, ‘argue’] with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.”—Isa. 11:1-5

In Daniel 9:25 there is another assurance of the coming of the Messiah. In this prophecy a time measurement is given, indicating when he would come. The prophecy reads, “Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” At the time Jesus did appear as the Messiah, many were in expectation of him—and this expectation might well have been based, in part at least, upon this prophecy recorded by Daniel.—Luke 3:15

In Micah 5:2 there is a prophecy which identifies the place where the promised one would be born. The text reads, “Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting [*Margin*, Hebrew: ‘the days of eternity’].”

And then in Malachi 4:2 we read, “Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.”

These and other promises and prophecies relative to the coming Messiah served as a great inspiration to the devout

of Israel. The people did not realize that they would not all be fulfilled at once. They failed completely to grasp the meaning of certain prophecies which told of the Messiah's suffering and death as the Redeemer of Israel and of the world. They did not know that he would be raised from the dead and return to heaven, and revisit mankind at the end of the Gospel Age. They simply had in mind the many assurances of Jehovah that a messiah would come, that Israel would be exalted, and all the families of the earth blessed.

Yes, the 'Israelites indeed' were well aware that God had promised to send a messiah. Many names and titles of this great one were mentioned in the prophecies. He was to be the 'seed'. He was to be 'Shiloh'. He was to be 'a prophet greater than Moses'. He was to be called 'Immanuel', Wonderful', 'Counsellor', 'The mighty God', 'The everlasting Father', 'The Prince of Peace'. The Messiah was also to be a 'root out of the stem of Jesse', and a 'Branch' was to grow out of his roots. He was to be the 'Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings'.

Throughout all the long centuries of Israel's waiting, the Messianic feature of the divine plan remained in the realm of promises, but at last the time came for those promises to begin to be translated into reality, so the angel announced, "Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ [Messiah] the Lord." (Luke 2:11) Now these promises began to take on substance—the Messiah was born.

Nine months earlier, Mary had been given the assurance that she was to be the mother of the one who would become the great Messiah and Deliverer of Israel and the world: "The angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the LORD God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be

In this announcement by the angel we are reminded of Isaiah's prophecy in which he foretold that the Messiah would sit "upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever." (Isa. 9:7) The typical kingdom of David had fallen in B.C. 606. Because David was so greatly beloved by Jehovah, he arranged that the future Messianic Kingdom should be looked upon as the rebuilt kingdom of this man after God's own heart. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) Jesus is the antitypical David, and, through his mother, was an actual descendant of David.

### HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES

From the announcement made to her by the angel, Gabriel, Mary would know that she was to be the mother of the promised one, and possibly wondered why God permitted those circumstances to arise which led to the birth of Jesus in a stable. However, even a stable must have seemed like a palace to Mary, a king's palace, since God had permitted her holy child to be born there. But while Jesus' birthplace was humble, and his mother a comparatively unknown person in Israel, his birth was announced by the angels. This was appropriate. The LORD had used angels on many occasions to convey to the ancients his plan to send the Messiah, and now that the time had come to fulfill those promises, it was fitting that both the conception and birth of this great one would also be announced by angels.

The birth of Jesus was a turning point in the outworking of the divine plan, for it meant that God's plan had moved out of the 'promise stage', and into the era of performance. True, through his New Testament servants the LORD continued to make promises, but now the central figure both of the Old and New Testament promises had come, and his birth in Bethlehem had been announced by the angels.

The shepherds to whom this announcement was made must have been awed, and at the same time made glad. To them the first thought was to go to Bethlehem and verify what they had heard. We read, "It came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds

said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”— Luke 2:15,16

The shepherds were thoroughly convinced. We read, “When they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” (vss. 17,18) The shepherds’ desire to tell as many as they could about the good news which had been given to them was natural and praiseworthy. We should have the same desire today. At this time the LORD’s people are privileged to understand the divine plan more fully than did the shepherds. The good tidings of the birth of Jesus, and all that it means in connection with the divine plan as a whole, should impel us to do all we can to tell out this message far and wide, and by every means at our disposal.

## NOT YET THE MESSIAH

The birth of Jesus was truly important as an advance step in the plan of God, but actually as a babe he was not the Messiah. The word messiah means ‘anointed’, or ‘the anointed one’. The significance of the word derives from the custom in Israel of anointing kings and priests to office with special anointing oil. It pointed forward to the anointing of the Holy Spirit which came upon Jesus at the time of his baptism, and upon the church at Pentecost.

At the time of Jesus’ baptism he heard his Heavenly Father speaking to him from heaven, saying, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22) Jesus’ birth was announced by the angels, but as a baby he would not know about or appreciate this. At the age of twelve he was found in the Temple with doctors of the Law, endeavoring to learn what he could about his mission. But not until he, at Jordan, dedicated himself to the doing of his Father’s will, did he receive the blessed assurance of his sonship, and know that his Heavenly Father was well pleased with him.

Now, as the Messiah of promise, he entered into the public phase of his ministry.

This was thirty years after Jesus' birth. Perhaps the shepherds to whom his birth had been announced had passed away. Certainly many to whom they had conveyed the good news had died. Whatever the reason, the fact is that no mention is made of the angelic announcement after Jesus began his ministry. It could well be that the LORD wanted to emphasize that the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus are the important considerations. True, Jesus' birth was necessary as the means to an end, but the LORD does not want us particularly to adore the babe Jesus, but to take up our cross and follow the anointed Jesus in his steps of suffering and death.

## GOD'S GIFT

The promises pertaining to the coming of the Messiah emphasized that he would be one sent by God. This thought is carried over into the New Testament, and in John 3:16 Jesus is referred to as God's gift. "God so loved the world," we read, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Paul speaks of Jesus as God's "unspeakable gift." (II Cor. 9:15) Words are wholly inadequate to describe this gracious and costly gift which our Heavenly Father made to us, and to the whole world of mankind.

And since the first evidence of this gift was manifested in the birth of Jesus, it is appropriate that this feature of the divine plan should beget in us the desire unselfishly to give for the blessing of others. First of all, when we come to know of God's great gift of love for us, we should willingly give our all to him. He had invited us to give him our hearts, and when we respond to this invitation, it means that everything which we have and are is really surrendered to him, with the understanding that he can use it in whatever way may be pleasing to him. This is consecration. This is presenting our bodies a living sacrifice as mentioned by the Apostle Paul

## A SAVIOR

When the angel announced to the shepherds that the Messiah was born he referred to him as the 'Savior'. To the shepherds this possibly meant no more than being saved from the Roman yoke of bondage under which the nation of Israel was living at the time. But to us it means much more. It means that through his death as man's Redeemer, Jesus would provide an opportunity of salvation from death for all mankind. The Heavenly Father knew that in giving his Son for the salvation of mankind it meant giving him up to suffer and to die. What a costly gift this was, and if we are to emulate the Father's love in giving we must be willing to suffer and to die even as Jesus did.

After the one angel announced the birth of Jesus, "suddenly there was . . . a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:13,14) Surely all who love the LORD, and rejoice in his great plan of salvation, will likewise give glory to God, and praise him for the gift of his Son.

We know that the birth of Jesus will yet lead to peace on earth. True, nearly two thousand years have passed since this glory song of the angels was heard, and still there is no peace on earth. But this does not mean that the divine plan has failed. It simply means that a further preparatory feature of God's great plan has been in the course of development, which is the calling out from the world of those who are invited to follow in the footsteps of Jesus—suffering and dying with him that they might live and reign with him. There is every reason now to believe that this work is about complete, which means that soon Messiah's kingdom will bring peace to the nations, and that Jesus will be recognized by the people of all nations as truly the Prince of Peace.

Jesus will also then serve as peacemaker between God and the estranged human race. After all, there can be no lasting peace between the nations unless the people are at peace with God. Our first parents decided to take a course contrary to God's law, and brought upon themselves the con-

tence of death. By heredity their entire progeny has been born in sin and misshapen in iniquity. The whole unbelieving world is thus alienated from God, and under condemnation to death. Jesus gave himself in death as a substitute for Adam and his race, and this opens the way for a return from death, and a reinstatement of the human race into the favor of God. This glorious provision will become effective during the thousand years of the Messianic Kingdom through the arrangement of the New Covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

It will be then that Jesus will be the everlasting Father, the father, that is, who will give everlasting life to all those who, through belief and obedience, prove worthy of it. And how glorious is this prospect! It will mean the end of sickness and pain and death. How true was the angel's announcement that the son born to Mary would be the Savior! As we contemplate the birth of Jesus, we should not overlook this glorious outcome of the divine plan of salvation.

### "GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN"

In the glory song of the angels they used the expression, 'good will toward men'. Many who do not know the plan of God for human salvation think of this as meaning goodwill 'among' men. This viewpoint places a great strain upon their faith because they know that there has been no more goodwill among men since Jesus was born than there was before. They have thought that God wanted them to convert the world to Christ and his teachings and thus bring about a state of goodwill among men. We rejoice to realize that in God's due time, which will be during the thousand years of the Messianic Kingdom, the world will be converted. Then the LORD's Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and under its enlightening influence the people will be led away from selfishness, and will learn to love and serve one another.

An incorrect understanding of this text is revealed in other translations. The *Revised Version* reads, "peace among men in whom he is well pleased." Others render it "peace among men of good will." But there is no basis in the Greek text for these translations. They are simply attempts to harmonize the

angelic message with what the translators, in their limited understanding of God's plan, suppose the angels meant.

But how beautiful is the text when taken as it properly reads in our **Common Version Translation**. It is goodwill "toward" men, and the reference is to God's goodwill as it was even then being expressed through the birth of his Son whom he had sent into the world to be the Redeemer and Savior of mankind. God's goodwill was thus expressed toward men because he loved them. Even though the human race was alienated from God through wicked works, he still loved the people—loved them so much that he gave his Son to serve as Redeemer and Mediator to restore them to life and to harmony with him.

Jesus' death and resurrection were further evidences of God's goodwill toward men. The selection of the little flock—Jesus' footstep followers—to share in the kingdom rule with Jesus is also an evidence of God's goodwill toward the Adamic race. The return of Christ to establish his kingdom also manifests God's goodwill toward the people. Indeed, God's goodwill is expressed in every detail of his loving plan for the blessing of all the families of the earth. In view of this, how appropriate that we join with the angels in singing, "Glory to God in the highest"!

It was a marvelous experience for the shepherds to be told by angels that the great one whom the God of Israel had been promising for so long had at last been born. It is even more wonderful to be living now, and to have the assurance that Christ's second visit to earth is a reality; that he is now present, preparing to establish his kingdom through which peace and health and life will be assured to all people.

To the unbelieving world it seems incredible that we are living at the threshold of such a 'Golden Age' of peace, security, health, and life. Probably many disbelieved the report of the shepherds concerning the birth of the Messiah, and the people for the most part will ignore our message today. But it is our privilege to proclaim the good tidings, and in doing so, to show our joy and enthusiasm for the message of the

angels to the shepherds in Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago.

May this glorious message never become commonplace in our lives! ■



## Notice to Dawn Subscribers

**BEGINNING JANUARY 1ST, 1995**, the annual subscription price for *The Dawn* magazine will be increased to \$3.00. The new rate for first-class mail subscriptions will be \$10.00.

This is the first general increase since *The Dawn's* inception in 1932. We regretfully make this change, but it is necessitated by rising production and mailing costs.

This increased price will pertain to new subscriptions and renewals which begin after the first of the year.

Adjustment increases will not be made to any existing long-term subscriptions before their expiration dates.

# INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 4

### PREPARE FOR A NEW LIFE

**KEY VERSE:** "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire."—Matthew 3:11

**SELECTED SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 3:1-15

**J**OHAN THE BAPTIST, the last of the prophets, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, said, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the Prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Matt. 3:2) *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* translates this verse, "Reform! because the Royal Majesty of the Heavens has approached. For this is he of whom Isaiah the prophet spoke." This translation clearly shows that the *King James Version*, reading: "the kingdom of heaven," refers to our Lord Jesus, and alludes to the sacrificial work he performed when laying down his perfect human life "a ransom for all" as the man Christ Jesus, to the ultimate benefit of all the world of fallen man.

John led a very simple, primitive lifestyle in the wilderness,

attired merely with a camel's hair girdle about his loins. Jesus' cousin John was six months older than Jesus, and hence began his ministry that much sooner. The people were in expectation of the Messiah, and all "mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not."—Luke 3:15

Israel had been waiting centuries for God to send their promised king with its accompanying exaltation of the nation to power—a blessing which would finally extend to all the families of the earth. The fulfillment of John's mission was divinely directed, coming at exactly the right time to introduce Jesus to the Jewish nation. It is little wonder that so striking a figure as John the Baptist made such a penetrating impression when he announced that the Royal Majesty of heaven was present, and God's kingdom was soon to be estab-

lished, and that he [John] had been sent as an advance messenger to proclaim it and to prepare his people, the Israelites.

Those who accepted John's teachings were required to manifest their sincerity of heart by immersion in water as a symbol of their turning away from sin and returning to full covenant relationship with God. As John expressed the idea, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance."—vs. 8

The movement grew in popularity, and the people came to him from "Jerusalem, all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." (vss. 5,6) Many Pharisees and Saducees, however, were among hypocrites responding to this message. These he warned to flee from God's wrath, saying, "He that cometh after me, . . . whose fan is in his hand, . . . will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (vss. 7-12) John here intimated that a great day of wrath was soon to swallow up that nation and scatter the people among all the nations.

John realized that his baptism was a preparatory work for the Jews only—a mission of repentance to restore sin-

ners to harmony with God's arrangement with Israel under the Law. Since it is only the blood of Jesus that can take away sin, John's baptism was for repentance unto remission of sins for those "Israelites indeed" (John 1:47) who received the Messiah at his First Advent. John knew that Jesus would have the power to immerse the faithful of Israel in the Holy Spirit, and the unfaithful with a baptism of fire of trouble. (vss. 11,12) John likened the ministry of Christ to the Jews as that of a reaper, who, with a winnowing fan, would separate the true wheat from the chaff, gathering the wheat to the garner of the Gospel Age at Pentecost. The LORD would not help them out of this trouble, which would utterly destroy their national polity.

Jesus said, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." (Matt. 11:10,11) Jesus applied the words of Malachi 3:1 to John the Baptist and himself. Then he added, "I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Jesus expressed his high personal regard for John in recognition of the distinguished honor God bestowed upon him as his messenger to prepare the way of the Messiah. ■

## HOLD ON TO YOUR FAITH

**KEY VERSE:** "This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."—Matthew 11:10

**SELECTED SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 11:2-15; Luke 7:24-30

**J**OHAN THE BAPTIST had begun his preaching as a herald of Jesus—the Messianic hope—with the words, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." (Matt. 3:3) "Herod Antipas of Galilee had given orders to have John arrested and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife whom he had married. For John had been saying plainly to Herod, 'It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.'"—Mark 6:17,18, *New International Version*

As a result, Herodias "had a quarrel (*Margin*, 'an inward grudge') against him, and would have killed him: but she could not." When this was not possible, she had John committed to prison, at the very time that our Lord departed into Galilee to start his ministry. (Matt. 4:12) What a severe test of John's faith, for he had fervently proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, the one who was to come to establish the kingdom of God. Surely, in dili-

gently carrying out God's command to introduce Jesus, he had expected as one of the faithful to play an active role in that kingdom. John wondered why, if Jesus was truly the promised Messiah, he would permit him to be arrested and held in prison. Meanwhile, when John heard what Christ was doing in his ministry, he, "calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?" Jesus did not answer directly, but "in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities. . . . Then Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." (Luke 7:20-23) John's disciples could then report not only on the message Jesus was preaching, but also

describe the miraculous works they had personally seen Jesus perform to reassure John that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Many of those who had been attracted to John's ministry in the wilderness were offended and stumbled by this odd, though humble, person. Clothed in raiment of camel's hair, wearing a leather girdle about his body, obviously poor, leading a primitive existence, and a somewhat bizarre and lonely life-style, surely John did not fit the picture of one chosen to announce the arrival of the great leader of the nation of Israel. So, after John's disciples departed, Jesus began to speak unto the people concerning John. He asked, "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? . . . A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves. being not

baptized of him."—Luke 7:24-30

Later, when Jesus had come into the Temple, he related a parable for the benefit of the chief priests and elders of the people who, even yet, had not repented of their blinded hard hearts and stiff-necked characters. Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.' When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parable, they knew he was talking about them."—Matt. 21:42-45, *NIV*

As Jesus observed later, even the faith of his own disciples had failed them, for the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms wrote concerning him, but they were slow of heart to believe all that they read therein. (Luke 24:25,44) The lesson for us is that we pray that our faith fail not. Let us each study to show ourselves "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth."—II Tim. 2:15 ■

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 18

# EMMANUEL

**KEY VERSE:** "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us."—Matthew 1:23

**SELECTED SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 1:18-25

CENTURIES AGO, GOD made a promise to Abraham saying, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18) Since then, every mother among the Israelites has had her heart set on the birth of a son, hopeful that she might be the mother of this promised child, the one who was to be the Messiah, the seed of Abraham.

Mary was engaged to Joseph to be married, but before the marriage occurred, the angel, Gabriel, appeared to Mary and said, "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. . . . He shall be called the Son of God."—Luke 1:30-32,35

The name Jesus has the same meaning as Joshua in the Hebrew language, and in the New Testament, appropriately, it means Savior, signifying, 'to

Mary was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit, which was surely a great trial to them, since this was not the child of Joseph. But being a kind and loving man he was not willing that she should be exposed to public shame. While Joseph "thought on these things," providence interposed, sending the angel of the LORD "unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy [Spirit]. . . . Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son. . . . Then Joseph, being raised from sleep did as the angel of the LORD had bidden him, and took unto him his wife."—Matt. 1:20-25; Isa. 7:14

The angel put Joseph in mind of his relationship to David, perhaps to prepare him for the fact that Mary was to be the mother of a baby that was dif-

ferent than any other—she would be the mother of the Messiah. Jesus was the promised heir of David, not begotten of an earthly father, but by the Holy Spirit of God. The Bible is clear that this child was specially begotten by divine power in the mother, while she was still a virgin.

Before Jesus became flesh, he had a heavenly existence. In John 8:58 we read, "Before Abraham was, I am." Again, in one of his prayers he said, "Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:5) John the Revelator identifies Jesus as "the beginning of the Creation of God." (Rev. 3:14) And Paul tells us that as an active agent of the Father, "by him were all things created."

Jesus is spoken of as 'having been rich, but for our sakes becoming poor', that through his poverty we might be made rich. (II Cor. 8:9) He voluntarily left the glory which he had in heaven, to take the human nature because it was necessary that a perfect man become the Redeemer. The divine law is 'an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; a man's life for a man's life'. (See Exodus 21:22,23.) Adam's perfect human life, as well as all his then unborn descendants, having been condemned to death because of his disobedience to God's law,

would require a perfect human life to redeem all. It was therefore necessary that Jesus should become the 'man' Christ Jesus, in order "that he, by the grace of God should taste death for every man." The Apostle Paul tells of Jesus' resulting faithfulness, "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8) For one who was perfect—holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, such an ignominious death must have brought on deep sorrow. Having laid down his life on the cross at the end of three and one-half years, he cried, "It is finished." (John 19:30) These words refer only to his work of laying down his life as a ransom for the world of mankind.

After Jesus' death came his resurrection, when God highly exalted him, giving "him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9-11) Jesus' words in reply to Pilate's question, "Art thou a king then?" were: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."—John 18:37 ■

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 25

# GOD'S GREAT GIFT

**KEY VERSE:** "When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."—Matthew 2:11

**SELECTED SCRIPTURE:** *Matthew 2:1-12*

**N**EARLY TWENTY CENTURIES have passed since the events of today's lesson. Israel, instead of being exalted as Messiah's Kingdom, has seen utter destruction, and its people scattered throughout the earth, until in just recent years we have seen the beginning of the promised return of the Jews to their homeland.

Our lesson relates to the "wise men" (vs. 7) of the east, traditionally three in number, and their seeing a wonderful star—which, as astrologers, they recognized to foretell a major event, the birth of a great king. They arrived in Jerusalem and began to inquire respecting the newly born Jewish king. The news soon spread, and the holy city was in a commotion because according to the prophets the Messiah—who had been promised for centuries—was due to appear about that time.

We read, in Luke 3:15, "All men were in expectation of

him." The news finally reached the royal palace, and King Herod himself. When he heard about this he was alarmed, jealous of anyone who might in any measure share the royal honor, and thus detract from his own importance. Beyond that, he may have felt that no other power should conflict with Caesar's authority.

Herod, therefore, sent for the wise men and, feigning a deep interest in their quest, inquired how they knew about Israel's Messiah, and where they were going to look for the newborn baby. They replied that they had seen his star in the east. Herod then called the learned men of the Law to inquire where the prophets had foretold that the Messiah should be born. The prophecies were searched, and it was learned that the humble city of Bethlehem would be the honored place of our Savior's birth.—vss. 1-6

The Prophet Micah had written. "Thou, Bethlehem Eph-

ratah, . . . out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel." (Mic. 5:2) Herod then sent the wise men "to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." (vs. 8) The wise men departed, fully intending to return to tell him where the baby could be found, not knowing the evil design in Herod's mind to destroy the child.

The wise men departed, and "Lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. . . . When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."—vss. 9-11

The crafty Herod had expressed his desire to worship the Heaven-appointed king, but really had every intention of destroying him. He attempted to do this by slaughtering all the innocent children in Bethlehem and its vicinity from two years old and under. (vs. 16) But how foolish was his endeavor to thwart the Almighty! Being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, the wise men departed into

their own country another way. And Joseph, also warned in a dream, took Jesus and Mary into Egypt where they lived until after the death of Herod.

The wise men who brought the Christ Child both worship and gifts, perhaps symbolized the fact that those who have ever since sought the divinely-appointed king, are truly wise — those who bring to him the incense of their devotion, and, as gifts, all their talents and powers. Such lay their very lives at the Savior's feet, the Apostle Paul explains, as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God."—Rom. 12:1

Although the Jews refused him as their Messiah, and then crucified him (John 1:11), Jesus is yet to be King of the Jews — yes, King of the world! We, by faith, hail him as King, even before the establishment of his kingdom, and gladly submit ourselves to him, pledging our lives in the service of his cause of righteousness and truth. When we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we express our confidence that God's will shall indeed be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and that the Messianic reign will overthrow all evil and establish righteousness among men on the same permanent basis as prevails in heaven. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—II Cor. 9:15 ■

# CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

## THE SEED SERIES, PART 9

### ISRAEL AND THE PROMISED LAND

*“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel,  
Thy servants, to whom Thou swarest by Thine  
own self, and saidst unto them, I [Jehovah]  
will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven;  
and all this land that I have spoken of will I give  
unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.”*

—Exodus 32:13

**O**UR TEXT IS a prayer by Moses for the preservation of the children of Israel, and the fulfillment of God's promise to their fathers to give them the land of Canaan. There is a revealing background to this prayer. While Moses was upon Mount Sinai receiving the Law from God, the Israelites, under the temporary leadership of Aaron, had set up a golden calf to worship, and were indulging in other gross sins.

Then “the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.” To this the LORD added, “I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiffnecked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation.”—Exod. 32:7,9,10

Moses' prayer was, in effect, a request for the LORD to reconsider his decision to destroy the Israelites as a people, reminding him of his promise to the fathers concerning the land. The LORD respected the wishes of Moses, and the Israelites were not destroyed. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness they did enter into the Promised Land, although, because of their disobedience, they later lost possession of it.

Moses foretold this loss of the land. We quote, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you."—Deut. 4:26,27

Continuing this prophecy, Moses said to the Israelites, "When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the LORD thy God is a merciful God,) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware unto them."—vss. 30,31

Here is a prophecy embracing more than three thousand years of time, which, in the light of history, is seen to be remarkably accurate. The Israelites were uprooted from their land for seventy years during the Babylonian captivity, and again when the nation was destroyed by Titus, and the people scattered. This was a scattering among many nations, and as Moses indicated in his prophecy, it was to continue until the 'latter days'. Moses projects the prophetic picture slightly beyond the present, to a time when the LORD's full blessing will be showered upon the Israelites in response to their turning to him, and seeking him with all their heart and all their soul. The LORD's returning favor upon his people will be based upon his mercy, Moses explains, and because he will not forget the covenant which he made with their fathers.

Moses' prophecy pertains, not to the faithful remnant of Israelites in each generation of that typical people, but to the many who failed to qualify for the special rewards which faithfulness and obedience would bring to those who received the testimony that they pleased God. The climax of unfaithfulness on the part of Israel as a whole came at the time of Jesus' First Advent. It was their rejection of him as their Messiah that led to their scattering among the nations.

## THE 'ELECTION'

In the 11th chapter of Romans, Paul makes some enlightening observations as to just what happened at that time, and what God proposes to do about it. First he asks the question, "Hath God cast away his people?" Answering this, Paul says, "God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, LORD, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. . . . What then? Israel [as a nation] hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election [that is, the elect remnant of faithful ones within the nation] hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded [*Margin*, 'hardened']."

—Rom. 11:1-7

Paul explains that all those not of the 'election', or elect class, were, as branches, broken off from an olive tree, and that believing Gentiles were being grafted into the tree to take the places of the unbelieving Israelites. Later in the chapter Paul explains that these cast-off branches, or unbelieving Israelites, will have mercy shown toward them, and that "all Israel" shall be saved.—vs. 26

Actually the whole nation of Israel were an elect people, specially chosen of the LORD. Moses said to those of his generation, "They set an holy people unto the LORD thy

God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”—Deut. 7:6-8

It is this general ‘election’, or choosing of the people of Israel, that Paul referred to when he wrote, “As concerning the Gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Rom. 11:28,29) Yes, ‘for the fathers’ sakes’—through whom all Israel became God’s chosen people—he has made provision to bless even the unbelieving among them—not, however, in their unbelief, but when their sin of unbelief is removed.

And God has made a wonderful provision for taking away the sin of his unbelieving people. It is the provision of the New Covenant foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Jesus will be the Mediator of this New Covenant, and associated with him will be the elect spiritual Israelites called during the Gospel Age. Together these are referred to as the “Deliverer,” and Paul wrote, “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel]: for this is my covenant unto them [the New Covenant], when I shall take away their sins.”—Rom. 11: 26,27

A glance at the promise of the New Covenant reveals how far-reaching it will be in removing the sins of those who are brought into relationship with the LORD under its terms. The LORD said, “I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the LORD: for I will forgive

their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—Jer. 31:33,34

This is God’s provision for unbelieving Israelites. It is a provision of his mercy extended through Jesus their Redeemer from sin, and the Redeemer of all mankind. Paul further wrote concerning the Israelites, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.” (Rom. 11:32) No wonder Paul observed, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—vs. 33

Nor is God’s provision for the Israelites, who failed to obtain a good report through faith, limited to those of any one generation. This provision of mercy is on behalf of the wayward and unbelieving of every generation. Paul explains how. He said “What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Rom. 11:15) Again we are reminded of the importance of the resurrection in the outworking of the divine plan for Israel and for the world. For the Israelites it means that God’s mercy will be operative on behalf of those who killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent to them. (Matt. 23:37) In the resurrection; God’s mercy will also be extended toward those who rejected Jesus, and later persecuted his apostles and others in the Early Church. “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”—Rom. 11:32

## THE LATTER DAYS

In Moses’ prophecy already quoted, we learn that the turning point in Israel’s relationship to the LORD was due to take place in the “latter days.” (Deut. 4:30,31) But to obtain his blessings it will be necessary for them to ‘turn to the LORD’, and ‘be obedient unto his voice’. It will be in response to this turning to the LORD in repentance, faith, and obedience that his mercy will be extended to them. “The LORD thy God is a merciful God,” wrote Moses, and “he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware unto them.” Paul might well have had this prophecy in mind when he

explained that "all Israel shall be saved," and that God will extend his mercy to this people for "the fathers' sakes."—Rom. 11:26-28

But with the approach of the 'latter days' in the divine plan, the people of Israel, to whom these wonderful promises have been made, were still scattered among the nations, and the first step in preparation for extending divine mercy to them was their restoration to the Promised Land. There are many prophecies which forecast this outstanding development in the plan of God. One of these is recorded in chapters 36-39 of the Book of Ezekiel, beginning particularly with verse 24 of the 36th chapter. This verse contains the basic promise: "I will take you from among the heathen [Gentiles], and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land."

In order to 'rightly divide the Word of truth', it is important to note that the Israelites here addressed are not those who obtained a good report through faith, but the measurably unfaithful of the nation. The context reveals this. Turning back in the chapter to find the identity of those to whom the promise is made, we read: "The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through[out] the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them."—vss. 16-19

Nor was the conduct of this people any more praiseworthy after they had been driven out of their own land. Concerning this the LORD explained, "When they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned

Then follows the LORD's explanation of his motive in restoring his people to their own land. We quote, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the LORD God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their [*Margin, 'your'*] eyes."—vss. 22,23

The LORD then promised to restore his people to their own land, and added, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."—vss. 25-28

## THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

The remainder of chapter 36 is largely a reemphasis of what the LORD had already commissioned Ezekiel to say to the house of Israel, and a further assurance that he would restore them to their own land, and that this land would become "like the Garden of Eden." (vs. 35) Then, in chapter 37, Ezekiel records what he saw in a marvelous vision which the LORD gave to him. This was the vision in which the prophet saw a valley of dry bones, with the explanation that "these bones are the whole house of Israel."—vs. 11

Ezekiel hears the whole house of Israel say, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off from our parts." Then Ezekiel was authorized to say to the house of Israel: "Thus saith the LORD God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD. when I have opened your graves. O my

people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.”—vss. 12-14

This is not a promise of the resurrection of the dead, but an assurance that the Israelites were to be gathered from the lands wherein they were scattered, and that God’s spirit would be poured out upon them. Earlier in the chapter, Ezekiel describes the progressive steps in this work of restoration, as he saw it portrayed in the vision. The bones come together, flesh appears on the bones, and finally the breath is given. (vss. 1-8) The LORD said to Ezekiel, “Prophesy unto the wind [*Margin*, ‘breath’], prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the LORD God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”—vs. 9

## NOW THE DUE TIME

Many prophecies reveal that we are now living in the beginning of the ‘latter days’ foretold by Moses when the Israelites would be restored to the Promised Land. Undoubtedly this is the true significance of what we have seen taking place in Israel during this generation. There have been various progressive steps in the occupation of the land by the Israelites, and these continue; most notable, of course, the formation of the country of Israel in 1948. However, the symbolic ‘four winds’ have not yet blown upon them, so, they have not yet been given the LORD’s Spirit, and from the LORD’s standpoint, do not yet have life.

Indeed, as yet, the Israelites possess only part of the Promised Land. We do not yet see the prophecies of their restoration to the land completely fulfilled, but we do see the beginning of their fulfillment. This means that we are living in a momentous period of the divine plan. It is a time when, before our eyes, we see the beginning events which are leading into the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

While the 37th chapter of Ezekiel does not directly prophesy the resurrection of the dead, it is true, nevertheless, that the receiving of Israel into divine favor calls for the resur-

rection, for so many generations of Israelites have fallen asleep in death. Following the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms known as Israel and Judah. Verse 22 assures us that this division will be healed, implying that those who lived in that ancient time are to be awakened from death to participate in the blessings of that new kingdom to be ruled over by the antitypical David, even Jesus. (vs. 24) How far-reaching is the mercy and love of God!

## INTERVENING EVENTS

Chapters 38 and 39 present prophecies of certain events related to Israel which must intervene prior to the establishment of the kingdom, and prior to the time when their sins will be removed and they receive the Spirit of the LORD, and hearts of flesh are given unto them. Briefly, chapter 38 depicts an attack which will be mounted against Israel by forces out of the "north," under the leadership of one named "Gog," from the land of "Magog." This, then, is definitely a development of the future, and it is not wise to speculate as to the details.

However, the final result of this aggressive attack against the Israelites is clearly indicated. Ezekiel points out that it will be then that the LORD will manifest his hand in protecting and delivering his people by the destruction of their enemies. The LORD says, "I will plead against him [Gog] with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the LORD."—vs. 22, 23

It is evident, we think, that when the eyes of the nations are opened to realize that the great God of the universe, the Creator of heaven and earth, has intervened on behalf of Israel, and against themselves, they will realize the futility of continuing their opposition. It would seem that from this point onward, Christ will be directing the affairs of the world, through the various kingdom personnel previously proved

worthy of this high position of trust. There will be his own footstep followers who, together with him, will be the invisible rulers; and these will function through their human representatives, the ancient faithful ones, who will be "princes in all the earth." (Ps. 45:16) The bringing forth of these in the "better resurrection" will, in itself, be a marvelous demonstration of divine power.—Heb. 11:35,39,40

The Israelites themselves will then understand the meaning of their restoration to the Promised Land. The LORD says, "So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel." (Ezek. 39:7) This thought is set forth in greater detail in the closing verses of the chapter.

We quote: "Thus saith the LORD God, Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame; and all their trespasses, whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them [*Margin*, 'by my causing of them'] to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the LORD God."—vss. 25-29

In his various messages to the Israelites, the LORD has been very frank in his indictment of them because of their transgressions. He makes it plain that they had brought dishonor upon his name among the Gentiles. But, as we have seen, this is not always to be the case; and, through the Prophet Zechariah, the LORD explains what will cause a change in the situation. Again we quote:

"It shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the

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# "FRANK AND ERNEST" . . . .

**Sundays Unless Otherwise Noted**

## ARKANSAS

Little Rock KAAV 1090 6:30 a.m.  
Marshall KCGS 960 4:30 p.m.

## CALIFORNIA

Claremont KTSJ 1220 9:45 a.m.  
Lancaster KVOY 1340 8:15 a.m.  
Monterey KNRY 1240 8:30 a.m.  
San Francisco KEST 1450 5:00 p.m.  
Tehachapi KTFM FM 103.1 8:15 a.m.

## FLORIDA

Jacksonville WXTL 1010 7:45 p.m.  
Orlando WGTO 540 9:00 a.m.  
St. Petersburg WTIS 1110 5:00 p.m.

## GEORGIA

Augusta WGAC 580 8:00 a.m.

## ILLINOIS

LaSalle WLFO 1220 9:45 a.m.  
West Frankfort WFRX 1300 9:15 a.m.

## INDIANA

Hammond WJOB 1230 8:30 a.m.  
LaPorte WCOE FM 96.7 10:00 a.m.  
North Vernon WKRP 1460 8:00 a.m.

## KANSAS

Goodland KLOE 730 7:30 a.m.

## KENTUCKY

Bowling Green WBG FM 107.1 8:15 a.m.  
Winchester WHRS 10:30 a.m.

## MICHIGAN

Detroit WLQV 1500 9:30 a.m.  
Fremont WSHN 1500 9:00 a.m.  
Fremont WSHN 100.1 FM 9:00 a.m.

## MISSOURI

Excelsior Springs KEXS 1090 7:30 a.m.  
Osage Beach KRMS 1150 8:30 a.m.

## NEW JERSEY

Camden (Tues.) WTMR 800 2:30 p.m.  
Salem WJIC 1510 9:45 a.m.  
Salem WNNN FM 101.7 9:45 a.m.

## NEW YORK

Buffalo WHLD 1270 12:00 noon  
New York WOR 710 9:15 p.m.

## NORTH CAROLINA

Wendell WETC 540 4:45 p.m.

## OHIO

Cleveland WRKG 1380 7:45 a.m.

## OREGON

Portland KKEY 1150 7:00 a.m.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Allentown WHOL 1600 10:45 a.m.  
Pottstown WPAZ 1370 12:45 p.m.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Charlestown WOKE 1340 7:45 a.m.

## TENNESSEE

Nashville WSM 650 7:45 p.m.

## VIRGINIA

Richmond WGGM 820 7:45 a.m.

## WASHINGTON

Spokane KAQQ 590 7:00 a.m.



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# WORLDWIDE RADIO BROADCASTS

## Canada

### **ALBERTA**

Banff	CFHC 1340	11:45 a.m.
Brooks	CIBQ 1340	8:00 a.m.
Canmore	CFNC 1450	11:45 a.m.
Stettler	CKFQ 1400	7:45 a.m.

### **BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Duncan	CKAY 1500	9:00 a.m.
	CKAY 1500	7:30 p.m.
Grand Forks	CKGF 1340	9:00 a.m.
Qualicum- Parksville	CHPQ 1370	9:30 p.m.

### **MANITOBA**

Winnipeg	CKJS 810	9:00 a.m.
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### **ONTARIO**

St. Thomas	CHLO 1570	10:45 a.m.
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### **SASKATCHEWAN**

Rosetown	CJYM 1330	9:45 a.m.
Weyburn	CFSL 1190	8:45 a.m.
Estevan	CJSL 1280	8:45 a.m.



## Argentina (Spanish)

Buenos Aires (Sat.) FM Malvinas 91.5 mHz  
10:00 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.

## British West Indies

Trinidad Radio Trinidad 610 10:30 p.m.

## Chile (Spanish)

Talcahuano Radio Almirante Latorre

## Costa Rica (Spanish)

San José Radio Sonora 105.9 FM, 700 AM  
6:15 a.m.

## Mexico (Spanish)

Culiacán Ranchera	XECQ	8:30 a.m.
Guadalajara	XEWK 1130	8:30 a.m.
Monterrey	XHSR FM	10:00 a.m.
Torreón	XETB 1350	8:15 a.m.
Tuxtla Gutierrez	XEON 720	7:30 a.m.

## Nigeria

Radio Africa (Thurs.) 7:45 p.m.

## Panama (Spanish)

Panama City (Fri.) HOQ 1250 6:15 p.m.

## Peru (Spanish)

Trujillo 105.7 FM 9:30 a.m. & 10:00 p.m.

## Philippines

Manila (Sat.) DZAM 1026 kHz 7:15 p.m.

## Portugal (Portuguese)

Vila Nova de Gaia Radio Minute 8:45 a.m.

## Russia (Russian)

Novgorod FM 71.3 10:00 a.m.

## South Africa

Swaziland SWAZI Commercial Radio 1400 AM  
Shortwave 49m 6155 kHz 8:15 p.m.

## Tonga

Nuku' Alofa (Mon.) 10:15 a.m.

## Uruguay (Spanish)

Radio Mundo CX32 1170 KHz 9:00 a.m.

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4-Peace through Christ's Kingdom

11-The Prince of Peace

18-Goodwill toward Men

25-Christ Is Born

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## **DECEMBER SPECIAL**

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**The Dawn**  
East Rutherford  
New Jersey 07073

(Cont'd from Page 31) Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do [in order to be a blessing], Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD."—Zech. 8:13-17

Truly, all those who are filled by the Spirit of the LORD, and are guided by divine principles of truth and righteousness, will, of necessity, be a blessing to those with whom they come in contact. The restored Israelites, cleansed of their defilements, will be a powerful influence for good. And so will those of other nations who, as the kingdom authority spreads under the direction of its ruling agencies, likewise become enlightened, and bring their conduct into line with the laws of God then in force throughout the earth.

How wise, and how all-comprehensive is the divine plan of salvation for all the families of the earth! ■



## CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

### “UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN”

*See Isaiah 9:1-7.*

OUR STUDY RELATES to a subject which has thrilled the civilized world for centuries—a subject which will never grow old—a subject which, on the contrary, shall to all eternity be a theme of angels and of men. The birth of Jesus, to be rightly understood and esteemed, must be considered from the standpoint of a gift of love divine. Any other view of the matter is merely the casket without the jewel. The Scriptures give us the key to the thought, saying, “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

The world was under sentence of death; mankind had been dying for more than four thousand years. God pitied humanity from the first. Yes, before sin entered, divine wisdom had seen the end, and would not have created man, or would not have permitted the condition which led to sin and the sentence of death, had divine wisdom not foreseen its matchless benefits, and arranged in advance for human redemption.

God had purposely arranged the matter so that it would require the death of a perfect man to redeem Adam and the race which lost life in and through him. God knew from the beginning that no such perfect man could be found coming from Adam's loins, because all men were of Adamic stock and had a share in Adamic weakness, imperfection, and condemnation. In the divine plan, God contemplated from the beginning that the only begotten of the Father, the **Logos**—our Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-human existence—his active agent in the work of Creation should be granted the great privilege of being man's Redeemer and thereby secure

ing a great reward—glory, honor, and immortality, the divine nature, through a resurrection from the dead.

## THE FIRST STEP OF REDEMPTION

The primary step in man's recovery necessarily was that the **Logos** (which means: 'the Word') should be made flesh and dwell among us and taste death, by the grace of God, for every man. (John 1:14; Heb. 2:9) It is this first step that we celebrate at this season of the year—the birth of Jesus. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be reclaimed.

Today's study points out that the ministry of Jesus would be in Galilee; that those people of the Jews, who at the time were supposed to be in greatest darkness, would see the great light of divine truth, as represented in Jesus and his ministry. This had a primary fulfillment in Galilee, where the major portion of the mighty works of Jesus were performed. But its real fulfillment lies in the future, when the great light of the Millennial Kingdom, "the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise with healing in its wings." (Mal. 4:2) Before that glorious Sun, sorrow and sighing will flee away; ignorance and superstition will vanish; sin and darkness will be no more; every knee will bow and every tongue confess.

Jesus is the great center of that Sun of Righteousness, but, as he points out, the bride class, in process of selection during this Gospel Age, is to be with him in the morning, shining forth in his glory. They shall sit with him in his throne. After the 'wheat' of this age is gathered into the 'garner' by the power of the first resurrection, the bride of Christ will shine forth with the bridegroom, to heal earth's sorrows and to scatter earth's night. (Matt. 13:43) All this will come to us because 'unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given'; because the government shall rest upon his shoulders; because "his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6

## THE FALL OF BABYLON

We are to understand verses 2-5 as applying not to natural Israel, but to spiritual Israel—nominal spiritual Israel—which refers to Christians who are such in name only. That ‘holy’ nation has phenomenally increased without increasing the joy. There are many ‘tares’ in the wheat field. But in the harvesttime of this Gospel Age there will be joy; the faithful will “rejoice [as men do] when they divide the spoil.” The burdensome yoke of the creedal superstitions will be broken, and the rod of the oppressor, Satan, will be broken “as in the day of Midian,” when Gideon with his little band put to flight the army of the Midianites and set the people free. Verse 5 intimates that the fall of Babylon and the breaking of the yoke and the rod will be in the great “time of trouble.” (Dan. 12:1) For all the armor of the armed men and the turmoil and the “garments rolled in blood” shall even be “with burning and fuel of fire.”

## MESSIAH'S MANY TITLES

Our great Redeemer, highly exalted, is eventually to bear many titles in commemoration of the variety of wonderful offices he will fill, and services he will accomplish. But these are yet future. His great work in the past—the redemption work—was the foundation of all his future work. On account of his faithfulness he will have a right to assume these numerous offices and use these several powers; and as each comes into exercise it will be used by Jesus. The right to govern the world is his since he died on our behalf, but he awaits the Father's time for taking to himself his glorious power to reign; and the government must come to him before he can begin to fulfill any of the numerous titles.

First of all, his revelation to the world will be as the Wonderful One, the embodiment, the expression, of divine justice, divine love, divine wisdom, and divine power. As yet the world knows him not. He will be revealed to mankind ‘in flaming fire’, in the time of trouble, and subsequently, in the rescue work of his Millennial Kingdom.

He will be the world's Counselor, to give assistance, guidance, direction, whereby they may return through restitution into harmony with Jehovah and to the enjoyment of the blessings provided through redemption. As the Head of the church, he has been her Counselor, but our text refers to him as the Great King or Governor of the world, and as the world's Instructor, the Great Prophet, or Teacher, whom God promised through Moses.

His title, The Mighty God, or Mighty One, will be recognized then, on earth, as well as in heaven—"that him hath God set forth to be a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance and remission of sins to Israel," and "to all that are afar off."—the Gentiles, the entire world of mankind.—Acts 5:31; 2:39

The title, the Everlasting Father, will apply to him as the lifegiver of the world, during the thousand years of his reign. In all that time he will be giving life more abundant to man-

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kind—everlasting life to all who will obey him—therefore his title, the Everlasting Father, or the Father who will give everlasting life to humanity. All the world of mankind, re generated on the human plane, will obtain their right to everlasting life as human beings in an earthly paradise from their Redeemer, who will then be their King. Not so the church, for Jesus is not the Everlasting Father of the church. On the contrary, the Apostle Peter declares, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.—I Pet. 1:3

His title, The Prince of Peace, will not apply to him at his return, when he will be breaking in pieces as a potter’s vessel every human system out of accord with the divine standards (Rev. 2:27; Ps. 2:9), but true peace shall speedily be established, and he ultimately shall be hailed as the Prince of Peace, and one whose reign will be undisputed and unmolested. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end”; there will be no rebellion; his kingdom will not pass away. When Christ’s reign shall terminate finally, at the close of the thousand years, it will be because “the Son also himself [shall] be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”—I Cor. 15:28

## UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID

Messiah’s kingdom is styled “the Throne of David” for two reasons. First, the name of David signified Beloved; and the Messiah, as the Beloved of God, of the Father, is the anti-type of David, even as Messiah’s kingdom will be the anti-type of David’s kingdom. David merely “sat upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD”; it was not his. So the greater than David will sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Jehovah, to order it and to establish it to completion, during the thousand years of his reign. Then he will deliver it up. “The zeal [love] of Jehovah of Hosts will perform this” (vs. 7), operating through Messiah.

## TALKING THINGS OVER

*During the ministry of Pastor Russell, one of the most effective presentations of the truth devised by the Bible Students was the Photodrama of Creation. The Photodrama was a collection of moving pictures and slides, accompanied by a narrated commentary.*

*We can well imagine what a tremendous task it must have been to produce each picture, and to frame a total of 1,500 slides. But it was an extremely effective approach to witnessing the divine plan of the ages, and many brethren came into the truth as a result of these presentations.*

*Today, with more advanced technology in all fields of human endeavor, it is possible to produce films with sharper, brighter colors, which are also much easier to present. Such is the case of the film entitled, "For this Cause," which is a professionally produced film available in several languages including Spanish. The work is a composite of Biblical history and prophecy, about the life and mission of our Lord Jesus during his First Advent, up until and including the present time — his Second Advent — and even into the future!*

### A LETTER FROM TWO PILGRIMS

CONCERNING THE

### PRESENTATION OF THE SPANISH-LANGUAGE FILM

### "FOR THIS CAUSE"

### IN SOUTH AMERICA AND MEXICO

**T**OGETHER WITH A brother from Peru, it was a joyful task to present the film, "For this Cause" in South America and Mexico for the first time, bringing a message of Truth to these countries during the Spring of 1994. We visited a total of eight cities in thirty-six days. Two presen-

tations of the hour-long film were made in nearly every city. In all, thirteen showings of the film were made to the public; two were given in private homes.

Some 36,000 pamphlets were printed and distributed to the public in the streets and marketplaces announcing the film showings. Seven ads were put into the newspapers of the various cities visited for the same purpose. Over 200 large posters were exhibited near the halls in each city, and a twenty-by-five foot cloth banner was carried with us and displayed in front of each hall used. More than twenty-one hundred people attended these showings; 605 asked for the free booklet.

We wish to thank the LORD for the privilege of spreading his Word in this manner in the often-forgotten countries of South America, and for all of those who made it possible for us to present "For this Cause" in the Spanish language, including those who worked so hard in creating it, and producing it, and those who sponsored it financially by the purchase of the special film projector, and otherwise.

## TRUJILLO, PERU

Our first presentation was in Trujillo, Peru. It was a thrilling experience to see people arrive at the hall, eager to see the film which was advertised through the local Radio Newspaper, and the distribution of pamphlets in the streets. Each of them was extended a warm welcome, and they were afforded the opportunity to fill out a form if they were interested in receiving a free booklet which was offered at the end of the presentation.

As we were to learn, the film itself was just the beginning of each evening. In Trujillo the film ran from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Many of the people attending came forward afterwards to converse about the Truth presented in the movie. Some stayed until after midnight. Among these were four men who identified themselves as Bible students who were not affiliated with any religious organization. They were very much impressed with the subjects covered

in the film, and remarked that their eyes had been opened more clearly to many truths contained in the Bible. They told us that they met with 30 others for Bible study, and were interested in having studies with us. We made a commitment to meet with them again when our schedules permitted us to do so.

## **LIMA, PERU**

In Lima, Peru, we had two presentations of the film and everything went well there also. A family of eight waited to talk to us after the first showing. One remarked that it was a miracle that the LORD had directed them to see the movie. They commented on its beauty, and on how it makes the Bible harmonious, and therefore more understandable. They too asked us about Bible studies. They said they had been searching for truth for a long time, and it was gratifying to be able to discuss the truth of God's Word with them.

## **SANTIAGO MAIPU, CHILE**

After we left Lima, we flew to Santiago Maipu, Chile. A woman of religious and political influence in the city approached us at the conclusion of the presentation. She confessed that her original intention was to cause problems by disrupting the showing of the movie. Instead, the film had touched her heart! She discussed some of the contents of the movie with us afterwards, asking us to stay in touch with her, and to please send her Spanish-language literature about the truth of the Bible.

After that same showing ten members of a religious congregation came forward to tell us how much they had enjoyed it. During the second presentation of the day, to our surprise, the same ten people were joined by thirty more members of the same church! It was a thrilling experience to see their enthusiasm, and after the meeting was closed they asked many questions related to doctrines expressed in the production.

## ARGENTINA

From Chile we were scheduled to visit brethren in Argentina, and as we arrived they were awaiting us at the airport. It was a joy to see their smiling faces and to savor a time of spiritual fellowship. The first film showing was held at Monte Grande, the second in Quilmes, and the third in Berazategui. Space does not permit us to relate all the experiences we had during the three meetings, but in short, in each case the film was well received by the public attend-



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ing, and this gave great satisfaction and encouragement to the brethren in Argentina.

The Berazategui Class requested a copy of the film which they intend to show to people in their area in conjunction with the witness work in which they are very active. In order to fellowship with these brethren we had reserved an extra day when a mini-convention was arranged. Approximately 95 attended, and we all enjoyed a

blessed day. In the evening we continued our fellowship at the home of one of the Berazategui families.

## MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY.

Our next stop was Montevideo, Uruguay. Prior to our visit there we sent invitations to the folks in that area who subscribe to El Alba, the Spanish-language Dawn magazine, and to the few brethren that we knew of in the vicinity. As they gathered at the film presentation they had an opportunity to meet each other. One family which lives in Montevideo offered their home for Bible studies. We offered to send them a copy of the film as well as the First Volume of Studies in the Scriptures entitled, "The Divine Plan of the Ages." Let us remember them in our prayers that their gatherings will be fruitful in an increase in the knowledge of the LORD.

## GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

Our last stop was Guadalajara, Mexico. This was the only city where we did not make reservations for a hall due to the high cost. Relying on the providences of the LORD, we searched around the city and found a gentleman who was in charge of all government meeting places. After explaining that the film we planned to run would be of educational value to his people, and outlining our needs to him to accomplish this purpose, the LORD indeed opened the door! He graciously arranged for us to use the beautiful auditorium at the Guadalajara Planetarium free of charge. Not only was the superintendent at the planetarium helpful in setting up our equipment, but he also announced on the public address system every half-hour that "For this Cause" was to be shown in the auditorium free of charge, and the time it would be shown. We wanted to compensate the planetarium or the superintendent in some way for their services, but the superintendent stated that he would accept a copy of the film as repayment, as he was certain that his family would be blessed by its contents. Most of the people who came to see the film here were Bible students; some came with their Bibles. Our conversations with them after the meetings were

spiritually uplifting, and we will endeavor to maintain contact with them.

As we have stated at the first, we are humbly grateful to God to have had the opportunity to plant a few seeds of truth on the vast continent of South America, and in Mexico. For the 'giving of the increase' we will wait upon the LORD.

Yours in the blessed hope,

Brother Joe Panucci  
and

Brother Fernando Dueñas ■

## WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**DECEMBER 8**—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me [Jesus] before it hated you."—John 15:18 (Z. '01-300 Hymn 261)

**DECEMBER 15**—"The LORD is my shepherd."—Psalm 23:1 (Z. '02-365 Hymn 87)

**DECEMBER 22**—"If a man therefore purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—II Timothy 2:21 (Z. '02-319 Hymn 208)

**DECEMBER 29**—"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Ecclesiastes 11:6 (Z. '02-71 Hymn 210) ■

## OBITUARIES

*We extend our sincere sympathy to friends and family.*

Sister Eva Schneider, Los Angeles, CA—September.  
Age, 98.

Sister Nellie Wesley, Shawnee, OH—October 1994.  
Age, 83.

Brother Joe F. Restifo, Phoenix, AZ—October 7. Age,  
76. ■

# CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

## DELIVERANCE

*“Casting all your care upon Him,  
for He careth for you.”  
—I Peter 5:7*

WHEN THE RESURRECTED Jesus appeared to his disciples on the shore of Galilee, he said to Peter, “When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” John commented on this prophecy, saying, “This spake he [Jesus], signifying by what death he should glorify God.”—John 21:18,19

In the Master’s prophecy concerning Peter, he pointed out the marvelous transformation of viewpoint and character he would experience as he grew to maturity as a New Creature, and appreciated the great privilege of laying down his life sacrificially in the magnificent cause of the Gospel. That Peter would stretch forth his hands and permit another to gird him suggests his full surrender to the will of God, and that he would willingly serve the truth and the brethren even though the LORD’s providences led him to places and into situations from which his flesh might shrink.

And Peter did attain to this high degree of maturity as a Christian. It was from his heart, and not merely as a theory, that he wrote, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” (I Pet. 5:6) It is in the verse following this that Peter admonishes us to cast all our care, or anxiety, on the LORD with the assurance that he is caring for us, overruling in all our affairs.

In giving us this admonition, Peter was not unaware of the difficulties with which all true followers of the Master are faced. In the next verse he wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The roar of the lion is designed to paralyze the intended prey with fear, thus weakening its resistance to capture. So the Devil endeavors to fill our hearts with fear, that he might wield a more destructive influence over us.

But God is our refuge and strength, and we can safely cast all our anxieties upon him. We have surrendered to him. We are allowing him to lead us in the way of sacrifice, and we are looking to him to give us courage and strength to be faithful until our sacrifice is complete—faithful unto death. If our surrender to the divine will is wholehearted and complete, we will not attempt to dictate how we are to lay down our lives, nor will we decide how long it should take. We will simply leave it all with him.

In Peter's own life of devotion we have a revealing example of this principle of full surrender to the will of God, particularly in connection with his experience in prison, as recorded in Acts 12:1-12. This imprisonment was brought about by our adversary, Satan, working in this instance through Herod the king.

We are informed that "Herod stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." Herod noted that this pleased the Jews, and wishing to court favor with them, he arrested Peter. According to the standards of this present evil world Herod was wise; for he realized that although the religious leaders of the Jews hated the disciples, they would not exactly relish having Peter murdered during their Passover holy days. So Peter was kept in prison until after the Passover. And now he was, the next day, to be brought forth from the prison to be put to death, simply to please the Jews. The brethren, meanwhile, knowing these circumstances, were gathered in the home of Mary, the mother of John

Mark, to pray for Peter. It was all that they could do, and what a wonderful thing it was to do!

We are not informed as to the exact nature of the brethren's prayers for Peter. It is hardly likely that they were petitioning the Heavenly Father for his release from prison, and deliverance from death, except as this might be God's will. This was after Pentecost, and the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, had revealed to the brethren that it was the privilege of all Jesus' disciples to suffer and to die with him.

Jesus, their head and Master, had been crucified. He was not delivered from the hands of his enemies. Stephen had been stoned to death. And now that Herod had embarked on a campaign of persecution, James had been killed. With Peter already in prison, and plans made for his execution, Jesus' followers would have no way of knowing that God's will would be any different for him than for the others.

But Peter needed their prayers, not for his deliverance, but for strength to endure, and to humbly submit to the LORD's providences. He needed the prayers of the brethren that his faith might be strong, sufficiently strong to enable him to cast all his care upon the LORD, a faith that would enable him to say from the heart, even as did Job: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."—Job 13:15

The prayers of the faithful little group were heard and answered. That last night in the prison, Peter was chained between two guards—a chain firmly securing each wrist. From the human standpoint the situation was absolutely hopeless, and Peter knew it. But what was Peter's attitude? Was he rebellious? Did he complain against the providences of the LORD? Did he reflect on his past faithfulness and wonder why the LORD had permitted this to happen to him?

We do not think this was the case. The evidence which substantiates the fact that Peter had no misgivings at all, that even in this experience he was completely resigned to God's will, is that he was "sleeping between two soldiers." (Acts 12:6) Could anything better reveal the complete resignation of this once obstinate fisherman?

While Peter was sleeping, "the angel of the LORD came upon him, and a light shined in the prison." (vs. 7) David wrote that "the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." (Ps. 34:7) But deliverance by the angel of the LORD does not always imply the same thing. It could, at times, and often does, mean strength to endure, wisdom to understand, or faith to accept with resignation even though we cannot understand.

When the angel of the LORD came upon Peter, 'a light shined in the prison'. On the whole, not many of the LORD's true disciples throughout the Gospel Age have been incarcerated in literal prisons, but probably nearly all, at one time or another, have been bound by circumstances over which they had no control. These circumstances may have prevented activity in the LORD's service, or attendance at the meetings of the LORD's people. The restraining circumstances in a Christian's life are often many and varied.

Do we feel that we are bound with chains which hinder us from doing what we would like to do? Are we surrounded by the walls of circumstances which separate us from the liberties and privileges enjoyed by our brethren? Are we so wholly resigned to these restraints that we are 'sleeping', or completely resting in the LORD, as Peter was?

Yes, when the angel spoke to Peter that night in the prison, a light shone out and brightened the prison room where Peter had been sleeping. Symbolically speaking, often the deliverances of God's people which are wrought by the angels are, in fact, that light is shed upon our experiences so that we are able the better to understand the situations in which the LORD has permitted us to become involved. The LORD has promised not to permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear, and often it is possible to bear much more when 'a light shines in the prison'.

With the light shining, the angel aroused Peter from his sleep, saying to him, "Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands." (Acts 12:7) There are times when all we can do is to quietly wait on the LORD, as illustrated by Peter's sleeping. There are other times when, while still trust-

ing in the LORD, it is essential to 'rise up quickly' if the 'chains' are to fall from our hands.

Jeremiah wrote, "It is good that a man should both hope and *quietly* wait for the salvation of the LORD." (Lam. 3:26) Peter had been *quietly* waiting on the LORD, but now the time had come for him to *actively* wait. The angel said to him, "Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals, . . . cast thy garment about thee, and follow me." (Acts 12:8) Knowing the power of God, and the extent to which it is employed by the holy angels, we realize that Peter could have been removed from the prison without any cooperation on his own part. Sandals and a garment could easily have been provided for him. Usually, however, this is not the method God uses in dealing with his people, even though his mighty power is employed for their deliverance.

The LORD expects us to do what we can for ourselves, and meanwhile exercise faith that he will do for us the needed things which go beyond own abilities. Now that the angel of the LORD had removed the chains which bound Peter to the guards, he could gird himself, he could bind on his sandals and put on his garment. And he could follow the angel. All these things he did, although as yet he was not fully aware of just what was taking place. He thought he saw a vision, or was having a dream.

So in our 'prison' experiences, when the time comes for the angel of the LORD to deliver us, there are always things for us to do. Often, like Peter, even though the light shines in our prison, and we comprehend that the LORD is dealing with us, we only understand in part the meaning of the little things he sets before us to do. Even so, it is necessary that we be obedient. We may see no point in binding on our sandals, but if the LORD indicates this to be his will, let us not hesitate to obey, and to follow the angel.

Peter obediently followed the angel. How important that we also follow the angel who may be leading us. Peter followed "past the first and the second ward." Finally they came to the "iron gate that leadeth unto the city." (vs. 10) The record indicates that the way out of the prison was not a

simple one, but we are also impressed with the fact that 'the angel of the LORD' knew the way.

Applying this figuratively to our own experiences, how true it is that the way is not always a simple one. God's great plan of salvation is simple enough, but the experiences which he permits his people to have as they endeavor to do his will are often permitted to be of such a nature as to test our faith and confidence in the LORD. This is in order that we may learn to follow the 'angel of the LORD' which he provides for our deliverance.

And even when we follow the angel, we are at times confronted with iron gates which seem to block our progress. It was true with Peter. But the reassuring thing is that the iron gate opened to them 'of its own accord'. Of course, the iron gate did not actually open of its own accord. It just seemed that it did. It was the angel of the LORD—or shall we say the power of the LORD—that opened the iron gate.

Peter followed the angel through that iron gate to freedom, and to further opportunities to lay down his life in the service of the LORD, the truth, and the brethren. So it is with our iron gates. How often the way seems blocked, and yet, in the LORD's own due time and way the iron gate opens—although waiting on the LORD to open the gate is often a very severe test of faith.

Delivered from the prison, Peter realized that the LORD had sent an angel to set him free. It often happens that not until after the iron gates open and we pass through them to a new vista of experiences, do we realize the full meaning of the divine providences through which we have passed. Looking back and noting the marvelous providences of the LORD which we only partially understood when we were experiencing them, we are able to praise the way he has led us day by day.

After his deliverance from prison, Peter made his way to the home of Mary, where the brethren were praying for him. They were greatly surprised to see him. Apparently they did not realize that God's will for him would be different than it was for Jesus, for Stephen, and for James. But it was

The LORD had further service for Peter to render, so he sent his angel to deliver him from prison and from death.

Although Peter was resigned to having his life taken away by Herod, we may be sure that since the LORD overruled otherwise, he was glad in his heart, and in essence said to the LORD, "If I may, I'll serve another day." Should this not be the attitude of all who are fully consecrated to the LORD, and who are endeavoring to prove faithful even unto death?

All of the LORD's true people realize that only by proving faithful unto death will they receive the "crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) But we may have preferences as to how we will meet death. There would be a certain degree of glamour, and therefore compensation, attached to a martyr's death. Often the most severe test of faith is simply to grow old and die. And yet, this is the very way the LORD has permitted the vast majority of his people to finish their course in death.

And growing old is fraught with so many distressing and tragic possibilities. Some who perhaps could sleep while chained to a prison guard, might well be agitated, and perhaps even rebellious, at the thought of being allowed simply to become sick and die. But let us realize that the angel of the LORD knows the way, the best way for us. Because the angels who guard and assist us always behold the face of the heavenly Father, they know exactly what his will for each one of us is, and are fully capable of overruling in all the affairs of our lives in order that the LORD's will might be done.

In our prison experiences, when chained to circumstances which restrict our activities in the LORD's service, whether we see ourselves approaching the end of the way in the manner of all flesh, or facing precipitous action by our enemies, may we ever and always 'cast all our care' upon the LORD, knowing that he is too wise to err, and too good to be unkind, and that he will faithfully care for us until we reach the end of the way. Truly, we can say to our Heavenly Father, "Great is thy faithfulness"!—Lam. 3:23 ■

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY CONCERNING PRESENT TRUTH

*“His Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”—Jeremiah 20:9*

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH is here using a very forceful comparison. He had a burning zeal in his heart, a consuming sense of the importance of the message given him to deliver. His previous declaration of the Word of God concerning Israel had been so despised and rejected that he had become disheartened. He himself declared, “The Word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his Word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay”! His message had to be spoken. The LORD had instructed him to tell Israel that they were about to be given over into the hands of their enemies.

This Word of the LORD to the Prophet Jeremiah was given prior to the seventy years' captivity of the Jews. There were false prophets among them who declared that the King of Judah was to gain a victory over their enemies. The people were glad to hear this assurance; and they despised the true prophet of the LORD, who gave them the real message from God. Jeremiah told them that they had failed in their responsibilities to Jehovah. They had professed to be his people, but had not been faithful in their covenant to serve him.

He warned them that it was too late for any who would repent to be delivered; the nation was sure to be overcome by their enemies, and carried away into captivity.

## **JEREMIAH'S CRUCIAL TEST**

Jeremiah knew that the false prophets would encourage the king, and that he himself would bring the king's wrath upon his own head by reiterating the message which Jehovah had commissioned him to deliver. He shrank from the infamy, the reproach, and the persecution which, by experience, he knew would result from loyalty to the LORD. But he overcame the temptation to hold his peace. He would speak as God commanded him, let the cost be what it would. He would tell Israel again the words which had been given him. He would give them a further warning.

If Jeremiah had allowed his fears to overwhelm him, and had withheld the message, undoubtedly he would have been set aside as the mouthpiece of God, and another would have been commissioned to deliver the message. The burning within the heart of the prophet would have grown feebler and would ultimately have died out. When a fire is kept shut off from a draft for some length of time, it will become extinguished. This is as true in the realm of moral and spiritual forces as in that of the physical nature. This is why the Apostle Paul urged: "Quench not the Spirit." (I Thess. 5:19) We might let the Holy Spirit of God die out in our hearts by a failure to do our duty, a failure to keep our covenant faithfully. The light within us, the holy fire, would smoulder for a time, and finally become quenched. The Prophet Jeremiah could not withhold that which God had commanded him to speak; he could not quench the fire within his soul without losing his relationship with Jehovah.

## **GOD'S MESSAGE GIVEN to US TODAY**

Thus it is with us today. God has let us into the secret of his counsels. He has granted us a wonderful spiritual illumination. He has given us a message of the utmost importance to deliver to his professed people. We have been informed by the LORD that a great change is impending—that the lease

of power to the Gentile nations has expired, and the Millennial Kingdom will soon replace them. We are instructed that the present religious systems of Christendom are to go down, that the present order is about to end, and that the dominion is about to be given "to Him whose right it is" to reign. (Ezek. 21:27) The kingdoms of this world are about to become "the kingdoms of our LORD and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."—Rev. 11:15

This message is not to be stated in a rude manner. But it is to be stated, nevertheless. The great king whom God hath appointed is about to come in. In Jeremiah's time, the message was that the kingdom of God, his typical kingdom, was about to be overthrown, and the lease of power to the Gentile nations was about to be inaugurated. This order of things was to be permitted to run for an appointed time. That time ran out in 1914. The King's Son is soon to receive his long-promised inheritance. (Ps. 2:7-9) We are glad that our message is not now the overthrow of God's kingdom, but the very opposite of this—the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness, and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. So we are to tell forth this glorious message. We are to tell it in our actions, in our words, by the printed page, by pictorial presentations to the eye, and in every way that the LORD shall give us opportunity. If through fear of persecution, of losing prestige in the eyes of men, for love of ease, or for any reason whatever, we should fail to give forth the message of God, it will be taken from us and given to one who is worthy. The LORD is seeking those who are valiant for him, for righteousness, for truth. If we prove ourselves weak, we are not fit for the kingdom.

## **ARE WE FULFILLING OUR COMMISSION?**

Is this wonderful message, this message the like of which was never before granted to men or angels to tell, burning within us? And are we speaking it forth, that its inspiration may cause other hearts to take fire? Can we sing with the poet:

"I love to tell the story,  
It did so much for me!  
And that is just the reason  
I tell it now to thee."

If we refrain from telling the glad tidings, the result will be that the fire of God's Holy Spirit will become extinguished within us. And if the light that is within us becomes darkness, how great will be that darkness! The possession of the truth—God's message—brings with it great responsibility. Shall we prove faithful to it? Shall we show to our God our deep appreciation of his loving kindness in granting us the knowledge of his wonderful message of salvation, his glorious plan, with its times and seasons?

There is a difference between the operation of the LORD's Spirit in his children now and its operation in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah and the other holy prophets. During the Jewish Age the Holy Spirit acted upon the servants and mouthpieces of God in a mechanical manner. Now the people of the LORD have both his message in his written word and the begetting of the Spirit, which gives us a spiritual understanding impossible to his people of past ages. The mysteries of God are now opened up to his faithful children, the watchers; and we are granted a clear understanding of "the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:10), some features of which were never revealed until the present time, even to the most faithful of the LORD's saints.—I Thess. 5:1-6

### "THE DAY IS AT HAND"

We are also told by the Apostle Paul that the things which were written of the servants of the LORD in past dispensations were written for our admonition and instruction and comfort, "upon whom the end of the ages are come." (I Cor. 10:11) Seeing all these things, dearly beloved, what manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness? (II Pet. 3:11) How earnestly, with what painstaking care, should we give heed to the Word spoken unto us! Let us be faithful in proclaiming the message of our LORD, now due. Let us tell forth the words which he has put into our mouths,

whether others hear or whether they forbear—whether our faithfulness bring us the favor or the disfavor of the world and of nominal spiritual Israel. But let us speak his Word in meekness and love, leaving the results with our great Chief Reaper. “The day is at hand!”—Rom. 13:12 ■



## FILL THOU MY LIFE

Fill Thou my life, O LORD my God,  
In every part with praise,  
That my whole being may proclaim  
Thy being and Thy ways.  
Not for the lip of praise alone,  
Nor e'en the praising heart  
I ask, but for a life made up  
Of praise in every part.

Fill every part of me with praise;  
Let all my being speak  
Of Thee and of Thy love, O LORD;  
Poor though I be, and weak.  
So shalt Thou, LORD, from me, e'en me,  
Receive the glory due;  
And so shall I begin on earth  
The song forever new.

“HE HATH PUT a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear [glorify] him, and shall trust in the LORD. Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust.”

—Psalms 40:3,4



## ENCOURAGING LETTERS

### In the School of Christ

Dear Brethren: Having providentially begun to study God's Word ten years ago, the good LORD of love took pity on my captivity and bestowed his blessing upon me. Nine years ago, I obtained a copy of "*The Divine Plan of the Ages*" through our main library. It was then that I made my consecration, and my vow was, I believe, accepted, and I received the Holy Spirit. After awhile I was told about the Dawn Bible Students.

As you can already appreciate, I am more than grateful to the LORD for his guidance to allow a weak and worthless person the hope of the high calling. I know in my heart that the victory was the LORD's, whose mercy to me is greatly helping me, I hope, to become humble in his eyes. I know now I have entered into the school of Christ, and trust you will endeavor to assist me to serve the true LORD, as I will encourage you and the brethren

to the best of my ability. I have read *The Dawn* magazine and found it very refreshing and well presented, and I am glad for the labour of love you and all do who help to produce it. Your brother by his grace.—England

### Can't Wait!

Dear Bible Students: I am saying it again! I can't wait for the kingdom to be manifested. I hope it will be soon. Perhaps I sound selfish. I have read all the Dawns, and now I am reading them a second time. To me it seems that all the contents are primarily intended for the true church. . . . I was brought up in the Greek Orthodox Church in a very strict manner, but I have always searched. At long last two years ago I stumbled on yourselves. Most of what I have read makes sense, and I hope you are right! May God bless you all.—England

## Norwegian Student

Dear Sir or Ms: I am a Norwegian student, and for quite a long time I have been searching for the works by C.T. Russell. Ever since I found Volume I of Millennial Dawn in Dano-Norwegian (1894) in a second-hand bookstore in Oslo, I have been fascinated by his works! They are, however, almost impossible to get hold of! Via "Encyclopedia Britannica Instant Research Service" I got the address of Chicago Bible Students, and their republishing committee!!! Brilliant!!! Reprinting makes C.T. Russell's works available again! I ordered a few books from the republishing committee two weeks ago, but they did not have *The Studies in the Scriptures*. I received a letter from the librarian for a local class in San Diego, CA, and he told me that *The Studies in the Scriptures* are available from several ecclesias. He also enclosed a few pages of *The Dawn* magazine. I see that you, too, have published *The Studies in the Scriptures*. How many versions of these books are there? I

take it for granted they are all faithful to the originals? Could you recommend a hard-back or deluxe edition of all six volumes? What do you think postage and packing would be?

The Jehovah's Witnesses I know don't quite catch why I read C.T. Russell's works—they say some of his teachings are *passè*, but I like what I read and the way it is written! I do look forward to hearing from you! Yours faithfully. —*Norway*

## Reads *The Dawn* Magazine Over and Over

*The Dawn*: I just have to write and let you know how much the October 1994 issue of *The Dawn* has pleased me. It's great, and I have read it over and over. Some of my friends have been calling me and thanking me so much for having *The Dawn* sent to them. It is so good—better than some preachers! I have learned so much from it. There are preachers and teachers, but there are none better than *The Dawn*! It is my Teacher, praise God! I wish I could put it in everyone's hands, but that's impossible. I have had it sent

to a lot of people, thank God. I am sending in now for another friend of mine. Please send it to her as soon as possible. Enclosed is the money for it; use the other money to help you in some way. Thank you.—VA

### Immensely Assisted

Greetings: I find *The Dawn* magazine a very valuable and helpful publication. It has immensely assisted my understanding of the Bible. Please keep up the good work!—MA

### Led by Holy Spirit

Dear Sir: The Holy Spirit led me to your ministry on the resurrection of the dead, which set me free. I want to send my tithes to you because I learned the truth which the Holy Spirit said would lead me into all truth if I followed its leading. Love in Christ.—MS

### Making Clear the Obscure

Dear Sir: I heard your broadcast over the radio last Sunday. For the first time in

my life, the Bible became clear, meaningful, and truly relevant. You made sense when you explained a verse that is otherwise obscure or unnoticed. May I request the free offer of your booklet, "*Armageddon, then World Peace.*" I think this will enlighten my mind about God's future plans. Thank you for your dedicated efforts. Sincerely yours.—Philippines

### Her Search Is Ended

Dear Dawn Bible Students: I have been praying and searching for the truth for sometime. I received Bible studies from one group, but still felt uncertain. After reading your literature and watching your TV programs, I feel that I have found what I've been searching for. If you can direct me to a place of worship in the New Orleans area, please do so. Thanking you sincerely for this gift you have given me. I am.—LA

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, PEACE ON EARTH !



## SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

*These speakers are routed through the Pilgrim Department of the Dawn, or by classes associated with the Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.*

### W. Blicharz

Phoenix, AZ Dec. 30-Jan. 2

### R. Gorecki

Phoenix, AZ Dec. 30-Jan. 2  
Middletown, NY December 18

### G.M. Jeuck

Phoenix, AZ Dec. 30-Jan 2

## CONVENTIONS

*These conventions are listed at the request of the classes who sponsor them. In order to ensure your convention being accurately placed in these columns, please make your request IN WRITING and mail it to this address at least two or three months before the date of the convention: Convention Listing, Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.*

**PHOENIX, AZ, December 30-January 2**—Wyndham Garden Hotel, 427 N. 44th St., Phoenix. Address all communications to: Mrs. Esther Bachorski, 13223 Palmwood Dr., Sun City West, AZ 85375  
Phone: (602) 546-0430

**ST. PETERSBURG, FL, January 8**—Majestic Park Homes, 8300 Seminole Blvd. (Alt. 19), Seminole, FL. Contact: Stella Slavich, 3847 Tarpon Pointe Circle, Palm Harbor, FL 34684  
Phone: (813) 786-3795

**ROCKLAND BIBLE STUDENTS' ANNUAL CONVENTION, February 26**—Green Meadow Waldorf School, Spring Valley, NY. For programs write: Mrs. Russell Shalieu, 1041 Johnston Drive, Watchung, NJ 07060

**BIBLE STUDENTS ANNUAL GENERAL CONVENTION, July 29-August 3, 1995**—Grand Rapids, MI. More information forthcoming in future issues of *The Dawn* magazine. ■

