

The True and Living God

***“The LORD
[Jehovah] is the true
God, he is the living
God, and an
everlasting king.”
—Jeremiah 10:10***

AN ARTICLE APPEARED recently in a chemical and engineering news journal citing the work of two prominent scientists who became involved in studies of possible life on Mars and Europa—a moon of Jupiter. Water is essential to life, and only these two places in our solar system (excepting Earth) are believed to

have, or have had, water as detected by the probes sent to explore the planetary system, and by rock samples from Mars.

The work done by the two scientists was reported in the *Journal of Geophysics Research*, (103, 1998). The title of this news item was eye-catching: “*Mars Was No Garden of Eden.*” Many writers on scientific subjects believe in evolution and do not accept the Bible as a message from God, the great Supreme Creator of the universe. Likewise, many of their readers believe in evolution and question the existence of God. Therefore, the use of Biblical language in this case was unusual. It may have been employed to illustrate the profuse vegetation upon Planet Earth in contrast to the lack of such vegetation elsewhere in our planetary system.

This work concerning the quest for life in other places in the universe analyzed data available from Mars and Europa. Their conclusion was: “Even if life could have arisen on Mars, there probably wouldn’t have been enough energy to allow it to flourish.” This conclusion was reached by using a model of energy available for creating and sustaining life. We quote further from the article:

“The model assumes that life requires water; elements like carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and sulfur to build complex molecules; and a source of energy. On Earth, photosynthesis makes possible the creation of about 20 grams of organisms per square centimeter of land every 1,000 years, the researchers say. On Mars, a biosystem without photosynthesis would have to rely on geochemical energy from volcanic activity, hydrothermal

circulation of water, and chemical weathering of the planet's surface and crust. The researchers calculate that it would take Mars 4 billion years to produce that same 20 grams per square centimeter from these energy sources. Europa's limited vulcanism makes it even less fertile a breeding ground than Mars. The findings suggest that searches for past life on Mars should focus on areas near former hydrothermal systems."

EXISTENCE OF A SUPREME CREATOR

The question that arises is, "Why are scientists so interested in the search for life elsewhere in the universe?" NASA recently sent another explorer to Mars to sample terrain in the south polar region, where ice is expected to be found. The answer is that many scientists are unwilling to accept the Bible as a message from the true and living God. This is so even though their work pinpoints the remarkable phenomenon of photosynthesis, which is the means whereby the energy from the sun makes food for the living creatures God placed on earth.

What a remarkable phenomenon it is. Scientists have long been studying photosynthesis and have learned much about the mechanics of the process. They say, "Each hour Earth's surface receives an amount of energy from the sun that approximately equals the amount of fossil fuels consumed globally in one year." Photosynthesis is described by them as a process that "nature developed several billion years ago to trap solar energy and store it in the fuels that are essential for life on Earth." What does the Bible say about this remarkable phenomenon?

We read in Genesis: "God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so."—Gen. 1:29,30

Note the 'green herb' mentioned in this passage of scripture. The robing of the earth in living green highlights the fact that chlorophyll—the material that imparts a green color to vegetation—is also the means whereby the sun's energy is absorbed. As far back as 1912 a photochemist said, "Plants are unsurpassed masters of—or marvelous workshops for—photochemical synthesis of the fundamental substances,

building up from carbon dioxide [a waste product] with the help of solar energy.”

Scientists now recognize that “mimicking natural photosynthesis” has great potential along many lines to improve life on Earth. They have embarked on a study of both the simplicity of the chemical reactions involved, as well as the complexity of these. Planet Earth is outstanding as a place where life had been carefully designed by God, and where life could be created and sustained. It contained a very beautiful place, called the Garden of Eden, and though the beauty of that garden no longer exists, Earth continues to be an amazing testimony to a living God.

FALSE GODS

There is a segment of the scientific world which believes that everything happened by chance. In doing so they unknowingly have erected a god called Chance. The Bible, however, is the message from the living God who created heaven and earth. In the past God has not been described properly by well-meaning supporters of the Bible. The traditional concepts of God as formulated in the creeds of the Dark Ages could be responsible for this rejection by thinking men.

What are some of these concepts? Prominent among them is the claim that God is a trinity of deities called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This conception of God is a monstrosity which cannot be harmonized either with the Bible, or with enlightened thinking. Various church leaders are discarding this concept of God, while others hold tenaciously to it.

Then there is the picture of God as being the author of ‘hell’ and ‘purgatory’. Here we have another theory that is not supported by the Bible, and is rejected by reasoning minds of the present. This concept of God blasphemes his holy name. How horrible it is to think that an all-powerful Creator would torture countless millions of his human creatures in a fiery hell forever! The theory of purgatory is only degrees less revolting.

The ‘end of the world’ dogma, handed down to us from the Dark Ages, is another one which pictures the true God of the Bible in a very false light. What a fiend God would be to destroy the whole earth with fire in twenty-four hours, and transfer its wicked inhabitants into a hell of endless torment! This is too awful to contemplate, yet it was taught that

God would do this. At that horrendous time, the righteous of earth were to be transferred to heaven; but we wonder how much joy they could have in heaven, knowing what had happened to their neighbors, and was continuing to happen.

HONESTY A GEM

These concepts are rarely mentioned in the churches today, with the exception of a minority of radical Fundamentalists. But they are still in the creeds, because the rank and file of church leaders do not have the courage or honesty to say openly that they no longer believe them, and advocate a revision of the creeds. Due in part to their lack of understanding, they do not possess sufficient faith in the Bible to accept its revelation of the true and living God, the God of all Creation, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ONE GOD

The Apostle Paul wrote, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:3-6) From this we learn that the one true God of the Bible is a ‘savior’ of his creatures, not their tormentor. He is the great Author of his plan of redemption from sin and death; it is for that plan that his beloved Son willingly and gladly gave himself in death as a ‘ransom for all’.

RESTITUTION

The word ransom means ‘a corresponding price’. Jesus took the place of Adam in death, thus providing release from the penalty of sin, which is death. This could not be understood by those who believed that the wages of sin is eternal torture. But how simply and clearly the Scriptures set forth the plan of God for his fallen human creatures! Paul wrote, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23) And again, “As by Adam All die, so by the Anointed [Christ] also, will All be restored to life.”—I Cor. 15:22, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

This making alive of the millions of Adam’s children is to be accomplished right here on the earth. This is what Paul refers to in his

statement that God will have all men to be saved—saved, that is, from the sleep of death. Following that awakening, the people will have an opportunity to ‘come to a knowledge of the truth’ that God does love them, and has provided for their eternal salvation upon the basis of belief and obedience. This diffusion of the true knowledge of God is referred to by Paul as a testifying of this great truth in ‘due time’.

Because this knowledge will be ‘testified in due time’ to the whole world of mankind, the “knowledge of the Lord” will fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) All will then have an opportunity to know “the only true God,” whom to know aright “is life eternal.” (John 17:3) No one will lose the opportunity of gaining everlasting life by being left in ignorance of the true God and his will for them. Nor will anyone be saved in his ignorance, for the Lord will then turn to the resurrected people a “pure language,” or message, and all shall know him, and call upon him, “from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.”—Zeph. 3:9; Jer. 31:31-34

ISRAEL’S IDOLATRY

When the nation of Israel was blessed with the knowledge of the true and living God, they often went astray and worshiped idols. God sent a powerful message to them through the Prophet Jeremiah, saying, “Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven.” (Jer. 10:2) Jeremiah then proceeds to describe idols built by the gentile nations, which were inanimate and powerless. These were not to be feared nor worshiped, because they could do nothing. Instead, Jeremiah calls their attention to the true and living God who provides all of our needs, and is in sharp contrast to the gods imagined by men.—Jer. 10:1-13

Men’s knowledge is limited, as Jeremiah says in continuing his message to Israel: “Everyone is senseless and without knowledge; every goldsmith is shamed by his idols. His images are a fraud; they have no breath in them. They are worthless, the objects of mockery; when their judgment comes, they will perish.” (Jer. 10:14,15, *New International Version*) We note the emphasis in this exhortation on a living God, and the absence of life in the gods worshiped by men. Jeremiah concludes by saying of God: “He who is the Portion of Jacob is not like these, for he is

the Maker of all things, including Israel, the tribe of his inheritance—the Lord Almighty is his name.”—Jer. 10:16, *NIV*

THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD

Many students of the Bible have discarded the concept of a lifeless god, or one founded on Dark Age creeds. The Apostle Paul spoke for all of us when he said, “We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men.” (I Tim. 4:10) Jesus emphasized the importance of God being a living God who was interested in the welfare of his Creation, saying, “Now he is not a God of the Dead, but of the Living; for to him all are alive.” (Luke 20:38, *WED*) Soon the world will know why Jehovah was called the ‘true and living God’, as through Jesus and the church, his Christ, he will employ his great power to bring back to life all who have passed into the sleep of death. Then they will know why he is the God of the living, as his plan is to provide an opportunity for everlasting life to everyone who ever lived.

The Apostle Paul exhorts all to wait patiently for the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. For then he will reveal to everyone “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”—I Tim. 6:15,16

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Believe and Live

Key Verse: *“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*

—John 1:14

Selected Scripture:
John 1:7-42

IN JOHN’S GOSPEL (chapter 1:1-5), Jesus in his prehuman condition is described as the Word of God, or the Logos, “the firstborn of every creature.” (Col. 1:15) This scripture is clear; God directly created no other being than the Logos. In ancient kingdoms, a Logos was the king’s representative, or mouthpiece. John used this illustration to picture God speaking to mankind through his only begotten son—to the church now, and soon to the world of mankind during Christ’s thousand-year Messianic kingdom. In this capacity, all of the creative works of the Father were

entrusted to him, as the Apostle Paul records, “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible.”—Col. 1:16

The Key Verse tells us, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” so that mankind might be redeemed from the curse—the death sentence that God placed upon all mankind due to Adam’s disobedience—which includes sorrow, pain and alienation from God. The Apostle Paul, quoting Psalm 40:6 (*Septuagint Version*), says of our Lord Jesus: “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb. 10:5), which was to be used for the suffering of death, and as a ransom price to redeem Adam and all mankind. It is little wonder that the angel rejoiced to announce to the shepherds that the Logos was made flesh as the “babe” of “Bethlehem.” (Luke 2:10-12) The angel said, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” The work of redemption began with Jesus’ consecration at thirty years of age; his baptism in the Jordan River symbolized his sacrificial death. He who was made flesh for that purpose gave himself to be a ransom price for all mankind, “to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:6

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He preached, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 3:2) Only the Israelites “indeed” (John 1:47), those without guile, were ready to receive the Messiah and became John’s disciples. John’s baptism was intended only for Jews not wholly faithful to the Law. His mission was the announcement of Jesus as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

He came to bear witness to that Light that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to witness to that Light (John 1:6-9) which “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” The role of John the Baptist was to lead people to believe in Jesus. However, as the account states: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”—John 1:11,12

The Apostle John wrote his Gospel—so that we might come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and through that belief we might have life. “Jesus did many other miraculous signs. ... But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that ... you may have life in his name.”—John 20:30,31, *New International Version*

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Bearing Witness

***Key Verse: “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”
—John 1:29***

***Selected Scripture:
John 1:19-34***

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS a primary witness to Jesus. It was prophesied of him that he would be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” (Matt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3) He also came to “bear witness of the light.”—John 1:6,7

When priests and Levites came from Jerusalem, they questioned John: “Who art thou?” (John 1:19) To this he replied, “I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.”—John 1:20,21

This last question, inquiring about his being ‘that prophet’, related to a prophecy of Moses, in which he said, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” (Deut. 18:15) The Apostle Peter quoted this prophecy (Acts 3:19-23), and applied it to the kingdom work of Christ to be accomplished during the “times of restitution of all things.”—vs. 21

John knew he was not this great prophet whom Moses had promised. In exasperation they finally said to John, “Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?” (John 1:22) Quoting from Isaiah 40:3, he said, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord.” (John 1:23) John’s mission was to prepare the way for the Lord by witnessing of him. Then they asked him why he was baptizing if he was neither Christ, Elias, nor ‘that prophet’, to which he replied, he was baptizing with water, but there was one standing among them whom they did not know and of whom John said he (John) was not worthy of even untying his sandals. (vss. 25-27) The Messiah was already present but they did not recognize him.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (vs. 29) John

gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and stay on him. I still did not know that he was the one, but God, who sent me to baptize with water, had said to me, ‘You will see the Spirit come down and stay on a man; he is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’. I have seen it,” said John, “and I tell you that he is the Son of God.”—vss. 32-34, *Today’s English Version*

How can we be witnesses of Jesus as John was? The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, tells of the responsibility those have who have received the Holy Spirit. He says one who has been baptized into Christ is a “New Creation: the old things have passed away; behold! they have become new. But all things are from that God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; namely, That God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not counting to them their offences; and has deposited with us the word of the reconciliation. “On behalf of Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors; as if God were inviting through us, we entreat, on behalf of Christ—be you reconciled to God!”—II Cor. 5:17-20, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

Paul says, “The love of Christ controls us.” (vs. 14. *RSV*) We witness about him at every opportunity.

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Seeking Answers for Life's Questions

***Key Verse: “God sent
not his Son into the
world to condemn the
world; but that the
world through him
might be saved.”***

—John 3:17

***Selected Scripture:
John 3:1-17***

NICODEMUS EVIDENTLY was a good man, a man of learning and influence, and a prominent member of the Jewish Sanhedrin. No doubt he was impressed by the teachings and the miracles of our Lord, for when he went to Jesus by night (John 3:1,2) we find him ready to acknowledge Jesus as a great teacher sent of God. Being a ruler in Israel, it has been supposed that Nicodemus did not want to be seen by others of the Sanhedrin, although in those

times visiting usually took place in the evening. The type of kingdom he and all Israel expected of the Messiah was not the kind of kingdom being proclaimed by Jesus and his disciples.

It was with astonishment that Nicodemus heard from the great Teacher that he and others could not possibly enter the kingdom without being born again. His mind ran to the natural human birth, and he inquired how it was possible that a grown man could be born again. Such a question gave our Lord opportunity to explain that man's human birth is an illustration of a higher birth—to the spiritual nature, saying, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (vs. 6) Jesus said that no one can either see or enter into the heavenly kingdom, except he be born of the Spirit. Jesus attempted to convey to Nicodemus the difference between human beings and spirit beings. He said, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit;” they can come and go as the wind.—John 3:8, *New International Version*

Nicodemus was astounded at the thought that the kingdom of God would be so different from what he himself and others had expected. “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and you do not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” (John 3:9-12, *NIV*) Paul confirms this: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: ... neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”—I Cor. 2:14

Jesus then related the experience of Moses and the brazen serpent in the wilderness, which pictures his coming death on the cross. The whole world is dying because it has been ‘bitten’ by the fiery serpent of sin. It was, therefore, needful that our Lord should be ‘lifted up’ as a sin-offering on behalf of the world, so that eternal life might be offered to all. Jesus said, “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

Jesus’ came at his First Advent in the flesh as a sacrifice for sin. In his Millennial reign he will come with “healing in his [beams] wings.” (Mal. 4:2) Then all men will have answers to the mysteries of life.

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Choose Life

Key Verse:

***“Whosoever drinketh
of the water that I
shall give him shall
never thirst; but the
water that I shall
give him shall be in
him a well of water
springing up into
everlasting life.”***

—John 4:14

Selected Scripture:

John 4:7-42

TRAVELING FROM JUDEA to Galilee, Jesus came to the town of Sychar in Samaria. At midday, tired from his journey, he sat down by Jacob’s well. Presently, a Samaritan woman arrived to draw some water. Jesus said to her, “Give me to drink. ... Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me? ... Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep from whence then hast thou that living water?”

“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not.”—John 4:7-15

“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”—vss. 16-19

Changing the subject, the woman said, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.” (vs. 20) Because the Samaritans’ belief was a mixture of the Jewish faith and idolatry, Jesus said to her, “Ye worship ye know not

what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (vss. 22,23) “The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.” (vss. 25,26) The woman then left her water pot behind, went into the town and told the people what she had heard. As a result they came to hear Jesus and believed.

Meanwhile, Jesus’ disciples returned with food. They begged their Master to eat, to which he replied, “I have meat to eat that ye know not of. ... My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. ... Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth ... gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. ... One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”—vss. 32-38

Jesus witnessed to the Samaritan woman advising her to choose life; and she, believing, went to her town where she witnessed, and many believed. Even today we can be ‘wells of water’ springing up into everlasting life to those who choose to follow Jesus.

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As Oft as Ye Do This

THE HEBREW MONTH, Nisan, which is the first month of the Jewish sacred or religious year usually begins after the spring equinox. This year, it begins a few days before. It was on the fourteenth day of this month that the Passover lamb was slain, and its blood sprinkled upon the doorposts and lintels of Hebrew homes as a protection against the slaying of their firstborn. The death of Egypt's firstborn that night was the tenth plague upon the Egyptians, brought upon them by the Lord to induce Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave the country and go to the 'promised land'.

The Scriptures clearly reveal that the slaying of Israel's Passover lamb prefigured the death of Jesus as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) It was appropriate, therefore, that Jesus should give his life on the day scheduled for the typical Passover lamb to be slain, and it was on the 'evening' of this day—which began at sundown the night before—that Jesus partook of the Passover supper with his disciples for the last time. It was on this occasion that Jesus instituted the only recurring rite or ceremonial enjoined upon his followers—the Memorial Supper—sometimes called 'Communion' and the 'Eucharist'.

It was a very simple ceremony as Jesus outlined it to his disciples, in which unleavened bread and wine—or 'fruit of the vine' were used. Paul explained the purpose of this, saying, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." (I Cor. 11:26) The expression, 'as often', has been taken to mean that it is appropriate to partake of the Memorial Supper almost any time, and as frequently as decided practical. We doubt, however, if this is what Paul had in mind. The ceremony is in memory of the death of Jesus, and we believe the only proper time to partake of the 'bread' and the 'cup' is on the anniversary of his death. If one should say, "As often as we commemorate the birth of Jesus," we would not understand him to mean as many times in the year as we feel disposed to commemorate the Savior's birth.

This year, the fourteenth day of Nisan corresponds to Wednesday, March 31. Since the Biblical day begins at sundown, it means Nisan 14 begins about six o'clock on Tuesday, March 30. After six o'clock that evening, therefore, would be the appropriate time this year to partake of the Memorial Supper commemorating the death of Jesus as our Redeemer, and the Redeemer of the whole world.

NOT A REVISED PASSEOVER SUPPER

The fact that Jesus instituted the Memorial Supper while he and his disciples were together partaking of the Passover does not imply that this new ceremony is simply a revision of the old, although there is a close relationship between the two. As we have seen, Jesus was the antitypical Passover Lamb. With his death, the yearly sacrifice of the typical Passover lamb officially ended, because the true Lamb which it prefigured had come and had shed his blood in order that all who come under its protection might have life.

The new rite was intended to be, not a revision of the old, but a commemoration of that which the old prefigured, a memorial of the antitype. As Paul explained, it is to 'show the Lord's death'. In this ceremony we 'show' the Lord's death by partaking of the 'bread' which represents his sacrificed body, and the 'cup', which symbolizes his shed blood. Concerning the bread, Jesus said [in the words of the Apostle Paul]: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."—I Cor. 11:24; Luke 22:19

Jesus did not mean by this that the bread was actually his body, as taught by some, for his literal body of flesh was still living when he gave this command. Clearly, what Jesus meant was that it represented his body. On a previous occasion, the Master had taught his disciples that he would give his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) In this lesson he likened his flesh to the manna which his Heavenly Father had provided for Israel during their wilderness journey, adding, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

This is pictorial language, beautifully symbolizing the precious truth of the Bible that those who accept God's grace through Christ will have everlasting life. The manna which fell in the wilderness sustained the lives of the Israelites for forty years, but the antitypical 'manna from heaven' has nourishing qualities sufficient to sustain life forever. This

the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—Jer. 31:31-34

According to this promise, the New Covenant will first be made with the regathered Israelites in their ‘promised land’, but its blessings will be extended to all mankind. This is clearly indicated by the prophecy recorded in Ezekiel 16:55-63.

There was shedding of blood associated with the establishment of the original Law Covenant with Israel. (Exod. 24:6-8) This blood pointed forward to the sacrificial work of Jesus, typifying the fact that he would shed his blood—or give up his life—in order that a New Covenant might be established with Israel and with the world. Thus, when Jesus invited his disciples to drink of the ‘cup’ which represented his blood, he said it was the ‘blood of the New Testament’, or New Covenant.

This does not mean that the New Covenant was made with the ‘house of Israel, and with the house of Judah’ at the time of our Lord’s First Advent. What did begin then was the selection and training of those who would be, as Paul describes them, ‘able ministers of the New Testament’. These are the true footstep followers of the Master who, in addition to being prepared to reign with him in his kingdom, are also to be co-mediators with him in making the promised New Covenant.

The Apostle Paul gives us a beautiful thought in relation to this high office to which we have been called, saying, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament.” (II Cor. 3:5,6) How true it is that no member of the sinful and dying human race could qualify for such a high position because of his own righteousness. But, as Paul explains, ‘our sufficiency is of God’. Yes, he has made a loving provision through the blood of his Son, which qualifies us to be “labourers together with God” (I Cor. 3:9) in fulfillment of his promises to bring all mankind into covenant relationship with him during the thousand years of Christ’s reign.—II Cor. 6:4; II Tim. 2:12

Because the blood of Christ is used during the present age to cover the blemishes of his followers, and make their sacrifice acceptable to God, it is properly called the blood of the New Testament. And it will be this same blood—that is, the merit of Jesus’ sacrificed life—that will seal that covenant when it is made with the people. Thus, when we partake of the

Memorial emblems, we are not only reminding ourselves of the riches of Divine grace on our own behalf, but also expressing our confidence in the larger purpose of God to extend the blessings of life through Christ to all mankind—Jew and Gentile.

Drinking blood was forbidden by the Jewish Law. It must have seemed strange to the disciples, therefore, when Jesus said to them that unless they drank his blood they could have no life in them; and also when later he commanded them to drink of the “cup” which represented his blood. (John 6:53; Matt. 26:27,28) Possibly one reason the Jews were forbidden to drink blood was that it symbolized the precious and sacred blood of the Redeemer. And now Jesus wanted his disciples to know that they could and must ‘drink’ his ‘blood’ if they were to have life.

But there is a further thought associated with this, which is that we have the privilege of dying with Jesus, of laying down our lives sacrificially with him. Of ourselves we have nothing to offer to the Lord in sacrifice which would be acceptable to him. We have no life, because we are under condemnation to death. But when we ‘drink’ Jesus’ ‘blood’ we do have life. Paul wrote, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.” (Gal. 2:20) Therefore, when we present our bodies “a living sacrifice,” our offering is acceptable because we have partaken of the life provided by Jesus’ shed blood.—Rom. 12:1,2

So it is that when we drink of the ‘cup’ at the Memorial Supper it is also with deep appreciation of the gracious privilege which has been extended to us of being ‘crucified’ with Christ, of being baptized with his death baptism. (Rom. 6:3,6) And our appreciation of this glorious privilege can best be expressed to the Lord by a renewal of our determination to fulfill our vows of consecration, and to let nothing stand in our way of being “faithful unto death.”—Rev. 2:10

THE ‘SPIRIT’ AND ‘LIFE’

When Jesus said that no one could have life unless he ate his flesh and drank his blood, many followed no more with him. It was, as the record indicates, a “hard” saying, one which the disciples themselves at that time did not understand. Jesus perceived that they “murmured,” and then he asked, “Doth this offend you?”—John 6:61

Then he offered a partial explanation, saying, “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the Spirit that quickeneth [giveth life]; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:61-63) Jesus had said that he would give his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) This meant that when he was raised from the dead it would not be as a human being to remain here on the earth. Instead, he was to return to the heavenly courts, and to be as he was before, a spirit being, although of a much higher nature, even the Divine nature—the express image of the Father’s person.—Heb. 1:3

With this explanation, the disciples would realize that Jesus did not expect anyone to eat his flesh in a literal fashion, in order to have life. ‘It is the Spirit that quickeneth’, or gives life, he explained. Then he added, ‘the flesh profiteth nothing’. This was the Master’s way of explaining that he did not mean they should actually eat his flesh, for this would be of no profit to them. Then he added, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

By this Jesus meant that we ‘eat’ his flesh and ‘drink’ his blood when we take heed to his teachings and obey them. In the category of truth encompassed by Jesus’ ‘words’ are all the essential doctrines of the Divine plan, including those which stress the necessity of accepting him as our personal Redeemer and Savior. Thus, through the acceptance of the Gospel, and obedience to the commandments of the Scriptures which are associated therewith, we appropriate to ourselves the life-giving virtues of the one whose blood was shed and body broken that we might have life.

WHO WILL PARTAKE

Throughout the world this year, as in the past, little groups of devoted Christians will gather on the proper night (March 30) and together will partake of the ‘bread’ and the ‘cup’. These gatherings may number into the hundreds. In other instances there may be but a lone individual, or perhaps a small family of two or more. Among all who thus commemorate the death of our Redeemer the same spirit of appreciation and devotion will prevail.

The Promise Repeated

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

VERSES 1-7 “And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. “Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:

“And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. “And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. “And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob. “So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is, Beth-el, he, and all the people that were with him. “And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.”

God was again able to overrule the mistakes of his people for a further outworking of his plans. Before the incident recorded in the previous chapter, Jacob seemed content to remain in Shechem, but this was not the Lord's will; so in view of the hostile attitude of the neighboring people which he was sure would result from his sons' treacherous dealings with the Hivites, he was willing to follow the Lord's request to move on to Bethel.

The Lord commanded Jacob to build an altar at Bethel, to honor Him who appeared to him when he first fled from his brother, Esau. Seemingly Jacob took from this command a gentle reminder that he had been too lenient in permitting his family to worship the gods of his father-in-law, Laban, for he instructed all in his household to put away their strange

gods in order that there be nothing to interfere with his worship of the true God who, as Jacob says, ‘answered me in the day of my distress’. The family complied with Jacob’s instructions, turning in all their idols, and these were buried under an oak tree by Shechem.

This matter taken care of, Jacob began his journey to Bethel. In case we might wonder how it was possible to escape from their hostile neighbors without being attacked or pursued, the record tells us that the ‘terror of God’ was upon the cities in the district so that the people feared to molest Jacob and his sons. There is no indication of what brought about this condition, but we know that God always has a way of accomplishing his purposes as they are being worked out through his chosen people.

Finally, they arrived at Bethel, also called “Luz.” Here, in keeping with the Lord’s direction, Jacob built an altar and renamed the city El-Bethel, ‘because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother’. On that occasion, God promised to go with Jacob, and to bless and keep him, and he had fulfilled his promise. Now he was back where he started his flight from Esau, and the Lord was still with him. How Jacob must have praised the Lord for all that he had done for him!

VERSES 8-15 “But Deborah Rebekah’s nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allonbachuth.

“And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. “And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.

“And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; “And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. “And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. “And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. “And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.”

On this occasion God took the opportunity to renew to Jacob that wonderful promise he had made to Abraham, of blessing all the families of earth. It is well to keep in mind that the entire narrative of these chapters is related to the manner in which God proposes to fulfil this oathbound covenant with Abraham. The individual incidents recorded are of little value except as they are related to this principal Biblical theme.

God told Jacob that a nation, and a company of nations, would issue from him, and that kings would come out of his loins. Paul shows that the fulfillment of this and similar promises is in the development of the faith seed of Abraham, and that this faith seed shall reign as kings with Christ.—Rom. 8:17; 11:15,25,26

VERSES 16-20 “And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard

labour. “And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. “And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem.

“And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.”

In these few verses we have a touching account of the death of Rachel, the wife for whom Jacob served Laban, her father, fourteen years. She died giving birth to Benjamin. Verse 18 speaks of her soul departing. The word soul here is a translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh*, meaning ‘life’. It does not denote that Rachel had some mysterious entity within her which escaped when she died. The account means simply that her life left her.

VERSES 21-26 “And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar. “And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: “The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, and Simeon, and Levi, and

Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun; “The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin:

“And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali: “And the sons of Zilpah, Leah’s handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram.”

Edar is mentioned only this once in the Bible. According to St. Jerome’s commentary, it was 1,000 paces outside of Bethlehem. Aside from a reference to the sin of Reuben, the remainder of these verses are concerned merely with a brief statement identifying the twelve sons of Jacob, the heads of the twelve tribes of the Israelitish nation.

VERSES 27-29 “And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

“And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. “And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”

‘Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people’. This does not mean that an immortal soul escaped from Isaac’s body. The term ‘ghost’ is a poor translation. It should be ‘life’, and the statement simply means that Isaac gave up his life. He was gathered to his fathers; that is, they were all together in the state of death, and awaiting the resurrection.

It is interesting to note that Jacob and Esau cooperated in the burial of their father. Following their reconciliation, they apparently remained on friendly terms.

Dawn Bible Students Association

Worthy Is the Lamb

***“Worthy is the Lamb
that was slain to
receive power, and
riches, and wisdom,
and strength, and
honour, and glory,
and blessing.”
—Revelation 5:12***

JOHN THE BAPTIST, our Lord’s forerunner, baptized the people of Israel for repentance, reinstating them into their covenant relationship with God, and preparing them for the Messiah. He also “bare witness of him [Jesus].” (John 1:15) The witness John gave of Jesus is recorded in John 1:19-34. Included in that witness was the identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God, “which taketh away the sin of the world.” (vs. 29) In the early part of this

first chapter of John we are given an insight into the prehuman existence of Jesus, who, as the *Logos*, was the Father’s spokesman. It was the *Logos* who “was made flesh, and dwelt among us” so that we could behold his glory as he assumed his role as the Lamb of God. (John 1:14) The *Logos* was ‘a god’ (mighty one) but not ‘the God’.—*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott, Interlinear*

WHEN GOD WAS ALONE

In the distant past of eternity, when God was alone, he desired something. When one thinks of the power and wisdom of God, could he not, if he desired something, just command and it would become a reality? Not in this instance. For the Heavenly Father to gain that which he desired required a plan that embraced many ages, really eons of time. This is because his wisdom, love, and justice directed a specific course of action which would in no way violate his character.

The Heavenly Father desired a family on his own spiritual plane of existence—the Divine nature. This is suggested in many scriptures. One that is especially impressive is the 132nd Psalm. This psalm, written by David, shows his great concern because there was not a permanent resting place for the Ark of the Covenant. David wrote: “Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.” (Ps. 132:6) He was

so desirous of building a habitation [a temple] for God that he used a vivid illustration: “Lord, remember David, ... how he swore unto the Lord, ... I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” (vss. 1-5) Then he beseeches God not to turn “away [from] the face of thine [his] anointed.”—vs. 10

JESUS, THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

This seems to indicate David was reminding the Heavenly Father that to David’s son was promised the honor of sitting on the throne of David as the specially anointed one. God repeats his promise for David’s reassurance: “The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.”—Ps. 132:11

There is more detail given in II Samuel 7 concerning David’s desire to build a house for the Lord. The answer God sent to David through the Prophet Nathan was as follows: “When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”—II Samuel 7:12-16

It might appear from these words that Solomon, David’s son, would fulfill this prophecy. Certainly, parts of the prophecy are applicable to him, such as building a literal temple, and being chastened if he committed iniquity. These words: ‘I will be his father, and he shall be my son’, and that his kingdom will be established forever, are the main thrust of the prophecy, and they prophetically apply only to Jesus.

THE SLAIN LAMB

The Lord Jesus was destined to receive a nature like that of God, his Father. In order to accomplish this, God made possible a testing ground—this planet, Earth—to insure that the *Logos*, (Jesus in his prehuman existence) could prove to be worthy of such a reward. It is for this reason

that Jesus is called “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (Rev. 13:8) The part that Jesus would play as the Lamb of God in providing the ransom was a main factor in God’s plan from the beginning.

Another objective of the permission of evil on the earth has been to demonstrate the bitter fruit of following an evil course. Hence, when the kingdom begins to function, and those who do righteously are rewarded, they will be able to distinguish between good and evil. It will also serve as a lasting lesson for all of God’s intelligent creation. All will be able to contrast the exceeding sinfulness of sin with the perfection, majesty, and grandeur of God’s righteous law. Those who receive life will have willingly chosen a life of obedience—there will be no need to force them into the decision.

A DIVINE NATURE

For one to receive the Divine nature, as promised to Jesus, required especially stringent measures and testing to the uttermost. To be on the highest plane of existence means one has life within oneself. Such could not die.

What a frightening thought if Satan had possessed such life! Hear the chilling account of his selfish, evil desires: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer. ... For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, ... I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”—Isa. 14:12-15

God would violate his own law if he created one on such a high plane without having previously crystallized his character in righteousness by severe testing. The Scriptures indicate that the most glorious being ever created was our Lord Jesus in his prehuman existence. The Apostle Paul speaks of him as “the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth.”—Col. 1:15,16

Yet, to be raised from the dead in “the express image of his [the Father’s] person” (Heb. 1:3) required testing of a severe type in the presence of evil. The Apostle Paul states, “though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” (Heb. 5:8) We realize Jesus was obedient before he came to earth, and he was also

obedient as a child and a man. Just what does it mean, ‘he learned obedience’?

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

This suggests that obedience to righteousness became a fixed or crystallized part of his character because it was willingly exercised in the presence of many testings, such as privation, suffering, and finally a cruel death. The account of Satan’s temptations in the wilderness illustrates how Jesus always sought to know the Father’s will and to be obedient thereto. He was tempted along the same lines that we are—that is, by the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

Jesus was tempted to use his unique power of performing miracles to satisfy his own fleshly needs. We read that he was very hungry because of fasting, and then Satan suggested, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” (Matt. 4:3) He knew the use of miracles was to glorify the Father and show forth the glories of the kingdom. How clear his answer: “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4) In other words, Jesus was saying: ‘My miracles are not to be used to sustain myself but to glorify the Father; my food and natural needs will come by the Father’s providences’.

“IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD”

Next, “the wicked one” (I John 5:18) suggested a dramatic demonstration by Jesus so that he would be recognized immediately as from God. Satan even used scripture to make it sound acceptable. Satan suggested that Jesus cast himself from a pinnacle of the Temple and land unharmed in the street. He said to our Lord: “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Matt. 4:6) Jesus’ answer was clear and scriptural, because his heart intention was right. He replied: “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”—vs. 7

God had not instructed Jesus to do such things as a means of revealing himself to the devout of Israel as their Messiah. Jesus had been instructed in the Word to preach the truth, heal the sick, open the blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, raise some of the dead. This was how he was to be recognized

as the Messiah—not by asking the Father to rescue him unharmed in a dramatic action, such as jumping from the pinnacle of the Temple.

Satan persisted in his tempting. He suggested to the mind of Jesus the glory of the then existing kingdoms and said, “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (Matt. 4:9) Our Lord was firm in his decision, saying: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”—vs. 10

Thus Jesus was tempted to use worldly tactics, which are Satan’s, to further his ministry. With our Lord’s perfection of mind and body, he could have charmed the rulers of his day. In our time men speak of some politicians as having “charisma.” This means that such leaders have special personal charm and appeal. Jesus, however, knew so well the Father’s will for him. That will was not for him to captivate and maneuver people to accomplish ultimate ends; nor should this be our motivation.

THE WITNESS OF JESUS

He was to preach the clear truth of the coming kingdom. The Father would determine and draw those who would be the followers of our Lord. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” (John 6:44) He was to “preach the Gospel to the poor, ... to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18,19) This very ministry alienated him from the leaders of his day and eventually led to his death.

The final tests that came upon Jesus occurred during his last night on earth as a man. He and his disciples were in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus knew his imprisonment was near. Peter had a sword and used it in an attempt to prevent our Master’s being harmed.

“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11) Just think of this final cup of sorrow! The High Priest had him scourged, the Roman soldiers placed a crown of thorns on his head, mocked him, spit upon him, and nailed him to the cross to hang until he died. It was prophesied of him: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and ... he openeth not his mouth.”—Isa. 53:7

How differently would the princes of the world have acted toward our Lord if they had known the truth! If they had known only of his prehuman existence, they would have stood in awe of him, and adored him. If, when seeing him, they had known that in time he would become a Divine immortal being seated at the right hand of God, they would have fallen prostrate at his feet.

OUR LORD'S KNOWLEDGE

When Jesus walked among the children of men after his baptism, he alone knew the awesome truth that he had been with the Father in ages past. He knew the prophecy of Micah which told not only of his human birthplace but also of his relation to the project of Creation. Micah wrote, "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, 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 [the days of eternity.]"—Micah 5:2, *Marginal Translation*

The expression 'days of eternity' suggests that point in eternity when our Lord was "the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14), and to him was committed the project of Creation. As the Apostle Paul states of him in Colossians 1:15,16, "[He] is ... the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth."

As he traveled through Israel in his ministry, this knowledge of his prehuman existence must have, by faith, had a profound effect on him. At night he would sometimes absent himself from the disciples for prayer. What thoughts must have coursed through his mind as he saw the stars shining in the black velvet of night—he had been there!

WORTHY IS THE LAMB!

Now his task upon earth was about to be completed. Jesus knew that God would reward him with a Divine nature, yet in his prayer he said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." (John 17:4,5) He did not drive a bargain with his Father by saying, 'I have done my part; now you are to give me a Divine nature'. All he asked was to return to the glory he had before as the *Logos*.

God, however, was anxious to have a Divine family of his own, and Jesus was to be the first of these sons. His position would be unique, as the Apostle Paul describes: “He raised him [Christ] from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”—Eph. 1:20,21; Phil. 1:6-11

In the Second Psalm, God tells how he has set his Son to be King, and declared a decree: “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” (Ps. 2:7) The Hebrew word translated ‘begotten’ is *yalad*, which is a principal root meaning both ‘to bear young’ and ‘to beget’. One might think that this prophecy was referring to the begetting of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit upon his immersion in the river Jordan. The Apostle Paul, however, clarifies the matter in Acts 13:33,34, quoting this verse in Psalm 2 as the equivalent of our Lord’s resurrection to the Divine nature.

God’s people of the present time are aware of our Lord Jesus’ glory, and on every occasion they glorify his name. The world, and many who have espoused the Christian faith, do not know this. In the heavens, the angelic beings know. The pageantry of the events bearing on our Lord’s successful completion of his test is presented in Revelation 5:12, with the angels saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing,” which is our theme text. Jesus was the beginning of the “eternal purpose” of God “which he [the Father] purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:11) Without Jesus none of God’s plan could be achieved.

The angels proclaimed Jesus to be ‘worthy’. The next verse is prophetic, and speaks of the time when “every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”—Rev. 5:13

What a wonderful day that will be!

The “Escaped of the Nations”

*“Draw near together,
ye that are escaped of
the nations.”
—Isaiah 45:20*

SPEAKING OF ISRAEL, which often represents the world of mankind, the Lord through the Prophet Jeremiah says, “I will make a full end of all the nations ... but I will not make a full end of thee.”—Jer. 46:28

It is generally understood that the great conflict of Armageddon will bring about the fulfillment of this prophecy. The nations of earth as we have known them, with their physical boundaries and national characteristics, are to disappear: even differences of language will pass away during the early years of Messiah’s kingdom.

The pure language of Zephaniah 3:8,9 includes the thought of a pure message from God’s Word, as well as a single universal language. Thus, one of the principal barriers keeping separate the races of men will be broken down. In any case, many of the words which occur in the languages of men, applicable to the things of this ‘present evil world’, will, in the new dispensation, become obsolete.

The prophet, however, tells us that in this great tribulation which closes down the present dispensation, called by the Apostle Paul “this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4), some will escape the work of destruction. To this class there are many references in Scripture. For instance, the Prophet Zephaniah says, “Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.” (Zeph. 2:3) Again, the Master, referring to the destruction during Armageddon, says, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.”—Matt. 24:22

Here we are clearly informed that Divine providence will operate for the shortening of these days of tribulation. The intimation is that all flesh will not die in the overwhelming destruction, and the survivors will be permitted to pass over into the new dispensation of Messiah’s kingdom. This will be the glad day when the curse of death is to be lifted, and the

blessings of everlasting life offered to all the willing and obedient of mankind.

The question will arise with some, “Will it not be necessary that every member of the human family die before experiencing the power of the resurrection?” We answer that it will be necessary for all those who will have part in the ‘first resurrection’ to go down into actual death before participating in the blessings of that resurrection, because such was their covenant, and such was the Lord’s promise to them: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) But as concerns the world of mankind, it is not necessary that they should all go first into the tomb before participating in the ‘resurrection’.

From the Divine standpoint, mankind has been reckoned as dead ever since the condemnation came upon Adam because of disobedience. The whole world is in prison at the present time—shackled, in a sense—with mental, physical and moral weakness. There are different ‘wards’ in this prison; but those whom men call alive, God calls dead in trespasses and sins, and under Divine sentence. These are, so to speak, still walking in the prison yard and have not yet been shut up in their cells, the tomb. But they are in prison, and none of them can escape.

If the order for release of all prisoners were sent to a jailer, we would understand it to apply not only to those who were shut up in their cells, but to all who were in any sense of the word behind the prison bars and under his power and control as the jailer. Just so it is with death—the great jailer. It has committed millions of the race to the tomb, and other hundreds of millions are still at partial liberty in the prison yard, but firmly and securely kept and doing service with groaning and travailing, waiting for their deliverance.

In order for the opening of this prison to occur, the great Restorer and Lifegiver is represented by the Revelator as having two keys to unlock death and the grave. (Rev. 1:18) It would seem that the key of ‘death’ will be used first: Divine power being exercised upon those who will survive the great tribulation. Later, the key of the ‘grave’ will come into operation—a symbol of Messiah’s power and authority to unlock the great prison-house (the tomb) and set at liberty the captives.—Isa. 61:1

The Scriptures positively assure us that some will be carried through the symbolic ‘fire’ of trouble, and to these God will turn a “pure

language”—the pure message of the Gospel, “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” (Zeph. 3:8,9; Luke 2:10) But this blessing of being among the ‘escaped of the nations’ is conditional, like so many other blessings promised in the Word of God. The Prophet Zephaniah writes to those who are turning toward God: “Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.”—Zeph. 2:3

There have been millions throughout the ages who have made some progress toward God and righteousness, even as there are today. All of these will be better off when the kingdom is established. Most of them will be glad to give their hearts to the Lord and make rapid progress over the “highway” that leads to holiness, and to God.—Isa. 35:8

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