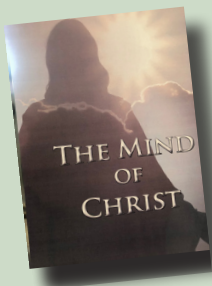




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“The Morning Cometh, and Also the Night”

*“He calleth to me
out of Seir;
Watchman, what of
the night?
Watchman, what of
the night? The
watchman said,
The morning
cometh, and also
the night: if ye will
enquire, enquire
ye: return, come.”
—Isaiah 21:11,12*

OUR TEXT IS TAKEN FROM a prophecy of Isaiah that speaks of the darkness of night and the dawning of a new day. The watchman proclaims that the dark night of sin and death over the earth would ultimately give way to the morning time of increasing light that is associated with the approaching kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Dark-

ness conveys to our minds the chilling effects that sin and death have had over mankind, while light indicates blessings of truth and righteousness.—Isa. 60:1-3; I Pet. 2:9

The history of the world has been a dark night indeed, with sin, suffering, and death as its chief characteristics. To those who by faith have walked

with God, however, it has not been a nighttime without hope, for they continue to be sustained by the promise that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5) It is this morning of joy that is referred to in our text by the statement of the watchman that the morning indeed cometh. There is to be a glad new day when human experience will be changed from sorrow to joy; from war to peace; from sickness to health; from death to life; thus fulfilling the psalmist’s promise that “joy cometh in the morning.”

The Scriptures reveal the manner in which this nighttime that has been experienced by the human race will be changed into a morning of joy. They further show that it will be the result of the Second Advent of Christ and the long-promised establishment of his kingdom. Another of the prophecies relating to this time likens Jesus to the light of the rising sun. “Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2) We note that this prophecy addresses those who fear, or reverence, God’s name and who have exercised faith in the promises of God, in anticipation of their fulfillment, faithfully watching for the “Sun of righteousness” to arise.

THE WATCHERS

Those who have looked for the return of Christ and for the establishment of his long-awaited kingdom, are represented in Isaiah’s prophecy by the “watchman.” Jesus also admonished his disciples to watch. (Matt. 24:42) His disciples had asked concerning the time of his return and second presence, but he explained at that time only the Father knew when

this would be, and that they all were to diligently watch. (Mark 13:31-33) The implication was that none of the watchmen would know in advance the time of these events, but if they watched faithfully until God's due time for making it known, they would at that time recognize certain signs, while the world in general would yet be unaware of the importance of what had occurred.

The Apostle Paul understood the meaning of Jesus' prophecy. In his letter to the church at Thessalonica, he wrote, "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." (I Thess. 5:1,2) Here Paul provides further detail for us in that he associates the invisible, thief-like return of Christ with the coming of the Day of the Lord. (Matt. 24:42-44; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15) Paul knew that this special day would break upon the world as a result of the promised return of Christ.

Paul continues to unfold the fuller meaning of this prophecy by explaining some of the characteristics of the Day of the Lord and that it would come upon the world "as a thief in the night." He said, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (I Thess. 5:3) We are thus reminded that the Day of the Lord will not at first be a peaceful and happy period, but rather, a time of severe trouble which will bring about the destruction of the present world order.

The apostle further writes, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you

as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” (vss. 4,5) Paul is explaining that the Lord’s footstep followers, because they would be spiritually awake and watching the events of the day unfold, would understand the meaning of that which was to come upon the world as a “thief in the night.” They would recognize that our Lord was carrying out the will of the Heavenly Father in connection with the great “time of trouble” that would come upon the world at the end of the present Gospel Age.—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22

There is an important similarity between our featured text and the apostle’s statement concerning the Day of the Lord. When asked about the “night,” the watchman replied, “The morning cometh, and also the night.” This implies a dark night of trouble that would be associated with the return and invisible presence of our Lord Jesus. In this connection, we note that Paul explains that with the dawning of the Day of the Lord there will also be “sudden destruction” which will come upon the world as “travail upon a woman with child.”

In our opening text, Isaiah draws our attention to Mount Seir, the geographical setting of his words. It has been observed that when the sun begins to rise in this particular region, its intense heat often causes a rapid evaporation of the moisture that has settled in the valley during the night. The resulting dense mist blocks out the light of the rising sun, resulting in a short period of darkness even after the sun has begun to rise. This characteristic perhaps is alluded to in the prophecy as the “night also” that is seen by the watchman even as the “morning cometh.”

Mount Seir was the inheritance of Esau, whose name was changed to Edom after selling his birthright to his brother Jacob. (Gen. 25:30-34; 36:1,8; Josh. 24:4) In the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the fall of Edom [Seir] corresponds to the destruction of symbolic Babylon foretold in the book of Revelation.—Isa. 63:1-6; Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 35; Rev. 18:2-10,21-23

It is in keeping with this thought that Paul speaks of the Day of the Lord resulting in destruction and trouble. This, in some respects, would be even more distressing to the world than the darkness of the night of sin and death that has occurred during the past 6,000 years of human history. This nighttime condition would become so dark, and its destruction so great, that Jesus said, “No flesh would have been saved; but because of the chosen, shall those days be shortened.”—Matt. 24:22, *Young’s Literal Translation*

The Prophet Joel also identifies these same characteristics as belonging to the dawning of the Day of the Lord. He wrote, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.” (Joel 2:1,2) From these prophetic descriptions, it becomes increasingly apparent that the watchmen must identify the dawn of the new day largely by the signs and events which are associated with the destruction of this present evil world, or social order.

DISTRESS OF NATIONS

We observe, in keeping with this, that when the disciples asked Jesus about the signs of his coming [Greek: presence], he answered them by pointing to the trouble which would come upon the world at that time. He said, "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25,26) These are the conditions which the watchmen were to look for as signs of the times just preceding the establishment of Christ's kingdom of righteousness upon the earth.

There should now be no question about this foretold distress of nations. Truly men's hearts are beginning to fail them for fear. In Joel's prophecy, he said, "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble," and we see evidence that this trembling is all about us today as never before. This, we believe, is all in fulfillment of the Master's prophecy concerning the time of his return and second presence. The Lord's people, as the watchmen, recognize this as one of the unmistakable signs that "the morning cometh, and also the night." They also know that this short, but dark, period in mankind's history was prophesied to occur just before the full blaze of the morning sun begins to warm and heal a distressed and dying world.—Mal. 4:2

The Apostle Peter indicates that the prophecies are to be our guide in watching for the light of the new day, saying, "We have also a more sure word of

prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn.” (II Pet. 1:19) The “sure word of prophecy” is more illuminating to the watchers now than ever before. The Prophet Isaiah also foretold the impending destruction of the present social order, and indicates that the nations would make an effort to prevent that destruction by banding themselves together. “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought.”—Isa. 8:9,10

The watchmen are witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy as the nations’ leaders fail to bring peace to a world filled with violence and turmoil and are unable to eliminate the increasing fear that is gripping the people. The Lord’s watchers, however, do not fear these things, for they know the greater meaning of what is occurring, that this Day of the Lord will shortly emerge as one of glorious light, peace, and joy. As the prophet indicates, we do not fear as the world fears, and neither are we afraid. (vss. 12,13) The psalmist wrote, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”—Ps. 46:1,2

PEACE WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE

The watchmen, alert to notice the signs which portend the dawning of day, note the prophetic statement which declares that even in the midst of

the destruction of the great Time of Trouble men would be saying, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." (Jer. 8:11; I Thess. 5:3) We see, too, that this is in process of fulfillment by all the various efforts of the worldly-wise who attempt to safeguard the tenuous threads of peace which still exist.

The nations continue to be engaged in a dangerous armament race that now includes, not only nuclear, but also biological and chemical weapons with which to wage war and cause widespread havoc and destruction. Many say this is being done in the name of peace, the claim being that the only way to secure peace is by developing more deadly weapons and to be prepared for war. Here again, the watchmen see the fulfillment of prophecy which traces further the pattern of events in this Day of the Lord. The prophet writes, "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong."
—Joel 3:9,10

HEAVENS AND EARTH PASS AWAY

The current social order is symbolized in the prophecies as the present heavens and the present earth, the heavens being pictorial of the powers of spiritual control while the earth pictures the more materialistic phases of the crumbling social structure. Both of these structures are to pass away in this time of destruction, but thankfully we are promised that they will be replaced by a "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."
—II Pet. 3:10,13

In this connection, it is particularly significant to the watchmen that the religious controls over the people are losing their power. Jesus foretold this, saying, "The powers of the heavens shall be shaken." (Matt. 24:29) The time was when these powers of the symbolic heavens crowned and uncrowned the kings, but this is no longer so.

Both the civil and ecclesiastical elements of the present social structure are melting "with fervent heat," Peter says. Not only are they losing their cohesion to each other, but the increasing friction that is developing between them is causing their disintegration, as the people lose confidence in the former standards and arrangements by which this world was governed. As the elements melt, they are, as the apostle also predicted, passing away with a "great noise."—II Pet. 3:10

THE ROARING OF THE SEA AND THE WAVES

When Jesus said that there would be upon the earth "distress of nations, with perplexity," he illustrated this condition by likening it to the roaring of "the sea and the waves." (Luke 21:25) The Prophet Isaiah also spoke of this, saying, "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind."—Isa. 17:12,13

It is clear from this prophetic explanation what it was that the Master meant by the roaring of "the

sea and the waves.” It is representative of the restless, discontented masses of the people clamoring for their rights, whether real or only fancied, as they lash against the bulwarks of the old social order, causing its governments or “mountains” to shake and falter.—Ps. 46:2,3

These destructive elements are now well organized and in place. As the watchmen see these forces at work and encompassing the earth, they recognize it as another sign that the nighttime of the Lord’s new day is already upon them. (Joel 2:3-11) They also see, however, that the new day of righteousness is ever closer to being established in the earth.

THE MORNING COMETH

Not all the signs of the new day have to do with the destruction of the old order. The “morning cometh,” and while the confusion of today’s world is causing fear, chaos, and disintegration, there are, nevertheless, evidences which have more directly to do with the new day at hand. One of these is the manner in which the Lord is dealing with his ancient people Israel.

The Jewish nation is symbolized in the Bible by a fig tree. (Jer. 24:1-9) In Jesus’ great prophecy concerning the signs of his return and subsequent presence, he said that when his watchmen would see the “fig tree” giving evidence of life, then we would know the kingdom of God was near. True to the Lord’s words, the State of Israel was re-established in 1948, and now, merely seventy-five years later, it is ranked as the 10th most powerful nation upon the earth.—Luke 21:29-31

As watchmen, our faith should be strengthened by such events, confident that the morning cometh. It is as yet obscured by clouds of trouble, war, and the commotion of a crumbling world society. However, the watchers see in the present symbolic storm clouds, thunderings, lightnings and storms convulsing today's world, evidence that the new day is drawing near. Soon the storms will have been scattered and the warming and healing rays of the "Sun of righteousness" will give health and life to all mankind.—Mal. 4:2

The joy of Christ's kingdom will be so complete that it will result in the wiping away of tears from off all faces. The prophet writes, "In this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:6-9

John the revelator joins in proclaiming the blessings that will accompany Christ's kingdom. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the

throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”—Rev. 21:4,5

All the causes of darkness will be removed, and the reign of sin and death will be over. Jesus died to pay the penalty of sin, and the human family will be restored to that which was lost. (Heb. 2:9; I Tim. 2:5,6; Luke 19:10) Paradise, with its billions of ransomed, resurrected and restored humans, will become worldwide. What if the clouds do for a moment hide the blue sky where morning appears? Soon the bright Sun of righteousness will rise to shine over all the earth. ■

In the last days, the mountain of the LORD's house will be the highest of all—the most important place on earth. It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship. People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." For the LORD's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. The LORD will mediate between peoples and will settle disputes between strong nations far away. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore. Everyone will live in peace and prosperity, enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees, for there will be nothing to fear.

The LORD of Heaven's Armies has made this promise!
Micah 4:1-4, New Living Translation

Be Doers of God's Law

Key Verse: *“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”*

*—Romans 2:13,
English Standard
Version*

Selected Scripture:
Romans 2:12-29

“doers” of the will of God. In doing God’s will we mature in faith and bring forth spiritual fruit. “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. ... Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.”—II Cor. 9:8,10, *New King James Version*

OUR KEY VERSE SERVES

as a guiding beacon in Christian life. The Gospel message brought to light the grace of God toward us. His grace is generous—more than we deserve. However, this grace is not an end in itself. It is a door of opportunity opening to the pathways of righteousness. Walking in the way of Christ is not justification alone, but as our Key Verse states, it is being

An oft repeated theme in the Apostle Paul’s ministry is that none will be justified by works of the law. This has frequently been misunderstood by Christians in saying, “None will be justified by works.” This has contributed to a misunderstanding. It is the works of the law of Moses that will not, and cannot, justify us. However, being justified by faith in Christ and his shed

blood, works will come forth. This is the fruit-bearing Jesus spoke of in the Gospel of John, and it is an evidence of our union with Christ and the working of his spirit within us. “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.”—John 15:8, *ESV*

Faith is manifested in actions. Paul acknowledged this Christian ethic in I Corinthians 15:10. “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” (*ESV*) Paul clearly understood the purpose of God’s grace in justifying us. Being justified by grace makes our works of faith acceptable, even when they are inevitably stained by our human sinfulness and frailty.

James affirmed the relationship between our justification by faith and the consequent works that accompany it. “Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”—James 2:17-20, *NKJV*

Living a life consistent with faith is of vital consequence. Our works of faith may be evident in public, but they are just as important, perhaps more, in private. One true measure of someone’s character is their conduct when no one else is around. What do they explore on television or the internet? What do they post on social media? How do they treat their spouse, children, or parents when behind closed doors? Let us not merely be hearers the Word of God, but faithful doers in all things. “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only.”—James 1:22, *NKJV* ■

Serving in Spirit—Not in Letter

Key Verse: “Now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

—Romans 7:6, New King James Version

Selected Scripture: Romans 7:4-13

ALTHOUGH OUR KEY

Verse mentions being delivered from obligation to the Mosaic Law, few Christians presently come from that situation. However, the importance of the lesson remains valid for us. We have been delivered from bondage to sin. This former condition manifested itself in various undesirable traits, such as covetousness, lust, hate, bigotry and other works of our fallen flesh. We now walk in newness of life—the “newness of the Spirit”.

Apostle Peter’s exhortation to the elders of the church informs our understanding of what it means to serve in the spirit. “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory

that does not fade away.”—I Pet. 5:1-4, *NKJV*

One word is especially pertinent to our subject—compulsion. Those who serve the flock should do so willingly. They do not take on the care of the church due to coercion. They are motivated by love for God, commitment to Christ, and the working of the spirit in their lives. Many challenges will arise for those who would serve God’s people. Yet, we get the message that Peter is sending—serve willingly. That is the spirit of Christ.

We are not under compulsion of a legal contract, such as the Law of Moses. We note the moment in history when Israel agreed to the Law. “Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.” (Exod. 24:7,8, *NKJV*) Paul notes that the agreement thus entered into brought sin to the forefront by revealing the depths of sin in us. “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, You shall not covet.”—Rom. 7:7, *NKJV*

The Law was a constant reminder of man’s sinfulness. Christ ever lives to make intercession for us, a reminder of our justification in him. Therefore, “the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. ... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (II Cor. 5:14-17, *NKJV*) Thus it is that we may serve God in newness of spirit. ■

Made Righteous by Faith

Key Verse: “A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”

—Galatians 2:16,
New King James Version

Selected Scripture:
Galatians 2:11-21

foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”—Gal. 3:1-3, *NKJV*

The Galatians received the word of justification by faith and began their spiritual journey. Now they must continue in the faith, abandoning any notion that they might be made perfect by their fleshly works. Why would

AS NOTED IN A PRECED-

ing lesson, the fact that we cannot be justified by the works of the law is here reiterated in our Key Verse. The dear brethren in Galatia were losing sight of Christ as the basis of their faith. Many had begun to return to observance of the Mosaic Law, leaving Christ behind! Paul beseeched them saying, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—Are you so

they, or we, be tempted to justify self by works? It may be due to pride, or the mistaken thought that we can earn favor with God. It might also result from a lack of faith in the power of forgiveness through Christ's shed blood? "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."—I John 1:7-9, *NKJV*

Critics of Christianity say that it sounds too easy to claim that faith justifies. In fact, however, living the Christ life is very challenging both within and without. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day."—Eph. 6:12,13, *NKJV*

Jesus' instructions to us are rigorous, especially those commanding love—love for God above all; love for the brethren; and love even for our enemies. (Mark 12:30; John 15:17; Matt. 5:43-45) However, mere good deeds, though important, cannot make us just, or right, in the sight of God. No amount of holding doors for others, carrying groceries for the weak, or providing transportation for the feeble will justify us in the Biblical sense.

"Rock of Ages," the majestic Christian hymn, acknowledges a great truth. We have no ability to save ourselves from sin:

"Could my tears forever flow, Could my zeal no languor know,

These for sin could not atone; Thou hast saved and thou alone.

In my hand no price I bring; Simply to thy cross I cling."

May we ever realize how blessed we are, as recipients of God's grace, to be justified by faith. ■

Children of Abraham

Key Verse:

“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

***—Galatians 3:7,
New King James
Version***

Selected Scripture:

Galatians 3:1-14

stars of heaven and the sands of the sea for multitude. “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son [Isaac], your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; ... In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”—Gen. 22:16-18, *NKJV*

How could one man father so many children that they would be virtually innumerable? An earlier event in Genesis provides a clue to the answer. After Adam’s disobedience, the Creator spelled out the punitive sentence. Death would be visited upon Adam and his descendants. No longer would the Edenic garden provide food and shelter. Instead, toil and sweat would be required to work the soil to provide food. Intriguing are the words spoken to the deceiving serpent. “I will put

ABRAHAM’S LIFE WAS A

type, or allegory, of God’s plan for mankind’s salvation. “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God.” (James 2:23, *NKJV*) That being the case, God entered into a covenant with him, stating that he would have seed, or offspring, like the

enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” (Gen. 3:15, *NKJV*) The seed of mother Eve would bruise the serpent’s head. Consider this in connection with Paul’s statement, “The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.” (Rom. 16:20, *NKJV*) Thus the “seed” that crushes Satan, fulfilling the prophetic words of God, is Christ.

Chief among the children of promise is God’s Son Jesus Christ. With Jesus, next in order, are those who follow him in the present time—his church. “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:16,29, *NKJV*) Last in the train of salvation will be “all the nations” of the entire human family, who will be blessed by Christ and his church in the kingdom of God.

We have received Christ by faith. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13, *NKJV*) “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” —I John 3:2, *NKJV*

Christ Jesus and the members of his mystical body, his church, constitute the “seed” that will bless all the families of the earth. Now is a day of salvation for the calling and development of Abraham’s children of faith, the seed that will bless the remainder of the human family. We are now Abraham’s children “and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” (Rom. 8:17, *NKJV*) Our Christian suffering for the sake of righteousness prepares us for the role we will play in blessing the nations together with Christ. ■

Heirs of God

Key Verse:

***“Therefore you are
no longer a slave
but a son, and if a
son, then an heir of
God through
Christ.”***

***—Galatians 4:7,
New King James
Version***

***Selected Scriptures:
Galatians 3:26-29;
4:1-7***

WE HAVE ALL AT ONE

time been slaves, in a sense. As Apostle Peter noted, “By what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” (II Pet. 2:19, *New American Standard Bible*) Apostle Paul tells us what has enslaved us, identifying them as deeds of the flesh that we need to deaden in ourselves. “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire,

and covetousness, which is idolatry. ... in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ... Put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” (Col. 3:5-10, *NKJV*) Now, as God’s children, we rejoice that Christ enables us to walk in newness of life.

Sonship with God is not an assumed position, but a rare privilege. That familial relationship with God comes only with acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior. Note the record in John’s Gospel, that Jesus “came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the

right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:11-13, *NKJV*) Those who receive Christ are given the “right” to become children of God.

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:14-17) It is in receiving and following the leadings of the “Spirit of adoption” that we are blessed at the present time. Yet, there are many joys, told and untold, that will follow in the future.

The Scriptures declare a grand purpose of our adoption. “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:29, *NKJV*) Genesis 22:18 reveals the significance of being Abraham’s seed, expressed in God’s great promise, “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” (*NKJV*) God’s sons, Christ’s disciples, the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, will bless all the nations of the earth. God’s words to Abraham remain the essence of the Gospel message. “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, In you all the nations shall be blessed.”—Gal. 3:8, *NKJV*

For over ninety years this journal has been sharing the message that all the nations will be blessed, whether living or long dead. Being the heirs of God and the promised seed of Abraham, Jesus and his church will bless all mankind in God’s kingdom. What a blessing to be given such a privilege! ■

Determining the Lord's Will

*"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."
—Psalm 40:8*

A CONCISE DEFINITION OF

full consecration to God is found in our opening verse. Although these words of the psalmist prophetically speak

of Jesus, they also express the attitude which Jesus' "body" members, "the church," must have fully developed in them in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. (John 4:34; Col. 1:18; Rom. 7:22) Our "will" includes our desires, our delights, what we take pleasure in and the things we want. When we speak of God's will, we speak of God's desires, his delights, what he takes pleasure in, what he wants and what he approves of and deems acceptable.

The Scriptures point out important features concerning God's will for his people. For example, in order to do the Father's will, we must know what his will is. Note Paul's desire that we "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col. 1:9) However, it is not enough to know what God's will is. It is vitally important to do his will. As Jesus said, "Not

every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 7:21

The apostle further tells us that God’s will must be done from the heart—that is, it must be rooted in our heart’s desire to please him. He states: “Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.” (Eph. 6:6) Summing up the eternal importance of doing God’s will, the Apostle John writes, “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”—I John 2:17

LEARNING HIS WILL

Those who have taken the step of full consecration to God, whether recently or many years ago, have dedicated their lives to the doing of his will. Yet, actually knowing and doing in full accord with the divine will is often a struggle.

The influences of the world, the adversary, and our own weak flesh hinder us at times from doing the Lord’s will to the extent we would like. As with many endeavors in the Christian walk, the matter of doing God’s will is something we learn over time through experience. Our sentiment in all this is that expressed by the psalmist, “Teach me to do thy will.” (Ps. 143:10) Before we can do the Heavenly Father’s will, however, we must first know what his will is. This is the primary focus of this lesson—that of determining the Lord’s will.

It is true that in many of our day-to-day experiences of life it is quite easy to determine the Lord’s will, both in temporal and spiritual ways. If we are employed, we believe God would be pleased that we go to our job each day and carry it out to the best of

our ability. (Col. 3:23) If we have a home, he would expect us, as part of his will, to take care of it and not let it fall into disrepair. The Lord, we believe, is also pleased that we take reasonable care of our physical bodies and our health, as well as look to the needs of our family. These and many others are temporal things, yet they are part of our stewardship, and it is the divine will that we take care of these responsibilities as part of our consecration vows.—I Tim. 5:8

Likewise, concerning the important spiritual responsibilities of our life, we can easily understand that it is the Lord's will that we come to meetings regularly, attend conventions when possible, spend time in study, prayer and meditation, speak the Gospel message to others, and develop our character in the likeness of our head, Christ Jesus. These are all part of God's will.

GOD'S WILL NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS

The focus of this lesson, however, is not so much the clear-cut matters described above, important though they are, but on the experiences of life in which the Lord's will is not so obvious. Suffice it to say that in some experiences it may be difficult to determine God's will and, in those cases, we need assistance and help to make such a determination. The Scriptures provide some "ground rules" for helping us determine God's will.

The first of these rules is that we cannot determine God's will in an experience by using worldly, or fleshly, thinking. "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable,

and perfect, will of God.” (Rom. 12:2) Notice that the will of God is proven by having our mind transformed from “this world” and renewed by the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit. To express it another way, we must use Godlike, or Christlike, spiritual thinking to determine the divine will.

A second ground rule for determining the Lord’s will is that we must be careful how we live. Paul makes this connection between living carefully and understanding the will of the Lord with these words, “Be careful how you live. Do not be unwise but wise, making the best use of your time because the times are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”—Eph. 5:15-17, *International Standard Version*

A SCRIPTURAL TOUCHSTONE

Even with these two general rules, we sometimes struggle in determining the Lord’s will. However, God, in his great love, has provided additional guidance to help us in our endeavor to know and do his will.

One such tool is found in the scriptural standard, “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” (Isa. 30:21) Notice in this Scripture that God knows we will face experiences in life which present us with a choice to go either in one direction or another. When we encounter such experiences, we should realize that we need to be especially guided by God in our decision making.

The “word behind thee” is not a literal voice, but figurative, referring to the tools available to help

us determine the Lord's will. These tools or methods that may say to us symbolically, "this is the way, walk ye in it," are suggested as follows: 1) Prayer; 2) The Word of God; 3) Our brethren; 4) Family; and 5) Past experience and God's providence.

Having begun by following the ground rules of using spiritual thinking and being careful how we live, prayer becomes an important "word" behind us to assist in determining the Lord's will. Prayer, in fact, should be used in conjunction with all the other tools we will discuss. As Jesus asked in his model petition to God, "Thy will be done."—Matt. 6:10

Paul describes prayer as the final element of the Christian's armor, stating, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph. 6:18) Notice in this verse we are admonished not only to be praying, but also watching. As we pray to know the Lord's will, let us remember also to look closely for God's leadings, to watch for providences in which his will might be revealed. If we pray and then watch carefully, the Lord's will may become more evident to us.

In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus admonished his disciples, saying "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26:41) In contrast with Paul's words in Eph. 6:18, here Jesus reverses the order and says first to watch and then pray. This means to show our desire, our interest, and our attentiveness before we pray to God about a matter by displaying a watchful attitude. Thus, we are to first watch, then pray, and subsequently continue to watch for his will to be revealed.

Prayer is so very important. We must talk to our Heavenly Father; after all, it is his will that we want to know, and have covenanted to do. We should be prompt to talk to the very one whose will we are trying to do and to whom we are striving to please —“continuing instant in prayer.”—Rom. 12:12

GOD’S WORD AN IMPORTANT TOOL

Another important tool which speaks as a “word behind” us are the Scriptures themselves, the Word of God. Paul states, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.”—II Tim. 3:16,17, *American Standard Version*

Here Paul points out that the Scriptures are provided for “teaching” us, so that we might be furnished completely for “every good work.” Good works are part of God’s will for us. Therefore, in order to determine what works he would be pleased to have us engage in, we must go to the Scriptures and find the “instruction which is in righteousness” which they provide.

The primary work which the Scriptures teach us to be engaged in, as part of God’s will for us, is that of sanctification. Paul emphatically states, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (I Thess. 4:3) Here the word sanctification means “to make holy or to purify,” and it includes also the thought of separation to God, as well as separation from evil things and ways.

On the night in which he would be betrayed, Jesus prayed for his disciples, asking his Heavenly

Father to “sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) This verse indicates it is God’s Word or “truth” which sanctifies us, and it is his will that this work of sanctification take place. Conversely, that which does not sanctify us, and which does not set us apart for the Lord, cannot be part of the divine will for us.

Another constant truth about the Lord’s will which we find in the Word of God is: “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (I Thess. 5:18) Thus, that which does not inculcate a feeling of thanks to God also cannot have any part in being his will for us.

The Bible is the ultimate and infallible word behind us in decision making. However, we must use it, study it, and make it our own, in order for it to truly help us in determining the Lord’s will. If we do not utilize its help, we place ourselves at a great disadvantage. As we seek to know more fully God’s will, let us go to the Scriptures, continuing also to watch and pray.

BRETHREN AND FAMILY AS ADDITIONAL HELPS

A third tool God has graciously given as a “word behind” us is our brethren, fellow members of the body of Christ. Many times, it is these who assist us in determining the Lord’s will when it otherwise seems unclear. Paul on numerous occasions spoke of the fact that brethren in one place were instrumental in helping those somewhere else, most often by way of example.

One such comment was directed to the brethren of Thessalonica. Paul wrote to them, saying “You became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and

Achaia.” (I Thess. 1:7, *English Standard Version*) We too have the privilege of looking to fellow members of the body of Christ, either collectively or individually, as a source of example and help as we seek to determine the Lord’s will.

Addressing the elders, the Apostle Peter admonished, “Be examples to the flock.” (I Pet. 5:3, *ISV*) At times, it may be helpful to look to the elders of the congregation, either by personal contact with them, or by their example, to gain insight into the Lord’s will. However, this is not just the responsibility of elders, nor should we only look to them for guidance. All the Lord’s footstep followers should be examples and willing to help each other in times when determining the will of God is difficult. We all have the privilege to do as Paul admonished Timothy, “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” —I Tim. 4:12

This important tool of the brethren cannot be of use to us unless we have regular contact with them. This can be done through regular meetings together and other opportunities for more private fellowship. We can also give, or receive, words of encouragement through cards or letters, phone calls, or email. All of these are means by which we can utilize this tool to assist us in determining God’s will. We should remember Paul’s words, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”—Heb. 10:25

Our natural families can also be a useful tool of assistance to us as we seek to determine the Lord’s will, especially if they are consecrated brethren,

members of the household of faith. Paul recounted the great and positive impact that Timothy's natural family had in the development of his faith, saying, "I thank God whom I serve ... as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." (II Tim. 1:3,5 *ESV*) From Paul's words we understand that the faith possessed first by Timothy's grandmother and then his mother had been of much influence in his life, and it likely helped him on many occasions to find needed answers as to what the will of the Lord was.

We should ask ourselves, "Am I giving heed to the words and examples of others around me in my decision making?" Conversely, "Am I showing forth the proper words and examples to others who may need assistance in decision making?" This is a two-way proposition. We can benefit from others in seeking the Lord's will, and we can also help others in doing the same thing, all by both recognizing and being examples one to another.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN EXPERIENCES

A fifth tool in determining the Lord's will is in viewing our experiences, both past and present, with a view towards God's overruling providence in them. This is a most valuable and indispensable tool in determining the Lord's will.

Paul also expresses our progression through experience this way, "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And

hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” (Rom. 5:3-5) True maturity, both naturally and spiritually, comes best through experience. Paul spoke of his own spiritual maturity by using the example of the natural man, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”—I Cor. 13:11

We are to claim God’s promises in our experiences, remembering that his providence is always there to guide us if we are submissive to him. “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19) Seeing the Lord’s will through our experiences is part of being properly exercised by them. As Paul wrote, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”—Heb. 12:11

If we truly believe our experiences are “tailor-made” by our Heavenly Father, and they are, then we should be on the alert because his will may be indicated in them.

THE HOLY SPIRIT NECESSARY

Another very important element which allows all of the aforementioned tools to work together in harmony is the Holy Spirit, God’s power and influence directed in our lives. Note that Ephesians 5:15-17, previously quoted in our lesson and which spoke of being careful how we live, is immediately followed by the words, “Be filled with the Spirit.”—vs. 18

The power and influence of God's Holy Spirit assists in using all the various tools he has provided to us to help in determining the divine will. Therefore, for example, as we utilize the first tool of prayer and watching, we should include in our prayers the request for more of the Holy Spirit's guidance in seeking God's will.—Luke 11:13

Summarizing these tools as they relate to the touchstone scripture of Isaiah 30:21, we see that we are to use prayer, the Bible, the brethren, our family, and the experiences of life as words behind us, saying figuratively, "Here is the way, here is the Lord's will." The word "behind" also implies that although we have these tools, we must still proceed with the eye of faith. We are not looking for, nor will God give us, a miraculous vision of what his will is, but by faith we should see his direction as we use the tools which he has provided for us. "For we walk by faith, not by sight."—II Cor. 5:7

MAKING NEEDED DECISIONS

Suppose, however, that an experience comes upon us, and in spite of our best efforts to use all the tools provided to assist us in determining God's will, the path to choose remains unclear. Additionally, suppose we are faced with a decision which we must make, and cannot delay further. What should we do?

First, we should continue to pray and watch, and not stop using all of the other tools given to us. Second, we should claim the precious promises, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."—Rom. 8:28; Heb. 13:5

Third, we should then make the very best decision we can in the matter, being firm in it, not wavering, but carrying it through. We should be full of faith that God, who knows our heart, will guide our decision in some way. In such cases, we should pray again after making a decision, asking God to overrule, according to his will, so that our actions will be made to work to our best spiritual welfare; and we should watch for his further providences in the matter.

We should always remember that God's hand is not short. He can and will overrule. Through the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord tells us, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear."—Isa. 50:2; 59:1

These promises are all available to us by faith. Furthermore, such experiences in which the Lord's will is not made clear to us may actually be permitted by God to develop and test our faith.

DOING GOD'S WILL, THE ULTIMATE GOAL

One of the matters of greatest importance in remaining faithful to our consecration is not only determining the Lord's will, but actually doing it to the best of our imperfect ability. This requires action on our part. As Jesus admonished his disciples, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." —John 13:17

The Apostle James states the matter with these words, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ... Being not a

forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”—James 1:22,25

If we follow the ground rules of spiritual thinking and being careful how we live; if we use the tools of prayer, the Word of God, the assistance of our brethren and families, our present and past experiences and God’s providences in them; if we make the best decisions we can; if we use the guiding influence of God’s Holy Spirit; if we are watchful, claim the precious promises, and have an unwavering faith, we will be successful in determining the Lord’s will. If we then do his will to the best of our ability, we will be found faithful to our vow of consecration with the Heavenly Father.

In seeking to know and to do God’s will, let us echo the words of Jesus, “I can of mine own self do nothing ... I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”
—John 5:30; 4:34 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

OCTOBER 5—“Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Hebrews 12:3 (Z. ’04-38 Hymn 266)

OCTOBER 12—“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.”—Matthew 6:28 (Z. ’04-37,38 Hymn 358)

OCTOBER 19—“Freely ye have received, freely give.”—Matthew 10:8 (Z. ’04-78 Hymn 338)

OCTOBER 26—“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”—I Peter 5:7 (Z. ’04-237 Hymn 205)

Hearken to the Voice of God

*“Hear ye the word
which the LORD
speaketh unto you,
O house of Israel.”
—Jeremiah 10:1*

AMID ALL THE CONFUSION of religious thought, how are we to know that what we have accepted as Truth is in reality the voice of God, and

by obeying that voice we are fulfilling the divine will? This is a question of vital concern to all of us, but one, nevertheless, which we should be able to answer to our satisfaction, otherwise we are left in a condition of doubt and uncertainty. We say we have heard the voice of the Lord, but how do we know?

There are many lines of approach to this question. We know, first of all, that we have heard the voice of God if what we have received is in harmony with the entire Bible and if it is also in accord with all the attributes of God's character—infinite justice, wisdom, power, and above all, love. It should also agree with all known historical facts and with our own experiences and observations. In short, what we have accepted as the voice of God, the voice of Truth, leaves no unanswered questions fundamental to our faith. It does not tell us that there is no such

thing as sickness, when we know there is. It does not tell us that there is no death, when we know people are dying all around us.

There is still another manner in which we can assure ourselves that we have heard the voice of God, and that is upon the basis of his unchangeableness. The Scriptures tell us that God changes not; that in him there is no “shadow of turning.” (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17) This being true, it means that the divine purpose as revealed through God’s ancient prophets of old is still his purpose. This, in turn, means that if we have heard the voice of God, we have heard the same things which that voice made known through the prophets and that these are all working harmoniously together toward the grand fulfillment of the Creator’s eternal plan for his human creation.

BLESSINGS FOR ALL

The great fundamental truth of God’s plan, the principal theme which characterized his message through all the prophets, is identified by Peter and recorded in Acts 3:20-23. Here the apostle tells of the blessings coming to all nations as a result of the Second Advent of Jesus. He describes these as “times of restitution [Greek: restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” It was to provide the opportunity for restitution that Jesus died as a “ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”—I Tim. 2:5,6

Ransom and restitution are the dominant chords in God’s great theme-song of love. There are various other details associated with the outworking of this

divine purpose, but the great objective to which these are leading is the blessing of all the families of the earth during the “times of restitution.” Have we heard and appreciated these great fundamental elements of Truth? If so, we have heard the voice of God.

There are many incidentals of the Word of Truth which are good and important in themselves. Even a natural-minded person can appreciate to a large extent the value of kindness, and mercy, and self-control, as well as other manifestations of righteousness. Christians and non-Christians alike, even atheists, may adhere to high principles of righteousness in their daily living. However, no matter how valuable moral and devotional teachings may be to any from the standpoint of righteous living, apart from God’s love for and intention to bless all mankind, they do not constitute the full measure and power of his voice.

GOD SPOKE TO NOAH

It is a blessed thing to hear the voice of the Lord, but it is costly. We find this exemplified in the experiences of Noah. Genesis 6:8 informs us that Noah “found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” As the narrative unfolds, it shows divine favor was manifested toward Noah in that God used him to build an ark and thereby to carry over a few from the first “world that then was,” to the second world, “the heavens and the earth, which are now.” (II Pet. 3:6,7) God also established a covenant with Noah concerning his intention never again to destroy all flesh. (Gen. 9:8-16) These divinely appointed experiences of Noah are referred to in the New

Testament by both Jesus and Peter and are used to illustrate different features of God's plan.—Luke 17:26,27; I Pet. 3:18-22; II Pet. 2:4,5

We read about the building of the ark by Noah but may fail to realize what it meant in the way of wearying toil through the long years it took him and his sons to complete it. It was a difficult assignment, for there was not only the work involved, but there was also the scoffing of the world to endure. Noah preached as well as worked. (II Pet. 2:5) He spoke to an unresponsive public, hence there were no apparent results from his words. Those with but little faith in contrast to Noah, and less appreciative of the fact that God had spoken to them, would have become weary in well doing. They would have concluded that God did not expect them to continue bearing witness to the Truth. After all, nothing apparently worthwhile was being accomplished, only wasted effort on an ark with no evidence of a coming rain or flood of waters.

Noah, however, had heard the voice of God and by it was enjoined to continue serving, irrespective of results. The due time had not arrived for a clear unfolding of the divine program for the blessing of all nations. Nevertheless, God used Noah as an illustration of certain phases of his plan, and this was a great honor. The covenant God made with Noah, that never again would he destroy all flesh from the earth, afforded a veiled suggestion even at that early date of God's intention that mankind in due time should live forever upon the earth.

Having heard God's voice, Noah was faithful to it, despite the cost of weariness, persecution, seeming failure of his efforts and cold indifference of virtually

all by whom he was surrounded. He had heard the divine voice because God had something for him to do, and Noah responded with his whole heart and life to perform the Lord's commission faithfully. Was it all for nothing? By no means! Two important results accrued from Noah's faithful response to the voice of God. Paul mentions them, saying that Noah "condemned the world" around him, and he became "heir of the righteousness which is by faith." —Heb. 11:7

Noah's faithfulness in preaching righteousness to his generation proved the justice of God in destroying the "world that then was." (II Pet. 3:6) When the plan of God is complete, the knowledge of his glory will fill the earth. This means the people will then know that all the acts of the Almighty Creator throughout the ages have been righteous, and that the suffering of humanity has been permitted for a particular purpose. It will be seen that the great catastrophe of the Flood which destroyed the first world was justified by the lack of response to Noah's preaching and the altogether too prevalent evil of those times. (Gen. 6:5-7) Thus, while none but his own immediate family gave heed to his message, Noah's seemingly fruitless preaching will, in the coming age, be esteemed for what it was worth and will help to fill the earth with God's glory.

In addition to the eventual satisfying result of his efforts, Noah's faithfulness made him an "heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Among other things, that heirship includes a "better resurrection." (Heb. 11:7,35) Psalm 45:16 also indicates that those who obtain this promised better resurrection are to be made "princes in all the earth."

Did Noah, then, waste his time? Surely not! He heard God's voice, obeyed it, was blessed in his obedience, and will yet be more than fully rewarded for every sacrifice which he made.

GOD SPEAKS TO ABRAHAM

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 12:1-3

In God's message to Abraham, we have the first definite statement of his purpose to bless all the families of the earth. So important was this that there was no other reason why God spoke to Abraham than that of inviting his cooperation in the outworking of his plan. Thus, the message and the invitation, or call, were heard together. God said to him, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,” but I want you to leave your own people and your father's house and go into a land which I will show you. “Thou shalt be a blessing,” God said, but the patriarch discovered that in order for this promise to become a reality to him it would cost the uprooting of his whole way of life.

God's promise to bless all the families of the earth was unconditional. That promise will be fulfilled regardless of what any individual may do about it. However, when it was made to Abraham, there was coupled with it the invitation to cooperate. Those since to whom the purpose of God to bless

all nations has been revealed have likewise been invited to cooperate. This is God's method of dealing with his people. First, he reveals his plan, and then invites cooperation therein.

Has it not been so with us? How sweet was the voice of God telling us of the great hope of a resurrection for all and restitution for the sin-cursed and dying world. It appealed to us as being just like God, and we rejoiced to think of all mankind being raised from the grave and restored to human perfection, inheriting the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. We soon realized, though, that there was more to it than that. Together with God's sweet voice of love for all mankind, were the words of invitation to us asking our participation in the divine program. We, too, like Abraham, were asked to leave our own people and our father's house.—Ps. 45:10,11; Matt. 19:29

Our "father's house" is the Adamic household. God's invitation to leave this house we recognized as a call to give up the hope of restitution upon the earth for ourselves and in its place to run "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling"—to set our "affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Phil. 3:14; Col. 3:2) This meant more than merely to exchange an earthly hope for a heavenly hope. It meant following in the footsteps of Jesus—steps of sacrifice and suffering even unto death—until that which remained of our present earthly life was wholly consumed in the service of God.—Rom. 6:3-5; 8:16,17; 12:1

Indeed, it was grand to hear the voice of God, but if we continue to respond to it faithfully it will cost us a life of sacrifice, service and sanctification.

When we properly appreciate the message of God's love, we will realize that we do not belong to ourselves, but to him who loved us and died for us. (I Cor. 6:19,20; Col. 3:3,4) We will endeavor not to live for ourselves, but to live for God by participating in the sacrificial work of this age, presenting ourselves and devoting our bodies to God's service, keeping our sacrifice on the altar until it is wholly consumed.

Abraham was asked to give up his home in Ur. For the remainder of his life he lived in "tabernacles," or tents, having no permanent home, no "continuing city." (Heb. 11:8-10; 13:14) Not only was this so, but God continued to test him, finally to the point of asking that he offer his son, Isaac, in sacrifice, which he showed his willingness to do. (Gen. 22:1-18) Abraham learned to know the voice of God more familiarly with the passing years, and he knew that it was a voice which not only promised wonderful blessings, but also invited sacrifice.

AT THE BURNING BUSH

God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, and it meant that thereafter his life was to be wholly devoted to the service of God. Even prior to this Moses was aware of his responsibility to the God of his fathers. The apostle explains that Moses had withdrawn from his position of honor in Pharaoh's palace, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," esteeming it as "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."—Heb. 11:24-26

Moses had fled from Egypt following an ill-timed effort to relieve the oppressions of his people, the children of Israel. Forty years he had been in

seclusion in Midian, serving as a shepherd over his father-in-law's sheep. (Exod. 2:11-21; 3:1; Acts 7:22-30) Doubtless he often thought of his early life in Egypt. Although he was called an Egyptian, he knew in reality he was an Israelite and that his kinsmen were serving as slaves under the oppressive hand of Pharaoh. From his mother, who was hired to care for him as a child, Moses would certainly have learned much about the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning the development of a seed and also of the blessings which would come to all nations through that seed.

The God of Israel was far from unknown to Moses. Hence, when his attention was attracted by the burning bush and he heard the announcement, "I am the God of ... Abraham, ... Isaac, and ... Jacob," Moses knew who was speaking. (Exod. 3:1-6) He knew he was to receive a message which in some way was related to the promises God had made to his fathers. It was even so, for the time had come when the natural seed of Abraham was to be delivered from Egyptian bondage, and Moses had been selected to serve as their leader in this great Exodus.

It was in the providence of God that the Israelites had gone into Egypt, for thereby the life of the nation had been saved from the seven years of famine which "was over all the face of the earth." (Gen. 41:54-57; 42:1,2; 50:19-21) Now it was necessary for them to be delivered, and for the same purpose. God was watching over his people. They were the natural seed to whom the promises had been made. Through this nation, the Messiah later was to come. Any service, therefore, which related

to this people had to do with the working out of God's plan for the eventual blessing of all nations.

Jehovah told Moses to take off his shoes, for the place where he stood was "holy ground." (Exod. 3:5) It was indeed holy. God chose the spot to meet with his servant, to commission and instruct him to be the deliverer of his people. That ground was therefore being used for as holy a purpose as has ever been given to man to know. True holiness to God today is represented in a full devotion to him and to the service of that same Messianic cause. We too, like Moses, have the privilege of laying down our lives for our brethren, who are the spiritual seed of Abraham.—John 15:12,13; I John 3:16

One of Moses' most notable character qualities was that of meekness, as stated in Numbers 12:3. He felt unequal to the great task which God was asking him to perform. Meekness is an essential quality of Christian character, but true meekness is not weakness. Moses was meek in that he recognized his own limitations, but when God assured him that all his needs would be supplied, his faith laid hold upon the promise, and he was made strong and courageous. God can use only those who rely on his wisdom and strength. This was the experience of Moses, and in the Lord's strength he courageously took up the task which God had assigned to him.

Moses heard the voice of God, and now that he was one of God's servants, he was no longer free to think, choose, act, or do as he might prefer. Henceforth the will of God was to be the guide in his life. God's presence accompanied Moses, and he had peace of heart and mind; but his way was difficult, and his burden was heavy. He had to face and defy the

austere and arrogant Pharaoh. He had to hear and bear patiently the murmurings of his own people and put down rebellion against the divine arrangements. In many other ways Moses had to bear the load of care and responsibility which was his because of the high position of honor God had given him in the outworking of his plan. It was a blessed experience to hear the voice of God, but it was costly!

THE GREATER THAN MOSES

Moses, who under God was the deliverer and lawgiver of Israel, prophesied that one greater than he would be raised up for the blessing of Israel and the world. (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-25; 7:37) Thus he pointed forward to the coming of Christ and to the establishing of his kingdom. The deliverance which will come to the people under the leadership of Christ awaits the inauguration of his righteous rule in the earth. He came at his First Advent to lay the foundation for that kingdom by the sacrifice of his life as man's Redeemer.—I Cor. 3:11

In Galatians 3:8,16, Paul explains that the seed which God promised to Abraham, through whom all nations would be blessed, was Christ. The entire ministry of Jesus was therefore related to the loving purpose of God to give life and peace to all nations. It is in keeping with this that at the outset of his ministry our Lord dedicated himself to God, agreeing to do all that was written of him "in the volume of the book."—Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:7

The apostle explains that whatsoever had been written by the prophets was written for "our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (I Cor. 10:11, *Revised Version*; Rom. 15:4) If this is

true concerning the followers of Jesus, how much more true it was of him! Assuredly, much of what all the prophets had written constituted the voice of God to direct Jesus in performing his part in fulfilling the divine purpose and arrangement.

Not only was Jesus blessed by the revealing testimony of the prophets, but he heard the voice of God speaking to him directly, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) What a blessed assurance this must have been to the Master! He was honored and he was blessed; yet nothing short of the complete sacrifice of his perfect humanity could discharge the responsibility which this honor and blessing had placed upon him. God had spoken to his Son by the mouth of all his holy prophets, and Jesus agreed to do all that they had spoken.

THOU ART THE CHRIST

When Peter identified Jesus as the foretold Messiah saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord explained that this knowledge could come only from the Father. Peter was to be widely used in the divine service, but at a great sacrifice of himself and his earthly interests. He was given the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," and he used them in opening up these privileges, first to the Jews, and later to the Gentiles.—Matt. 16:16-19; Acts 2:14-41; 15:7

Surely this was a high honor, and it was a joy thus to be used in the service of God and of his people. However, Peter was no longer his own, but belonged to God whose voice he had heard. When, after his resurrection, Jesus conversed with Peter, he said to

him, “When thou wast young, thou girdedst 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 21:18

The Apostle John explains that this statement to Peter was an indication of the death that he was to die. (vs. 19) It was to be a sacrificial death. He was to be “crucified with Christ,” “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:5) Before he had heard the voice of God, Peter was free to choose for himself, to plan his own life, but now it was to be different. From henceforth he was to be led where his own natural inclinations would not wish to go. The will of God was from that time forward to be the guide of his life, which was to be a life of sacrifice. He had heard the voice of God!

“WHO ART THOU, LORD?”

When, through Jesus, God spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road, this devout Israelite realized at once what it signified. Saul first made sure who was speaking, asking, “Who art thou, Lord?” Then, assured that he was receiving a message from the God of the Jews through their promised Messiah, he responded with the inquiry: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:1-6) Saul was acquainted with the manner in which God dealt with his servants in the past. He knew that an experience of this nature implied more than merely that he was being enlightened concerning the fact that Jesus was the Messiah. God allows people to continue on in darkness until he has a place for them in his plan. Saul knew this, and now that he was

enlightened, he realized that God was calling him into service.

Paul was a chosen vessel. He had been selected to bear the Gospel to “the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” What an honor; but at what great cost! The Lord said, “I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15,16) Here again we find the same principle operating. God had spoken; truth had been revealed; a commission had been given; and great things were to be suffered. The record of the Apostle Paul’s entire ministry demonstrates the sincerity of his question, “What wilt thou have me to do?”

IN THE LAST DAYS

In Hebrews 1:1,2 the apostle explains that in “these last days” God has spoken to his people through his Son. That was true of the Early Church, and it has been true during the entire Gospel Age. It is true in a very special sense at this end of the age. In Luke 12:37,42-44 is recorded a promise by Jesus that at the end of the age he would return and through a faithful servant serve his household with “meat in due season.”

God has served us bountifully! Through his Word of Truth he has spoken to us. His voice has enlightened us. His words have girded and encouraged us, and by them he is leading us forth as light bearers for him and ambassadors of the kingdom. As spiritual Israelites, let us, day by day, faithfully heed the instructions of our opening text, to hear and obey “the word which the LORD speaketh” unto us. ■

Lights in the World

*“Do all things
without
murmurings and
disputings: That ye
may be blameless
and harmless, the
sons of God,
without rebuke, in
the midst of a
crooked and
perverse nation,
among whom ye
shine as lights in
the world.”
—Philippians
2:14,15*

THE THOUGHT UPPER-
most in the hearts of those who know the Gospel message is one of thanksgiving to God for opening the eyes of their understanding to know and appreciate his glorious plan of salvation. (Ps. 100:3-5) This spirit of thankfulness is bound to overflow, not only in direct praise to God for his abounding grace, but also in showing forth his praise to as many others as possible. Those into whose

hearts the Lord has shined and who, in turn, are reflecting the illumination of his Word in order that others around them might see it, are to shine forth in the dark world of today and not hide their light “under a bushel.”—Matt. 5:14-16

There should be no question in the minds of enlightened Christians as to the nature of the

message which should be proclaimed at the present time; for now, as ever, it should be nothing short of the Gospel of the kingdom. (Matt. 24:14) The incentive for preaching this Gospel should be no other than love for God and a desire to bless those who may have ears to hear and hearts to respond to the message. It is highly important to keep these viewpoints in mind, else there may be danger that in our zeal we may place ourselves in the unfortunate position of being energetic, yet “unapproved,” ambassadors.—I Cor. 9:27, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

Jesus was persecuted, and we desire to be like Jesus. The apostles and others in the Early Church were also persecuted, and we want to follow them as they followed Christ. We know that it is only “through much tribulation” that we may hope to enter the heavenly kingdom; it is only if “we suffer with him” that we will also “reign with him.”—Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12

These thoughts are scriptural, and should weigh heavily in our Christian thinking, but they should not be allowed to outweigh other important truths pertaining to the proper attitude of the Christian in this world of darkness. Persecution alone is not an evidence of being on the Lord’s side. It would be comparatively easy to stir up the wrath of the world against ourselves if that were the only consideration. However, the question we should ask ourselves is whether we are suffering “for righteousness’ sake” or for our own misguided efforts.—I Pet. 2:20; 3:14,17

The Lord’s people should always walk in the true path of righteousness. (Rom. 8:1-10) It is something that we will do well to remember. At present, the Gospel of the kingdom is being heralded by the

printed page, radio, television, the Internet and many other forms of electronic media, yet in much of the world there is seemingly not a great deal of outward opposition to it. There is indifference, but little active persecution. Because of this we might conclude that our message is not useful.

What did Jesus mean when he said that his followers were to be the “light of the world?” (Matt. 5:14) What did Paul mean in our opening verse when he said that we “shine as lights in the world?” Do any of the Scriptures which bear on the Christian’s commission as an ambassador for Christ suggest he is to be a crusader in the world? There is much in the world that is wrong and against which we could find fault, but is it in this manner that we are to shine as lights? If so, how shall we decide which particular wrongs in the world we are to address? Shall we crusade against political corruption, immorality, social injustice, drug traffic, to name only a few?

The reality of war and the many threats of one nation toward another are continually thundered around the world. The masses do not want war, but the international situation is such that nations and their people are in constant danger of being sucked into the terrible abyss of armed conflict and its awful results. Here is something that every sincere Christian could easily be in open rebellion against, but is this what the Lord wants?

OUR EXEMPLAR

What would Jesus do? This is a question that each one of us should seriously ask ourselves as we consider the nature of the message that we are commissioned to proclaim in the violent and distressed

world of today. One of the first messages Jesus gave when he began his ministry was delivered in a synagogue in Nazareth. It was based on Isaiah 61:1-3. This is a prophecy concerning Jesus' anointing by the Holy Spirit—his commission for service. It is also our commission; for as members of Christ's "body" we receive of the same anointing that came upon him.

What is included in this divine authorization? "The LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

When Jesus said to his audience in Nazareth that this scripture was "fulfilled in your ears," he did not quote all of it, stopping just before it mentions the "day of vengeance." (Luke 4:16-21) There was good reason for this, for that part of the commission has its particular application at the time in which we are now living rather than when Jesus conducted his personal ministry. This expression is one of those that indicates the significance of the great "time of trouble" with which this "present evil world" comes to an end.—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22; Gal. 1:4

In a study of this entire commission, several points come to light. One is that it calls for the proclamation of the whole Gospel. To specialize on some particular segment of the Word of God would not be in keeping with this divine instruction. It

calls for the proclamation of the “good tidings,” the great hope of man’s restoration; as well as the “high calling” of this age, the “acceptable year of the Lord.” (Phil. 3:14) These two great fundamentals of the Gospel cannot be presented properly and effectively without an explanation of man’s fall, his redemption through Christ, and his need for repentance and surrender to the Lord. This has been the work of the church throughout the present age, and every footstep follower of the Master is still bound by the same divine commission.

“THE DAY OF VENGEANCE”

Now that we are at the end, or “harvest,” of the Gospel Age, there is added the responsibility of announcing the day of vengeance. This is not in reality an additional message, but more particularly a current application of the same glorious Gospel of the kingdom. It involves an explanation of present world conditions in the light of prophecy and emphasizes the fact that the kingdom of Christ is man’s only hope of survival. It is God’s day of retribution that is upon the nations and the broken down systems of the “present evil world” under Satan’s control.

To declare this aspect of the message does not imply pronouncing vengeance, nor does it call for a campaign of smiting condemnation against the evils of the crumbling world. The Scriptures clearly tell us that pronouncing and executing vengeance belongs only to God. (Ps. 94:1,2; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30) Generally speaking, the people already know how wrong the world is, but they do not know the basic causes of its insanity, nor do they have any

conception at all of the divine remedy—the kingdom of Christ. Only in the great plan of God is this information available, and it is our privilege to proclaim these glorious truths.

Our preaching of the day of vengeance consists in explaining as clearly as possible the meaning of present world chaos, that the judgments of God are upon the nations, and that soon Christ's kingdom will be established to bless and restore the people to health and life. Properly presented, the truth concerning this subject should be one of great comfort. It will "comfort all that mourn," and surely the world is filled with mourning ones today.

In Isaiah 35:4, the responsibility of the saints during this Time of Trouble is again mentioned. The text reads: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you." Jesus said that at this time the hearts of the people would fail them for fear as they looked ahead to the things coming upon the earth. (Luke 21:26) It is our privilege, however, to say to as many of these as we can, "Fear not." We can say this by explaining that while the trouble now upon the earth is a manifestation of God's righteous vengeance, it is but preparatory to the blessings of Christ's kingdom, and the salvation of all the willing and obedient from sin and death.

MOURNERS IN ZION

Isaiah 61:3 makes special mention of those who "mourn in Zion." These seem to be in addition to "all that mourn" mentioned in verse two. Zion was the highest point in Jerusalem and is spoken of in

the Psalms as where the people of God dwelt. (Ps. 48:1-3,11; 125:1; 132:13) Therefore, those who “mourn in Zion” evidently refer to those who, in one way or another, are associated with the professed people of God, and who are distressed over conditions with which they are surrounded, both in the world and in the church.

The same glorious message that comforts sorrowing ones in the world in proportion to their faith to believe it is also a satisfying portion to these who mourn in Zion. Indeed, it is especially so, because it provides an explanation for the confusing and disappointing situations in which they find themselves as a result of the church systems’ failure to convert the world. It is not that a special message needs to be directed to these, for God’s plan, the Gospel of the kingdom, suffices to accomplish this desired end, even as the same message accomplishes all the other objectives of the divine commission.

The term Zion is also sometimes used in the prophecies concerning God’s typical chosen people, those who are Israelites according to the flesh. (Lam. 1:3-8,17; Isa. 51:2,3) The kingdom message also reaches and comforts any among these who have ears to hear.

We are not to suppose, however, that the Lord’s commission implies that all who hear the message will be comforted, nor that every individual mourning in the world will even be reached by our efforts—although we should do all we can toward this end. The thought is, rather, that there are no restrictions on the scope of the commission. The whole world is the field of service, and in this time of darkness we are to let our light shine as brightly and as effectively as possible.

FOR A WITNESS

Jesus said that “this gospel of the kingdom” would be preached in all the world for a “witness.” (Matt. 24:14) It is not to be expected that more than this will be accomplished. That feature of the Gospel pertaining to the “high calling” of this age is still reaching one here and there. Every effort should be made to nurture these and encourage them to run zealously for the “mark for the prize of the high calling.” (Phil. 3:14) Indeed, no part of the Word of God should be held back from those who show a desire to learn the way of the Lord more perfectly. As for the people in general, we will find that our efforts have resulted largely in a witness, rather than in bringing large numbers into the full light of Truth.

This will be true with respect to both Jews and Gentiles. The prophecies clearly indicate that the Jews would return to the land of promise mostly in unbelief, and that they would remain in that condition until in the final phase of the great “time of trouble,” when the Lord would intervene to save them. (Jer. 16:14-16; 30:3-11; Zech. 14:1-3) In confirmation of this Paul declares that “blindness in part” was upon Israel “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” The reference here is to the completion of the true church, the “little flock” of the present age, the majority of which are Gentiles, as a result of the nation of Israel rejecting Jesus, their Messiah, at his First Advent.—Rom. 11:25-32; Luke 12:32; Acts 3:13-15

The work of selecting and completing the church, the “Bride of Christ,” is still going on. Thus, the “fulness of the Gentiles” has not yet come in, and

this explains why Israel is still in unbelief. It will remain so until their eyes are opened by the wonderful manner in which God will protect and deliver them in that future hour of their greatest peril. An occasional one may accept the Gospel message, even as is true among the Gentiles, and as has been true of both groups throughout the age. Aside from this, however, let us not expect that our message will result in more than a “witness” to those who hear.

“WITHOUT MURMURINGS”

In our opening text, the apostle admonishes us to “do all things without murmurings and disputings.” How wise is this counsel! The world in which we are to shine as lights is filled with strife and violence, and in such a world our witness will be effective only in proportion to the wholesome influence of love and goodwill among ourselves as we proclaim the message. The Lord’s people should have but one objective in their labor of love, and there should be no reason for strife as together they lay down their lives showing forth the praises of God.

It is only thus, the apostle asserts, that will make us “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke.” If we continue faithfully to let our light shine in this dark and suffering world, sooner or later we are sure to be rebuked by those who sit in darkness. When it comes, however, it should be unmerited so far as any wrongdoing on our part is concerned. Our own conduct should be both harmless and blameless, hence without just cause for rebuke. We will not be reproved by the Lord if we are faithful to his Word and maintain the proper attitude of sympathy, understanding

and love, as we minister the kingdom message to others.

Faithful followers of the Master have never found themselves at home in the world. Its spirit is contrary to their spirit, and it is often a struggle to overcome the disposition of the world. This is especially true today. We are surrounded by turmoil and chaos, by violence and hatred, but let us rise above these in our association with one another and in our attitude toward those to whom we proclaim the message. Paul speaks of the "perverse nation" of his day, and now we have the privilege of shining as lights in a perverse world. We cannot do anything to hinder the fall of this present evil order, nor would we want to, but we can tell the people that a new world order is near.

The Prophet Isaiah, in symbolic language, describes this new world order of Christ's future kingdom of righteousness. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." (Isa. 65:17) Peter confirms this wonderful feature of that kingdom which describes the new social order administered by Christ. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—II Pet. 3:13

We do not know how much longer we will have the privilege of shining as lights in the world. Therefore, let us make use of every opportunity we have, rejoicing in the realization that if faithful in doing the Lord's will now, we will be united with Christ beyond the veil, and together with him, "shine forth as the sun" in the kingdom of our Father. (Matt. 13:43) Then it will not be a case of

lights shining in the darkness, for the darkness will be dispelled by the glory of the “Sun of righteousness,” and the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, “as the waters cover the sea.”
—Mal. 4:2; Isa. 11:9 ■

What of the Night?

Watchman, tell us of the night,
What its signs of promise are.
Trav'ler, o'er yon mountains height,
See that glory-beaming star!
Watchman, does its beauteous ray
Aught of hope or joy foretell?
Trav'ler, yes; it brings the day,
Promised day of Israel.

Watchman, tell us of the night;
Higher yet that star ascends.
Trav'ler, blessedness and light,
Peace and truth its course portends.
Watchman, will its beams alone
Gild the spot that gave them birth?
Trav'ler, ages are its own;
See, its glory fills the earth.

Watchman, tell us of the night,
For the morning seems to dawn,
Trav'ler, darkness takes its flight,
Doubt and terror are withdrawn.
Watchman, will earth's sorrows cease,
And God's will on earth be done?
Trav'ler, yes, the Prince of Peace,
Earth's appointed King, has come!

—Hymns of Dawn

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. N. Alexander

West Newton, PA
September 30-October 1

M. Balko

West Newton, PA
September 30-October 1

M. Ensley

Orlando, FL October 28,29

M. Kerry

West Newton, PA
September 30-October 1

A. Kopczyk

Orlando, FL October 28,29

B. Sweeney

Orlando, FL October 28,29

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Lois Mottie, Greenfield, OH—July 14. Age, 92

Sister Sylvia Golby, Mayerthorpe, AB, Canada—July
28. Age, 88

Brother Earl Tindell, Grove City, OH—August 29.
Age, 92

Sister Irene Zapp, West Newton, PA—September 2.
Age, 93

Brother John Hosu, Baia Mare, Romania—Septem-
ber 8. Age, 75

Sister Elaine Goodrich, Hampton, NH—September
18. Age, 73

Brother Edward Szarkowicz, Pleśna, Poland—Sep-
tember 18. Age, 62

Brother Marek Jakubowski, Lublin, Poland—Sep-
tember 20. Age, 74

Sister Isabelle Baker, Mahomet, IL—September
21. Age, 98

CONVENTIONS

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

WEST NEWTON FALL CONVENTION, September 30, October 1—IN PERSON ONLY—Sewickley Grange Hall, 1011 Greensburg Pike, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139

AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 8—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For hotel accommodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198 or Email: mtwardak@verizon.net. For all other information, contact F. Sansom. Phone: (860) 861-6881 or Email: elshaddai144k@sbcglobal.net

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 28,29—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (321) 442-1862 or Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 4,5—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email: debfarchione@aol.com

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 12—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—NEW CONVENTION LOCATION—Elks Lodge, 175 School Street, Hamden, CT 06518. Contact M. Lacombe. Phone: (203) 910-3091 or Email: merrilylacombe@hotmail.com

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 18,19—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Brand. Email: blatbrand@aol.com

IBADAN THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 2,3—IN PERSON ONLY—Ibadan Place of Fellowship, Coca Cola Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 13,14—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Fountain Hills Community Center, 13001 N La Montana Drive, Fountain Hills, AZ 85268. Contact A. Mengos. Email: samengos@yahoo.com

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL CONVENTION, January 26-28—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Charlton. Email: randscharlton@bigpond.com

*“BY THAT WHICH EVERY JOINT
SUPPLIETH”
Ephesians 4:16*

*On the little things the big depend,
A tiny screw does the main-spring hold,
And without the aid which it doeth lend,
The clock would never the time have told.*

*Now a rudder small will guide a ship;
Without it, tis but a thing adrift,
But with it, tis berthed within its slip,
So the seeming small give a worthwhile lift.*

*And within the Christian Brotherhood
Is there not a place and a need for all?
And the humblest saint it is understood,
By presence and word may encourage all.*

—Poems of the Way

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35

