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Seeds of Discord

“As for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.”
—Genesis 17:20

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, GOD has promised to multiply the seed of Ishmael abundantly, and that he would make him and his offspring a great nation. Ishmael was the firstborn son of Abraham by Sarah’s bondmaid Hagar, and his name means “God will hear.” Abraham’s true wife Sarah would not give birth to Isaac, who was the long-awaited seed of promise, for several more years. It is recorded, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called.”—Gen. 21:12

Later, after Isaac had been born, and when the two young boys were growing up, Ishmael began to manifest seeds of envy and scorn toward his younger brother Isaac. Because of Ishmael’s unruly behavior, both he and his mother Hagar were dismissed from Abraham’s household. From the scriptural account, we read, “Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of

this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.”—vss. 9,10

HAGAR’S CHILD

In the scriptural record, we are given information concerning Sarah’s handmaid Hagar and her son Ishmael. We read, “He [God’s angel] said, Hagar, Sarai’s maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.”—chap. 16:8,9

The Word of God also provides important details concerning the child’s innermost and distinguishing characteristics. It is written, “The angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.”—vss. 10-12

These natural features would prove to be an important prophecy in connection with Ishmael and his future offspring. The Ishmaelites would be recognized for their uncouth and unruly behavior and they would act like wild nomadic men of the desert. The Bible record indicates that their hands would be set continuously and contemptuously against their neighbors and, in turn, their neighbors’ hands would be set against them.

SARAH'S CHILD

Before the birth of Isaac, Abraham continued to cling to the belief that his son Ishmael was the seed of promise and that, through him, God's gracious purposes were to be ultimately accomplished. "Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!"—Gen. 17:18

However, this was not God's intention concerning the long-awaited seed of promise. "God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." (vs. 19) A few years later, and in spite of their advanced ages, Isaac was miraculously born to Abraham by his wife Sarah as the true child of promise. This long-awaited event was the fulfillment of Abraham and Sarah's fondest hopes.

TWO COVENANTS

Centuries later, in his letter to the brethren at Galatia, the Apostle Paul explained that God had arranged that there was a typical, and far grander, significance in connection with Abraham's two wives, Sarah and Hagar, and the birth of their two sons, Isaac and Ishmael. He wrote, "It is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar."—Gal. 4:22-24

The apostle's further explanation provides an important perspective regarding the Heavenly Father's ultimate purpose in connection with the future work of reconciliation for the sin-sick world of mankind. "This Agar [Hagar] is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."—vss. 25-31

The Apostle Paul was pointing to the significance of Sarah and her son Isaac. She represented the Covenant of Grace, and Isaac illustrated our Lord Jesus. The Master would be the true seed of promise who would bless all mankind many centuries later under the administration of his future kingdom of life and peace.

Hagar, on the other hand, served to illustrate the old Law Covenant that was given to Moses. The children of Israel could not keep the Law, nor could they obtain life rights under its divine principles, or under its mediator Moses. Israel thus represented the whole sin-sick world of mankind who are yet in bondage to sin and condemned to death.

Ishmael served to illustrate the Jewish nation to whom God gave his Law. They needed a Savior, the true seed of promise who was willing to die for their sins and to provide them with a new and superior covenant. Under the administration of Christ's future kingdom, a better mediator would be provided who would have the power and authority to carry out our loving Heavenly Father's ultimate purpose for the eradication of sin and death, and to grant life to all who willingly obey the divine law.

ENVY AND HATE

To Hagar, the unexpected birth of Isaac meant the end of her long cherished hopes and ambitions. Ishmael, as the firstborn son, had been regarded by all in the encampment as the heir of Abraham's wealth and the inheritor of the blessings promised to his descendants. Now he was suddenly set aside, and in their disappointment both Hagar and Ishmael began to envy Sarah and her child. This was made manifest when it came time for Isaac to be weaned, because Abraham had prepared a sumptuous feast to mark the very special occasion.

At that time, Ishmael was a young lad, slightly more than a dozen years older than his half-brother Isaac. The scriptural record suggests that the widespread rejoicing had only served to increase his jealousy. Eventually, Ishmael dared to openly mock the heir of God's promise. "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking."

The expression "to mock" means to taunt, laugh, or to make sport of someone. This revealed Ishmael's true nature even as a young lad, and gave a strong

indication of the truth of the prophecy written many years before concerning him. It suggested a very serious trait that could not easily be passed off as an insignificant incident in an otherwise innocent child's behavior. Sarah saw in Ishmael's turbulent disposition a perpetual source of discord, and she appealed to Abraham, urging that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away from the encampment.

Ishmael's taunting of Isaac included an element of envy, no doubt, in connection with his rights as the firstborn son and heir of his father Abraham. This position is made clear in the scriptural record, where we read, "Wherefore she [Sarah] said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." Ishmael's demonstration of his true nature of scorn toward his younger brother Isaac was a significant factor in his dismissal, and that of his mother Hagar, from Abraham's household.

Through the lineage of his mother Hagar, Ishmael was half Egyptian (Gen. 16:1), and also he later married an Egyptian woman. (Gen. 25:13-16). From the very beginning, therefore, the Ishmaelites were partly Semitic and partly Hamitic, which resulted in the establishment of idolatry in his family. Thus separated from his father, and embittered by the strife and contention of a home lacking the love and fear of God, Ishmael was driven to choose the wild marauding life of a desert chief. The powerful nation that descended from him produced a turbulent, heathen people, who were ever an annoyance and affliction to the descendants of Isaac.

A CLASH OF CULTURES

Throughout their history, the nations that arose from Ishmael worshipped other gods rather than our Heavenly Father. This put them in direct conflict with the Israelites who continued faithful to the God of Abraham. The adoption of Islam by the progeny of Ishmael added yet another facet to the marked clash of cultures which has been the historical fact existing between the sons of Abraham's two wives. This conflict continues to manifest itself in the current violent struggle between the regathered people of Israel and the overwhelming majority of their Muslim neighbors, who seek their annihilation.

A VAST EMPIRE

Islam is a militant religion, enjoining its adherents to go out and conquer in the name of Allah. Three centuries after the death of the Islamic prophet Muhammad (High Middle Ages), the Arab Caliphates extended from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to Central Asia in the east. In the later Middle Ages, the traditional center of the Islamic world, from Persia to Egypt, was greatly weakened by Mongol invasions from the east and the Black Death in the west. As a result, a horde of Turkic people from Central Asia under Osman I, was able to conquer most Arabic speaking areas. The resulting Ottoman Empire established Islamic rule over the territories in southeastern Europe, southwestern Asia and North Africa from 1299 to 1923 AD.

The empire began as a small principality in Anatolia which was also known as Asia Minor. It was ruled by the Imperial House of Osman, the name of

the administrative structure of the powerful Ottoman Dynasty. Its territory was later expanded to include all of the district of Anatolia. During the last four hundred years of its existence, the “Caliphate” was claimed by the Turkish Sultans of the Ottoman Empire, and was generally accepted as the de facto leader and representative of the entire Islamic world.

In the mid 14th and 15th centuries the growing empire spread into southeastern Europe, and eventually conquered the capital city Constantinople in 1453, which the Ottomans renamed Istanbul. This important Islamic victory established the status of the empire as the preeminent power in southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. They continued their conquest of Europe into the 16th century, and about 1514 turned their attention to conquering the Near East, Arabia, and North Africa.

At the height of its power in the mid 17th century, the vast Ottoman Empire had spread across North Africa to include modern-day Algeria and southeastern Europe as far as Vienna. They had also taken control of Greece and much of the Slavic-speaking regions. As they continued their quest for power, the Ottomans also conquered the Caucasus region, the Crimea, and all of the Levant. Furthermore, they took control of the Fertile Crescent region which encompasses modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, and Israel. Its eastern territory extended to the present border between Iraq and Iran, and it also included the southern region of Yemen encompassing both sides of the Red Sea.

COLLAPSE OF THE EMPIRE

Although there are many important causes that lead to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it suffered final defeat as a result of World War I (1914-1918), which also marked the end of the prophetic Gentile rule over Israel. The Treaty was signed at Sevres, France, on August 10, 1920. It was dictated by the Allied Powers (The Entente) and the Associated Powers of the Ottoman Empire. The same approach was used as in the dismembering of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed on June 28, 1919.

The plan was to create several new states which would divide the vast Ottoman Empire into ethnically based nation states. Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine would be assigned to Great Britain. Lebanon and Syria would come under French rule. The Dodecanese Islands, Rhodes, and southern Anatolia were to become Italian territory. Thrace and western Anatolia including Izmir/Smyrna would be given to Greece. The Bosphorus, Dardanelles, and the Sea of Marmara which connected the vital waterways between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean were to be demilitarized and internationalized. Saudi Arabia and Armenia would become independent countries.

FOUR PHASES OF RULE

Historians have pointed out that there have been four distinct phases of Middle Eastern rule since the beginning of the 20th century. First was the Ottoman rule, that ended in 1920. It was then succeeded by Britain and France assuming leading roles. This phase lasted from the end of World War I

until the Suez crisis in 1956. Colonial rule was then followed by the rise of independent local states which were largely influenced by the United States and the Soviet Union. This phase lasted until 1991, when the Soviet Union disintegrated into fifteen separate countries. Since the end of the Cold War, America has been the predominant power in the Middle East.

RISE OF NATIONALISM

With the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the focus on the special problems relating to Palestine, there was an accompanying rise of Arab nationalism. The British had promised to open this largely Arab-populated territory as a national homeland for the Jewish people. The immigration of Jews into Palestine began to take place especially after the Nazis took power in Germany in the 1930's. This raised the proportion of the Jewish population from about 10% to 30%, which caused a repeated clash of cultures between the Arabs and Jews. The British had assumed that Palestinians and Jews could live peaceably together in a single state. However, Britain's obligation to the Jews could only be met at the expense of the Arab majority. Palestinian Arabs were united in their refusal to recognize the legality or authority of the British mandate and by their fear of Zionist nationalism and intrusion. Their struggle was largely concerned with self-preservation and self-determination.

The British were caught between the growing forces of Jewish and Arab nationalism, and they tried in vain to placate both sides of the conflict. The seeds were thus sown for the very serious

Israeli/Palestine problems that continue to plague the entire region. On the eve of World War II, therefore, Great Britain began to restrict Jewish immigration into Palestine as well as to curb Jewish purchases of Arab lands in the mandate. Although the United States played only a peripheral role in the formation of the state of Israel, the Arabs see America as Israel's co-sponsor. This perception is the source of deep hostility and mistrust.

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

A clash of cultures has often been associated with Muslim traditions and culture, including the Muslim Brotherhood which is an Islamist fraternity founded in Egypt in 1928. One of its goals is to establish a new Islamic Caliphate in the region. The Caliphate refers to the first system of government that was established in Islam, and which has represented the political unity of the Muslim world for generations. The concern among many is that although it may publicly condemn violence, it is believed to have supported terrorism and other acts of violence to achieve its goals.

As an example, some of our readers may recall the recent federal case that was brought against the "Holy Land Foundation," the largest Islamic charity organization in the United States, with headquarters in Texas. It was originally known as the "Occupied Land Fund" whose primary area of focus was with the Palestinian refugees.

In 2007, federal prosecutors brought charges against the organization because they were suspected of funding various Islamic terrorist groups. Its assets were frozen by the United States as well

as the European Union, and the charity fund was shut down by the United States government following the discovery that it had funded \$12 million to Hamas. Hamas was formed in 1987, at the beginning of the first Palestinian Intifada, and it has roots in the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The group's charter calls for establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in place of Israel.

END OF GOSPEL AGE

As we enter the final years of this present Gospel Age, there is fear that the clash of cultures will end in further violence and turmoil in the Middle East. Of increasing concern is the security of the Jewish people who are being surrounded by hostile neighbors that are intent on the destruction of Israel. In connection with this growing anxiety, the Prophet Zechariah wrote, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."—Zech. 12:2,3

Israel's leaders foresee the possibility of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood pressing for closer ties and cooperation with the Palestinians and its branch Hamas. The Israeli-Palestinian issue has not been solved and will no doubt complicate relations between the newly emerging Arab governments and their people on one side, and the Western nations' hope for stability on the other. We put our trust in

the Heavenly Father who will manifest his mighty power against any and all hostile neighbors who seek to destroy the Israelite nation.

ABRAHAM'S TWO SONS

We learned from the Scriptures that the two brothers, Isaac and Ishmael, and their offspring have taken separate directions. However, when their father Abraham died at the age of 175 years, they met to pay their respects and bury him. From the scriptural record, we read, "These are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost [spirit], and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife."—Gen. 25:7-10

Later, when Abraham's son Isaac died at the age of 180 years, his two estranged sons Jacob and Esau also met to lay their father to rest. "The days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. And Isaac gave up the ghost [spirit], and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."—chap. 35:28,29

RECONCILIATION

Previous to this time, Jacob had been thinking about his brother Esau who he had not seen in several years, and was hoping for a reconciliation of their differences. We read, "Jacob went on his way,

and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom."—chap. 32:1-3

Jacob instructed his messengers to entreat Esau as his Lord or superior, while referring to himself as Esau's inferior. He did this to avoid his brother's recall that he had bought the firstborn rights of their father Isaac. He also desired to give rich presents to his older brother. The messengers returned with the news that Esau would come to meet him, but that he would bring four hundred men with him which troubled Jacob greatly.

From the account, we read, "Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept."—chap. 33:1-4

NO MORE DISCORD

This wonderful scene of reconciliation between the two brothers suggests the future reality of God's purpose in blessing all the families of the earth during Christ's kingdom of righteousness and peace for all men.

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And 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. 21:1-5 ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

OCTOBER 6—“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”—Luke 9:55,56 (Z. ’04-43 Hymn 296)

OCTOBER 13—“I will show thee my faith by my works.”—James 2:18 (Z. ’04-45 Hymn 306A)

OCTOBER 20—“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”—Matthew 10:16 (Z. ’04-91 Hymn 260)

OCTOBER 27—“My times are in thy hand.”—Psalm 31:15 (Z. ’04-237 Hymn 186)

*Come all ye saints to Pisgah's mountain,
Come view our home beyond the tide:
Millennial Canaan is before us,
Soon we'll sing on the other side.
O! there see the "white throne of glory,"
And crowns which the saints then shall gain;
And all who shall love Christ's appearing,
Shall be blessed by his glorious reign.*

*Thence springs of life will e'er be flowing,
Robing the earth in living green,
Visions of beauty rise before us
When the King and the saints shall reign.
Soon our conflicts and toils will be ended;
We'll be tried and tempted no more,
And mankind of all ages and nations
Shall be blessed in that triumphant hour.*

*O! the prospect! it is so transporting,
Reapers hasten the gathering we pray;
We rejoice in the glory that's promised,
And the dawn of millennial day.*

—*Hymns of Dawn*

OBITUARIES

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

**Brother Frank Mancina, Detroit, MI—July 2011.
Age, 86**

**Sister Tammy Kuenzli, Sacramento, CA—August
17. Age, 49**

An Ordered Life

Key Verse: *“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.”*
—Proverbs 29:25

Selected Scripture:
Proverbs 28:1-29:27

FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, we receive much instruction as to living a properly ordered life. In today’s lesson, we will focus on several of these found in chapters 28 and 29. In Proverbs 28:11, we read, “The rich man is wise in his own conceit; but the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.” While the “rich” in this verse can certainly refer to literal wealth, it can also mean the riches of nobility and status in this world and the richness of a worldly spirit. Such thoughts cause many to be wise in their own conceits—full of pride. Pride is an enemy of the servant of God. It must be conquered in order to receive God’s approval in any endeavor of life. Likewise, the “poor” of this verse, although applicable in some cases to the literally poor, are those who are humble, meek, and of a contrite heart—those who are “poor in spirit.”—Matt. 5:3

Just being “poor,” however, is not sufficient to be pleasing to God. This verse indicates that “understanding” and “searching out” are also necessary. Being disposed to meekness and humility will make one more likely than the “rich” to desire understanding from God and to search out his ways. This is because such, unlike the rich, realize their own insufficiencies. It is this meek and humble desire to know and understand God, and

search out his will, that should motivate the Lord's people.

Another lesson is found later in Proverbs 28 relating to the enemy of pride. "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat." (vs. 25) How true this is! Those with the spirit of pride in their heart will desire selfishly to have their own way in life's experiences. For many with this mind-set, it does not matter how others feel, believe, or think. Thus their heart "stirreth up strife" by always wanting its own way.

Such a proud attitude also leaves the Lord out of the picture. That is why the latter part of the verse says, by contrast, that the one who "putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat." In other words, their humble trust in God will be rewarded, "be made fat," in due time by the Heavenly Father. As the Apostle Peter states, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—I Pet. 5:6

The Key Verse of our lesson also points out the need for humble trust in the Lord. If we truly trust in him, we will safely abide under the shadow of his wings. This does not mean that he will spare us from trials and difficulty, but he will be with us in all these things. He will never ask us to bear more than he sees we are able to bear. By contrast, this verse indicates that we should not put our trust in man in his current fallen condition, or act in "fear" of man-made creeds or doctrines. To do so would be a "snare" to anyone desiring to serve God.

By properly understanding and searching out God's will, and developing the necessary qualities of humility, meekness, and trust, we will be properly equipped to live a life ordered in accordance with the Divine purpose. "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes."—Ps. 119:133-135 ■

The Superiority of Wisdom

Key Verse: “*Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*”
—**Ecclesiastes 9:16**

Selected Scripture:
Ecclesiastes 9:13–10:20

THE KEY VERSE OF TODAY’S

lesson is part of several verses in which the wise man, Solomon, tells the story of a small city and relates it to the lesson of wisdom. (Eccles. 9:14-18) Paraphrasing verses 14,15, a powerful ruler surrounded and attacked a small city where only a few people lived. The enemy army was getting ready to break through the city walls. Thankfully, the city was saved because

of the wisdom of a poor person who dwelt there; yet, since he was poor, he and his wisdom were soon forgotten.

The account does not tell us what the poor man did in his wisdom to save the small city. As the Key Verse points out, however, this wisdom was evidently much more powerful than the strength of the ruler who made the attack. Unfortunately, this wisdom was despised from the standpoint that it came from a mere poor man and quickly faded from memory. Yes, fallen man has little inclination to remember the wise words of a poor and insignificant person, even when it is to their benefit. Such should not be the case, however, with God’s people. True spiritual wisdom, based on God’s Word, should always be heeded and remembered, regardless of the

instrument used to dispense it. As the account further states, “The words of wise men are heard [by God] in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war.”—vss. 17,18

Continuing our lesson in Ecclesiastes chapter 10, we find several other references to the superiority of true wisdom. “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand; but a fool’s heart at his left. Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.” (chap. 10:2,3) In somewhat veiled language, Solomon is stating here that those who have true wisdom will be led to do right. Those lacking wisdom will tend toward sin, and their lack of wisdom will be evident to others by the way they live.

Apostle James tells us, “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17) If this be the wisdom we pursue, it will of necessity lead toward holiness and a proper development of the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit.

In still another reference to wisdom, this verse from our lesson states, “If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.” (Eccles. 10:10) Interpreting Solomon’s words, he says that if you have an ax (an earthly implement) that is not sharp, it will take a lot more effort to get it to cut. However, wisdom from God, figuratively speaking, will always be sharp and never lose its edge.

We know that our chief source for knowing and understanding God’s wisdom is his Word, the Bible. Apostle Paul speaks of this in complete harmony with Solomon’s words, even using the metaphor of sharpness. He says in two separate instances, “Take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword.”—Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12 ■

Wisdom for Aging

Key Verse: “*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.*”

—*Ecclesiastes 12:13*

Selected Scripture:
Ecclesiastes 11:7–12:14

YOUNG KING SOLOMON

was granted much wisdom from God as he began his reign over Israel. As time passed, however, he departed from much of the wisdom he had received. Now, in the context of our lesson, Solomon is nearing the end of his life and imparts to us lessons he has learned. Some of these he had learned through the wisdom given him by God. Others were learned in much difficulty as he strayed from righteousness.

One of the lessons Solomon passes on to us is that we should cherish life and rejoice in the years that we have. (Eccles. 11:8) Life is a precious gift from God our Creator. Solomon reminds us also in this verse that in the present life there are many “days of darkness.” These are the days of trial and suffering that all mankind experience to a greater or lesser extent because of their inherited fallen condition. This will be dealt with in Christ’s kingdom, for the penalty imposed upon Father Adam, and its resulting curse upon the earth and its inhabitants, will be lifted. This will allow mankind to learn righteousness in a way that he has never had available to him before. Then man will be free from the sinful, fallen tendencies passed down from generation to generation that are the case now.

Another lesson that Solomon provides us is the importance of following the ways of the Lord from our youth.

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment. Therefore, . . . put away evil from thy flesh. . . . Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” (chaps. 11:9,10; 12:1) To some degree, Solomon was undoubtedly making a reference back to his own life. It is supposed that he was only 20 years old when he began his reign over Israel. It is evident that at first his heart leaned much on the Lord, and he was granted great wisdom as a result. However, even as still a relatively young man, he soon began to depart from the ways of God. He did not fully “remember” the Creator in the days of his youth. Let us heed this lesson even if Solomon did not.

Solomon also brings to our attention a very important doctrinal principle in today’s lesson concerning the condition of death. Using metaphorical language, he speaks of death this way, “Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.” (chap. 12:6) These natural examples all are illustrative of death. Then Solomon states an important truth concerning death, “Then [when a person dies] shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”—vs. 7

Solomon’s words confirm the Genesis account of man’s creation (see Gen. 2:7). God formed man’s body from the elements of the earth, the “dust.” That dust was lifeless until God used his power—the power of the Holy Spirit—to breathe life into the elements he had fashioned into man’s body. Then, and only then, man “became a living soul.” Similarly, as Solomon says, when a person dies, their body returns to the elements, and the breath, spirit, returns to God. The soul dies and waits in the peaceful sleep of death for the resurrection day of Christ’s coming kingdom. ■

Tradition and Love

Key Verse: *“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”*
—*Song of Solomon*
4:16

Selected Scripture:
Song of Solomon
4:8–5:1

spices!” Here, we see Christ symbolically speaking to the effect that it is the character of love which he is especially looking for in his bride. He also mentions “the smell of thine ointments” as perhaps referring to the acts of kindness and service by which the church demonstrates this character of love.

As our lesson continues, the church is symbolically spoken of as being a garden in which many valuable things are grown. “Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.” (vss. 13,14) The fruitage spoken of here symbolizes the fruits and graces of the Spirit by which the

THIS BOOK OF THE BIBLE, the Song of Solomon, is in reality an allegorical representation of the mutual love between Christ and the church—his espoused bride. It is in highly symbolic language that this love story is told. Thus, in the context of today’s lesson we see Christ speaking of his love and care for the church.

In Song of Solomon 4:10, we read, “How fair is thy love, . . . my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all

church is developed and prepared as a bride. (Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7) The herbs, spices, and oils also mentioned as being part of this garden all served various important purposes in Biblical times. They also had pleasing odors. This perhaps represents the services and acts of kindness and sacrifice accomplished on behalf of others by the church. The Apostle Paul speaks of these things as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”—Phil. 4:18

The Key Verse of our lesson points out another feature of this symbolic “garden” of our Christian walk and development. It states that winds from the north and south are called upon to blow upon it, that the spices and fruitage may flow out even more. The wind seems to be a reference to the trials and troubles of life. Some of these are permitted directly from God as he sees our need for certain experiences, thus representing the north wind. In other experiences, Satan may be allowed to try and tempt us along certain lines, representing the south wind. God supervises these experiences too, only allowing the needed lessons to be learned, and never to the hurt of the New Creature. By these winds of trials and testings, the church is developed so that its fruitage “may flow out.”

In Song of Solomon 5:1, we find further symbolic language concerning Christ and the church. “I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” Here we see, again symbolically, Jesus speaking of the fact that he has eaten of the Word of God and drunk of the doctrines of truth. He urges his “friends” to do likewise. The word “friends” really means close associate, or companion. It is the church who are the companions and close associates of Jesus. Indeed, they are seeking to follow in his footsteps. They eat from the same source of truth—the Word of God—as he did. They drink the same wine of sound doctrine that he drank. Let us accept the Master’s invitation to eat and drink “abundantly.” ■

Living as God's People

Key Verse: *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”*
—*Matthew 5:6*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 5:1-12

MATTHEW CHAPTER 5, verses 3-12, contain what is commonly referred to as the Beatitudes. The word “beatitude” means blessedness, or happiness. In these verses, Jesus tells his followers the qualities of character which will lead them to such a state. A Bible student once said that the Beatitudes tell us of

the “attitudes” we want to “be”—coining the phrase “be-attitudes.” We will look briefly at some of the attitudes of heart and mind mentioned here by the Master.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (vs. 3) The “poor in spirit” are those who are humble. Humility is the foundation for the blessedness of our standing before God. It is only as we are divested of self, and self-will, that we can enter into a life of consecration. We must remain in that humbled condition, though, to receive the ultimate blessing of “the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” (vs. 4) When we have humbled ourselves, we realize our undone condition. In this, we figuratively “mourn,” knowing that in our flesh dwells nothing worthy of merit. Brought to this condition of heart, God can now deal with us. Through the merit of his Son’s redemptive sacrifice, God imputes righteousness to those who come to him in humble, unreserved consecration. Thus justified by the merit of Christ’s blood, we

are truly comforted and further blessed.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (vs. 5) To be meek is to be teachable and submissive. While humility is a foundation principle for the Christian, meekness carries this down to the day-to-day experiences of life. This verse speaks of the blessedness of inheriting the earth. Those who are faithful unto death will inherit the opportunity to help mankind—the dwellers of earth—walk up the highway of holiness in Christ’s coming kingdom. (Isa. 35:8) To be prepared for this great work, the Christian now must be meek, teachable, and submissive, in order to receive instruction in the school of Christ, for use in this great work of the next age.

Our Key Verse presents the fourth of these Beatitudes. In our relationship with the Heavenly Father, he desires to feed us with the righteous words of truth found in his Word, the Bible. In fact, it is a requirement that we know of his plans and purposes in order to be faithful. Christian victory will not be attained in ignorance. If we are to be instruments of use to God for all eternity in the heavenly realm we must know the fundamentals of his Divine Plan. Those who have such a hunger and thirst are promised to be filled and to receive the resulting blessedness.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” (vss. 7-9) These three conditions of blessedness can only come about as the Christian is daily developed through experience in the school of Christ. Mercy is an action emanating from love. Purity of heart comes from looking into the pure, glorious character of God and his son Jesus, and emulating them. Being a peacemaker results when we have developed a true sympathy for the poor, groaning creation. Those developed in these three conditions have progressed much in the narrow way and are thus richly blessed. ■

Journeying Toward Canaan

“Because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.”

—Deuteronomy 4:37,38

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

was a typical people, and various aspects of their culture, traditions, and religious observances served as illustrations. Many of these types had a deeper meaning and significant purpose in connection with God’s ultimate plan for the reconciliation of the sin-sick and dying world of mankind. This is especially true in connection with their Tabernacle arrangements, the Levitical priesthood, their sacrificial offerings, and its many other important details and

services. These were designed by God to provide important instruction and guidance for the true followers of our Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age.

THE CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY

This lesson's featured scripture points to another important aspect of the Israelites' experiences pertaining to their journey in the wilderness and their hope to reach the promised land of Canaan. Their travels served to illustrate the very difficult and arduous journey upon which our Lord's consecrated people have entered as they seek the promised antitypical haven of rest.

Our minds are thus drawn symbolically to the footstep followers of Jesus who have accepted the heavenly calling and are striving for an inheritance in Christ's future kingdom. The Apostle Paul explains that these consecrated believers "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), and aspire to new, higher spiritual goals and attainments.

OBSTACLES AND BESELEMENTS

The faithful child of God will encounter obstacles and besetments in their journey to the spiritual Canaan. These will challenge, oppose, and attempt to discourage them in their new spiritual life and growth in Christ Jesus. There are three main obstacles that every child of God will need to overcome. Among these three are the weaknesses and failings of the fallen flesh. Therefore, we need to heed Jesus' instruction, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt. 26:41) The New Creature in Christ Jesus will also be required to overcome the temptations and allurements of the present evil world. (John 16:33) Finally, they will also struggle against the wiles of Satan, the great adversary of the Lord's people, "for the accuser of

our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”—Rev. 12:9,10

A NEW COMMITMENT

There are basic principles that the called in Christ must follow. The Apostle Paul wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

The apostle has also given special instructions to the called in Christ Jesus to fight their individual Christian warfare. “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds).”—II Cor. 10:3,4

We are also provided with our Heavenly Father’s precious Word of Truth that contains the wonderful teachings of the Master. Therefore, we are strengthened to fight this battle, to know his will for us in this narrow way of sacrifice, and to faithfully carry out our lifetime commitment of total consecration. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

As a typical people, the Israelites were commanded to build the Tabernacle for their religious observances. God gave them very explicit instructions, “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the

instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” (Exod. 25:9) This command was later confirmed in the Book of Joshua, where we read, “Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.”—Josh. 22:28

Any violation of God’s arrangements was punishable by death, as seen in the case of the very serious transgression committed by two of Aaron’s sons when it came time for them to carry out the particular religious services that they had been commanded to perform. The scriptural record states, “Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”—Lev. 10:1,2

Like the ancient nation of Israel which served as a type, the consecrated child of God is also engaged in a warfare that will continue to the end of his life’s journey in Christ Jesus. Having made a commitment to our Heavenly Father to be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, there can be no looking back. Should we falter, we will not be prepared for a place in the promised land of Canaan—Christ’s future kingdom. The seriousness of this commitment was addressed by the Master during his earthly ministry when a person who expressed his desire to follow him asked for time to attend to his earthly affairs

first. "Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—Luke 9:62

POWERFUL ENEMIES

It was commanded of the Israelites that they drive out the various powerful nations that were occupying the land of Canaan. They were to dispossess them so that they could enter the land and claim it in accordance with the will of God. The Canaanites had no rights to the land they occupied. They had simply staked off the most fertile areas that they wanted for themselves and then settled on them. The land did not belong to them because God had promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would be given to his seed. From the scriptural record, this is made clear. "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."—Gen. 15:18-21

There heathen people had descended into a revolting depth of immorality, gross iniquity, and idolatry that could no longer be tolerated and needed to be destroyed. There are ten enemies referred to in this particular scripture. Ten has the significance of being a number representing completeness. As the enemies of the Israelites, it was essential that they all be totally dispossessed from the land because of their extreme violation of the most basic principles of righteousness and common decency.

The Canaanite people were engaged in the most corrupt forms of behavior, and this is brought to our attention by J. B. Rotherham in his *Emphasized Bible*. Immediately following his translation of the Book of Joshua, he includes a special “Note” on the “Destruction of the Canaanite Nations.” In his “Note” Rotherham describes the level of sin, degradation, and depravity to which the people of Canaan had fallen. He points to their worship as being obscene, sensual, and of the utmost cruelty. Their sacred places had been turned into brothels, and, in honor of their unholy false deities, women surrendered their virtue. Further to this, the sons and daughters that were born from these unholy rites were consumed by fire as sacrificial offerings to their false gods.

ANTITYPICAL LESSONS

Since the Word of God indicates that the Israelite nation were a typical people, there are important lessons that remain applicable at this end of the age, especially in connection with the significance of the monstrous enemies typified by the inhabitants of Canaan—the antitypical enemies that must be overthrown in our own lives wherever applicable.

We note the following text of scripture, “On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea

side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.”—Deut. 1:5-8

CHRISTIAN WARFARE

This scripture has a symbolic lesson in connection with the true followers of our Lord Jesus. Crossing the River Jordan pictures the Christian’s consecration, and the land of Moab represents the land of the Adversary. Horeb serves to illustrate the mount of sin that must be dealt with. Those who have willingly offered their lives to the Heavenly Father in consecration are weary of sin. In reference to the “Spiritual seed of Abraham” we read, “The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.”—vs. 10

We may consider the experiences of natural Israel, as they also pertain to the consecrated lives of spiritual Israel—the stars of heaven—lessons by which we are edified and built up in Christ Jesus. We have all inherited sin in its many ugly forms, and as consecrated followers of our Lord Jesus, we must be engaged in fighting the Christian warfare to rid ourselves of them. We should strive diligently to make progress in overcoming the weaknesses of our flesh, and to walk in newness of life. As the spiritual seed of Abraham, and thus enrolled in the “school of Christ,” we must learn the necessary lessons that pertain to our life of faith. Each of us will be examined by our loving Heavenly Father to

determine the degree of progress that we have made.

As the “stars of heaven,” we are counted as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. The Apostle John taught, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”—I John 3:1-3

In fighting the fight of faith, we must also subdue our mortal bodies and bring them into subjection to the pure mind of Christ. This means that we bring every thought into subjection, even as the Apostle Paul explained, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (I Thess. 4:3) Sanctification is the process of setting apart our mortal bodies in total consecration to God with the intention of rendering our best possible service to him.

ENEMIES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

There are enemies of righteousness and truth harbored within our mortal fleshly bodies, and we are to remember that natural Israel serves as a type of the little flock of spiritual Israel. In the conquest of Canaan, there were powerful nations that Israel was to dispossess, destroy, and to make no covenant with.

“When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites,

and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.”—Deut. 7:1,2

There are seven nations in this reference, the number seven suggesting perfection. These names, and the land which they occupied, also correspond to the enemies of the New Creation, the antitype of Israel. All who are of the little flock have to battle these many enemies of righteousness. (Luke 12:32) Our Christian warfare, and our battles as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, will involve driving them out so that we may go in and possess the promised land, which represents Christ’s glorious future kingdom.

Further instructions were also given Israel concerning their enemies. “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you,

nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.”—Deut. 7:3-7

FALLEN FLESH TENDENCIES

It is suggested that the various Canaanites who needed to be dispossessed may represent different tendencies of our fallen flesh which have to be overcome and rooted out. For example, the name “Amorite” has the significance of being very strong and very tall. Therefore, those Amorites who dwelt in the mountains and high places may represent those of the Lord’s people who tend toward self assurance, and those who are haughty, or lifted up with pride. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” (Prov. 16:18,19) Spiritual pride is one of the greatest of all enemies to be destroyed by the consecrated child of God.

Those in Canaan who dwelt in the lower parts of the land may represent a jealous disposition, or one that is easily aroused to envy. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.”—Song of Sol. 8:6

Dwellers of the best and most level landscape could represent selfishness, as in those who expect to have, and demand, the best of everything for themselves. Other weaknesses according to our fleshly nature that need to be dealt with include malice, strife, covetousness, and arrogance. Discouragement is another weakness of the flesh that

needs to be continuously brought under control. Many of the Lord's people have been driven from the Truth and a life of sacrifice because they were easily discouraged.

SPYING OUT THE LAND

From Israel's encampment at Paran, Moses sent spies to search out the land of Canaan. This was permitted by God at the request of the Israelites. (Deut. 1:22,23) The spies travelled throughout the land as far north as Hamath and west toward the sea. On returning, although they all agreed that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey, ten of the spies gave a faithless report that put fear into the hearts of the Israelites. Only Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people to go into the land, overcome their enemies, and possess it.

“Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”—Num. 13:30-33

Joshua and Caleb brought back an encouraging report, but the spies who had travelled with them lacked faith in the wonderful providence of God

and were overcome with the spirit of fear. Caleb said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” We also as spiritual Israelites may overcome the giants of fear and discouragement in our lives, and share with our blessed Master in his future kingdom when we reach the heavenly Canaan.

PILLAR OF A CLOUD

God provided for his people Israel in a most remarkable way. “The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”—Exod. 13:21,22

From the scriptural record, we learn that God’s providence was with Israel when they met Amalek for battle. Moses stood on a hill overlooking the site of battle. “It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.”—chap. 17:11

God then showed his powerful hand, as we read, “But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”—vss. 12,13

EXAMPLES FOR US

The Apostle Paul enumerates some important examples of God’s overruling care over his typical people. “I would not that ye should be ignorant,

how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”—I Cor. 10:1-6

We must fight our enemies until we reach the end of our course. However, it is only through our Lord’s strength that we can cast out the enemies that seek to destroy us. Our enemies are mightier than we are, and we rely upon the powerful hand of God to help us.

Throughout our battles with the flesh, the world, and the Adversary, we trust in our Lord who has promised to be with us, and we must manifest his strength and glory in all of our Christian warfare. Therefore, in any victory that may be gained, we must honor the Lord and recognize that it is through his strength, his Word, and his Holy Spirit that we may conquer and possess the long-promised land of Canaan.

“I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.”—Lev. 25:38 ■

*“Let us not be weary in well doing:
for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”
—Galatians 6:9*

Think It Not Strange

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”
—I Peter 4:12,13

SUFFERING OF ANY KIND

is foreign to the natural desires of all God’s intelligent creatures, and the human creation is no exception. One of the blessed assurances given us concerning God’s plan for the human race is that eventually “there shall be no more pain.” This will be at the close of Christ’s Millennial kingdom, when sickness, and even death itself, will have been destroyed, and when all things shall have been made new.— Rev. 21:4,5

We are in a suffering and dying world, and the followers of the Master share in the experiences which are common to all. The divine arrangement for them does not call for a release from suffering simply because they are servants of God, although

they are given assurance of strength to bear their afflictions.

Pain itself is difficult enough to endure, but when there is added to physical suffering an uncertainty as to why it is necessary, or what the cause might be, then it becomes even more difficult to bear. This is frequently the case with the people of God. They are visited by afflictions of one sort or another, and they may wonder what they have done to displease the Lord. They search their hearts and lives for the answer, and while they know that they are imperfect, usually they can find no special reason why they should suffer more than others. So their anxiety, and perhaps even fear, increases the burden of their experience.

When we understand clearly the viewpoint which is presented to us in the Word of God, we will have no cause to wonder and worry about our troubles, whether they be sickness or other afflictions. It is this that the Apostle Peter is explaining to us in our text. "Think it not strange," he says, "concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

NOT STRANGERS

The Greek word here translated "strange" is one that suggests the relationship between the host and a guest, those not members of the same family. Paul used a similar word in his reference to the experience of Abraham when visited by three angels. Paul wrote, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."—Heb. 13:2

The angels were strangers to Abraham, but he welcomed them as guests and entertained them. As Peter explains, we are not to think of our trials as being foreign to us. We are to take them in, so to speak, as a part of our family of experiences and learn to live with them. To take this viewpoint of our afflictions will help a great deal in becoming reconciled to them and in learning the necessary lessons which they are designed to teach us.

Confirming this viewpoint of our trials is the Greek word used by Peter, and translated “happened” in the expression “as though some strange thing happened unto you.” Its literal meaning is “to walk together.” The thought is that when trials visit us and “walk together” with us we are not to think of them as strangers, but to accept such experiences as though they were our friends or even members of our family.

Peter explains that the reason we should not think of our trials as being strange, or alien to us, is that in experiencing them we are partakers of Christ’s sufferings. As the Greek text indicates, we are partners in Christ’s sufferings. In other words, in our trials we are sharing the common experiences of all whom the Heavenly Father is preparing to share in the glory of the kingdom and to partake of the glory of the divine nature.

Since trials are thus so closely related to our hope of glory, we should not consider them as “strange,” but should welcome them into our lives. We should get acquainted with them and learn well the lessons which they alone, perhaps, are best able to teach. We will discover that if we become reconciled to our trials and consider them as a necessary

part of our family of experiences, they will be as “angels,” imparting much valuable information which we need in order to make our calling and election sure.

NOT AN EVIDENCE OF GOD’S DISFAVOR

A critical point of truth to remember is that trials to the Christian are not an evidence of God’s disfavor, but the reverse. Paul wrote, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 3:12) We also read that it is through “much tribulation” that we enter the kingdom. (Acts 14:22) Even if some of our trials may be in the nature of discipline, they are still an evidence of God’s love, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” (Heb. 12:6) “Every son” whom the Heavenly Father receives and loves is subject to training and discipline. Therefore, when trials are permitted for this purpose, we should think of them as evidences of God’s grace, not as being alien or foreign to our needs as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

Of the nonbelievers, David wrote, “Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.” (Ps. 73:7) This is not necessarily true of all who are not running for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. All are not feasting on fatness. There are many in the world who have severe trials, through poverty, sickness, or in other ways. However, at times a Christian is tempted to compare his lot with a worldly friend or neighbor who is doing well along material lines and perhaps wonder why, as a child of God, he himself is having such a difficult time.

THE DEVIL SEEKS TO DISCOURAGE

It is along this line that our adversary the Devil often tries to discourage us. He endeavors to catch us off guard and inject the thought into our minds that if we were truly the Lord's he would take better care of us. This reasoning might well appeal to our fleshly minds, and we would begin to wonder why matters should not go as favorably with us as with our neighbors.

If we are tempted along this line, we should recall the words of Peter, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial" with which we are being tried. True, our neighbors may be carefree and prosperous, and we should be glad if they are. They do not possess, however, the glorious hope of joint-heirship with Christ Jesus that stirs our hearts and enriches our lives. Our neighbors may be getting much out of the present life, but we are made rich by the joys of faith. They are to a great extent without God, having no hope in the world. We have the presence and favor of God and a hope "that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven."—I Pet. 1:4

TRIALS COMMON TO ALL

Paul informs us that Christians do not have any temptations or trials except those common to all. (I Cor. 10:13) This is very true. The entire human race is suffering and dying. Because of this, all experience mental and physical suffering. All, sooner or later, sicken and die. There is a common heritage of trial which is experienced in every family, and by every member of the dying race.

Individually, nearly all of us experience intermittent periods of carefree and happy existence, and it

is fortunate that this is so. No one knows when a severe trial will strike. When we give ourselves to the Lord to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we are not translated out of this general situation of the world. Instead, the Lord uses these common experiences of man for the testing of our faith and patience, and for our disciplinary training.

The general "ministry of evil" is being utilized by the Lord for the good of all mankind. With the world in general there is as yet no compensating grace of God to offset the trials. The value of these experiences will not be realized by the world until their day of judgment during the thousand years of Christ's future kingdom.

Our trials as members of the fallen race are neither more nor less severe on the average than those of the world, but we have a wonderful burden-bearer who is ever present to console us and give us strength. The Lord said to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (Exod. 33:14) This is no less true of the Lord's consecrated people today. In addition, as Paul reminds us, we have a sympathetic High Priest under whom we serve who was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities."—Heb. 4:15

IN ALL POINTS

Paul also explains that Jesus was tempted in all points "like as we are, yet without sin." (vs. 15) Jesus was not himself a sinner nor did he yield to the temptations which were presented to him by Satan and by the sinful world, nevertheless, he was in this world. He was surrounded by suffering, and he experienced the hardships which are common to

man. Therefore, he knows all about our afflictions and is able to succor us in our trials.

FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE

The sufferings of Christ in which we are invited to share are, in part, the bitter persecutions which came upon him, and which resulted in his death. He was persecuted because of his faithfulness in proclaiming unpopular truths and in exposing popular errors. We are to follow his example in this. While today the persecuting spirit manifests itself along more refined lines such as ostracism and cold indifference, we will surely feel the opposition of those who sit in darkness if we faithfully let our light shine.

Jesus also suffered weariness of the flesh because of his faithfulness to his vows of consecration. We have the same opportunity. How encouraging it is to realize that today there are still many of the Lord's consecrated people who, in addition to spending necessary time and strength meeting the temporal responsibilities of life, are happy to work "overtime" in the service of the Lord.

When the unconsecrated are through with their necessary daily toil they are free to seek enjoyment or relaxation where it suits them best. The greatest pleasure of the consecrated heart is to seek out ways and means of devoting time and strength directly in the service of the Lord. There are many avenues of service, and the consecrated today are finding these and utilizing their strength as faithfully as possible and in the spirit of rejoicing, just as Jesus did. Oftentimes, perhaps, Jesus would have appreciated the privilege of a little more rest. This is also true of the Lord's people today. However, he

was laying down his life and we are laying down our lives with him; so, we rejoice in our weariness because it is a part of his suffering.

Jesus also suffered sympathetically because of being in the world, though he was not “of” the world and its generally fallen spirit. Being himself perfect, the sinful and imperfect things of the world would be even a greater trial to him. The sickness with which he was surrounded bore down heavily upon his sympathetic shoulders. When Jesus stood by the tomb of Lazarus he wept in sympathy for the family and for the whole dying world.

WE SHOULD ALSO MOURN

We also participate in these sufferings of Christ, although our minds are more or less dulled by inherent imperfections. We cannot enter into the sufferings of mankind with the same degree of sympathy and understanding that Jesus did. However, it was our revolt against sin which led us to the Lord. Having consecrated ourselves to his service, and having received of his Holy Spirit, we are to some extent in the same relative position that Jesus occupied. Thus we share in his sufferings along this line.

Jesus spoke of this, when he said, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” (Matt. 5:4) This could be true only of the consecrated who mourn sympathetically for the sorrows of others, as Jesus did. Of Jesus, it is written that he was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”—Isa. 53:3

Jesus was not grief-stricken because of his own illness, or poverty, or for any of the reasons which ordinarily mar human happiness. Rather, he was

mournful because of the sorrow with which he was surrounded. His weeping at the tomb of Lazarus was an evidence of this, and an indication of the burden of love and sympathy which continually bore down upon his heart.

Are we, from this standpoint, suffering with Jesus? Does a part of our daily trial consist of the fact that we are pained by the sorrow of others? If this be true, we have one of the most outstanding witnesses of the Spirit that we are the children of God. Surely, we should not think such trials strange, but should rejoice indeed if we have this evidence of Christlikeness.

LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN

It was because Jesus loved the world that he suffered with the people. This will be the basis of our sympathy toward the poor groaning creation. This feeling will be even more keenly felt toward our brethren in Christ. Concerning this, Paul wrote, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."—Phil. 2:1,2

Just as Jesus passed through experiences similar to those which try us, and is now able to understand and succor us, this should also be true among ourselves. We are all running in the same narrow way of sacrifice. We are all living in the same unfriendly world. We are all subject to the same trials and temptations. Should not our hearts go out to one another in sympathetic understanding and in the spirit of true comfort and helpfulness?

This is the attitude of the truly consecrated. If we do not find such a spirit surging up in our own hearts we may know that we are lacking in true Christian growth. Concerning the brethren in Galatia, Paul wrote, "Ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." (Gal. 4:15) Paul's eyesight was seriously impaired, and was a great trial to him. Evidently the Galatian brethren realized this, and in their spirit of sympathy made Paul feel that, if it had been possible, they would have given him their eyes.

A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

To realize that our brethren in Christ regard us with genuine sympathy and in the spirit of helpfulness, strengthens us to face the difficulties of the narrow way. John said that we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. This surely involves the outpouring of our love and our sympathy in words and acts of kindness to one another in times of need.—I John 3:16

The very fact that we are laying down our lives as Jesus did should remind us not to think it strange when we are surrounded with hardships and trials. Such experiences provide the flames necessary to consume our sacrifice. The Scriptures admonish that whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, all is to be done as unto the Lord. (I Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17) We can also consider all our hardships as indirectly related to our partnership in Christ's suffering. To view our common tasks and our trivial cares from this standpoint will transform them into hallowed experiences. In these we will see the hand of the Lord directing our

destiny and causing all things to work together for our good.

MADE PERFECT

We are told that Jesus was made perfect by the things which he suffered. He was trained for the position which he now occupies as our sympathetic High Priest and as the head of the royal priesthood which later will succor the whole world of mankind. He was tested in all points as a New Creature in the same manner in which we are tested as New Creatures.

During this present Gospel Age, the church is being made perfect, or trained, to be associated with Jesus in dealing with the sin-cursed world. Because we are by nature sinners, it means that “The Christ” will be able to deal sympathetically with the people during the future mediatorial reign.

Since Jesus died in order to provide life, it might be expected that those who accept the provision of his blood would immediately be released from suffering and death. This is not the case. Instead, they are invited to suffer and die with Jesus, sacrificially. So when we suffer, think it not strange. The Lord could deliver us from suffering, but from this experience he wants us to learn the great need of all the human race who are undergoing similar pain. It is our training and the way we are being “made perfect” as a part of the world’s sympathetic priesthood.

MANY HARDSHIPS

The hardships of the world are many and varied. Being in the world, we share in all of these. Again, think it not strange, for in the great economy of

God, he is using these distresses to enrich our spiritual life and to prepare us for glory. To the unconsecrated a bitter experience may be tragic. To us it can be an instrument in the Lord's hand to teach us sympathy for the millions who are similarly suffering. Thus it will make us better prepared for our future work as part of the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Those who understand the divine plan of salvation know why God permitted evil. They know that it was because he wanted his human creation to learn valuable lessons from the experience. Do we always stop to think, when we are passing through severe trials which come as a result of the permission of evil, that in our case the Lord is using these experiences in a special way? Do we remember that by them he is training us to be the teachers of the world of mankind, to help them understand the full meaning of the reign of sin and death?

This is the divine purpose of our calling and of permitting us to suffer even as the world suffers. Think it not strange, therefore, that we should find ourselves in a furnace of affliction. Rejoice, rather, that we are a partner in the sufferings of Christ and that our trials are being used for the same purpose as were his.

To keep this thought in mind will help us greatly to bear our trials, but merely to bear them is not enough. The Lord wants us to bear them patiently and, in spite of them, to be rejoicing Christians. This also is possible through faith—faith in the promises of God to strengthen us in our weakness and to guide our otherwise uncertain steps.

HE ALSO SUFFERS

Concerning his typical people, the Lord said that when they were afflicted he also suffered. (Isa. 63:9) Surely this is no less true with us. If our faith can grasp this fact it will help to make every ache and pain—of mind, or heart, or body—a sacred experience of priceless value in preparing us for that high position for which we have been apprehended by God. This will be true regardless of the specific cause of our distresses, for they are all being utilized by the Lord in connection with the trial of our faith.

Think it not strange, then, concerning your fiery trials. Remember that your Heavenly Father knows all about them and, if you will tune your ear to his Word, you will hear him say, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (II Cor. 12:9) Also, “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Josh. 1:9) Because the Lord fulfils these and his many other promises in our day-by-day experiences, we can rejoice in him and in the power of his might. Our joy in the Lord will abound and “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” will be our daily and blessed portion.—Phil. 4:7

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”—I Pet. 4:12,13 ■

Humility Before Honor

“The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility.”
—Proverbs 15:33

THE GRACE OF HUMILITY

is an important mark of the consecrated child of God. Jesus taught his disciples, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 18:3,4

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

This wise counsel is echoed by the Apostle Peter. He wrote, “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and

giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”—I Pet. 5:2-6

The Apostle Paul also said, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:3-5) Thus our Lord Jesus, and the Apostles Peter and Paul, have all expressed the admonition in our featured scripture, that “before honour is humility.”

LESSONS FROM THE MASTER

This lesson was also set forth by Jesus in a parable. “When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke 14:8-11

SATAN’S PRIDE

This attitude of humility is in direct contrast with the aspiration of Lucifer. In this connection, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will

ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.”—Isa. 14:12-14

In keeping with the divine principles, the time will come when Lucifer, who sought to exalt himself, shall be forever abased in the minds of all God’s intelligent creatures, and will ultimately be destroyed. “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”—vss. 15-18

CONTRASTING ATTITUDES

Jesus taught a powerful lesson in humility by contrasting the attitudes of the Pharisee and the publican. “He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall

be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”—Luke 18:9-14

The Pharisees were the religious leaders in Israel while the publicans were looked upon as being outside of God’s favor. Many of them collected taxes for the Roman government, and to the Israelites this made them appear as traitors to God’s people.

The parable states that the Pharisee “stood and prayed thus with himself.” He was assuring himself of his own righteousness and his own superiority over the publican who had also gone up to the Temple to pray. There has always been much of this type of praying, but we can be sure that our loving Heavenly Father pays little heed or attention to such prayers. The publican had the right attitude, the attitude of humility before God. He stood “afar off” and “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” This man knew that he was a sinner and, therefore, believed he was unworthy of receiving God’s blessing. He realized that the only basis upon which he could be blessed by God was that mercy would be shown to him. This publican had the type of character to whom the ministry of John the Baptist had appealed. When the way was pointed out to him he repented. In the parable, Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

The word “justified” as it has been used in this scripture, and with respect to the publican, does not have the same connotation that describes the life-justification of the consecrated followers of our

Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age. This type of justification is possible only through the merit of the shed blood of Christ. The lesson for us, as taught in this parable, is that the publican's humility and repentance was pleasing to God.

GOD IS HUMBLE

The great God of the universe is humble, as recorded by the psalmist. "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people."—Ps. 113:4-8

Our loving Heavenly Father, symbolically speaking, has looked down upon the earth, has seen our need, and was willing to help us. When our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed the divine law and were sentenced to death, God could have turned away from them and their children forever. However, he humbled himself and made provision for them to be given another opportunity, under more favorable circumstances. It was his abundant love that provided us a Savior, our Lord Jesus.

OUR ATTITUDE OF HEART

Our attitude toward God should likewise be one of humility. We must humbly accept the experiences that our Heavenly Father's wisdom sees best to give us for a place in Christ's future kingdom. This consideration should awaken us to a realization that we need to develop a proper attitude of heart as the Lord's people. Our Lord wants us to be humble

toward each other, and to learn the much needed lessons that he provides for our growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.”—I Cor. 12:18

This is true with respect to “The Christ,” and it is also true of each one of the Lord’s consecrated people. Few will have difficulty in accepting with rejoicing the Lord’s appointments for the church as a whole. We all rejoice in Jesus as our Head and Master, and recognize and honor the twelve apostles that were chosen to assist us in our walk in newness of life. We acknowledge with thanksgiving and rejoicing the many rich blessings that we have received through the appointments of the Master.

WHAT THE LORD REQUIRES

The Prophet Micah wrote, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic. 6:8) To walk humbly before God is to hearken diligently to his Word and, with a ready mind and heart, obey his every precept. In Jesus, we have the perfect example of what it means to walk humbly before God. He was willing and ready to die as the world’s Redeemer. However, he purposely avoided those who were seeking to take his life until he knew that his Heavenly Father’s time had come for his sacrifice to be consummated in death.

Jesus was humble in acknowledging that there were some things he did not know. One of these concerned the time of his Second Advent. He gladly acknowledged that this was information which, at

the time, was possessed only by his Heavenly Father. We read, “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”—Matt. 24:34-36

Jesus’ humility was also displayed in his willingness to render small services. He was just as zealous in proclaiming the message to the Samaritan woman at the well as he was in preaching to the multitude at the Sea of Galilee. How very appropriate it is that we accept Jesus’ invitation—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”—Matt. 11:28-30

We should thus learn of Jesus with the view of being like him. Jesus freely acknowledged that of himself he could do nothing; and that it was only because the Father worked in and through him that he was able to do the works which he had been sent into the world to do. (John 5:19,30) We should realize that the same thing is true of us. Although we do not have the same outstanding works to do, we realize that even the little things assigned to us would be impossible of accomplishment except as the Heavenly Father blesses us with his wisdom and strength.

HE REVILED NOT

Jesus was also humble in dealing with his enemies. Peter wrote, “Even hereunto were ye called:

because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”—I Pet. 2:21-25

The natural tendency of the fallen human nature, is to strike back when attacked, if in no other way than in an attempt to vindicate oneself. But Jesus did not do this, and we are to be like him, humbly submitting to whatever misrepresentation may be heaped upon us. This is a severe test of humility; but, by the Lord’s grace, his people can overcome.

Let us remember that our exaltation is not to be made manifest on this side of the veil, but on the other side and in the spiritual creation. The Apostle Paul proclaimed, “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom. 2:7) Only those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God may expect to be exalted by him in due time. ■

“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.”—Proverbs 2:10,11

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

K. Fernets

Orlando, FL October 29, 30

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

M. J. Balko

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2

E. Blicharz

Atlanta, GA October 16

R. Carnegie

Grand Rapids, MI October 8,9

R. Charlton

Orlando, FL October 29,30

M. Davis

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

A. Fernets

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

R. Gorecki

Grand Rapids, MI October 8,9

L. Griehs

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

K. Humphreys

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

E. Kalinski

Detroit, MI October 30

B. Keith

Grand Rapids, MI October 8,9

H. Montague

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2

J. Parkinson

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

G. Passios

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2
Orlando, FL 29,30

D. Rice

San Luis Obispo, CA
October 15,16

T. Trzeciak

Pittsburgh, PA October 1,2

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, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 1,2—Sewickley Grange Hall, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139 Or contact L. Mlinek. Phone: (724) 689-8733

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, October 8,9—Kenowa Hills Middle School, 3950 Hendershot Avenue, Grand Rapids, MI. Contact J. Houlmont. Phone: (231) 972-4259

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONVENTION, October 15,16—Masonic Temple, 859 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Contact M. Allard. Phone (805) 773-2962

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 29,30—NEW LOCATION—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 831-2098

JERSEY CITY PRE-THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, November 20—The Loyalty Lodge, 1912 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ 07083. Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (718) 961-4437 or (917) 554-2348

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Send Out Thy Light

*Send out thy light and truth, O Lord;
Let them our leaders be
To guide us to thy holy hill
Where we shall worship thee.
Send out thy light o'er land and sea,
Till ev'ry heart shall bow to thee.*

*Send out thy light and truth, O Lord,
Where sin's dark shadows fall;
Arouse the soldiers of the cross
To heed the trumpet's call;
Send out thy truth where error reigns,
And cleanse away its crimson stains.*

*Send out thy light and truth, O Lord;
The blessed tidings spread
Till, by those sweet evangel tones,
All nations shall be led;
Send out thy light, O Morning Star,
And beam upon the isles afar.*

*Send out thy light and truth, O Lord,
And let the beams of day
Break through the dismal gloom of night
And guide men in thy way.
Send out thy truth, O speed the hour
When all the world shall know its power.*

*Send thy light,
Thy light and truth, O Lord.*

—Hymns of Dawn

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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 the 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