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Celebrating Liberty

*“The creature
itself also shall be
delivered from the
bondage of
corruption into the
glorious liberty of
the children of
God.”*

—Romans 8:21

EVERY YEAR ON JULY 4TH

the people of America celebrate the “Declaration of Independence” that was adopted by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. This date is one of the most important milestones in the history of the United States, and this year commemorates the two hundred and thirty-fifth anniversary of that great event.

The newly-founded United States quickly became a refuge for countless numbers of people who arrived in this country from every corner of the earth. People from many countries came to the new American nation to seek liberty and freedom from oppression, and to forge a better life for themselves and their families. Some came to escape persecution for religious beliefs in their former homelands, and many were searching for safety and the hope of living in a free society and under the provisions of a meaningful Constitution. There is

little doubt that those who read this magazine have family connections that date back to an ancestor that arrived on the American shores from some other place.

SOCIAL INEQUITIES

During the closing years of the eighteenth century, citizens of Great Britain's thirteen American colonies became increasingly dissatisfied with unfair taxation and various other social inequities that were being imposed upon them by a largely unsympathetic governing body located thousands of miles away in England.

The quest for freedom sparked a spirit of revolt that culminated in the War of Independence. The American Revolutionary War began in 1774 and lasted until September 3, 1783, when British colonial rule over its thirteen American colonies ended with the Treaty of Paris. The treaty was officially signed by representatives of both Great Britain and France in recognition of the newly-formed thirteen United States of America. This great event was the first of its kind and became very significant in relation with other historical revolutions that were soon to follow.

END OF ABSOLUTE MONARCHY

A few years after the American Revolution had given birth to the new nation in America designed to provide freedom for its people, an even greater and more widespread revolt began to take shape in France. The French Revolution lasted from 1789 to 1799 and brought an end to France's long standing rule of absolute monarchy, known as the "Ancien Regime." It was a very dangerous and

complicated time. The French purged their nation of the old aristocracy during a “Reign of Terror” that brought down the long-established autocratic rule of Louis XVI, who was executed by the National Convention.

One of the main reasons for the French Revolution was a growing economic crisis resulting from many years of aristocratic gluttony, mismanagement, and waste, compounded by the huge cost of France’s Seven Years’ War and involvement in the American struggle for freedom. Ruinously high taxes were levied on the peasants and middle classes to support the sumptuous lifestyles of the king, the aristocracy, and the church. It was a general time of growing discontent that was made worse by the fact that hunger was rampant amongst the peasants and working people.

The rising middle class in France had attained a unique social and economic position and sought equity with the honored class. During the last decade of the eighteenth century, there was increasing governmental interference in the private lives of the French people, including the persecution of religious minorities. The people, influenced by ideas of freedom and equality from the writings of Diderot and Voltaire, were also critical of the monarchy’s lack of leadership. The government was seen as self-serving and inefficient, and the legal system was generally considered antiquated and biased. The French monarchy had become the symbol of waste and corruption, and, as the people sought to strengthen their economic status, they also wanted to free themselves from the burden of the aristocracy.

THE BASTILLE

Bastille is a French word meaning stronghold, or bastion, and refers to an ancient notorious prison located in Paris. It had a secret and sinister reputation, and housed not only common criminals, but also people who had been imprisoned for religious reasons, such as the Huguenots, as well as political prisoners, persons who spoke too loudly of the rights of man, or who were involved in the preparation and printing of forbidden pamphlets.

The Bastille was a symbol of the absolute monarchical power of King Louis XVI and the long standing “Ancien Regime” in France. On July 14, 1789, a huge crowd of people gathered to storm the prison, thus marking the beginning of the French Revolution.

In the creation of the Republic in 1792, the red, white, and blue tricolor flag became the symbol of the new French Republic which was centered around its three main ideals, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity for all its citizens.

NOBLE EFFORTS

The founding fathers of the newly created United States of America used their influence wisely in an effort to bring a new sense of liberty and freedom to the people. They are to be commended for their work in establishing an equitable system of self-government based on the Constitution. The people of France had also been set free from long-standing abuse under the power of absolute monarchy. However, their revolution degenerated into a reign of terror that marks the most devastating period in the history of the country.

Each of these two major upheavals provided a new sense of freedom for its citizens, but neither could bring freedom from the most terrible bondage which grips man—the bondage of sin and death—nor could they provide life for the people.

THE FEATURED SCRIPTURE

The featured scripture which appears at the heading of this article is taken from the Apostle Paul's letter to the brethren of the church at Rome. (Rom. 8:21) Here he speaks of the bondage of sin and the corruption of death wherein the whole family of mankind now suffers and which, finally, ends in the grave.

The context of this scripture provides God's wonderful promise of the ultimate deliverance from the sentence of death which has been inherited by the whole human race since sin was introduced in the Garden of Eden by our first parents, Adam and Eve. Paul wrote, "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."—Rom. 8:19-23

The apostle explained that the whole human creation is yet waiting for our Lord's future kingdom

of life and blessing that will soon be made manifest to all people. Under the administration of that kingdom with the glorified Christ, all of the obedient of mankind will be delivered from the bondage of sin, corruption, and death into a lasting and glorious liberty. He further pointed out that mankind will continue to groan and travail until the completion of “The Christ,” which he identifies as possessing the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit of God.

To this special class being called from the world during this present Gospel Age, John said, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

ISRAEL IN BONDAGE

The experiences of the children of Israel while in Egypt illustrate the bondage of sin and death that holds captive the entire human family. God had prepared a place for his people in Egypt, and had sent them there to serve as a type of something greater. Throughout the entire lifetime of all of the first generation who had gone into Egypt, he provided them with the very best land and gave them great temporal prosperity.

THE FIRST GENERATION

The scriptural record provides the background information concerning this great event. “Now these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt; every man and his household came with Jacob. Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan, and Naphthali, Gad, and Asher. And all the souls that came

out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls: for Joseph was in Egypt already. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.”—Exod. 1:1-7

JOSEPH

Joseph was especially chosen by God to further the interests of the Israelite people and to serve his Egyptian master. “Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.”—Gen. 39:1-6

THE SECOND GENERATION

The lives of the Israelites were about to change, from one of prosperity to one of bitter oppression

at the hands of their taskmasters. Their population had increased abundantly so that, during the second generation, the land of Goshen had become filled with them.

There had also been a regime change, and although the new Pharaoh of the dynasty had no doubt heard of Joseph, he did not know him or appreciate his many contributions to Egypt and its people. Neither had the new generation of Egyptians been witnesses to the gratitude their forefathers had known toward Joseph. They began to fear lest the prosperous Israelites who were living in their midst might rise up against them, or ally themselves with Egypt's enemies.

BITTER OPPRESSION

The account reads, "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there fall-eth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land."—Exod. 1:8-10

However, it seems that the common sufferings of the Israelites bound them closer together as a people and kept them separate and distinct from the Egyptians. It also served to keep them apart from the Egyptian religious beliefs and principles.

We next read, "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them,

the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.”—Exod. 1:11-14

The new Pharaoh did not want to destroy the Israelites as a people, nor to drive them away, but merely to hold them in check and to prevent their further increase in population. His plan was to discourage them by overworking them and forcing them to live under very difficult conditions. The scriptural record shows that these repressive measures were not successful and the Israelites continued to increase in numbers.

SLAVE LABOR

With the new Pharaoh there came new ambitions, especially in building projects. These included building new cities, grandiose public buildings and edifices, and other expensive endeavors. It was in connection with this ambition that the Pharaoh realized that he could use the Israelites as his slave laborers, and that they could do much for the enrichment of the Egyptians by furnishing labor at the mere nominal cost of the meanest sustenance. It was decided to take the youngest, most rugged and healthiest males from their homes and families for service in the Egyptian public works. They served without pay and were forced to survive on very scanty rations. Additionally, they were put under taskmasters who were

directed to work them so hard as to make their lives burdensome.

“SO SHALL THY SEED BE”

Although the Israelites' lives had become bitter with hard bondage, God had promised them that their seed would multiply. “He [God] brought him [Abram] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” (Gen. 15:5) “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”—Gen. 22:17

God's promise to his people was therefore being fulfilled. The record showed that there had been only a handful of 70 persons that entered Egypt. When it came time for them to leave Egypt, about 215 years later, there were 600,000 men, not including women and children. “The children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children.”—Exod. 12:37

It is reasonable to infer that the females of the Israelite company that were not included in the count were no doubt as many more. If there were an average of two children in each family, the total number would then be approximately 2,400,000. In addition, there were servants and other helpers within the various households that added to the number that left Egypt. “A mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.”—vs. 38

PHARAOH AS SATAN

When man's first parents Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden, they were tested as to their loyalty to God and his law. Because of Satan's temptation, they disobeyed God and received the penalty for sin which was death. All mankind has subsequently come under that sentence. Pharaoh serves as an illustration of Satan, the great tempter of mankind. The bitter lessons of bondage and servitude suffered by the Israelite nation while living in Egypt serve to illustrate the whole human creation that is in bondage to the death penalty.

It is written, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."—Job 1:6-12

From this scripture, we learn that God allowed Satan to tempt man, but limits were placed on him in connection with God's ultimate plans for his servants. From the early chapters of the Bible, this is confirmed. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15) The Apostle Paul also speaks of the time when Satan's head will be crushed. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."—Rom. 16:20

FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE

God delivered a series of plagues to convince Pharaoh, who illustrates Satan, to let the Israelites go free from Egyptian bondage. It wasn't until the tenth and final plague in which all of the firstborn in Egypt died that they were finally permitted to leave.

Pharaoh, however, changed his mind and pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea. "It was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh,

and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.”—Exod. 14:5-9

God gave instructions to Moses for the deliverance of all the people of Israel. He said, “Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.”—vss. 16-18

Thus were the people delivered from Pharaoh’s grasp. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them.

“But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that

great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.”—vss. 26-31

“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.”—chap. 15:1,2

CELEBRATING THE TRUE LIBERTY

Pharaoh represents Satan, and Egypt illustrates Satan’s world dominion of sin and death. Satan’s army pictures his servants of evil and oppression. The children of Israel typify all who will be blessed under the terms of Christ’s future kingdom who obey the laws of God that will be established at that time. Celebrating the true deliverance from the bondage of sin and death will be a most glorious episode in Christ’s kingdom of liberty for all soon to come.

“The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”—Rom. 8:21 ■

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God Reacts to Disobedience

Key Verse: *“The children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel.”*
—Joshua 7:1

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 7:1-8:29

GOD’S REACTION TO DIS-
obedience sometimes seems harsh when examined through the experiences of his people as recorded in the Scriptures. When we recall, however, that he is the Creator of all things, he has every right to expect his creation to abide by his laws. On the contrary, when his people obey his commands, the scriptures indicate that great blessings follow. Such is the account of today’s lesson.

After successfully conquering Jericho, our Key Verse states God detected that one of the Israelites had taken some spoils of the victory—“the accursed thing”—and kept them as his own. The first hint that there was a problem came as the Israelites went out to battle their next enemy, the city of Ai. When Joshua sent men to view the city, they came back and reported that only two or three thousand would be needed to conquer Ai, “for they are but few.” (Josh. 7:3) Joshua believed their report and sent only three thousand men, who were summarily routed by the

men of Ai and fled.—vss. 4,5

When Joshua heard the news of Israel's defeat, the account says he "rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the even-tide." (vs. 6) Joshua then prayed to God as to why such a thing would be allowed to happen to his chosen people Israel. God's response was that the defeat at Ai was due to the "accursed thing" that had been taken from Jericho and hidden in the house of one of the Israelites. It would be necessary to determine who had the accursed spoils of Jericho. The pronouncement given concerning this person was, "he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all he hath." (vs. 15) Only then, God said, would Israel be able to stand before their enemies again.

In verses 18-23, the record states that Achan, of the tribe of Judah, was the guilty person, for hidden in his tent were a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, all of which he had taken as spoils from Jericho, contrary to the word of the LORD (see Joshua 6:17-19). Achan, together with the silver, the wedge of gold, and the garment, his sons and daughters, his oxen, his asses, and his sheep, were taken to the valley of Achor and destroyed.

True to his word, God then provided a great victory to Israel, they having now obeyed his word and destroyed "the accursed thing." Now they went back to Ai once again, not with three thousand men, but thirty thousand. Joshua positioned all but five thousand on the north side of the city, and when the men of Ai went out to them as before they made as though they would flee. However, Joshua had positioned the other five thousand Israelites on the west side of the city. When the men of Ai pursued those on the north, the five thousand went in and routed the city, burning it. The men of Ai fled back to the city, but it was too late. They and their city were destroyed by the hand of the LORD.—Josh. 8 ■

Listen to God's Judges

Key Verse: *"Yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so."*
—Judges 2:17

Selected Scripture:
*Judges 2:11-19;
21:25*

AFTER THE DEATH OF THE Israelites' great leader Joshua and those of his generation, "there arose another generation after them, which knew [observed] not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim." (Judg. 2:10,11) "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."—chap. 21:25

Such was the part of Israel's history commonly referred to as the period of the judges. This period was later referred to by the Apostle Paul, when he said,

"He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet." (Acts 13:20) Although God had expected Israel to follow him as their leader, they continually forsook him, seeking after other gods. Because of this, God allowed them to be delivered into the hands of their enemies time and time again. Whenever this happened, only when they were in the most dire condition, did they finally turn back, albeit temporarily, to the LORD. For this purpose, and in his great

mercy, “the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.”—Judg. 2:16

Our Key Verse indicates that, after being delivered by their judges, the Israelites did not listen to their counsel and quickly returned back to the heathen gods around them. The account further states, “Yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; but they did not so. And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.”—vss. 17-19

These verses identify one of the key shortcomings of the Israelites, which in a sense mirrors the shortcomings of mankind in general—“They ceased not from their own doings.” God expects those who are striving to be of his chosen people to endeavor to the best of their ability to seek and do his will in all things. This means to cease from doing one’s own will. Apostle Paul describes this as entering into the rest of God. “He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” (Heb. 4:10) If the Israelites had been more faithful in ceasing from their own doings, they would have enjoyed the favor of God and the resulting rest and peace which it affords. However, because they continually wanted to do things “their way,” they found themselves in trouble time after time, with deliverance coming only at the hand of the judges God had mercifully provided. ■

Use God's Strength

Key Verse: *"When the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab."*
—**Judges 3:15**

Selected Scripture:
Judges 3:7-31; 21:25

TODAY'S LESSON FOCUSES

on two experiences of the deliverance of God's people Israel which followed periods in which they had served other gods. In the first case, they "served Baalim and the groves" (Judg. 3:7), and, as a result, were delivered to the king of Mesopotamia and served him for eight years. Finally, "when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD" (vs. 9), he raised up a faithful deliverer, Othniel. "And the spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war."—vs. 10

Because of Othniel's faithfulness, the king of Mesopotamia was defeated and "the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died." (vs. 11) One might think that this long period of rest, resulting from God's appointment of Othniel as a judge, would have had the effect on the Israelites of bringing their hearts into closer conformity with the purposes and commandments of God. Such, however, was sadly not the case. After the death of Othniel, "the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD." (vs. 12) This second departure of Israel from serving God resulted in a more severe punishment. This time the Ammonites and Amalekites both attacked Israel; and a third nation, Moab, took the

Israelites to serve them. “So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years.”—vs. 14

We note a lesson here. In the first case, God allowed Israel to serve under the king of Mesopotamia for eight years. In the second case, because they had not learned from the first experience, he permitted them to serve Moab for eighteen years. In our life, if God sees us straying from obedience to his will, he may allow a difficult experience to occur which is designed to bring us back into fuller harmony with his plan and will for us. If such an experience, however, fails to accomplish this, God may allow a more severe experience to come. This is not for the purpose of harming us eternally, but to teach the needed lessons of humble obedience to his instructions.

After a period of eighteen years of service to Moab, our Key Verse again indicates that the people cried unto the LORD. He raised up Ehud who, according to the flesh, seemed an unlikely person to deliver them. First, he was from the smallest and most insignificant tribe, Benjamin. Second, he was left-handed, which was thought to be a severe physical shortcoming in any person, much less one chosen to be a leader. The Apostle Paul reminds us that “the weakness of God is stronger than men. . . . God hath chosen the foolish things of the world . . . to confound the things which are mighty: . . . That no flesh should glory in his presence.”—I Cor. 1:25,27,29

Ehud, in God’s strength and by following his detailed instructions (see Judges 3:15-26), killed Eglon king of Moab and gained the release of the Israelites from their hand. Upon learning of the death of Eglon, the Israelites joined Ehud and slew ten thousand of the Moabites “men of valour.” (Judg. 3:29) Just as God had given them the severer experience of serving Moab eighteen years, he now blessed them, not just with forty years of rest (see verse 11), but “the land had rest fourscore years.” (vs. 30) Thus once again obedience was rewarded just as disobedience had been punished. ■

Let God Rule

Key Verse: *“It was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.”*
—Judges 7:15

Selected Scripture:
Judges 6-8; 21:25

sight to help provide for his family. This caught the attention of God, who sent an angel to appear to him. The angel said to him, “The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.” (vs. 12) Gideon immediately questioned the angel as to why so much evil had befallen Israel and they now appeared forsaken. God, through the angel, responded, “Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? . . . Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.”—vss. 14,16

Gideon desired signs that what the angel had said

FOLLOWING THE FAITHFUL
judgeship of Deborah and Barak, Israel once again “did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.” (Judg. 6:1) The Midianites were so many in number they quickly took all the land, pushing the Israelites to Gaza and leaving them without land to grow crops or sustain cattle. As had happened often before, Israel finally cried unto the LORD because of their desperate situation.—vs. 7

Gideon, a faithful young Israelite, was found to be threshing wheat out of the Midianites’

was true. The first of these was that he would present an offering to the LORD, requesting that a sign be shown that it was accepted. He killed a kid of the goats and made unleavened cakes and set them upon a rock under an oak tree. The angel touched the offering with his staff; fire came out of the rock, consuming the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel departed. Gideon responded, “Alas, O Lord GOD! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.”—vs. 22

The next sign requested by Gideon was that he would put a fleece of wool outside on the ground, leaving the fleece there all night. In the morning, if dew was only on the fleece and not on the ground around it, Gideon said “then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so.” (vss. 37,38) Wanting to be absolutely sure, Gideon made one last request of God, simply reversing the previous sign. Once again, God favorably answered Gideon the next morning by causing dew to be on the ground, but with the fleece completely dry.—vss. 39,40

As Gideon prepared to battle against the Midianites, God informed him that the thirty-two thousand men he had gathered were too many. Any who were fearful were asked to return home. This reduced the number to ten thousand. These were then taken down to the water to drink. God observed those who lapped the water as a dog would do, and those who bowed face down to drink. Those who lapped the water were only three hundred, but these were the ones God wanted. Those who lapped the water were able to see everything going on around them as they drank, whereas those who bowed their faces down to the water and drank could not see their surroundings and were vulnerable. Thus Gideon, armed with only three hundred men, and following the instructions of God as to the use of trumpets, lamps, and pitchers as their “weapons” (see Judges 7:16-22), was used to deliver the Midianites into the hands of Israel. ■

Return to Obedience

Key Verse: *“They put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.”*
—Judges 10:16

Selected Scripture:
Judges 10:6–11:33;
21:25

but many, heathen gods. They served “Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD.”—Judg. 10:6

Not surprisingly, the account reads that “the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel” (vss. 7,8), and he gave them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites for eighteen years. This was particularly oppressive due to the fact that the Philistines, who resided to the west, and the Ammonites, who resided to the east, could effectively control the entire nation of Israel, its land and people, without there being any means of their escape. As a result, “Israel was sore distressed.”—vs. 9

This climax of trouble which had come upon the nation of Israel caused them, as it had in the past, to cry unto the

THIS MONTH’S SERIES OF lessons has focused on a few of the many times God delivered the nation of Israel from its enemies although, time after time, they slipped back into disobedience and the worship of the heathen gods around them. In today’s lesson, we have this cycle brought to a climax. Israel’s idolatry had progressed to the point where they were not just worshipping one or two,

LORD. This time, though, and for the first time during the period of the judges, their cry was accompanied by these words: “We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.” (vs. 10) God, however, did not merely take these words at face value. More proof of their sincerity was needed. He reminded them of how he had delivered them from the Egyptians, and from many other nations subsequent to that time; how that he had helped them every time they cried unto him. He reminded them that, in spite of all this, they continued to forsake him and go back to serving other gods. As a result, God said, “I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.”—vss. 11-14

By these words, God issued a heart-searching challenge to the Israelites. If, indeed, these other gods could deliver them from their trouble, then they would no longer have any need to serve him or to ask him for deliverance. If the other gods could not deliver them, then that would pose a serious question as to their legitimacy. It is clear from God’s statement that he wanted Israel to give serious consideration to their pattern of behavior—serving other gods, being subsequently punished by serving other nations, crying to the God of Israel for deliverance, gaining that deliverance, then going back to the worship of false gods. Such a pattern must needs be broken.

In at least this case, the Israelites took God’s soul-searching statement to heart. They responded again, “We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.” (vs. 15) They recognized not only that they had sinned, but also that any punishment God chose to inflict on them would be justified. Yet, they still expressed the desire to be delivered. Our Key Verse brings out the ultimate action God was looking for—the total putting away of the strange gods from among them, and serving only the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ■

The Great Deliverance

“When these things are beginning to occur, raise yourselves, and lift up your heads; for your deliverance is drawing near.”

—Luke 21:28,

*Wilson’s Emphatic
Diaglott*

GOD’S PEOPLE OF ALL

ages have been aliens and strangers in the sinful world around them and have been persecuted by the devotees of false gods. However, the truly faithful have always been encouraged by God’s promise to care for them and to help them in their every

time of need. “God is our refuge,” wrote the psalmist, “a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”—Ps. 46:1-3

A FAITH CLASS

God has not promised to deliver his people from their troubles in this life, although he often does, but he has promised to give them strength to endure their trials while they learn the important

lesson of putting their trust in him. We should cast all our care upon the Lord, knowing that he will permit only those difficulties to come into our lives as will best serve to test our faith and confidence in him. Only those who learn this lesson of faith can be at peace and truly pleasing to the Lord. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Heb. 11:6

Wonderful examples of faith are brought to our attention in both the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes in these examples, faith was openly and visibly rewarded by deliverance from trying situations, but at other times it was not. This was true of the Ancient Worthy class, and it is also true of the little flock class of the present Gospel Age. As individual servants of the Lord we can often see the hand of God in our affairs. We can sense his lifting of the burden of trial which, without his help, might well crush us. Yet at other times we do not have this rewarding experience and can hold onto the Lord only through faith in his promises. It is through these experiences that we need to be convinced that, while we may not be able to discern the providences of the Lord in our hands, he is still dealing with us. We must learn that his tender mercy is over all our affairs, even when all we can see are threatening and dark clouds of trouble.

It is important to realize that our loving Heavenly Father is the very light of our lives. In the final analysis, he will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Let us hold fast the profession of our

faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)." (Heb. 10:23) We know and trust that none of his promises will ever be unfulfilled. Paul also reminded the Hebrew brethren, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." (vs. 35) God rewards those who diligently seek him even though, at times, his rewards are not outwardly demonstrated.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH

Among the Israelites who had been taken captive to Babylon, there were many of God's faithful servants, such as Daniel and his three friends, as well as Ezekiel and others. To these, Jeremiah wrote, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."—Lam. 3:22-26

For a long period of time, the people of Israel, especially their kings, had been for the most part unfaithful to God. They had worshipped false gods and in many other ways they were disobedient to him. According to the Law they could have been justly put to death. As Jeremiah explains, however, God showed his compassion and mercy toward them. Instead of consuming them in death, he permitted them to be taken captives into Babylon.

While the nation as a whole had been disobedient unto the Lord, there were noble exceptions among

them—notably Daniel and his three companions. These remained loyal to God while in Babylon and even at the risk of their lives. Paul, when speaking of Daniel, said that he “stopped the mouths of lions.” (Heb. 11:33) Daniel was courageous in his loyalty to God and from this comes the expression, “Dare to be a Daniel.”

Because of the wonderful manner in which the Lord enabled Daniel to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image, he was highly exalted in the government by the king. He continued thus to be honored by the rulers of Babylon, and was very highly placed in the kingdom of Darius. The scriptural record states, “It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.”—Dan. 6:1-4

DELIVERED FROM LIONS

Because of Daniel’s faithfulness in his devotion to God, those who were plotting against him said, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” (vs. 5) Surely this is a wonderful testimony

concerning Daniel's loyalty to the God of Israel. His enemies then prevailed upon King Darius to "establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions."—Dan. 6:7

The king was not aware that this was a plot against the life of Daniel whom he loved and trusted, so he made and signed the decree. Since the laws of the Medes and the Persians could not be changed, when he discovered the intent of his advisers it was too late to do anything about it. He could only hope that Daniel's God would deliver him. The king knew that Daniel would continue to worship his God even though it might result in his death.

Daniel continued openly to pray to God and was "discovered" by his enemies. Consequently, and much against the king's desire, he was cast into a den of lions. From the scriptural account, we read, "Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"—vss. 18-20

Daniel's reply to the king was, "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me;

and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.” (vss. 21,22) Concerning God’s angels the psalmist wrote, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. 34:7) How wonderfully true this was with Daniel in the lions’ den. How Daniel must have rejoiced because of God’s protecting hand over him, and it was surely a wonderful witness concerning Daniel’s God.

DELIVERED FROM A FIERY FURNACE

Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego likewise had their loyalty to their Heavenly Father severely tested. It was demanded of them that they worship a great image which the king had ordered to be erected that he might impress his subjects with the greatness of his authority and power. The penalty for refusal to bow down to this image was death by being cast into a fiery furnace.

Because of their loyalty to God, Daniel’s three friends refused to obey the decree of the king. Thereupon the king summoned them before him and said, “Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”—Dan. 3:15

The reply of these three courageous servants of God was direct and to the point. They said to the king, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning” (Continued on page 35)

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(Continued from page 31) fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” (Dan. 3:17,18) The record continues, “Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” (vs. 21) The fire had been made so hot that even those who threw the Hebrews into it were themselves burned to death.

God sent an angel and delivered the three Hebrews. “He [the king] answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” (vs. 25) The king was impressed and gave commandment that the people of the realm should worship only the God of the Hebrews. As for the three Hebrews themselves, their faith in the ability of their God to deliver them had been strengthened, although they would not have lost their faith had God’s providence for them been that they should perish in the fiery furnace.

There is a vitally important lesson in this well-known experience of the three Hebrews. While God is always abundantly able to deliver his people from physical harm, he does not always do so. His providential care over his people is not always manifest in the same manner in their individual experiences in the narrow way. He may permit some to suffer and die. Others he might deliver from suffering and permit them to continue in his service for a while longer, though perhaps under difficult circumstances.

WORTHIES OF OLD

This point is enlarged upon in chapter eleven of Paul's letter to the Hebrew brethren. Here he writes of the faithful lives of God's worthies of old. The apostle names many of them, such as Abraham, Moses, and David. He then tells of many others, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."—Heb. 11:33-35

It will be noted that all of the ancient people of faith in this listing had their faith visibly rewarded by the protection and deliverance which their Heavenly Father afforded them. Through faith they knew, as did the three Hebrews, that the God whom they served was able to deliver them, and in their case he did.

However, this was not true of all the Ancient Worthies. Paul continues, "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword [unlike those who "escaped the edge of the sword"]: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”—vss. 36-40

These “others” were just as much the objects of God’s care as were those who were delivered from prison and from threatened death. These “others” were mocked and scourged, and God did not interfere. They suffered “bonds and imprisonments,” and God did not deliver them. They were “sawn asunder,” as Isaiah, by tradition, is reputed to have been. They were destitute and seemingly uncared for. It was by faith that they realized that the great God of heaven permitted their trying experiences for some good purpose although they could not always—perhaps seldom—understand what that purpose was.

They knew, although they may not have expressed it in these words, that their God was too wise to err and too loving to be unkind. They knew that their privilege and responsibility as his servants was to be loyal to him regardless of what the cost might be. They knew by faith that, in the end, God would give his very best to those who left the choice with him.

SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES

We who are now living in the closing years of this present Gospel Age are encouraged by our realization that our loving Heavenly Father is also dealing with us in much the same way as he did with his faithful people of old. His dealings we see exemplified in the life of Jesus and in the experiences of those in the Early Church. Jesus was delivered from a calamity near the beginning of his

ministry, but the Heavenly Father withdrew his protection at the end and allowed him to be crucified. We can understand God's workings in the case of Jesus, for his role was to give his flesh for the life of the world, but we may not always understand why God allows us, the followers of Jesus, to suffer.

The Apostle Peter addressed this very point, when he wrote, "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

JAMES KILLED

The Early Church was bitterly persecuted by the king. We read, "Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." (Acts 12:1,2) Herod also placed Peter in prison until after the Passover thinking that then he would also have him put to death, but the Lord in this case intervened by sending an angel to deliver him.—vss. 8-10

Peter was no doubt surprised at his miraculous release. He went immediately to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where the brethren were holding a prayer meeting. They were so surprised by his arrival that at first they could not believe he was really there. (vss. 11-17) The question remains why God would deliver Peter from certain death at the hands of Herod while not delivering James. The brethren were no doubt praying for James as

well as for Peter. Although James had been killed, it is certain that the prayers for him gave him strength to bear up faithfully during his final hours of trial. Peter, by the same prayers, was able to sleep during the night even though he was chained to prison guards awaiting death.

This emphasizes a precious reality which has been true for all of the Lord's faithful people. God sustains them in their trials, even though he does not always deliver them. The Lord has promised to provide a way of escape when trials are too severe to bear. Many times that escape is through death. This was so for God's ancient people and it has been true throughout the present Gospel Age. Perhaps Stephen could not have endured being pelted with rocks for a great length of time, but God permitted him to fall asleep in death and thus escape the cruel torture being inflicted upon him by his enemies.

FAITH TESTED

The trials of the Lord's people are designed to test their faith in him, and be a witness for him. If, every time we suffered a bit of pain either of body or of mind, the Lord would at once deliver us from the distress, we would probably be very thankful, but our faith in his love, mercy, and compassion would not be completely tested. This would be walking by sight and not by faith. True faith is that which believes in God regardless of the circumstances with which we are surrounded, or the distresses which we suffer. Regardless of any and all circumstances, a true faith will continue to believe that God rewards those who diligently seek him.

True faith is that which will not permit us to shrink from the narrow path of sacrifice no matter how many, or how fierce, the foes we see ahead in that path. Through sickness or other difficult circumstances, we may realize that death may not be far away. However, such an experience of faith will firmly trust our loving Heavenly Father in the assurance that he knows what is best for us. We will not permit the pleasures of living, or the threat of dying, to separate us from him, and we will be able to say from our hearts, "Great is thy faithfulness."

We will know, by faith in the promises of God, that our ultimate and glorious deliverance from all enemies, and from all our distresses, will come through death, if indeed, we are faithful even unto death. It was this realization that enabled the ancient people of God to maintain their faith in him and loyalty to him. They endured their afflictions, refusing deliverance upon the terms of their enemies, "that they might obtain a better resurrection."—Heb. 11:35

It seems clear that those heroes of faith, the worthies of old, did have a hope of the resurrection. In a prayer, Moses said, "Thou [God] turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." (Ps. 90:3) Job said, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait [in death], till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands." (Job 14:14,15) Those ancient ones may not have known the details of the divine plan of salvation as we are privileged to know it today, but they testified to their faith, and "have hope toward God, which

they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”—Acts 24:15

The “just” as mentioned by Paul would surely include those who looked for the resurrection, the hope of which inspired the Ancient Worthy class to faithfulness. When Daniel was informed concerning the great Time of Trouble through which we are now passing, he was assured that then his people would be delivered. While Daniel’s people here referred to would include all of the Lord’s faithful servants in every age who have longed for deliverance, this promise must have been a great source of strength to Daniel himself. It was made plain to him how this great deliverance would be wrought. It would be through a resurrection of the dead: “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” (Dan. 12:2) Daniel was told, “Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest [in the sleep of death], and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”—vs.13

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

How real has been the hope of spiritual Israel in the resurrection, the “first resurrection” promised to those who are “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” (Rev. 20:4) This hope should be especially real to the Lord’s people now at the close of this present Gospel Age. We are living in the time when we see the signs described by Jesus relative to the time of his presence and the end of the age being fulfilled. Just as Jesus stated in our featured text, “When these things are beginning to occur, raise yourselves, and lift up your

heads; for your deliverance is drawing near.”—
Luke 21:28, *WED*

LIFT UP OUR HEADS

Let us raise ourselves, for it is no time to be prostrate and idle. We are to be active in our witness for Jesus and for the Word of God. It is a time also to lift up our heads with hope, courage, and rejoicing. The clouds of trouble are hanging low over the peoples of the earth. The world leaders are distressed and their hearts are filled with fear. We know that the troubles in the world may well bring additional hardships upon us, but this does not cause us to hang our heads in discouragement.

We know that God is in the midst of his prospective bride class. “GOD is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted

among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”—Ps. 46:1-11

“When these things are beginning to occur, raise yourselves, and lift up your heads: for your deliverance is drawing near.”—Luke 21:28, *WED* ■

*When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise!
O, how can words with equal warmth
The gratitude declare
That glows within my inmost heart!
But thou canst read it there.
Through all eternity, to thee
A grateful song I'll raise.
And my eternal joy shall be
To herald wide thy praise.
—Hymns of Dawn*

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Purifying the Soul

*“Seeing ye have
purified your souls
in obeying the
truth through the
Spirit unto
unfeigned love of
the brethren, see
that ye love one
another with a
pure heart
fervently.”*
—I Peter 1:22

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

is a most important essential of the Christian life. Without it no Christian endeavor can be truly acceptable to the Heavenly Father. The words “purity” and “holiness” as used in the Bible have much the same meaning. They describe that condition of heart which must characterize all who aspire to joint heirship with Jesus in the glorious kingdom soon to be established. To be pure means to be unadulterated. Applied to the Christian life, it means that one’s heart attitude before God must be that of full and complete submission to him, undivided in its affection and loyalty.

This purity of heart before the Lord means a complete separation from the world and its spirit, a full renouncing of the will of the flesh, and a constant effort to bring the flesh into subjection to the will of God. To maintain this purity requires a continued alertness with respect to the deceptive influences of the great deceiver, Satan, and by means

of the whole armor of God to give battle against him. To be successful in attaining and maintaining this condition of holiness, one must use the divinely provided means of purification, which in our text is declared to be the Truth.

To be pure, or holy, also means to be sanctified. Jesus, praying on behalf of his disciples, said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) By inspiration, the Apostle Paul reiterates the thought expressed by Jesus, saying, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:25,26) From these scriptures, it is apparent that the Christian should esteem the Word of truth very highly and seek daily to become better acquainted with it. No wonder the Apostle Paul advised Timothy to study that he might show himself "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."—II Tim. 2:15

TRUE STANDARD OF HOLINESS

There are many false standards of holiness among the peoples of the earth. Frequently, the word "holiness" is erroneously used to convey the thought merely of moral uprightness. Yet, even the standard of moral uprightness varies much in different parts of the world. Some moralists of today would severely condemn Jesus for many things which he did, yet of him the Scriptures declare that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."—Heb. 7:26

The Bible sets forth a true code of morals for the Christian, and it is of utmost importance that every

Christian be guided by that code. Anyone who supposes, however, that the Christian life consists merely of living up to a high moral code will ultimately fail in his effort to be truly holy before the Lord, and his soul will be far from purified.

When Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17), he had far more in mind than the importance of moral uprightness. The various teachings of both Christendom and heathendom have produced a certain degree of moral integrity in those who have been brought under their influence, but the falsities in religion have not sanctified their followers. The fear of eternal torment in a creedal hell has frightened many into giving up certain earthly pleasures, but such a false conception of sanctity does not result in true holiness in the sight of the Lord. False teachings have never purified the souls of those who believed them from the standpoint that the word "purity" is used in our text.

The full thought of sanctification as taught in the Bible is that of a dedication, or setting apart, to the Lord's holy purpose. The word "purity" as used in our text has to do with the singleness of heart in living up to the terms of sanctification. It is for this reason that the truth of God's Word is our means of sanctification. The Truth is God's plan, and his plan reveals the will of God for his people who follow in the footsteps of Jesus. In order to do God's will, one must know his plan for salvation. For this purpose, God has given us his Word of truth, revealing his plan that we might become acquainted with the work he is doing in the earth. Thus we can understand how it applies to our moral conduct

and also as it touches upon our responsibility in the service of God and of his cause.

“OBEYING THE TRUTH”

A mere technical knowledge of the Truth, however, will not in itself produce a sanctifying effect on the heart. The apostle clearly shows that we are purified only by “obeying the truth through the Spirit.” (I Pet. 1:22) Jesus promised that he would send “the Spirit of truth” (John 16:13), and that it would guide his disciples into all truth. Even this, though, does not complete the apostle’s formula for soul purification. There is still another qualification. The Truth must be obeyed “through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” Thus Peter concludes, “See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.”

The Apostle John adds his testimony to the importance of brotherly love as the final step in soul purification, saying, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” (I John 3:18,19) The importance of love as the final goal of the sanctified life is apparent when we remember that the plan of God itself—the Truth—is a revelation of how the love of God is operating for the redemption and restoration of a lost race. A knowledge of this plan is given to us in order that we, by co-operating in it, may become like God. It is evident that if God’s love is such as to prompt him to give the dearest treasure of his heart as a sacrifice on the cross in order that his enemies might ultimately be blessed, the one who has not

learned to love his brethren is far from the goal of Christian holiness.

The process of soul purification embraces the complete work of conversion from the service of Satan and selfishness to the service of God and being guided by the godly principle of love. This purification begins when the light of truth concerning God's love breaks in upon our hearts and minds, and under its influence we become constrained to give our all to him. Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."—II Cor. 5:14,15

When the constraining love of God and of Christ brings one to the point of full consecration, and the work of sanctification begins, it will be found to divide itself into two major aspects. One aspect of the purifying work has to do more particularly with one's own personal conduct, and the other with activity in the service of him to whom all has been devoted. It is not possible to say which of these phases of sanctification is the more important because there could be no sanctification at all unless both were given their proper place in the Christian life.

PURE PERSONAL CONDUCT

The "personal conduct" aspect of sanctification has to do, in addition to one's strictly personal affairs, with our domestic life, our attitude toward our brethren in the church and how we should endeavor to deal with our brethren, and with our

relatives in the world. It has to do with the proper attitude toward the governments of this world and how we should deal with our enemies. In all these matters and others, the Bible gives us our instructions. In order for the work of soul purification to go on acceptably before God, the Christian will need to give careful attention to all these instructions and endeavor to obey them, not only in letter, but in spirit also. Any failure to adhere to the expressed will of God as found in his Word constitutes a measure of impurity or lack of holiness. Unwilling failures are covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness, but willful disobedience will be punished.

One may become free from all his impure habits and from the worldly viewpoint be a noble example of good citizenship. Yet, if he persists willfully in speaking evil of his brethren or others, he shows disobedience to the command, "Speak evil of no man." (Titus 3:2) He is unholy in the sight of God and is far from the point of being fully sanctified. One may never become intoxicated, steal, or use impure language. He may be a model husband and a loving father. He may be a good neighbor and highly respected in his community. If, however, in the spirit of carnality he is guilty of sowing discord among the brethren, he is unholy in the sight of God and has failed fully to purify his soul through obeying the Truth.

In Matthew's gospel (18:15-18), Jesus gives explicit directions as to the proper course to pursue when difficulties arise among the brethren. A failure or refusal to follow these directions constitutes, by default, an unholy act. One may spend hours in

prayer and meditation until he fancies himself very close to the Lord. Yet, if he disobeys this important command of the Lord, he is in that proportion unholy, and his soul has not been truly purified. If his failure to act as directed by Jesus causes any of his brethren to suffer through misunderstanding or misrepresentation, the sin is doubly reprehensible in God's sight.

Prayer is absolutely necessary for the Christian, but he must first obey the Lord's commands if he expects his prayers to be heard. The Christian is expected to forgive and love his enemies. Forgiveness of his enemies is the condition upon which his own sins may be forgiven by the Heavenly Father. If such forgiveness is not forthcoming on the part of the professed follower of the Master, the unforgiving one is unholy. Not only is such a one unholy because of his failure to obey the Lord's commands, but he is unholy also in the sense that his own sins are still charged against him because he has failed to meet the conditions of their forgiveness. Impure, indeed, is the heart that continues to harbor anger and malice toward others, and is unable to forgive the imperfection in them by which he is so afflicted himself.

Some make the mistake of supposing that Jesus meant we should forgive what merely appears to be a trespass. They believe that if the trespass is found to have been a real one—if wrong has actually been done—forgiveness should be withheld and punishment administered instead. This is not the case. Real trespasses are the kind which our Heavenly Father forgives in us, hence it is the real trespasses against us that we must forgive in others,

else we are unholy. That which appears to be a trespass, but turns out not to be, does not need to be forgiven, for there is nothing to forgive.

PURITY IN SERVICE

The soul that is purified by the Truth and sanctified to God is a soul that is devoted to a definite, active purpose. As the faithful soldier must do more than merely wear the uniform and obey military rules, so the good soldier of Jesus Christ must do more than properly govern his personal conduct. He must do more than forgive his enemies. He must bless them as well, and “do good” unto them that despitefully use him. (Matt. 5:44) Yes, to be sanctified by the Truth means more than to be guided by the abstract principles of right, important though this is. Even as there can be no true sanctification apart from a scripturally governed personal conduct, so also there can be no true holiness unless the soul purification continues to the point where the being is consumed in the service of God to whom it is consecrated.

Our service to the Lord cannot be of just any kind. The service must be in harmony with the divine plan and the expressed will of God. The Heavenly Father is very particular about this. When he commanded Moses to build the Tabernacle and gave him instructions concerning its services, he said, “See . . . that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” (Heb. 8:5; Exod. 25:40) Death was the penalty for disobeying this command. The Tabernacle and its services were illustrations of better things to come. Many of these “better things” have to do with the Christian

life and service. Surely God would not be less particular about the reality than he was of the typical shadow.

It is obvious that Paul was expressing something more than a mere ideal when he said that we should study to rightly divide the Word of truth if we are to be workmen approved by God. (II Tim. 2:15) A workman on any project could not be approved by his employer if he did not follow the plans given to him. If the Truth is the sanctifying medium in our lives and through obedience to it we are purified, is it reasonable to suppose that there can be true sanctification where the Truth is ignored, minimized, or opposed? Is the preaching of eternal torture for nine-tenths of the human race a holy work? It would not seem so and for the reason that it is not God's work. This is an extreme illustration but it will help us to realize the importance of the true doctrines of God's plan in connection with the work of soul purification that is going on within us.

Let us remember that the Christian is not commissioned to engage in any work except that which has to do with his share in the fulfillment of God's plan. No work can be holy work that is out of harmony with the divine will. The reverse of this is also true. Any work that is in harmony with the divine plan is properly a part of the Christian's privilege and a holy work. It is a practice of true holiness to engage in that work. Nor is one part of God's work either more or less holy than another.

THE DIVINE COMMISSION

Specifically, then, what is the Christian's work and how is it to be accomplished? Many have supposed

that it was God's will that the Christian church should convert the whole world in this present age, making Christians of the entire human race. Thousands of lives have been sacrificed in this unauthorized work. True, many were "converted" in this way, and some might be inclined to say that this is evidence that God blessed the work. This is not necessarily so. Almost any kind of message preached in any part of the world will result in converts to the particular theory advanced. This is especially true with respect to religious teaching. If the theories advanced offer future salvation from eternal torture, the result in the number of converts is often outstanding.

The divine commission to the church was to engage in the work of making disciples. (Matt. 28:19,20) The Scriptures show that the entire group of disciples to be made, from Pentecost down to the very end of the Gospel Age, was to constitute the church of Christ, also styled the "bride" of Christ. The completion of this work is referred to in Revelation 19:7, where it is said that "his wife hath made herself ready." The method by which the bride of Christ makes herself ready is the proclamation of, and obedience to, the Truth. Since it is the Truth—the Gospel message—that sanctifies, it is obvious that it must be made known to those who are to come under its purifying influence.

Every consecrated Christian is anointed by the Holy Spirit to take part in this work. In the association of God's people as groups, God has arranged that some be chosen to serve in special ways. This does not relieve those not chosen of their responsibility in the general work. Every activity of the

Christian has to do with the work of making ready the bride. He attends meetings and conventions, he prays, he sings praises, he preaches, he witnesses, all in order that the making-ready process might go on in himself as well as in others. Thus, everything pertaining to one's Christian activity is a part of the holy work in which they are engaged.

So far as we are concerned the church, while still in the flesh, will always be made up of those in various stages of development. Hence it will always be necessary to promote all possible activities in the work of finding and making disciples. The Lord himself is the only one who can end this work. When he does stop it, no Christian will question the matter. However, until the Lord does stop the work, every Christian whose soul has been purified by obeying the Truth should continue on in the use of whatever opportunities of service the Lord may give. None are entirely without opportunities, as even a prayer on behalf of fellow members of the bride class is a privilege of service.

In the days of the Early Church, the opportunities of service were not as diversified as they are today. Now we have the printed page, radio, television, and an explosion of electronic media available. There is something for all willing hands to do either directly or in cooperation with others. Every activity of the Christian should be in the direction of the one goal, which is the full preparation of the bride. The complete adornment of the bride must be the adornment of love, hence the apostle says in our text, "unto unfeigned love of the brethren."

When the sanctifying work of the church is complete and the entire Christ company is brought

wholly under the influence of divine love, then this holy bride will become, with her heavenly Bridegroom, the pure source of blessing for mankind in general. It is for this future work that the church is now, through soul purification, being made ready.

The importance of loyalty to the Truth as the sanctifying medium in our lives cannot be overemphasized. God severely censured his typical people for compromising with the false gods of their heathen neighbors. To the Christian, Paul says, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” (II Cor. 6:17) Paul is here referring to heathen temples and heathen gods. Similarly “unclean” philosophies permeate many religions today and have done so for centuries. God has given his people the Truth in order that they might be sanctified by it—fully set apart to his holy will and purpose. Let us cherish that Truth, and through the full submission of our wills come wholly under its purifying influence. ■

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 Stewart Livermore, Israel—December 28, 2010. Age, 93

Sister Jessie Hill, Temecula, CA—May 8. Age, 89

Sister Rosca Zamfira, Cluj, Romania—May 13. Age, 88

Walking in Faith

*“My brethren,
count it all joy
when ye fall into
divers temptations;
Knowing this, that
the trying of your
faith worketh
patience.”*

—James 1:2,3

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE Apostle James admonishes us that whenever we are going through very difficult and trying experiences, we must keep in mind the promise that our Heavenly Father is directing our lives. He has a lesson for us in all of the trials of our consecrated life, even as he has in life's blessings.

Throughout this present Gospel Age, our trials are especially designed by our loving Heavenly Father as opportunities for us to grow in grace and knowledge. Sometimes this fact may become obscure, even as the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome. He told them, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Rom. 8:18) Therefore, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit.”—I Thess. 5:18,19

PATIENCE

When we accept the terms of our consecration to God, we begin our walk in newness of life. However,

we must be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice if we are to receive the wonderful promises of being a part of “The Christ” in his future kingdom. Each of us must be rightly exercised by the trials that are permitted by God’s grace to develop in us the graces of the Holy Spirit. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

In his epistle, James spoke further concerning the development of our faith, and that it is a life-long work of patient endurance. He wrote, “Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.”—James 1:4-6

Further to this, he also stated, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.”—vss. 12,13

CONSECRATION

Consecration applies to all of those who offer themselves as a willing sacrifice to God during this present Gospel Age. Paul thus admonishes, “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

When we give our hearts to the Heavenly Father, and present our sacrificial life to him, our spiritual priorities must be established. We will then learn how to follow the Lord’s leadings, and how we may carry out our consecration even unto death. We will be continuously tested to determine whether we are truly committed to God.

In connection with God’s providence with the children of Israel, we may relate their experiences to our own. We read, “The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 13:3) We should not be surprised when we are faced with a trying experience which we do not fully understand. We are being lead by the Holy Spirit of God and do not always know what his ultimate purpose may be. God’s ways are higher than our ways. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—Rom. 11:33

“MIND OF THE SPIRIT”

In Paul’s letter to the brethren at Rome, he explained to them, “We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with

groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:24-28

A human parent might withhold something his child wants because he knows that at this early stage of his life it would hurt the child’s development or character. The Heavenly Father may sometimes do the same thing concerning his children. He may deny us something that we want because he knows it might damage us at that particular point in our consecrated life and development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

Our faith should realize God’s overruling providence even in life’s disappointments and trying circumstances. If we understood the divine working in every detail of our consecrated walk in newness of life, we would have no need for faith. When we cannot understand all of his ways, and yet try to live close to him and follow his commandments, we learn to trust him and to leave all matters in his loving hands.

A MAN OF FAITH

One of the most outstanding examples of faith recorded in the Scriptures is found in the life of Abraham, who has been called the father of the faithful. He walked with God for long periods of time when he could not understand everything that was happening to him. He was about seventy-five years old when the Covenant was ratified with

him at Haran, prior to his entering Canaan. He was promised that it would be through him that all the families of the earth would be blessed. It is recorded, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."—Gen. 22:17,18

Abraham and his wife Sarah were of advanced age and must have wondered how this miracle would take place, but they learned that the judgments of God are unsearchable and his ways past finding out. However, as the father of the faithful, he kept his faith and followed God even when he could not trace him. Finally, God informed him that he was to become a father and that Sarah would be the mother. From the scriptural record, we read, "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?"—Gen. 17:17

KEEPING THE FAITH

We, who are now living in the closing years of this present Gospel Age, must also keep our faith in God, even when the answers to perplexing problems are not apparent. We must remember that God is fitting the experiences and circumstances of our consecrated life into a complete picture which will only be fully seen when he is ready to reveal it.

If we have prayed and worried over our lack of understanding of what the Lord is accomplishing in our lives, we should not be discouraged if an answer to our prayer is not immediately forthcoming. Abraham had to wait twenty-five years from the time the promise was first made to him before he understood how God would fulfill it. Let us also trust that God is indeed working out great things in our lives in every experience of our consecrated walk.

“COUNT IT ALL JOY”

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”—James 1:2,3 ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JULY 7—“Behold the Lamb of God!”—John 1:36 (Z. ’99-14,15 Hymn 177)

JULY 14—“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, . . . and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”—Ephesians 4:31 (Z. ’99-71 Hymn 256)

JULY 21—“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”—John 18:37 (Z. ’99-123 Hymn 259)

JULY 28—“If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.”—I Peter 3:14 (Z. ’99-166,167 Hymn 307)

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.

J. Freer

Prince Albert, SK July 1-3
Sturgis, SK 8-10

B. Keith

Kansas City, MO July 4

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

D. Blencowe

Sturgis, SK July 8-10

D. Christiansen

Sturgis, SK July 8-10

O. B. Elbert

San Diego, CA July 2-4
Sturgis, SK 8-10

A. Fernets

Sturgis, SK July 8-10

T. Krupa

San Diego, CA July 2-4

H. Montague

Prince Albert, SK July 1-3
Sturgis, SK 8-10

P. Mora

Prince Albert, SK July 1-3

B. Siwak

Sturgis, SK July 8-10

B. Sweeney

Prince Albert, SK July 1-3

*"By love serve one another."
—Galatians 5:13*

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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.

PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1-3—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1, Station MPP, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, July 2-4—Alliant University, 10455 Pomerado Road, San Diego, CA 92131. For accommodations at Alliant University, or at nearby hotels, contact B. Bach, P. O. Box 323, Alpine, CA 91903-0323. Phone: (619) 445-4879

CANADIAN CONVENTION, July 8-10—Sturgis Community Hall, Highway #9, Sturgis, Saskatchewan. Contact B. & C. Jakubowski, 108 Hudson Street, Sturgis, SK S0A 4A0. Phone (306) 548-4665

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 19-21—Emmanuel College Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: 2348033339949 or 2348082146621

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2-5—Seabeck Conference Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Room reservations, contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822. Other information, contact D. Christiansen. Phone: (360) 440-3283

JACKSON CONVENTION, September 3,4—Fa-ho-lo Camp & Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Unit 1, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact V. Lumley. Phone: (517) 782-7252

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 3,4—Doubletree Hotel, Mahwah, NJ. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 9-11—
Radisson Inn Huntsville Airport, 8721 Madison Blvd.,
Madison, AL 35758. Contact J. Cothren, 1300 Hunts-
ville Hills Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802. Phone: (256)
852-8505

CLAY CITY CONVENTION, September 16-18—
Canyon Inn, McCormick's Creek State Park, 451 Mc-
Cormick Creek Park Road, Spencer, IN 47460. Contact
S. Clark, 7861 Clearwater Parkway, Indianapolis, IN
46240. Phone: (317) 578-2634

COLORADO CONVENTION, September 16-18—
Red Lion Hotel-Denver Central, 4040 Quebec Street,
Denver, CO 80216. Contact L. Turner, 1966 Mount Zion
Drive, Golden, CO 80401. Phone: (303) 278-4091 or
(303) 809-1957

**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

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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