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July 2010



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Gulf Oil Leak:

Unprecedented Disaster 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

God's Cosmic Plan 18

Glory to Christ 20

Chosen and Called 22

God's Own Faithfulness 24

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Searching the Scriptures—Part 7

Parables and Dark Sayings 26

Chosen to Salvation 42

Children of Promise 54

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 53

OBITUARIES 41

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

Gulf Oil Leak: Unprecedented Disaster

*“The earth is also
polluted by its
inhabitants.”*

—*Isaiah 24:5, New
American Standard
Bible*

IN OUR OPENING SCRIP-

ture the Prophet Isaiah speaks of the devastating effects of pollution that has been caused by fallen man’s careless, selfish, and irresponsible behavior. This has occurred as a consequence of disobedience to the divine law and resulting sentence of death. The Old Testament word that has been translated ‘polluted’ means to soil, but it has also been variously translated as defile, profane, or corrupt in other versions of the Bible. Within the context of this scripture, the prophet was pointing to earth’s inhabitants who continue to profane the laws of God with little attention paid to his Holy Word, and while ignoring his righteous and equitable standards of Truth.

The effects of polluting substances are corrupting our precious air, water, and soil resources. It is

a matter of deep concern among investigators and analysts who point out that the human family's earthly home is becoming increasingly contaminated with dangerous materials that have devastating consequences to man and his environment. Pollution is difficult to deal with and very expensive to clean up. Additionally, long-established wildlife habitats are being disturbed that seriously impact the human family and its food supply.

THE QUEST FOR OIL

As further oil resources are needed to satisfy the appetite of a growing population and its need to fuel a technologically oriented world, pollution problems are also becoming more critical. Offshore areas in the Gulf of Mexico in the southern United States have become an important source of oil supply, not only for this country but for others as well.

As oil-drilling operations continue to expand and oil and gas companies push the frontiers of offshore drilling into deeper and more dangerous waters in recent years, federal regulations have not kept pace with the growing trend. Government watchdogs have remained in the shadows while clinging to long-standing practices, and failed to make plans for possible new risks and hazards.

UNEXPECTED DISASTER

On April 20, 2010 a violent explosion occurred on the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform which was leased by British Petroleum (BP) several miles off the southern coast of Louisiana. Eleven people were killed and several seriously injured. Extensive efforts are underway to plug the leak, and plans are being made to clean up the oily mess.

Some company officials have indicated that there were problems on the drilling rig long before the explosion occurred. The Deepwater Horizon operation acknowledged that it was a very difficult well—not a typical one—and that it was necessary to either redrill or reroute the well. Several worrisome events and findings leading up to the disaster were described in internal corporate documents that were later made available to a House committee by BP executives. The documents provided evidence that there was a sequence of events and failures that led up to the explosion.

Congressional investigators said later that a key safety system known as the blowout preventer, used in BP's oil-drilling rig had a hydraulic leak and a failed battery that prevented it from working as designed. It was also indicated that there were conflicting pipe pressure tests that should have warned those on the rig that poor pipe integrity may have allowed explosive methane gas to leak into the well. Significant pressure discrepancies were observed in at least two of these tests which had been conducted only hours before the explosion.

Crew members spoke about the chaos that erupted on the drilling rig in the aftermath of the explosion. They spoke of workers leaping eight stories into the sea to escape the flames that engulfed the rig, and nearby ships that raced to the scene to pluck survivors from the burning waters. Witnesses also described heroic efforts by some in their struggle to assist the injured. The incident escalated into a massive rescue effort as every available helicopter began a nighttime search. Pilots were flying with night-vision goggles, and

aircraft fitted with radar equipment that detected heat to find anyone in the water.

UNPREPARED

Neither the oil companies nor their regulators in the United States Department of the Interior were ready to deal with a crisis of such major proportions. There had been no written protocol and no history of drills to simulate such a disaster anywhere close to this size. Interior analysts had calculated that the chances of any spill exceeding 1,000 barrels were from 3% to 5%. There are no records to suggest that anyone had seriously considered the possibility of such a tragedy becoming a reality. Computer analysts had projected that there was only a 7% chance that in a month's time a spill in the area where the BP leak began, could ever drift into the marshes and bayous of St. Bernard Parish, La. Yet, oil from the spill began washing up in the area 16 days after fires erupted on the Deepwater Horizon and sent it to the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.

SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

The Minerals Management Service, the branch of the Interior Department that oversees oil and gas drilling on federal land and offshore drilling, has fallen behind in its fundamental regulatory duties, including enforcing environmental and safety rules, assessing the risks of energy exploration and calculating how much money the federal government is owed in oil and gas royalties.

Oil officials were suddenly forced to find new and untested ways to cope with the worsening oil spill. They believed the best method would be to

drill a second well close by to serve as a relief well, but it would take approximately three months to do so. In the meantime, thousands of gallons of oil continue to pollute the entire gulf area every day.

Members of a Congressional and Federal panel of inquiry planned to meet in the state of Louisiana to determine the cause of the explosion. They determine that a decision to remove heavy drilling lubricants from a pipeline may have been a contributing factor. The Obama administration announced a major reorganization of the Minerals Management Service, the Interior Department Agency that oversees offshore drilling.

They point to tougher limitations that should be imposed on what oil companies can and cannot do when drilling in very deep water, in this case a mile below the water's surface. President Obama has said that efforts are underway to contain the environmental damage from the oil spill, which poses a significant challenge to the nation, and pledged to explore all options to address the crisis.

DEEP WATER HAZARDS

As officials scramble to find solutions to contain the oil leak, British Petroleum's (BP) David Clarkson, who is managing the project, acknowledged that there was no quick fix or solution to cap the well. There are many possible solutions, but they have never been attempted before in such deep water. Previous assessments don't accurately reflect new challenges of drilling for oil far from equipment and support, and depths that are not possible for divers to reach. The technology has been used a few times before in shallow waters, but

never at such extreme depths as five thousand feet under the surface. At that depth extremes of pressure and temperatures can tax materials such as cements used to repair casings, or synthetic materials used for seals and valves. That far below the surface water pressure is great enough to crush a submarine.

Additionally, unfamiliar formations in deep sea areas may contain surprises such as contaminants or layers of unforeseen high pressure. A gas leak at the seafloor may result in gas expanding very rapidly as it travels up to the water's surface. Clarkson said that the slurry of gas, water, and oil that is expected to surge up the collection system will encounter a whole range of shifting pressures and temperatures. These must be carefully managed at every step, and mishaps may leave pipes fatally blocked.

The oil is mixed with natural gas, and at depths of more than 1,600 feet, where the pressure is 2,300 pounds per square inch and the temperature is 42 degrees Fahrenheit, gas can mix with water and quickly produce what is known as 'gas hydrates,' which are formations that are similar to frozen water. These clear or white chunks are stable only under pressure, and inside a narrow pipe they could quickly gum up.

Engineers have hundreds of feet of pipe to worry about as this mixture of gas, oil and water moves rapidly upward from the seafloor. To control the temperature, warm water will be pumped down the space between the outer and inner pipes. BP also plans to inject methanol into the system to keep the water from binding with methane and other gases.

ECONOMIC TOLL

Although BP executives have agreed to pay all costs involved to clean up the mess, legal experts point out that it took nearly twenty years for more than 30,000 Alaskan fishing boat operators, property owners and others to be paid damages after the Exxon Valdez tanker accident that took place in 1989.

At the center of these kinds of disasters there are countless people who are simply put out of business. They need help now, but are often left to fend for themselves with little or no income. Also, there may not be enough money to cover all costs for losses suffered, including lost profits of local businesses, property damage, and other factors. Oil companies could never have anticipated the scale of such a disaster that extends way beyond the horizon in many cases. Exxon Corporation ultimately paid \$3.8 billion dollars in cleanup costs, fines, and compensation related to the oil spill off the Alaska coast. That was an 11 million gallon spill and was the worst in United States history, but it is now feared that the Gulf of Mexico accident could be potentially greater in volume if not soon brought under control.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOLL

At the time of this writing, the gulf oil spill is releasing an estimated 210,000 gallons of crude oil a day into the waters of the gulf. However, BP representatives acknowledge that the leak could increase to 2.5 million gallons a day if containment efforts are not successful. These waters provide a major portion of America's shrimp, oysters, and

other seafood commodities. In addition, the tourist industry in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, and Florida is adversely affected. There is little consolation to the numerous small businesses, fisheries, and local governments that are faced with the economic problems that have been caused by giant oil companies.

In light of this tragedy, some members of the United States Congress are suggesting legislative changes to ensure victims of the oil spill will be compensated. The present limit set by Senate and House bills is \$75 million for damages suffered, but it is hoped that the limit can be increased to \$10 billion and retroactive to April 15, 2010. Senators Robert Mendez and Frank Lautenberg have introduced the “Big Oil Bailout Prevention Act” to help address the enormity of the situation and to provide funds that are more realistic with the present world economic conditions. Mendez is reported to have said, “We can’t let the burden fall on the taxpayers. We should ensure that those who cause the damage are fully responsible.”

Another possible source of reimbursement to victims of disasters is The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund that is part of the Oil Pollution Act which was passed by the federal government in 1990. One of the main sources of revenue for the project was an eight-cent-per-barrel tax assessed on the oil industry. Consumer rights groups pointed out that this cost to the industry was simply passed on to the consumer, which means that part of the cost of a disaster would then be borne by American motorists and other consumers. The law expired in 1994 but there is believed to be approximately \$1.6 billion remaining in the fund.

There are a variety of obscure laws and regulations regarding liability in connection with a major disaster occurring within the oil industry. It is difficult and time consuming to determine a remedy for a particular situation. First of all, important and vital information concerning a certain case must be obtained. Time is also required to cap the well, retrieve the equipment, conduct a proper inspection and then test the site. Additionally, interviews must be conducted for those who are involved, and a detailed study of the meticulously kept logs to determine fault.

FAILED ATTEMPTS

A news report submitted by Harry R. Weber and Ray Henry under the heading “Long-Shot Plans Lined up to Plug Flow of Crude” was published by *The Daily News* (May 10, 2010) that reveals the sobering reality that this is no ordinary oil spill. Quoting in part from the article we read, “A growing collection of crippled equipment litters the ocean floor near a ruptured oil well gushing crude into the Gulf of Mexico, the remnants of a massive rig that exploded weeks ago and failed efforts to cap the leak.

“On the surface, nearly a mile up, a fleet of ships maneuvered to deploy the latest stopgap plans hatched by BP engineers to keep the Deepwater Horizon disaster from becoming the nation’s worst spill. Millions of gallons has risen from the depths since the April 20 explosion that killed 11, a pace that would surpass the total spilled in the Exxon Valdez disaster by Father’s Day.

“A day after ice-like crystals clogged a four-story box that workers had lowered atop the main leak,

crews using remote-controlled submarines hauled the specially built structure more than a quarter-mile away and prepared other long-shot methods of stopping the flow. Chief operating officer Doug Suttles said BP was thinking about putting a smaller containment dome over the massive leak, believing that it would be less vulnerable. The smaller dome could be ready in a day or two.

“The company was also now debating whether it should cut the riser pipe undersea and use larger piping to bring the gushing oil to a drill ship on the surface. The third option would use a tube to shoot ground-up material into the well’s blowout preventer, a process that could take two to three weeks.

“As BP weighed its options on the mainland, waves of dark brown and black sludge crashed into a boat in the area above the leak. The fumes there were so intense that a crew member of the support ship Joe Griffin and an AP photographer on board had to wear respirators while on deck. A white cattle egret bird landed on the ship, brownish-colored stains of oil on its face and along its chest, wings, and tail. Meanwhile, thick blobs of tar had washed up on Alabama’s white sand beaches, yet another sign that the spill was spreading.

“It had taken about two weeks to build the box and three days to cart the containment box 50 miles out and slowly lower it to the well a mile below the surface, but the frozen depths were just too much. Company and Coast Guard officials had cautioned that ice-like hydrates, a slushy mixture of gas and water, would be one of the biggest challenges to the containment box plan. The crystals

clogged the opening in the top of the peaked box, like sand in a funnel, only upside-down. It was never believed that the hydrates could actually plug up a 12-inch opening but they did, which means they're forming very rapidly and in large quantities. The containment box plan, never before tried at such depths, had been designed to siphon up to 85 percent of the leaking oil.

"The original blowout was triggered by a bubble of methane gas that escaped from the well and shot up the drill column, expanding quickly as it burst through several seals and barriers before exploding, according to interviews with rig workers conducted during BP's internal investigation. Deep sea oil drillers often encounter pockets of methane crystals as they dig into the earth. As the bubble rose, it intensified and grew, breaking through various safety barriers."

A WAKE UP CALL

The term 'oil spill' does not capture the magnitude of the unfolding tragedy that is taking place in the Gulf of Mexico. In reality, it is an endless explosion of toxic muck, a sickening mess of poisonous sludge that slowly winds its way toward more than a dozen wildlife refuges and hundreds of miles of coastline. Some think that it might even reach the ecologically fragile areas of the Florida Keys and beyond. Even before the spill, the gulf's wetlands and habitat were under siege from oil operations. Offshore pipelines that cross the coastal wetlands are estimated to have destroyed more salt marsh in the gulf region than can be found in the entire coastline from New Jersey to Maine. The

use of oil and other dirty fuels continues to pollute the atmosphere with carbon dioxide which accelerates climate disruption.

The immensity of the tragedy will undoubtedly draw attention and bolster support for change. Environmental groups will call for stopping any further expansion in offshore gas and oil drilling, saying we can no longer accept the outdated practices in a transition to a clean-energy future. In the United States, there are approximately 90 million people who live near the nation's more than 150 oil refineries. These refineries release millions of pounds of cancer-causing chemicals such as benzene, butadiene, and formaldehyde, along with nickel, lead, and other pollutants into the air and water resources. These pollutants are linked to heart disease, asthma and other health risks.

REVISED ESTIMATES

At the time of this writing, BP Company executives acknowledge that their previously estimated leak of 5,000 barrels of crude oil and 15 million cubic feet of gas per day into the gulf may need to be revised. The company released a video of the gushing oil recently, and independent scientists point out that the leak appears to be much larger than previously stated. Some observers said it could be several times as much, but there is no way of accurately measuring the flow.

Officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the United States Coast Guard said the 5,000 barrel figure was always understood to be a very rough estimate, and that the federal government has established

an interagency task force to study the flow rate in a scientific fashion. BP has come under sharp criticism for not being more forthcoming about the results of testing and monitoring of the spill. Homeland Security Secretary (HSS) Janet Napolitano and Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Administrator Lisa Jackson contacted BP demanding that the company make available all data and information it has collected on the disaster, including reports of internal investigations.

Further to this, EPA has informed BP to use less toxic oil dispersants to break up the growing oil slick. Approximately 700,000 gallons of chemical dispersant have been applied so far, the most ever used in a spill in the United States. Most of it has been released over the water's surface. This procedure breaks the oil up into droplets that will more quickly decompose with the help of oil-eating bacteria. This unprecedented use of dispersants exposes marine life to even more oil, imperiling deep sea organisms. BP says that they were complying with the order and had been retesting alternative products.

THE DESOLATE HERITAGES

Throughout the past two thousand years our Heavenly Father has been calling a little flock of faithful believers to share with our Lord Jesus in his future kingdom. (Luke 12:32) They will share in bringing peace, harmony, and life to the poor sin-sick world that has also inherited a polluted earth. (Isa. 24:5) In prophetic words, Isaiah again wrote, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I

helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.”—Isa. 49:8

The Apostle Paul clarified that the present Gospel Age is the ‘acceptable time.’ He said, “We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”II Cor. 6:1,2

The Prophet Joel also spoke concerning the desolate heritages, when he wrote, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.”—Joel 2:1-3

Ever since sin was introduced to the human family by Adam and Eve, our Heavenly Father has generally let the world take its own course. However, during the closing years of this present Gospel Age he is overruling in the world’s affairs and allowing the human family to realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Joel speaks of the inhabitants of

the land as trembling, and the present order as a 'desolate wilderness' that will be destroyed by fire.

We can have complete confidence in God's ultimate purpose as revealed by the Prophet Joel, who likens the future kingdom as a Garden of Eden wherein all unrighteousness, sin, and selfishness have been brought to an end.

We can have complete confidence that "The LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."—Joel 2:11-13 ■

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. . . . I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the LORD hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it."—Isa. 41:10,18-20

The Secrets of the Lord

*Precious art thou whom the Lord calls His own,
For from you are no secrets concealed.
As God spake to the Fathers thru prophets of old,
So thru Christ are His mysteries revealed.*

*“The secrets of God are with them that fear Him,”
To those who like children will be.
Thru only His Spirit His mysteries are shown—
With the eyes of our faith do we see.*

*His mysteries were hidden for long ages past,
But now unto us they are shown.
We hope for that glory for Christ in us dwells,
Its secret the world hath not known.*

*Our God hath revealed His most wonderful plan
Of His glorious Kingdom to be.
While many are blind thru the “God of this world”
How blest are our eyes for they see.*

*We know there are mysteries known only to God
Which “eye hath not seen nor ear heard.”
The promise of life in that heavenly realm—
This by faith we accept thru His Word.*

*Then we’ll know one another as even we’re known.
All mysteries will then be made plain.
Tho the way is now narrow, and our pathway is rough,
Still thru Christ we the victory can gain.*

—Poems of the Way

God's Cosmic Plan

Key Verse: “*God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus.*”

—*I Thessalonians*
5:9

Selected Scripture:

I Thessalonians

4:13-5:28

THE KEY VERSE OF THIS

lesson points out a wonderful truth to those who are thoroughly consecrated to God at the present time. These are not to be the recipients of God's wrath, though they will go through various trials and testings in this narrow way. They are, instead, in the process of obtaining salvation by their faith in, and obedience to, their master, Jesus. It is, rather, this present evil world (Greek, *kosmos*)—order of things—which is the object of God's wrath. This present order, and its leader, Satan, will be brought to an end and supplanted with a “new heavens and a new earth.”—II Pet 3:13

The ‘new heavens’ and ‘new earth’ will be brought to fruition by the raising from the dead those who have slept in the grave, both those who receive a heavenly spiritual reward as well as mankind in general, who will be raised to life here on the earth. The hope of the resurrection is a wonderful one, so stated by Paul, “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” (I Thess. 4:13) In the remaining verses of this chapter, Paul explains that it will first be the church—those faithful to the heavenly calling—who are raised from the dead. To these apply the promise,

“so shall we ever be with the Lord.”—vs. 17

Further in this lesson, Paul indicates that before the rest of mankind experiences their resurrection to perfect human life upon the earth, this old order of things must pass away. This happens through a great time of trouble and tribulation, of which Jesus prophesied, recorded in Matthew 24:21. Paul here describes the trouble this way, “When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.” (I Thess. 5:3) The metaphor of a woman in travail is fitting. Much pain and suffering is endured by a woman in childbirth, however, when her baby is born, she immediately forgets the former pain, on account of the joy of having a new life to cherish, nourish, and love.

Man also is going through much tribulation as this present order of things is nearing a close, ‘as travail upon a woman.’ He too, though, will forget this pain and suffering when Christ’s kingdom is established, giving ‘birth’ to a new righteous arrangement, including the raising of all in their graves to the opportunity for perfect human life. “Wonder not at this. For a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear His voice and will come forth—they who have done what is right to the resurrection of Life, and they whose actions have been evil to the resurrection of judgment.”—John 5:28,29, *Weymouth New Testament*

In the remaining verses of our lesson (I Thess. 5:8-28), Paul counsels those who are striving to receive a heavenly resurrection, and gives many important admonitions for daily living. “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly.”—I Thess. 5:16-23 ■

Glory to Christ

Key Verse:
***“Wherefore also we
pray always for
you, that our God
would count you
worthy of this
calling, and fulfil
all the good
pleasure of his
goodness, and the
work of faith with
power.”***
***II Thessalonians
1:11***

Selected Scripture:
II Thessalonians 1

hibited in their trials and persecutions was evident.

It is clear from this lesson that the faithful members of the body of Christ, as exemplified by the brethren in Thessalonica, will go through much in the way of trials, tribulations, and even persecution. Paul says that these are tokens, or evidences, of being counted “worthy of the kingdom of God.” (vs. 5) Such trials, although difficult for the flesh, are for the purpose of helping to shape and mold the Christian character to the pattern of our master, Christ Jesus. He was tried and tested in this way in order that he might gain a feeling for the difficulties which fallen man has dealt with for thousands of years.

APOSTLE PAUL OPENS HIS

second epistle to the Thessalonians by thanking God for them, “because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.” (II Thess. 1:3,4) He was clearly pleased with their progress, for he speaks of it along numerous lines—their faith was growing, their love was abounding, and the faithful endurance which they ex-

He was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15), and became a sympathetic High Priest.

The church—Jesus’ footstep followers—must also develop this same sympathetic attitude. These, along with Jesus, will constitute the great antitypical High Priest in the coming earthly kingdom, to bless and instruct all of mankind in righteousness. Having previously been developed through difficult experiences in this life, Christ and the church will be able to be patient, longsuffering, gentle, and loving as mankind gradually learns and develops the character necessary to pass the tests of that judgment day period.

In the Key Verse, Paul said that he prayed for the brethren, that God would count them worthy of their calling, and fulfill in them everything required to be counted faithful. It is noteworthy that Paul says this is a work of ‘faith with power.’ Faith implies complete and implicit trust in God, even in those experiences in which his will seems unclear, or his purposes vague. The power mentioned is the power of God’s Holy Spirit, for it is only through its guiding influence that faith can be made complete and fully function in the life of the Christian. Without the Holy Spirit and its enlightening influence, the Thessalonian brethren would surely have failed to develop the needed level of faith required to endure the trials, tribulations, and persecutions previously cited. The same is true of the Lord’s people today.

Our lesson closes with these words, “That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (II Thess. 1:12) Those who are faithful as the brethren were in Thessalonica, are such, not because of their own works, but by the grace of God and by the power of his Holy Spirit. This was exemplified in his son Jesus, who, as a perfect man, proclaimed God’s grace, and showed forth his power. Truly, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in us if we are faithful, even unto death. ■

Chosen and Called

Key Verse:
“Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.”
—II Thessalonians 2:15

Selected Scripture:
II Thessalonians 2

that the gospel message was just beginning to be preached and the work of the present Gospel Age was only getting started. How then, they perhaps wondered, could Jesus' return and the resulting end of this Gospel Age, occur so soon?

Paul explained the matter to them, “Be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” (II Thess. 2:2,3) This ‘falling away’ is a time Paul spoke of prophetically in which many of the doctrines of Truth would be put aside and replaced by false teachings. A false church system would be set up and deceive many for a long period of time. Finally, though, he prophesies this was to ‘be revealed,’ and that false system to be destroyed “with the brightness of his coming [presence].” (II Thess. 2:8) All

ONE OF THE PURPOSES

Paul had for writing the second epistle to the Thessalonians was to correct an apparent misunderstanding of the timing of Jesus' return and the resulting establishment of his earthly kingdom. Evidently, some had been teaching that these events were imminent. This was confusing to the brethren because

the evidences around them were

this, Paul said, must occur before the end of the Gospel Age and the establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom.

Nearly two thousand years have passed since Paul penned these words, and we now see in hindsight the evidences of that 'falling away'—the Dark Ages of superstition, fear, and the many false teachings and practices which entered Christendom. We also see, however, that a great enlightenment has come upon the true church during this 'harvest' time of the Gospel Age, signaling the nearness of the destruction of this old order of things and the establishment of the true kingdom of God upon the earth. It was this that the Thessalonian brethren looked forward to, for they desired to be a part of the Christ which would then bless all the families of the earth.

Having clarified this matter concerning the relative nearness of the kingdom, Paul again encouraged the brethren. He thanked God for them, and assured them that God had chosen them to "salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." (vs. 13) Notice that 'belief of the truth' was necessary, thus explaining why Paul had found it needful to correct their understanding. The Key Verse further points out the importance that those striving to follow Christ hold firm to the truths they have learned from the Scriptures. These truths do not change, although our appreciation of them increases as we grow and develop into the image of Jesus, and as we more and more appreciate the beauties of God's plans and purposes for all mankind. In all this, we are mindful of these words, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."—Isa. 55:9

Our lesson ends with Paul once again encouraging the brethren, that Jesus and God, "even our Father," might "comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." (II Thess. 2:16,17) Let us be likewise stirred to faithfulness in all our words and actions, as those chosen and called of God. ■

God's Own Faithfulness

Key Verse: *“The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.”*
—II Thessalonians 3:3

Selected Scripture: II Thessalonians 3
have free course.” (II Thess. 3:1) As the chosen apostle to the Gentiles, he realized that much work lay before him yet, and the fervent prayers of the brethren would be much needed.

The Key Verse of this lesson lays out for us three important features of God's supervision of our lives. First, he is faithful—he will never leave us nor forsake us. Second, he establishes us—firmly planting us upon the foundation of Christ. Third, he keeps us from evil—not necessarily according to the flesh, but he keeps us from all spiritual harm. Although these are all things God is doing on our behalf, we have responsibilities as well. Paul lays out some of these to the Thessalonian brethren and to us in the remaining verses of this chapter.

Having corrected their understanding of the times and seasons (see the previous lesson) related to Christ's Second Coming, Paul's first exhortation in this final chapter

IN THIS FINAL CHAPTER

of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, he leaves them numerous exhortations and admonitions to be used in their Christian walk. We, too, benefit from these same teachings even today. First, though, Paul asked the brethren to pray for him, “that the word of the Lord may

is appropriately in this regard, that they be directed “into the patient waiting for Christ.” (vs. 5) He knew it would require much in the way of patient endurance for them to maintain their walk in Christ, and we likewise today. ‘Patient waiting’ also includes the thought of continuance and constancy, two other necessary elements for the Lord’s people as they walk in the narrow way.

Paul further admonished the brethren that they withdraw from those who walk disorderly, remembering the example he had left when he was with them, “for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.” (vss. 6,7) He admonished them to work for their own food, also as he had done. (vss. 8-10) Evidently there had been some who were not following Paul’s example along these lines, but who were “disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies.” (vs. 11) He exhorted them to more properly work with “quietness,” and “eat their own bread.”—vs. 12

“Be not weary in well doing” was Paul’s next admonition. (vs. 13) The narrow way is long and difficult. Doing good in this present world of sin is not easy, and with our fallen flesh to contend with, it might be easy to become weary of doing that which is righteous. In another place, Paul says, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” (Gal. 6:9) The final admonition to the Thessalonian brethren was that they be watchful as to any of their fellowship who did not obey the words of this letter. Even in such cases, however, the proper spirit of love must be manifested, “Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.”—II Thess. 3:15

Summarizing Paul’s second epistle to the Thessalonians, we find a mixture of encouragement, doctrinal correction and clarification, exhortation to faithfulness, and practical admonitions for the body of Christ. As these were helpful to the brethren of the Early Church, so let them be with us living during the harvest of the present Gospel Age. ■

Parables and Dark Sayings

“Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old.”

—*Psalms 78:1,2*

THE HEAVENLY FATHER’S

divine program was designed to keep the Truth hidden from the worldly-wise and those whose hearts were not in tune to the principles of truth and righteousness. However, they would be revealed to the Lord’s people who accept the wonderful teachings, and respond by making a full consecration to God during the present Gospel Age. “Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.”—vss. 3,4

TAUGHT IN PARABLES

Our Lord Jesus used parables and dark sayings to teach valuable lessons to his followers and those who are seeking the heavenly calling. In Luke’s gospel, it is recorded, “He [Jesus] said, Unto you it

is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.” (Luke 8:10) All others of the sin-sick world will receive their opportunity toward reconciliation with God during the future kingdom of life and truth that will be made available to them under the establishment of Christ’s future kingdom, that we believe is soon to come.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

One of the important and valuable lessons which Jesus taught was the parable of the sower, and Luke recounts the lesson in his gospel. The Lord said, “A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”—vss. 5-8

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, some of his faithful followers evidently surmised that his mission was the conversion of the world, even at that early time of the church’s history. They therefore asked him, “Why speakest thou unto them [the multitude] in parables?” (Matt. 13:10) The Lord answered them, saying, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them

in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”—vss. 12,13

Continuing, the Lord explains the inability of the multitude to understand his words, saying, “This people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”—vss. 15-17

THE PARABLE’S MEANING

The Lord plainly states to his disciples the important point of his parable. He told them, “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”—Luke 8:11-15

SEED SOWN BY THE WAYSIDE

In this parable, the ‘seed’ that is sown is the Word of God. The sowing of the seed began with our Lord Jesus and was continued by the apostles after Pentecost and the remainder of the present Gospel Age church. We observe, in this parable, that some of the seed falls by the wayside where it is trodden down and the fowls of the air devour it. The Lord explains that those by the wayside are they who hear the message of Truth, but have the Word taken out of their hearts by Satan, lest they should believe and be saved. The seed which falls by the wayside to some extent enters the hearts of those who demonstrate some interest and appreciation for the Truth. As we know, Satan is a deceiver. (Rev. 12:9) He employs an array of means by which he endeavors to take away the precious Word of God from those who may have received it with lukewarm zeal or a passing interest. One of his most potent means, and most often employed, is by false teachers who often instill error, fear, and confusion where there would otherwise be confidence, peace, and understanding.

SEED LANDING ON STONY GROUND

Some of the seed fell upon ground that had little of the necessary nutrients to sustain it, or the right amount of moisture to nurture the new life that springs forth from the seed of Truth. The Lord explains that this part of the lesson portrays those Christian people who are joyful upon hearing the Word of God and believe it. However, having no substantial root they fall away in an hour of temptation. He said, “He that received the seed into

stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but [en]dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.” (Matt. 13:20,21) The trials may come because of the Truth, and those who uphold the Word of God will inevitably be tested by a world full of unbelief.

The Apostle Paul made clear, “Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:1-4

As they begin their Christian walk, these Christians fall prey to one of Satan’s most insidious lies. It is the lie that says that it is reasonable to expect that the disciple of Christ will be protected from trials. The mature believer never forgets that the path to glory is only through much tribulation. We are reminded of this reality in the account of Paul and Barnabas when they passed through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. They strengthened the brethren, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22) In his second

epistle to Timothy, Paul states, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” (II Tim. 2:12) In his epistle to the Romans, the apostle explains, “Not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.”—Rom. 5:3,4

Only those who are willing to suffer and die with the Master may expect to attain a place in Christ’s future kingdom. The consecrated child of God must continue to allow the sanctifying effect of the Word of God to take ever deeper root in their heart, or a falling away will surely follow. Those who would patiently endure the test are those who have sufficient good ground for the seed of Truth to have become deeply rooted.

SOWN AMONG THORNS

Jesus also pointed to other of the sown seed that fell among thorns, which sprang up and choked it. He explained that this portrays those who have heard the Word of God, and may go forth with zeal and commitment in an effort to fulfill the Christian life they desire to follow. However, these soon allow themselves to become entangled in the riches, pleasures, and cares of this world. In due course, the sense in which they began their new Christian journey gradually becomes choked and dies, having fallen prey to another of Satan’s insidious devices. As recorded by Matthew, we read, “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.”—Matt. 13:22 *(Continued on page 35)*

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(Continued from page 31) We are not to understand that those who hear and embrace the wonderful Word of God are to abandon their daily obligations to family, friends, and their fellow man. On the contrary, those who would faithfully follow our dear Lord are cautioned that it would be a mark of infidelity if they were to use our calling in Christ Jesus as an excuse to evade that responsibility. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he told him, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—I Tim. 5:8

It is manifest that one cannot avoid altogether the cares of this world of imperfection. In his wisdom, our dear Lord was not overlooking that reality, but was exhorting those who would follow him to avoid the pitfall of allowing earthly concerns and ambitions to overwhelm their budding spiritual vitality. When writing his epistle to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul exhorted them, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) All who heed these admonitions should be aware of the need to detect the evidence of thorns in their consecrated life, and to take the measures necessary to control and eventually eradicate them.

Those who have made a consecration to our loving Heavenly Father must continually resist the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. These enticements are characterized by the Apostle Paul, who admonishes us, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand

against the wiles of the devil.” (Eph. 6:11) In his letter to the brethren at Ephesus, he continued by then identifying seven various elements of the armor. He explained, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”—vss. 12-18

Those who neglect to do all that is advised by the apostle in the foregoing passage of scripture are those who will be vulnerable to the Devil’s wiles. They are not “holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” (Titus 1:9) Their attempt to please the world demonstrates their loss of the holy fear of displeasing their Heavenly Father. “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body.”—Matt. 10:28

SEED UPON GOOD GROUND

The Lord concludes his wonderful parable of the sower by pointing to the seed that falls upon what he refers to as ‘good ground.’ He thus teaches, “On the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” (Luke 8:15) He states that these hear God’s Word, ponder its teachings, and then bring forth fruit with patience. Patience is the significant thought, and is the vital difference between the believers who constitute the good ground of the parable, and those merely professing believers he spoke of in the other categories of the parable.

Thus, the ‘stony ground’ believers did not have sufficient depth in which to cultivate patience. They could not endure the tribulation that inevitably comes to all who endeavor to hold fast the Word of God. Others who were enticed by the pleasures of this world could not endure the perceived thorny privations of a life of sacrifice. On the other hand, throughout the present Gospel Age the ‘good ground’ believers have endured with patience the various trials of a fully consecrated life.

MANKIND TO LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS

The ‘good ground’ believers in the Christ realize that, in due time, the whole human family will be required to consider the wonderful providence of a loving Heavenly Father as recorded by the prophet Isaiah, who wrote, “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are

in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”—Isa. 26:9

At the time of his First Advent, the Master’s message of the kingdom of heaven was not intended to convert the multitudes to whom he spoke. It was only for those who had a ‘hearing ear’ for the High Calling in Christ Jesus during the present age of sacrifice. Thus did the Apostle Paul encourage the consecrated during this present Gospel Age by saying, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”—Heb. 2:1

THE APPOINTED TIME

The Prophet Habakkuk was moved by the Holy Spirit of God to write, “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” (Hab. 2:3) Prophecy reveals that the present Gospel Age has been the appointed time of waiting for the ‘vision’ of Christ’s kingdom.

Many centuries later, the Apostle Paul pointed back to Habakkuk’s prophecy and proclaimed that Christ Jesus was the vision, and that it would be his Second Advent for which his faithful followers would be patiently waiting. “Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. 10:36,37) The apostle reveals that waiting for the Lord’s Second Advent would prove to be a test of patience. He warned that this period of waiting would constitute a severe test of faith for many who were walking in the narrow way of sacrifice.

HOLDING FAST THE TRUTH

Paul wrote to encourage the brethren at Rome, and emphasized that it was the Heavenly Father who is the supreme example of patience. He told them, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." (Rom. 15:4,5) In his epistle to Titus, the apostle mentions a special characteristic that should mark every child of God. "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."—Titus 1:9

Through divine revelation, the Apostle Paul understood that the due time for the return of Christ and the gathering of his disciples unto him would be many centuries into the future from his day. The apostle proclaims: "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."—II Cor. 12:4-7

THE PROMISED INHERITANCE

In his gospel, John recorded some of our dear Lord's final words as his earthly ministry was drawing to a close. In his prayer to the Heavenly Father, Jesus spoke of his faithful followers, those who were of the 'good ground' class and, therefore, well-grounded in the fundamental doctrines and wonderful promises of the Truth. He said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."—John 17:19-25

As the present Gospel Age comes to a close, let us strive with greater diligence to make our calling and election sure and inherit the long-promised blessings of the Christ, of which the worldly-wise remain unaware. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that

come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”—I Cor. 2:6-9

“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—Ps. 16:11 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Rosemary Webster, Topsfield, MA—December 2009. Age, 82

Brother William Diemer, Derry, NH—February 21. Age, 82

Sister Elizabeth Hagensick, St. Petersburg, FL—May 1. Age, 99

Sister Adalene Dickey, Danville, KY—May 11.

Sister Vanatta Simon, Los Angeles, CA—May 11. Age, 77

Sister Alice Scrivens, Clearwater, FL—May 24. Age, 89

Chosen to Salvation

“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

—II Thessalonians 2:13

for them. Paul takes the matter a step further, saying that as he traveled and visited the various churches he had helped establish, he spread the word of their faithfulness so that all who heard gloried in it. He states, “We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.”—vs. 4

PAUL OPENED HIS SECOND epistle to the Thessalonians, as he did many times in his writings, by thanking God for the brethren whom he was addressing. (II Thess. 1:3) Specifically, he thanked God for their growing faith and their love, which seemed to abound toward one another. What a beautiful testimony of their faithfulness is given just from Paul’s simple statement of thanksgiving

Although Paul realized that the church at Thessalonica had been faithful up until now, he also knew they would continue to be tested and tried, and maintaining their faithful course would not be accomplished in their own strength, but in God's. He prayed that God would continue to work in them to the completion of that which had been started. In II Thessalonians 1:11, we read, "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." Notice that Paul indicated in this verse that it was really God's work which was being fulfilled in the Thessalonian church, 'his goodness,' and his 'work of faith with power.' Paul wanted them, and us, to realize that all the glory and honor relating to the development of each member of the church belonged exclusively to God and his faithful son, Jesus Christ, and it was only through grace that they, and we, could be products of such a work. "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."—vs. 12

MORE THAN MERE BELIEF REQUIRED

In our article text, Paul recounts once again how that the brethren he was addressing had been specially chosen by God to receive salvation based on their faithfulness in being sanctified and because of their understanding of the Truth of God's Word. This points out the fact that to realize the hope of a heavenly salvation requires more than mere belief, although this is certainly a required element.

It also requires an understanding of God's plan—his Truth—and the resulting sanctifying effect that knowledge should have on one's character. Without these two additional elements—God's Truth and its sanctifying effect—we could not be found fit for a place in Christ's heavenly kingdom. Realizing this, Paul admonished the brethren to “Stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught.” (chap. 2:15) He also prayed that God would “comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”—vs.17

Paul expressed to the Thessalonian brethren that the Lord is faithful, as well as his confidence that they would be also. He says, “The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.” (chap. 3:3,4) We also should be confident, not in our own strength, but in the Lord's, and remember the words, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).”—Heb. 10:23

WHO IS WORTHY?

To look further into the arrangement by which the church is ‘chosen to salvation,’ we turn to the last book of the Bible—Revelation. The book of Revelation is highly symbolic, and in chapter five we have pictured before our minds, as it were, God upon his throne with a book. This book, or scroll, was written on the inside as well as on the outside, as books were in olden times. However, no one could read it, or even open it, as it was sealed with seven seals. The question is then asked, “Who is

worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (Rev. 5:2) No one "in heaven nor in earth" was found who was able to open the book, or even to look upon it, causing much weeping and disappointment. (vss. 3,4) The book, in this instance, seems to be symbolic of God's divine purpose and plan, that purpose being to have a perfect race of God's creation here upon earth, enjoying in peace and perfection all the beauties and blessings of God's creative handiwork. However, sin had separated man from God's favor, and instead of living and enjoying the beauties of earth forever, man was subject to the results of sin—disease, sickness, suffering, and eventually death. God's original purpose for man was sealed, unable to be opened and fulfilled, until and unless someone could be found worthy to redeem man from his fallen condition and bring him back into favor with God.

To fulfill the requirement of a redeemer would not be an easy task. First, it required a corresponding price—a perfect human life to be given up in payment of the perfect human life Adam lost when he sinned in the Garden of Eden. Many angelic beings qualified as perfect, yet they were not a corresponding price because they were not human beings—born of flesh and blood. Although a corresponding price from the standpoint of their human lineage could be found among mankind, all failed in the other vital requirement of being perfect. All were of Adam's descent, and, therefore, it was impossible for any of them to give a perfect life as a ransom, for none were perfect, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10) As the Psalmist says, "None of them can by any means

redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.” (Psa. 49:7) Surely it seemed that no one was worthy to open the book, and loose its seals.

WORTHY IS THE LAMB

Just when it seemed that no one would be found worthy to be the one to carry out God’s plan of salvation to its ultimate conclusion, the cry is heard, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” (Rev. 5:5) Who was this ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David’? If there was any doubt, it is removed in the next verse, when it identifies this ‘worthy’ one as a “Lamb as it had been slain.” (vs. 6) This could only be Jesus, of whom John the Baptist had said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

Because of Jesus’ faithfulness even unto death and his subsequent resurrection to the right hand of God, it could now be said with much rejoicing, “Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood {men} from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”—Rev. 5:9, *New American Standard Bible*

TWO CLASSES IDENTIFIED

In Revelation chapter 7, the Apostle John, in vision, sees the reward of the faithful overcomers of the present age—those chosen to salvation. These, he says, are those who receive a heavenly inheritance prior to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom here on earth for the rest of mankind, all of whom have been purchased by Jesus’ blood. In

this chapter are mentioned two distinct, yet related, classes of those who receive such a heavenly reward.

First, John says that the symbolic four winds of trouble that will bring about the end of this present evil order of things and usher in a new age of blessing for mankind (see II Peter 3:7,13) cannot be let loose in their fury until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, that is, until they have proven themselves faithful, even unto death. (Rev. 2:10) Verse 4 of Revelation chapter 7 states that this group of faithful servants will be a relatively small number, only one hundred and forty four thousand, to be exact. This is in harmony with the words of Jesus when he referred to this class of his faithful followers as a "little flock." (Luke 12:32) It is only this class that has the indelible mark, or seal, of the character of Christ so fixed in their hearts and minds, having been proven loyal through trials and testings. They only can be deemed worthy of "glory and honour and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) Later, John again refers to this small number of faithful ones, and the reason they are rewarded so highly, saying, "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."—Rev. 14:1,4

Notice in the previous scripture that John speaks of this small group as 'firstfruits.' This indicates

that there are to be other groups who will be deemed worthy of life—‘afterfruits,’ as it were—although on a lesser plane of life than the 144,000 to whom immortality is given. One of these groups is the second class spoken of in Revelation 7. Verse 9 identifies this group as a “great multitude” in contrast with the first group comprising only a ‘little flock.’ Also, in contrast, is the statement in this same verse that this second class stood “before the Lamb,” whereas the first group is spoken of as being ‘with’ the Lamb (see Rev. 14:1). John further says that this ‘great multitude’ had “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (chap. 7:14) Thus is indicated to us that this group, while deemed worthy of heavenly life, were not as faithful as the class cited earlier in the chapter. This group had, through a measure of willful sin, soiled their symbolic robes and, through difficult experiences, were required to wash them in order to be found acceptable to God. Because of this, they fail to achieve the reward of immortality given to the little flock. However, they are promised a heavenly inheritance, to serve God ‘before the throne,’ with their life sustenance graciously provided by the Lamb. “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—vs. 17

PREACHING AND LIVING THE GOSPEL

One of the privileges that the prospective members of the church—the little flock—have at the present time is to preach the good tidings to others. This is an important requirement for those chosen

to salvation. Revelation 14:6 speaks of an angel, or messenger, as “having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” All who are striving to follow Christ have part in proclaiming the Gospel message. That this would be the case was prophesied by Jesus himself, when he said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.” (Matt. 24:14) In the next verse, Revelation 14:7, John tells us what our message to others should be, “Fear [reverence] God, and give glory to him: . . . worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” God is to be the center of all our preaching—not ourselves, our ideas, our thoughts, our ways, but his only. Additionally, we should preach Jesus, the one who exercised the power of God his Father to create heaven, earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters. “All things were made by him [Jesus, God’s son]; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”—John 1:3

John the Revelator reminds us that it is not only important that we preach the gospel message, but that we also live it each day of our Christian walk. “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” (Rev. 14:12) This verse indicates that to live according to the gospel message requires endurance, constancy, and patient continuance, because the way is sometimes difficult, the trials and tests severe. John says that to be successful in this lifelong work, two things must take place. First, we must keep the commandments of God. That is, we

must be obedient to the precepts and guidelines which, through the Scriptures, he has set before us. Obedience is the ultimate test of loyalty, and our character must be found in such a state if we are to be deemed faithful and worthy of the crown of life. Second, we must also keep the faith of Jesus. This means we must have the same kind of faith that Jesus had. His faith was such that, even under the most difficult circumstances, he could say, “not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42) His was also a faith based on a correct understanding of God’s plans and purposes. Our faith, too, is to be built upon the simple truth of God’s Word, not upon human reasoning, creeds, or theories.

We find these words concerning those who faithfully complete the work previously described: “I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” (Rev. 14:13) Although these will experience death, yet it will be a blessing, for they will be resurrected—changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (I Cor. 15:52)—and have the privilege of being associated with Jesus in the heavenly phase of the kingdom to bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 28:14) They will rest, or cease, from their present earthly ‘labours’ as the above verse indicates, but their works will ‘follow them’ after their resurrection, as they will then have part in the great work of blessing mankind in Christ’s coming kingdom. These faithful, patient, enduring ones are spoken of in Romans 2:7 as those “who by

patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.”

AN EARTHLY HOPE FOR MANKIND

Our lesson thus far has focused on the reward of those footstep followers of Jesus who would be counted worthy to share a heavenly inheritance with him as immortal spirit beings—his church—as well as those who, although less faithful, will also receive a heavenly reward—a great multitude. The Apostle John, however, presents the additional hope of an earthly inheritance for the remainder of mankind, to be made possible by the establishment of a kingdom of peace here on earth. Revelation 21:1,2 speaks of this arrangement as a “new heaven and a new earth.” This is not to be thought of literally, but in the sense that there will be established a new order of things, and that this new order will have as the source of its governing authority the ‘new heaven’—that is, Christ and his church. They will not reign literally here on earth, as they will be in heaven. However, their governing authority will be made manifest through various faithful earthly representatives who will administer the righteous and perfect laws of that kingdom.

“I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” (Rev. 21:3) This verse states plainly that it has been God’s intent from the very beginning that his tabernacle (dwelling) would be with man. Since he created man to dwell on the earth, it only makes sense that God intended, in due time, for mankind

to live here in perfection forever, enjoying the beauty and bounty of the earth, and also enjoying communion with God as Adam had in the garden of Eden. We believe this time is close at hand, and once the lessons of sin have fully been learned by mankind, this present evil order will give way to the righteous and peaceful kingdom that Jesus taught his disciples to pray for—"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

John continues by describing some of the wonderful conditions that will exist in the earth during this time of blessing, saying that when this time comes tears will be wiped away, and there will be no more death, sorrow, or crying, not even any more pain! All these former things will have passed away. (Rev. 21:4) Summarizing all these changes, John says, "Behold, I make all things new. . . . Write: for these words are true and faithful." (vs. 5) We can have the utmost confidence that these words will come to pass. They will not fail, for God has so stated the matter.

OBEDIENT MANKIND TO ATTAIN SALVATION

In Revelation 21:22-27, John points out that authority, both religious and civil, during Christ's coming kingdom will center in God and his Son, "the Lamb." (vs. 22) The light of Truth will also emanate from them. (vs. 23) No more will this light be hidden, covered up, or deceitfully distorted by Satan and his devices, for he will be bound, no longer able to influence mankind. (see Rev. 20:1,2) The result of this will be that entire nations and peoples will flock to be part of this wonderful

arrangement. “The nations . . . shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory . . . into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory . . . of the nations into it.”—Rev. 21:24-26

All of mankind who come into harmony with this blessed arrangement and attain full heart obedience to the precepts of righteousness then in force will be those spoken by John—“they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (vs. 27) All such among mankind will then be found also chosen to salvation, all to the praise and honor of God and his precious son, Jesus. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JULY 1—“Walk as children of light...proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”—Ephesians 5:8,10 (Z. ’99-4 Hymn 315)

JULY 8—“The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”—I Timothy 3:15 (Z. ’99-37 Hymn 217)

JULY 15—“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, . . . and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”—I Corinthians 13:3 (Z. ’99-77 Hymn 344)

JULY 22—“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”—Psalm 34:18,19

“A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.”—Proverbs 24:16 (Z. 03-217 Hymn 111)

JULY 29—“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.”—Daniel 3:17 (Z. 99-171 Hymn 63)

Children of Promise

“I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.”
—*Genesis 18:10*

MANY YEARS AFTER BE-ing called by God out of the land of Ur, Abraham was divinely commanded to go with his son Isaac to the land of Moriah. “He [God] said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”—Gen. 22:2

A SACRIFICIAL OFFERING

After arriving in Moriah, Abraham prepared to offer his beloved son in sacrifice as testimony to his great love for God. However, at the crucial moment, the hand of Abraham was stayed from sacrificing Isaac by an angel who, speaking for God, said, “By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 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.”—vss. 16-18

NOT THROUGH THE LAW

Later, the Israelites came to believe their unique national status under the Law Covenant instituted by Moses at Mt. Sinai. It was confirmed that they were the promised seed and, as Abraham’s natural descendants, were the sole inheritors of all that was promised him by God. However, the Apostle Paul explains, “The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”—Rom. 4:13-16

THE PROMISED SEED

All that are under the Law do not constitute the seed promised to Abraham, and the foundation of God’s promises do not rest on the Law of Moses but by the faith of Abraham. Paul further teaches, “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the

flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac.”—Rom. 9:6-10

The promised seed that will bless all the families of the earth is not natural Isaac, for he serves only as a type of a greater spiritual Isaac. The true seed—antitypical, spiritual Isaac—will consist of both Jew and Gentile. During this present Gospel Age, it will be begotten in a new and special manner, like unto that by which typical Isaac was begotten through a specific promise of God.

PROMISE AT MAMRE

The promise was given in Mamre and is recorded for us: “The LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground.” (Gen. 18:1,2) “And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.”—vss. 9-11

Paul proclaims that the miracle and the promise thus invalidate the Israelites’ claim of an exclusive right to the promised seed of Abraham. Neither

Sarah's promise, nor the child she subsequently delivered, were the products of the Law, but were products of her faith in the power of God. In his epistle to the Hebrew brethren, the apostle emphasizes that Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac signified that the salvation of all mankind is to be accomplished through the vital element of faith alone. He said, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."—Heb. 11:8-11

CONSIDER THE PROMISE

As he preached the pure message of faith, Paul was vigorously opposed by Christian converts from Judaism who taught obedience to both Christ and the Law. Countering their message, the apostle alludes to the promise and the miracle that pertains to Sarah and the birth of Isaac, and asks, "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise."—Gal. 4:21-23

Paul then reveals the symbolic significance of Abraham's wives. "This is allegorically speaking:

for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. For it is written, Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband.”—vss. 24-27, *New American Standard Bible*

TWO COVENANTS

By naming Hagar and alluding to Sarah, Paul refers to two of Abraham's wives. These are figures, or symbols, of two covenants. One covenant enslaves through the flesh and is characterized by literal Jerusalem. The other covenant liberates through the spirit and is characterized by spiritual Jerusalem. Paul says Hagar typifies the Law Covenant which binds those under it to ordinances they are incapable of keeping. Sarah, on the other hand, typifies a covenant of liberation wherein all under it are free from the demands of those ordinances. The apostle purposely avoids mention of Keturah, Abraham's third and last wife. He referred to her with the implication of a third covenant, but it would have broadened the focus of his subject beyond the point he is making, namely that the Law Covenant represents Israel's bondage to a standard which kept it perpetually condemned. There is another covenant which, during the present Gospel Age represents the prospect of liberty through Christ from all condemnation.

THE SARAH COVENANT

Paul declared that the covenant typified by faithful Sarah ‘is our mother.’ Therefore, the covenant from which the promised seed will be brought forth can be properly designated the Sarah Covenant. During the present Gospel Age, members of ‘The Christ’ are begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who remain faithful will constitute the true promised seed—the antitypical Isaac. These faithful ones are the saints of God. They are begotten, nurtured, and brought to completion within the figurative womb of the Sarah Covenant which is a covenant of sacrifice. “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.”—Ps. 50:5

The apostle reminded the Judaizers that the Sarah Covenant of sacrifice had centuries before been pictorially foretold, and although long barren it would in time bear greater fruitage than the Law Covenant to which the Jews were so zealously and erroneously devoted. Addressing those begotten of the Holy Spirit of God, the apostle directly states his point, saying, “Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” (Gal. 4:28) Thus, Paul does not refer to the promise given in the land of Moriah (Gen. 22) that pertains to Abraham, but to the promise given in the land of Mamre (Gen. 18) that pertains to Sarah.

BONDWOMAN CAST OUT

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul continues to counter the teaching of the Judaizers. He speaks of the history of conflict within Abraham’s very household wherein the child of the flesh, Ishmael, persecuted the younger child, Isaac, who had been

begotten by the Spirit of God. This resulted in the casting out of the fleshly child and his mother Hagar. The apostle says, "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."—Gal. 4:29-31

A SPECIAL CREATION

Typical Isaac was begotten and born under extraordinary circumstances. He was a special creation of God's power upon Sarah's womb. Paul makes it clear that it is to be likewise with anti-typical Isaac. This spiritual class of Jews and Gentiles, with Christ Jesus as its head, is begotten during the present Gospel Age by the power of God. A distinctly New Creation is nurtured and developed within the protective womb of the Sarah Covenant. Brought forth in the first resurrection, first the head our Lord Jesus, and then the body members of the Christ, the spiritual seed will bless all the families of the earth.

"[God] hath put all things under his [Jesus'] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."—Eph. 1:22,23

THE CHRIST

Isaac, of whom God spoke to Abraham while in the land of Moriah, is to be a collective, spiritual seed composed not only of Jews but those from many nations who will have the faith of Abraham. These

spirit-begotten brethren in Christ are the promised fruit of a symbolic womb—the Sarah Covenant of liberty. It will be within the figurative womb of the Sarah Covenant that the Christ, head and body, will be brought forth to bless all the families of the earth with a New Covenant. This is represented by Abraham’s third wife Keturah, a covenant to be mediated during the 1000 years of the Millennial Age.

Isaac was the promised seed brought forth by God’s miraculous power through Sarah. The Christ will likewise be brought forth through the Sarah Covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant holds forth the promise of blessing all the nations of the earth by that antitypical seed once it is brought forth from the Sarah Covenant. Everything that pertained to Isaac as the child of promise was contingent upon Sarah’s belief that it was possible for God to do that which he had promised. Likewise, antitypical Isaac—the Christ head and body—begotten and conceived during the present Gospel Age will be delivered through faith to the everlasting benefit of all.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:6) “This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”—Heb. 8:10,11 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

K. Fernets

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 2-4
Vernon, BC 9-11

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

C. Chandler

Vernon, BC 9-11

D. Christiansen

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 2-4

O. B. Elbert

Vernon, BC 9-11

B. Jakubowski

Vernon, BC 9-11

A. Kopczyk

Vernon, BC 9-11

T. Krupa

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 2-4
Vernon, BC 9-11

H. Montague

Portland, OR June 18-2

A. Oystryk

Vernon, BC 9-11

B. Siwak

Vernon, BC 9-11

B. Sweeney

Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 2-4
Vernon, BC 9-11

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CONVENTIONS

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PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 2-4—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1, Stn. Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada, S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692

OKANAGAN CONVENTION, July 9-11—Shubert Centre, 3505 30th Avenue, Vernon, BC, Canada. Tourist area, reserve early. Schell Motel (1 block away). Phone: (888) 772-4355 or (250) 545-1351. For other information, contact B. Blencowe. Phone: (250) 545-0780

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 17-22—University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, PA. Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 8-13—Baia Mare, Romania. Contact Tom Machacek. Phone: (219) 662-8107 (International Youth Seminar follows, August 16-20.)

ALBERTA CONVENTION, August 13-15—Pioneer Lodge, 4324 47th Avenue, Red Deer, AB, Canada. For hotel reservations, call Stanford Inn, (403) 347-5551. Contact A. Baumgarten. Phone: (403) 356-0004

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, August 21,22—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact L. Boyd. Phone: (414) 736-1106

JACKSON LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 4,5—Fa-Ho-Lo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Unit 1, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact R. Lumley. Phone: (517) 782-7252

NEW YORK LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 4,5—Doubletree Hotel, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NY 07430. Phone: (201) 529-5880. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196

SEATTLE LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 4-6—Seabeck Christian Conference Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380-9583. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 10-12—Radisson Inn Huntsville Airport, 8721 Madison Blvd., Madison, AL 35758. Reservations: (800) 395-7046 or (256) 772-8855. Mention Huntsville Bible Students. Deadline for rooms: August 31. Contact J. Cothren, 1300 Huntsville Hills Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802. Phone: (256) 852-8505

CLAY CITY CONVENTION, September 24-26—Canyon Inn, McCormick's Creek State Park, 451 McCormick Creek Park Road, Spencer, IN 47460. Cut-off date for reservations is August 27. Contact S. Clark, 7861 Clearwater Parkway, Indianapolis, IN 46240. Phone: (317) 578-2634

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, October 9,10—Kenowa Hills Middle School, 3950 Hendershot Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544. Contact T. Malinowski, 5609 Buttrick Avenue SE, Alto, MI 49302. Phone: (616) 868-0313

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 30,31—Garden Club of Sanford, 200 Fairmont Drive (Corner of Hwy. 17-92), Sanford, FL. Contact J. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 831-2098

*"If we love one another, God dwelleth in us,
and his love is perfected in us."
—I John 4:12*

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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