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Renewing Our Vows for the New Year Ahead

*“When thou shalt
vow a vow unto the
LORD thy God,
thou shalt not
slack to pay it: for
the LORD thy God
will surely require
it of thee; and it
would be sin in
thee.”*

—Deuteronomy 23:21

FOR GENERATIONS, THE start of another new year has often been associated with the resolve to set certain new goals. It is thus a proper time to be thinking about making commitments that would improve our lives. As we enter the New Year 2009, many of the Lord’s people will also take the opportunity for solemn reflection regarding their consecrated walk in newness of life. They will rededicate, refocus, and strive for higher attainments of growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, and to be more faithful in carrying out their consecration vows even unto death.

Turning over a new leaf on our calendars is an excellent time to reflect on the abundant goodness, mercies, and blessings that were received from the

loving hands of our Heavenly Father during the year now ending, and to do so with much joy and thankfulness. It is also a time to look forward with increased anticipation and hope as we see increasing evidence that Christ's long-promised kingdom is nearer than when we first believed. We look forward to using our time, talents, and opportunities in new ways to serve our loving Heavenly Father and his people. We may share with him in his ultimate plans and wonderful purpose to bring blessings of life and peace to the poor sin-sick and dying human family, and to provide reconciliation for all of the obedient under the administration of Christ's future kingdom of peace.

MAKING A VOW

The word 'vow' means to make a solemn promise, or pledge, to do a certain thing. When the consecrated follower of our Lord Jesus makes a vow, it reflects the heart condition of the brother or sister, and represents a life of total commitment and service to the Heavenly Father. It involves the sacrifice of all that we have and all that we hope to be. It must be done with our best intention to carry out that pledge and to be faithful even unto death. David's son Solomon spoke of the seriousness of making vows and faithfully keeping them when he wrote, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."—Eccles. 5:4,5

THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

This present Gospel Age has been set aside by God for the very special purpose of selecting the

bride of Christ. “Being also co-laborers, we exhort you not to receive the favor of God in vain; (for he says, ‘in a Season acceptable, I listened to thee, and in a Day of Salvation I assisted thee.’ Behold! now is a well-accepted Season; behold! now is a Day of Salvation.)” II Cor. 6:1,2, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

A LIVING SACRIFICE

All like-minded children of God are energized by the wise counsel of the Apostle Paul, who wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

Paul’s inspiring exhortation to give our lives as a sacrifice to the Heavenly Father is addressed only to the fully consecrated and justified members of the household of faith. They are being called and selected by God during the acceptable time of sacrifice—this present Gospel Age. As the typical high priest of Israel offered himself to God, so also did Jesus. “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”—Heb. 7:27,28

The apostle appreciated his privilege to live a life of sacrifice to God, and speaking of his own

experience said, “Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.” (Col. 1:24) He reminded his beloved Timothy in his letter to him, saying, “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”—II Tim. 2:11-13

GIVING ALL DILIGENCE

The Apostle Peter spoke of our High Calling in Christ Jesus, and stressed the importance of making it our highest priority in life. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.”—II Pet. 1:4,7

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—vss. 10,11

WINNING CHRIST

Paul wrote a very personal account of his own experiences in his letter to the church at Philippi

which are meaningful lessons for us. He said, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."—Phil. 3:7-11

The apostle tells us that he was ready to give up all personal hopes, ambitions, and honors to receive a position of favor with Christ. All other interests and earthly advantages have no lasting value. They fade into insignificance in comparison with the heavenly hope, and to attain the Divine favor and chief blessing as an heir of God and a joint-heir with our Lord Jesus.

JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES

An important lesson in connection with how we pay our vows of consecration to the Heavenly Father was given to us by the Master when he taught the parable of the talents.

"The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability;

and straightway took his journey.” (Matt. 25:14,15) During this Gospel Age, each of Jesus’ consecrated followers has been responsible and accountable to God in accordance with their own several abilities. This would be shown in their faithfulness to use what they possess in their service to him, including their time, influence, and opportunity. “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”—II Cor. 8:12

THE FIVE TALENTS AND THE TWO

Jesus continued, “Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord’s money.”—Matt. 25:16-18

A responsible steward will seek and find ways and places where he can use the talents he possesses which are fully consecrated to the Heavenly Father. He uses sanctified wisdom and judgment to his best advantage under the providence and guidance of God’s Word. It is our duty to study how we may invest our talents to receive the greatest advantage. The believer who had one talent did not show proper judgment, but carelessly buried his talent in earthly desires and pursuits. This indicates a lack of love and appreciation to God for the blessings received from him.

Jesus then said, “After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou

deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”—Matt. 25:19-23

The words ‘after a long time the lord of those servants cometh’ points to the closing scenes of the present Gospel Age at the time of our Lord’s Second Advent. His first work would be with the faithful members of his church, as spoken by Peter, “The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (I Pet. 4:17) Paul also wrote, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”—II Cor. 5:10

Each one of the bride class who are found faithful unto death will receive their rewards in proportion to the degree of effort spent in carrying out their covenant of sacrifice, and in their service to the Heavenly Father. Faithfulness in using the few talents given to each one will bring a correspondingly greater privilege of service as part of Christ’s future kingdom.

THE ONE TALENT

Continuing in Matthew, we read, “Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.”—Matt. 25:24-27

The consecrated believer who had received the one talent represents the large number of the Lord’s people who may not possess outstanding abilities or means whereby they may serve God. They have numerous small opportunities that they may use in serving our loving Heavenly Father who accepts these small offerings of love and devotion to him. However, these humble provisions of grace were buried in earthly interests and were thus neglected.

NOT MANY WISE OR NOBLE

Paul wrote concerning the fact that few would be called from among the worldly wise, saying, “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring

to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”—I Cor. 1:26-29

THE UNPROFITABLE SERVANT

The unprofitable servant who had the one talent serves as an important point of reference. “Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—Matt. 25:28-30

Jesus taught that those who fail to use the opportunities and privileges that are available to them to serve God will have these privileges taken from them, and they will be given to another consecrated believer who has been faithful in using his talents profitably. A talent that is not used has been buried under worldly cares and encumbrances which have not been set aside. A faithless and slothful servant has broken his covenant as a colaborer with the Heavenly Father.

The revelator provides an important perspective when he wrote, “One of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb.”—Rev. 7:13,14

TESTINGS NECESARY

Carrying out our vows to God encompasses a concerted effort in overcoming the temptations that

surround us in this evil world. It includes overcoming the failings of our own fleshly weaknesses and the wiles of Satan, the Devil—the great Adversary of the Lord’s people. “I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”—Rev. 12:10

SATAN’S CHALLENGE

Our Lord Jesus is the standard example of total commitment for us to follow, and he demonstrated that pledge soon after he was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. It was at that time that the Heavenly Father allowed Satan to tempt him according to the flesh, the world, and the Adversary. The Gospel account reads, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”—Matt. 4:1,2

Jesus challenged Satan’s suggestion that if he were the Son of God he could command that the very stones be made bread to satisfy his hunger. Jesus quickly responded with a scriptural answer [Deut. 8:3], when he proclaimed, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:3,4) Satan then attempted to quote a scripture [Ps. 91:11,12] that assured Jesus that if he were indeed the Son of God he could cast himself from the pinnacle of the Temple with no fear of harm to himself. Again Jesus turned to the scripture [Deut. 6:16]

for his answer—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—Matt. 4:5-7

A THIRD TEMPTATION

Satan's third attempt to test Jesus was to take him to a very high mountain from which they could view all the kingdoms of the world. The Devil offered them to Jesus if he would fall down and worship him, but our Lord answered, "It is written [Deut. 6:13], Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matt. 4:8-10) The Apostle Paul made clear the fact that Satan is the god of this evil world and was therefore able to offer Jesus the kingdoms of the world. "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. 4:4) Jesus said, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John 14:30) Immediately after the confrontation with Jesus we read, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."—Matt. 4:11

PREPARING FOR THE WARFARE

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul urges, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness [wicked spirits, *Marginal Translation*] in high places." (Eph. 6:10-12)

The apostle encouraged the brethren toward greater faith, confidence, and trust in our Lord, and this is especially true in our evil day.

“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.”—vss. 13-17

The ‘preparation[s]’ of which Paul spoke will provide the proper means to fight the good fight of faith. Putting on the ‘whole armor of God’ is necessary to protect us from the fiery darts that may come our way, and because the warfare will be against the prince of darkness and the wicked spirits in heavenly places. If Satan realizes that we are well protected and resisting him with the Heavenly Father’s provisions of grace, he will retreat from his attacks.

FACING AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

As we enter the New Year 2009, we do so with awareness of the fear and uncertainty that now grips the nations. “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:16) The United States government will be installed with a new and untried administration to deal with many complex and unsolvable problems. These include the chaotic financial situation with millions of family homes subject

to foreclosure, unemployment lines growing longer, the weakening value of the American dollar, and the fear of major inflation. Savings and retirement accounts are losing value and major banks and corporations are failing.

The United States continues to fight two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with the prospect of enlarging the confrontation to Pakistan. Israel is surrounded by hostile nations that seek its destruction, while Iran—one of its enemies—seeks to acquire nuclear weapons. There is concern over Russia’s intentions toward their former territories, including Georgia and Ukraine, and Poland has allowed the United States to place weapons on its territory. Control over oil supplies threatens the people of Europe who are dependant upon Russia for their energy supplies. Terrorist organizations may be planning new and devastating attacks on innocent civilians. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” (II Tim. 3:1) These few evidences of the growing turmoil in the world point to the necessity of our putting on the whole armor of God, and resolve to fight the good fight of faith.

OUR DAILY REMINDER

Many students of the Bible are familiar with the reading of the Morning Resolve that has become a household source of daily help and encouragement in the narrow way. Let us continue to rejoice in its wonderful scope of blessings as we strive to make our calling and election sure. We include it here as a reminder of our responsibility to renew our vows to our loving Heavenly Father now and during the New Year just before us.

MY MORNING RESOLVE

My earliest thought I desire shall be, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD [for grace to help]. I will pay my vows unto the Most High.”—Ps. 116:12-14

Remembering the Divine call, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Ps. 50:5), I resolve that by the Lord’s assisting grace I will today, as a saint of God, fulfil my vows, continuing the work of sacrificing the flesh and its interests that I may attain unto the Heavenly inheritance in joint-heirship with my Redeemer.

I will strive to be simple and sincere toward all.

I will seek not to please and honor self, but the Lord.

I will be careful to honor the Lord with my lips, that my words may be unctuous and blessed to all.

I will seek to be faithful to the Lord, the Truth, the brethren, and all with whom I have to do, not only in great matters, but also in the little things of life.

Trusting myself to Divine care and the Providential overruling of all my interests for my highest welfare, I will seek not only to be pure in heart, but to repel all anxiety, all discontent, all discouragement.

I will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord’s providence may permit, because

Faith can firmly trust him, come what may. ■

Midwives Serve God

Key Verse: *“The midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.”*
—Exodus 1:17

Selected Scripture:
Exodus 1:8-21

A PERIOD OF ABOUT TWO hundred years passed from the time Jacob and his family moved to Egypt under the guiding hand of God through faithful Joseph, settling in the land of Goshen. During this period, “the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them.”—Exod. 1:7

They enjoyed this peaceful and fruitful existence until the time came when “there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.”—vss. 8-10

The new Pharaoh’s plan to ‘deal wisely’ with the Israelites was ingenious. He afflicted them with hard manual labor: gathering straw in the fields, using the straw in the making of mortar and bricks, and then building treasure cities for the king. (vss. 11-14) The goal was threefold: first, the hard labor under their Egyptian taskmasters would keep the Israelites from engaging in

any rebellion against the kingdom or from leaving; second, the heavy burdens would result in their being less fruitful and keep their ever-growing population in check; and third, the resulting treasure cities would solidify Pharaoh's power, bringing him the honor and majesty he desired.

Although Pharaoh's treasure cities were built, his other goals did not materialize. Later, as a result of the ten plagues, the Israelites left the bondage and burdens of Egypt by the mighty power of God. More immediately, however, the account says, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." (vs. 12) Seeing that the hard labor inflicted upon them actually caused the population of the Israelites to increase, Pharaoh devised a more insidious plan for dealing with the matter. He commanded the midwives of the Hebrew women that when they assisted at the birth of any Israelite child, "if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live."—vs. 16

Once again, the evil plan of Pharaoh was thwarted. The Key Verse states that the 'midwives feared God,' and saved the male children. The proper thought of their 'fear' of God was not that they were afraid of God, but that they revered and loved him to such an extent that they could not violate their consciences by carrying out the command of Pharaoh, even though this put themselves in great danger. They knew and appreciated that God's commandments were to be obeyed, not those of man, even one as powerful as Pharaoh.

This is a lesson for all those seeking to follow after God. In another place, we read, "Fear [reverence] God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccles. 12:13) As a result of their faithfulness, the account says that God blessed the midwives, providing houses for them to dwell in.—Exod. 1:20,21 ■

Rahab Helps Israel

Key Verse: *“As soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token.”*
—Joshua 2:11,12

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 2; 6:22-25

saying, “Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP

of Joshua, the time had come for the Israelites to cross the Jordan River and enter the land of Canaan—the land which had been promised to their forefathers. There were, however, many heathen peoples living in the land, so God gave instructions to Joshua to conquer and take these regions, until all the land which had been promised to Israel was theirs. One such area, Jericho, is the focus of today’s lesson.

Jericho was a walled city so, prior to crossing the Jordan, Joshua sent two spies to scout out the area in advance of any attack by the Israelites. Upon their arrival at Jericho, the spies came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, most certainly an overruling of God. Word got around that spies from Israel had been sent, and were lodged at Rahab’s home, resulting in the king sending men to Rahab,

out all the country.” (Josh. 2:3) Rahab hid the spies on the roof of the house, and told the men sent from the king that, indeed, there had been two men who came to the house, but they had since left the city and she did not know where they were. The king’s men left the house, pursuing after the spies for three days, but never finding them. Upon their departure, Rahab went up to the roof and told the spies that they were now safe.—vss. 4-8,22

The account does not indicate that God condoned Rahab’s lie to the king’s men, saying that the spies had left when, in fact, they were on her roof. To the contrary, God could have just as easily delivered the spies if she had told the truth of the matter. We are told that “a lying tongue” is one of the things that God hates. (Prov. 6:17) Despite her mistake in this regard, however, Rahab displayed great faith in the God of Israel, saying, “I know that the LORD hath given you the land.” (Josh. 2:9) Further, in our key verses Rahab says that the God of Israel was the only true God in heaven or on earth.

Rahab requested of the spies that, in exchange for her keeping them safe as well as her silence in the matter, she and her family might be saved when Israel’s attack on Jericho would take place. The spies agreed, the sign of this ‘covenant’ being that Rahab would hang a scarlet string down from her window, thus giving indication of the keeping of her part of the promise. The Israelites, upon seeing this when the attack came, would then save her and all her family alive. (vss. 12-21) All of this came to pass, as agreed, when Jericho was attacked, and Rahab and her family were saved.—chap. 6:22-25

Rahab’s faith as well as her works are attested to in the New Testament as examples to us. “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” (Heb. 11:31) “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?”—James 2:25 ■

Joshua Leads Israel

Key Verse: *“The LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.”*
—Joshua 3:7

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 3:1-13

then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.”—Josh. 3:3

IT WAS A CLIMACTIC TIME

in the history of the Israelites. They were on the verge of entering into Canaan, with only the Jordan River separating them from the land promised to their forefathers. Their leader, Joshua, instructed the officers of the Israelites to go through the host and instruct the people. “They commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.”—Josh. 3:3

The ark of the covenant symbolized God’s presence with Israel. Indeed, this ark had been the focal point of their worship of God for nearly forty years through the arrangement of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. It was God’s desire that they continue to put their faith and trust in him, represented in the ark, as they crossed the Jordan and entered into the land of promise. This is also a lesson for spiritual Israel. Faith in God and in his leading is a requirement of all those seeking to be pleasing in his sight. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and

that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Heb. 11:6

Our Key Verse shows God’s desire to make evident the fact that he would be with Joshua in the same way he had been with his predecessor, Moses. This testimony on God’s part was both for Joshua’s benefit, to encourage him and keep his faith strong, as well as for the ears of the people, so they might realize the need to obey Joshua as God’s representative. For spiritual Israel too, we are to obey God’s chosen representatives—the prophets, the apostles, and his chief representative, Jesus. To be heedless of their words is the same as disobedience to the Heavenly Father himself. To obey their instructions, however, is to follow after God’s precepts and teachings.

As final preparation for their crossing the Jordan, God, through Joshua, instructed the priests who bore the ark of the covenant to come to the brink of the river with the ark, and stand still. The people were then told that the ark, borne by the priests, would pass first over the Jordan, and they would follow after. (Josh. 3:8-11) The instructions continued, “It shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.”—vs. 13

The promise of God was carried out. As the feet of the priests bearing the ark touched the waters of the river, it turned to dry land. They walked to the midst of the river, and the riverbed became dry all the way to the other side. The priests stood in the middle of the river, holding the ark, as all the people walked by, “until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” (vs. 17) Israel’s faith in God, represented by the ark dwelling in the midst of the river, was rewarded by their entrance into the promised land. ■

Samson's Mother Prepares for His Birth

Key Verse: *“Lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.”*
—Judges 13:5

Selected Scripture:
Judges 13

ISRAEL'S HISTORY, AS RE-corded in the Old Testament, was one largely of alternating between faithfulness and unfaithfulness in serving God. At the time of our lesson, the account states that “Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD,” and as a result they were delivered into the hands of their enemies, the Philistines, for forty years. (Judg. 13:1) As this period drew to a close, God knew that a faithful leader needed to be raised up in Israel to begin the work of delivering them from this cruel enemy.

God selected a faithful couple from the tribe of Dan—Manoah and his wife—to be the ones who would bring forth a son, to be named Samson, to begin this great work. An angel of God was sent to Manoah's wife, who was barren, telling her she would bear a son. The angel further stated that her son would be “a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death.” (vs. 7) The word ‘Nazarite’ means ‘separated’ or ‘consecrated.’ Those in Israel who took the vow of a Nazarite were specially separated for service to God. A Nazarite abstained from

any drink that could be intoxicating, they also were not allowed to touch or go near a dead body, and as an outward sign of their consecration to God they did not cut their hair or shave their beard. In preparation for the birth of this child and his dedication as a Nazarite, the angel instructed Manoah's wife that during the period of gestation, she herself should "drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing."—vs. 4

Manoah, not present when the angel came to his wife, requested of God that the angel be sent again. He wanted to be certain that they followed all the instructions given from God. The angel was sent again, reiterating the previous instructions given to Manoah's wife. As a result of the angel's reassurance, Manoah rejoiced, and desired to show his thankfulness by making an offering to God. The account states, "Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on." (vs. 19) The phrase 'the angel did wondrously' was immediately fulfilled in a remarkable way. As the flame of Manoah's offering went up toward heaven, "the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar" (vs. 20), and they saw the angel no more. They were then convinced that this was indeed a messenger sent from God, and they rejoiced in anticipation of a promised son who would be used in the service of the God of Israel.

There are several lessons in this account for spiritual Israel. First, as with Manoah and his wife, all who desire to so dedicate—consecrate—their life to God must do so knowing the terms of that consecration. Second, they must study and follow to the best of their ability the instructions given in God's Word as to the fulfillment of their consecration. Third, as Manoah thanked God by offering sacrifice to him, the life of the spiritual Israelite should be one of offering a "sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."—Heb. 13:15 ■

The Eternal Purpose of God

*“Blessed be the God
and Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ,
who hath blessed
us with all
spiritual blessings
in heavenly places
in Christ:
According as he
hath chosen us in
him before the
foundation of
the world, that we
should be holy and
without blame
before him in love.”
—Ephesians 1:3,4*

WITH THIS ISSUE AND THE beginning of another new year, *The Dawn* magazine will introduce a new series of articles that will feature various aspects in connection with the present Gospel Age call to the church. This call has emanated from our loving Heavenly Father who is gathering a select number from among the present evil world who will share as members of our Lord Jesus’ bride. The word ‘called’ identifies those Christians who have thus responded

to this wonderful invitation. Together they will comprise the body of Christ, our Lord being the Head, who will inherit the Divine nature in a heavenly home that has been especially prepared for them.

When this great work of the present age has been completed, the full number of the called and

faithful ones will all be brought together in the first resurrection. They will then share with our glorified Lord as members of the promised seed class that will bring the blessing of life and peace to all the families of the earth in accordance with the Abrahamic promise. (Gen. 22:16-18) This will take place under the administration of Christ's future kingdom, and the terms of the New Covenant which will then be established on the basis of truth and righteousness. God's plan and purpose is to institute a work of reconciliation for the sin-sick human family, and to offer everlasting life to all of the obedient of his human creation. This new law and world order will take place under the direction of Christ's rule, and will introduce to the human family the necessary provisions whereby they may attain everlasting life on a perfected earth with the Christ as its just mediator.

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of the endearing relationship with the Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus that the New Creation, who are presently being called in Christ, will enjoy, and the glory that shall ultimately speak of his name. In the distant past, the prophet wrote in connection with those who would be called to this glorious inheritance that would be accomplished during this Gospel Age. "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." (Isa. 43:7) The revelator echoed these prophetic promises with the words that will be spoken by the heavenly host who will proclaim, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Rev. 4:11

When he wrote to the brethren at Rome, the Apostle Paul pointed out that those who are being called during this present age are called to the same glorious nature and inheritance as was our Lord Jesus during the time of his earthly ministry. "We are buried with him [Jesus] by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) This is a remarkable prospect for each of us to consider, and with great humbleness of mind.

PAUL'S LETTER

In consideration of the featured text of this lesson, and the opening verses of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, we soon recognize a true sermon of grace in itself. It points to the very high level of love and devotion that the apostle possessed in accordance with his brethren's spiritual growth and welfare as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. His words were meant to encourage them to greater faithfulness in their walk in the narrow way of sacrifice, and they also serve to arouse a greater sense of faith in our own consecrated walk during these closing years of the Gospel Age.

In Paul's introductory remarks, he spoke of the Heavenly Father's preparation in connection with this wonderful calling which began many ages ago, even from before the foundation of the world. In reference to God's ultimate purpose, the apostle said, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."—Eph. 1:5,6

The apostle's use of the word 'predestinated' in his letter lends special attention and recognition to the Heavenly Father's foreknowledge in determining long beforehand the class of Christians who would respond to his calling of a New Creation. The call would go out to members of the fallen race who were under the sentence of death because of sin. There would thus be a predetermined number who would respond to the call. By his special provisions of grace these Christians would be made acceptable to him through their faith in Jesus' blood which had been shed for them as their Savior. John's account bears record, "Jesus saith unto him [Thomas], I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14: 6) "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."—Rom. 5:1

The Apostle Paul made this point clear in his letter to the Ephesians when he explained, "In whom we have redemption through his [Jesus'] blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."—Eph. 1:7,8

A SPIRITUAL CALLING

There are various points of emphasis in connection with the church's calling in Christ Jesus that is truly a most wonderful and blessed inheritance. In the apostle's letter to Timothy, he spoke of this as a "holy calling" and added, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and

grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (II Tim. 1:9) When he wrote to the church at Philippi, Paul directs our attention to the further dimension of this call, and emphasized that he was using all of his strength and effort to reach the mark for the prize which he said was the “high calling” in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14) In his message to the Hebrew brethren, he addressed them as “holy brethren,” and partakers of a special inheritance promised to the saints. He told them that it was a spiritual or “heavenly calling” in Christ Jesus.—Heb. 3:1

SAINTS OF GOD

In the context of our featured scripture, we note that Paul greeted the church at Ephesus as “saints” and as the “faithful” children of God who were being called “in Christ Jesus.” To them he proclaimed, “Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 1:1,2) The word saints means to be sacred or holy, and these brethren at Ephesus were among the special class of Christ’s followers who were being called out of the world by the Heavenly Father, and were consecrating their lives to him and to the service of the Truth. They were of the overcoming class of believers in Christ. The apostle took seriously his own opportunity and responsibility to care for this special class of Jesus’ faithful followers, and appreciated his privilege to supply their spiritual needs and progress in the narrow way.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD’S WILL

On one occasion during our Lord’s earthly ministry, the disciples of Jesus asked him why he spoke

and taught in parables. “He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” (Matt. 13:11) The Master was speaking about the church—his faithful people who would be told about the mysteries of the kingdom. Peter said, “The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”—Acts 2:39

In our featured text, Paul also spoke of the mystery of the heavenly calling, and that it has gone out to the church of Christ only during this present Gospel Age. He wrote, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”—Eph. 1:9-12

Again, when writing to the brethren at Colosse, Paul spoke of God’s mystery and said, “Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you [among you, *Marginal Translation*], the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:26,27) The mystery is that Christ will share his glory with others, a class of 144,000 faithful followers who hear

the Father's call, and desire to become members of the body of Christ with Jesus as their head.

THE SPIRIT OF PROMISE

The marvelous calling to which we are responding is the Heavenly Father's blessed promise to us. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13) The saints of the most high God have thus received the seal or mark of the Holy Spirit of God which provides us with a new standing as sons of God, and with the seal of adoption. This gives us the Father's blessed assurance that we shall inherit the kingdom promises when we have faithfully endured and carried out the tests of love and devotion to him.

The apostle then points to the blessed promises from God, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (vs. 14) The word 'earnest' means that it is God's pledge until such time when we shall receive the actual inheritance that he has promised us. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power."—vss. 18,19

Paul encourages us to a higher degree of faithful endeavor, saying, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the

vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the one hope of your calling.”—Eph. 4:1-4

JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST

Paul explained this wonderful assurance and relationship that we have with the Heavenly Father in his letter to the church at Rome, when he said, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—Rom. 8:14-18

The faithful class who are being called during this present time are children of the Heavenly Father, and begotten of his Holy Spirit. They will share as joint-heirs with our Lord Jesus in his kingdom. “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3: 29) “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”—Gal. 4:6,7

(Continued on page 35)

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(Continued from page 31) The apostle again writes, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”—Rom. 8:28-31

BE YE HOLY

In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter also spoke about the glorious and precious promises of our spiritual calling, and the need for us to walk in newness of life. He said, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (I Pet. 1:13-16) Peter is pointing to the glorious hope of our High Calling, and the severe trials that are necessary to fit us for an exalted position in our heavenly inheritance. It will require casting the weights of worldly cares, hopes, and ambitions aside that we may obtain the prize of our High Calling in Christ Jesus. Holiness is the standard of righteousness, and must be diligently sought after.

A SEPARATED PEOPLE

The called-out Christians constitute the consecrated church class who are separate and distinct from the rest of the world of mankind. The Apostle Peter explained, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, *Marginal Translation*] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—chap. 2:9

This special class are a New Creation—a new order of beings who are chosen of God and are heirs of his special favor. The royal priesthood’s head is our Lord Jesus, and the under-priests are anointed in him for the future great work of blessing all the families of the earth. The Christ, head and body, will be the antitypical ‘royal priesthood’ under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom. The ‘holy nation’ of which Peter spoke are the spiritual Israelites that are now being gathered out of all nations, tongues, and people. They are a ‘peculiar [purchased] people’ who have been called from the world into the marvelous light of God.

Further in his letter, Peter also pointed out, “Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps.” (vs. 21) The true class of saints must all suffer with Christ even as the apostle has again stressed, “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”—I Pet. 5:10

In his second epistle, Peter wrote concerning the blessed calling of God, and said, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”—II Pet. 1:2-4

NOT MANY WISE OR NOBLE

We note God’s words which were spoken to Samuel when he spoke favorably concerning Eliab whom he believed the Lord would anoint. We read, “The LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”—I Sam. 16:7

This is an important lesson for the called of God to contemplate. When writing to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul made some comparisons between the worldly wise and those who are presently being called by the Holy Spirit of God. He wrote, “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are

despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written [Jer. 9:23,24], He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”—I Cor. 1:26-31

James tells us, “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”—James 2:5

MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS

We catch a glimpse of the true character and nature of the apostle, when he wrote, “He [the Lord] said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”—II Cor. 12:9,10

Our Heavenly Father is seeking the meek, the humble and those who are willing to learn of him and to follow the only true pattern, our Lord Jesus. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

The consecrated life of the true child of God who has been called from the present evil world, is one of spiritual growth and development as a New Creature in Christ Jesus. It is a lifetime work, and it is taking place under the care and keeping of our loving Heavenly Father. Paul expressed this transformation in his letter to the Corinthian brethren, saying, “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (II Cor. 3:18) “As it is written [Isa. 64:4], 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. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

GIVE DILIGENCE

The call to the Divine nature has been the Heavenly Father’s great mystery and secret of the ages, to select a class as the bride for his only begotten Son. This class is called from the sin-sick and death-ridden world of mankind. Thus we heed the admonition of the Apostle Peter, who said, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:10,11 ■

Lessons from the Jordan River

“Ye shall pass over Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God giveth you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein. And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day.”

—Deuteronomy 11:31,32

events concerning it. Although Israel as a nation today does not yet see God’s hand in their affairs, or the symbolisms contained in a consideration of the Jordan River, students of the Bible see these things through the enlightening power of God’s Holy Spirit. This is particularly true as the time approaches for the establishment on earth of God’s kingdom through Christ.

MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND years have passed since the Israelites fulfilled the instructions of our opening text and crossed the Jordan River, entering for the first time the land promised to their forefathers. The Jordan River has played an important role in the history of God’s chosen people, Israel, and by searching the Scriptures we are able to see significant meaning to many

Many of the outstanding events in ancient Israel, that had typical meaning, were associated with the Jordan River. God instructed Israel to go up the east side of the Dead Sea and cross the river Jordan to enter Canaan. It would have been much simpler if they had gone up the west side of the Dead Sea and not have to cross the Jordan at all. However, it was required because our Heavenly Father was giving us a valuable lesson in connection with our consecrated walk in newness of life. We also remember how the Jordan River entered into many of the experiences of Elijah and Elisha, most of which are recorded in II Kings. David likewise had many experiences at the Jordan River which have typical significance, and it is also significant that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JORDAN RIVER

These characteristics become more understandable when we note that the Jordan River runs north and south, and nearly in the middle of Israel's entire length. This illustrates certain features of God's plan of the ages, and it was through Joshua that God divided the land between the tribes of Israel. The river has its beginning on the northern border of Palestine on the sides of Mount Hermon, and one hundred and fifty miles south the river terminates in the Dead Sea, also called the Salt Sea. Between these two points, the Sea of Galilee is an outstanding landmark through which the Jordan flows.

There are also certain physical characteristics of the water itself. As the small river leaves the slopes

of Mt. Hermon, it is sweet and pure and continues to be so as far as the Sea of Galilee. Immediately upon leaving Galilee it begins to pick up marl and salt from along the banks and the river bed, and by the time it reaches the Dead or Salt Sea it is polluted to such an extent that no life exists in it. It is estimated that each year 850,000 tons of salt are added to the salt content of the Dead Sea by the waters of the Jordan River. In addition, we see the rapid descent of the river from high up in the mountains of northern Palestine, along its one-hundred-fifty mile length, as it plunges to a depth of 1,300 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea. This accounts for the name Jordan being given to it, which means 'the descender.'

A PICTURE OF GOD'S PLAN

The head waters of the Jordan River are at Mt. Hermon, representing God's throne, of which the Psalmist David spoke, "As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. 133:3) At the time our first parents were created, the pure water of life descended from the throne of God to Adam and Eve, and instructions were given to Adam that he should multiply and fill the earth with a perfect race of human creatures. This was dependent upon the pure water of life as it would flow out and encompass the entire earth.

However, because sin entered in through the disobedience of our first parents, these pure waters became polluted, and that which should have been a blessing for man became a curse upon all. Since

the original fall, as each generation passes, man has degenerated from the original perfection of Adam. The human family is becoming more polluted with sin and error in the depths of human depravity and hopelessness represented by the Dead Sea. The whole human family then may be represented by the Dead Sea—the condition of Adamic death.

The Dead Sea's waters are so polluted, and the salty marshes that surround its shoreline have such a stench, that for centuries there have been no inhabitants around its shores. This, however, has not always been the case. The scriptural evidence is that God placed a special curse upon that area at the time that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. In due time, this special curse will be lifted when Christ's kingdom is established, signifying that once again these areas will be inhabited with a thriving population. Prior to this curse being placed upon the region, the scriptural record states, "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar."—Gen. 13:10

WATER OF LIFE

Mankind has not been left hopelessly lost in the Dead Sea of Adamic death. At the due time in God's arrangement, he sent forth his Son, and brought hope to a dead world. Most of Jesus' life and ministry was spent in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee performing many miracles and doing much preaching there. The Sea of Galilee was sweet and clean

water, abundant in fish and animal life, and is a fitting picture of the hope for life held out to all men through the ministry and sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus. The Jordan River, especially from Galilee to the Dead Sea, represents the human family still on the downward course toward destruction and death. The pure water of life has been polluted with sin and error and has been turned into a curse upon mankind, and no one is able to avoid its consequences.

John the Revelator assures us that the ultimate purpose of God to restore life to his human family will in due time surely be fulfilled. "He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."—Rev. 22:1,2

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

In Genesis is recorded the battle of the kings, when many of the kings of surrounding nations came together against the more prosperous kings, including the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose cities were located in the "vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea." (Gen. 14:3) When Abram heard that his brother's son, Lot, had been taken captive during one of these battles, he organized his men and set out in pursuit of his nephew. He finally overtook and defeated those kings, returning the captives and spoil, including Lot, back to their rightful cities in the vale of Siddim. It was

on this return trip that he paid tithes to Melchisedek.—vss. 18-20

Later, in Genesis, is recorded the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah by God. “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.” (Gen. 19:24,25) The entire area of the Jordan valley, as well as the people, were cursed by God, and the valley of the Jordan which had been known as ‘the garden of the LORD’ was now to become known as the ‘valley of salt.’

The immediate effect of God’s judgment was in the form of literal fire that rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrah destroying the people and the cities. God intended that there should be a perpetual curse against the region, and this could not be accomplished by fire only, as the cities could have been rebuilt later if fire was the only disaster to the area. God intended that there should be a perpetual desolation of the land, and this was accomplished by polluting the waters of the Jordan and the Dead Sea with great quantities of salt and marl.

THE PROPHET ZEPHANIAH

Josephus—the Jewish historian of the first century A.D.—suggested that there may have been earthquakes accompanying the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and geologists now are finding many evidences that this may have occurred. This might account for the salt springs that apparently broke out along the lower section of the Jordan. This led to the pouring of their polluted waters

into the river, resulting in millions of tons of polluted, salt-laden, poisonous water flowing daily from the river into the Dead Sea. The prophet of God spoke of this, saying, “Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation.”—Zeph. 2:9

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

The Prophet Jeremiah also says, “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.”—Jer. 17:5-7

The whole human family is represented in the curse that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and truly the earth, being cursed, is not able to sustain or perpetuate life, but blessed are those who trust and hope in the LORD, and in his plan. Let us rejoice in the hope through Christ that is represented by his earthly ministry by the Sea of Galilee. In due time, that curse will be lifted through the administration of Christ’s future and glorious kingdom. Then the waters of the Jordan, being purified, will once again represent the pure river of life that will go out and encompass the entire earth. At that time, mankind will be washed in the symbolic waters of Galilee, through the merit of our Lord Jesus, and made free from Adamic death and condemnation.

THE CITY OF ENGEDI

There was a city on the western shore of the Dead Sea called Engedi, contemporary with Sodom and Gomorrah, yet it continued on for many generations before the curse of salt caused its desolation. It is first mentioned in Genesis 14:7 under a different name—Hazon-tamar. Later, when David was being pursued by Saul, he took refuge in the ruins of Engedi by the Salt Sea. (I Sam. 23:28-29) Since Engedi was not destroyed by fire as was Sodom and Gomorrah, its ruins have been much better preserved. The evidence of excavations there agrees with the scriptural account that, at one time in the distant past, it was a thriving and prosperous city due to the fertility of the soil along the Dead Sea. This is shown in the Song of Solomon, where we read, “My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire [cypress, *Marginal Translation*] in the vineyards of Engedi.” (Song of Sol. 1:14) This was before the curse of salt began to take effect in the Jordan valley.

The judgments of the LORD upon Sodom and Gomorrah are a vivid reminder and illustration of God’s judgments against the human family as a result of the transgression in Eden. This destruction represents Adamic death. However, Jesus indicated that the Sodomites would be granted an opportunity to obtain eternal life in his future kingdom. “I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.” (Luke 10:12) The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah has also been used in the Scriptures both as a warning and as a picture of God’s judgments upon certain nations and institutions before Christ’s future kingdom is set up.

MOSES' WARNING

After Moses smote the rock twice in anger, the Heavenly Father told him that as punishment he would not be allowed to cross over the Jordan River into Canaan. (Num. 20:10-12) Realizing this, and that he would die in the wilderness, Moses wrote this book, which was a mixture of admonitions and instructions concerning the Law, but also a book in which he seemed to pour out his heart and soul to his people Israel. He showed his earnest desire for their faithfulness to God's Law, and his complete selflessness, by the fact that he hardly mentioned his imminent death. His sole concern was for his brethren.

Moses gave a warning to Israel in which he reminded them of the importance of keeping God's Law. He told them of all the blessings they had received at the LORD's hand—the way in which God had smitten their enemies before them, how he provided for their food and drink in the wilderness, and even miraculously preserved their clothes and the shoes that they wore. Then he warned them, saying if they sinned against him, and against the Law, he might do to them as he had done to Sodom and Gomorrah. "That the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."—Deut. 29:23

God used the desolation of Sodom and other cities to signify what would happen to Israel if they forsook the Law. This text is further scriptural evidence that the killing salt content of the lower

Jordan and the Dead Sea was indeed part of the curse which God placed upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

JEREMIAH PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE JORDAN

God used the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of how he would, in due time, destroy the great mystical city Babylon. This account is found in chapters 50 and 51 of Jeremiah. God speaks of the judgments against literal ancient Babylon, foretelling her overthrow by the Medes and Persians, but also speaks of a greater fulfillment as he foretells the overthrow of symbolic Babylon. Jeremiah's prophetic words read, "As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein." (Jer. 50:40) In the Revelation account, we read, "He cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." (Rev. 18:2) This indicates that God will, in due time, destroy Babylon with the symbolic fire and brimstone of Armageddon, and sprinkle it with the salt of perpetual desolation never to rise again.

Jeremiah continues to tell how this judgment against Babylon will be carried out. He says, "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand

before me?” (Jer. 50:44) The Revelator identifies the one who has been chosen to carry out the Father’s will. We read, “One of the elders saith unto me, 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

ISAIAH’S HOPEFUL TESTIMONY

Isaiah’s prophetic words are encouraging. He says, “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”—Isa. 11:10,11

Later, he wrote, “The LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.”—vss. 15,16

The prophet wrote of the time when the offspring of David—the root of Jesse—shall stand before the people in power and glory. At that time, he will roll back the curse represented by the waters of the Jordan, so that the people can pass over into the blessings of the kingdom. The prophet also speaks of the highway that will be prepared for the

people to walk upon. We look forward to that glorious time to come when the glory of the Lord will fill the earth, and the hearts and minds of all people.

A PICTURE OF SALVATION

There were four main streams that converged together on the slopes of Mt. Hermon to form the body of the Jordan River. This may signify the salvation of the church, the great company, the Ancient Worthies, and the world of mankind all taken from the human family. Each group will be glorified on their respective planes because they all drank at the brook of that pure living water. They will all have been lifted up by faith from the poisonous waters of the Dead Sea and washed in the pure waters of Galilee. Those who are now striving to be of the church class should especially have before their minds how the Lord has lifted them up from the condemned world and brought them under the cleansing influence of his precious blood.

May we continue to rejoice in the wonderful words of life and keep in mind the importance of giving diligence to make our calling and election sure. We are living at the very threshold of the kingdom and the fulfillment of all things prophesied and promised in God's Holy Word. ■

*Soon shall the joyous song arise,
through all the hosts beneath the skies,
that song of triumph
which records, that all the earth
is now the Lord's!*

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

WITH THANKS

DawnBible: Thanks for all of your mailings, devotions, love and support. My days are certainly easier to get through with the material you continue to pour out all over the world.—TX

BLESSED BY WEBSITE

DawnBible: Thanks for the work you are doing through the internet. It has transformed my life. May God bless you.—KENYA

SEVEN YEARS

DawnBible: I belong to the Bangalore Bible Students. It is nice to read the Dawn books. I am reading from the past seven years.—INDIA

TRUE BROTHERLY LOVE

DawnBible: I am formerly one of Jehovah's Witnesses for 47 years! I have been wandering in darkness!

I attended a convention of the Bible students and saw true brotherly love. Yes, I have found those people Jesus talked about—'You will know my disciples if

they have love among themselves.' Nothing fake, just true brotherly love.

God bless you as you preach the good news in this time of the end.—WA

EXCITED TO LEARN

DawnBible: Great site, I love it! I like all the reading that I may do. I can't wait to see how much I am going to learn from it.—TX

READING MORE AND MORE

DawnBible: I came across the Dawn [website] on the internet one day. I began to read different parts of it. Now I find myself reading the Dawn more and more.

I just want to say, Thank you, and may the Lord bless and always be with you.—MD

FATHER A FOLLOWER OF THE TRUTH

DawnBible: Thank you for publishing the Dawn—reading it for over 30 years. My father was a follower of the Truth and I decided to check out God's Truth. So glad I did.—PA

PREACHING THE KINGDOM

Dear Dawn Brethren: You are bringing hope, comfort and cheer to many hearts.

May God bless you abundantly for preaching this wonderful gospel of the coming kingdom, which shall bless, “all the families of the earth” (Gen. 28:14), and “wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 21:4), now so near at hand.—ENGLAND

HELP IN TOUGH TIMES

DawnBible: My Dad was a firm believer in the Dawn. He is now asleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection.

You got him through some tough times, and now you're helping me through the tough times as I read.

I thank God and pray his speed. Thanks.—MO

FOUND AN OLD FRIEND

DawnBible: My mother has been following you since I was a little girl. I remember hearing *Frank and Ernest* on the radio back

then. She gave me a set of six books of yours and many small paperbacks over the years that always seemed to get pushed aside.

Recently, I began to notice them more and read a few, then found your website. It seemed like I had found an old friend. Thanks for waiting for me. I enjoy all your articles very much. God bless.—IN

USEFUL IN EVANGELISM

DawnBible: I came across your contact through one of your books called *The Dawn*.

I find it very useful in my academy and evangelism. May God bless you.—NIGERIA

HELP WITH THE BIBLE

DawnBible: I just wanted to say thank you for these books you have sent me.

I have turned my life over to the Lord. I got saved, and I'm a Christian now.

These books help me and my family with the Bible. Thank you and may God bless ya'll.—SC

The Passing of the Year

*Look not with sadness on the passing
of the year,
Behold it as you would a sunset glow
That streaks the sky with red and gold
'ere night descends
To say, "Fair day, 'tis time for you to go."*

*Regrets will come, for resolutions
oft we break.
The unsaid word, the duty never done.
Lessons O so hard to take and
understand—
Ah! but have you counted victories won?*

*God turns a brand new page within our
book of life
For us to start a chapter fresh and new.
Forget the blots and errors of the pages
past,
Remember, God in love forgets them too.*

*So greet the New Year coming in with
upturned face.
Upon the ladder-rung we can't stand still
But must climb upward, step by step
to reach our goal,
And thus our fondest hopes we shall fulfill.*

—Poems of the Way

General Convention Bulletin

July 18-23, 2009

THE 2009 GENERAL CONVENTION returns once again to the lovely facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Air-conditioned hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style apartments (also air-conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air-conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in his own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied. If a child is alone in a bedroom sharing the bathroom with other adults, the double occupancy rate will apply to all family members.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid in cash at the door.

A complete pricing table and registration form is provided for your convenience immediately following this announcement. We encourage you to make your reservations early.

This year's convention theme text is taken from the words of Romans 8:28, "We know that all things

work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Additionally, a series of three minitalks will be presented, based on lessons from Paul’s three missionary journeys; and assigned discourse subjects will include “We Are His Workmanship” (Eph. 2:10) and “Ye Shall Know the Truth, and the Truth Shall Make You Free.” (John 8:32) We encourage you to make your plans now to attend this year’s General Convention. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$7.00	\$6.00
Lunch		8.00	7.00
Dinner		11.00	10.00
Total, three meals		\$26.00	\$23.00
Lodging (per night)			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$30.00	\$25.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$25.00	\$23.00
**single occ (LLC)		\$55.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$30.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$325*	\$290*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$195*	\$160*
**single occ (LLC)		\$460*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$235*	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—*\$35 **Air-conditioned *** 100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group			

General Convention Registration

1425 Lachman Lane — Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

E-mail: Nekora@aol.com (310) 454-5248

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 17, 2009				
Saturday, 18th				
Sunday, 19th				
Monday, 20th				
Tuesday, 21st				
Wednesday, 22nd				
Thursday, 23rd				
Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals <input type="checkbox"/>				
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) <input type="checkbox"/>				
Check: <input type="checkbox"/> private bath or <input type="checkbox"/> shared bath				
<input type="checkbox"/> double occupancy <input type="checkbox"/> single occupancy				
<input type="checkbox"/> interested in APTS				
Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)				
Address:				

Statistical Report

For the year ended September 30, 2008

THE DAWN IS pleased to provide this annual report to our readers. During the fiscal year 2008, the Dawn was able to maintain its witness work at a similar level to the prior year due to increases in contributions, which helped offset decreases in bequests and other income. Although we had budgeted, if necessary, to reduce our cash and reserves by up to 10% in 2008 in order to carry on our witness work, our actual reduction was only 5%. Total revenues were 1% below budget for the year, operating expenses were 7% below budget, and witnessing expenses were 21% under budget. This resulted in a net loss of \$12,306, or 88% below the budgeted loss of \$100,000.

We have budgeted to continue current radio, TV, Internet, and other witnessing work for 2009, but to limit to no more than \$100,000, or 11%, any reduction in total cash and reserves during the year. Further increases in witnessing efforts will be considered if revenue or bequests exceed budgeted amounts.

During the year past, we were able to maintain our level of witness activity using various media such as radio, television, 30-second commercial spots, and various magazine ads including *Old Farmers Almanac*. Foreign radio efforts now include India,

Income	Receipts	Expenditures
All revenue other than bequests	\$310,199	
Expenses		
Radio (domestic and foreign)		\$ 66,287
TV (includes spots and recordings)		26,688
Other Media and Editorial		25,790
Pilgrim Service (domestic and foreign)		10,044
Other Foreign Support		6,185
Plant Operating Expense		108,202
Shop Operating Expense		35,771
House Operating Expense		54,590
Shipping/Mailing		84,565
Outside Printing		12,700
Total Expenses		\$430,822
Less Income	310,199	
Net Loss before Bequests	(120,623)	
Bequests	108,317	
Net Loss after Bequests	(12,306)	

Africa, Trinidad, Panama, Australia, and Peru. The station in Peru broadcasts the Truth 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, throughout a large area. Large amounts of free literature have been sent out by various ecclesias in this country and abroad, including many booklets available as Bible study helps on various subjects. Additionally, Hope booklets continue to be sent to funeral directors throughout the United States, and by many ecclesias as well, bringing a message of comfort to those who have lost loved ones in death.

The Dawn recorded lecture service continues its work. *The Dawn* magazine and lectures are available upon request on cassette tape as well as CD. Our library includes 1,300 recorded lectures from past conventions. The Dawn web page continues to bring

in requests for literature from around the world, and during the past year we reached over 1.5 million “hits” for the first time. *The Dawn* magazine, as well as other literature, is available through our web page in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Polish, and Romanian languages.

The Dawn Devotional Radio internet radio station at Live365 continues to provide witnessing and truth programs 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Since its launch in November 2006, individuals have tuned to the station 3,470 times and listened for an average of 77 minutes per occasion.

We continue our keyword advertising on Google and Yahoo for 19 booklets in English. During the past year, the number of individuals responding to this advertising, and viewing a web page offering one of the booklets, grew to 41,223. From these web pages, users read the booklet online 5,450 times, downloaded an electronic version of the booklet 1,878 times, and requested a copy of the booklet to be mailed to them 3,402 times.

In April, the Dawn launched keyword advertising for the Spanish version of five booklets: *Armageddon*, *Then World Peace*, *Christ’s 1000-year Kingdom*, *God Has a Plan*, *Hope*, and *Why God Permits Evil*. In just the first five months, 8,901 individuals viewed the web pages offering these booklets. From these web pages, users read the booklet online 1,597 times, downloaded an electronic version of the booklet 419 times, and requested a copy of the booklet to be mailed to them 720 times.

Combined, all of the witness efforts we have been privileged to engage in have proven fruitful with many responses coming in as a result. We have taken

this as an indication that the message of Truth is indeed giving hope and comfort to people throughout the world in these days of economic, financial, and political turmoil. For this, we are very thankful to the Heavenly Father.

The Dawn is pleased that the Lord has blessed these efforts, and it is the brethren around the world who make this possible through their generosity. We also thank the laborers from near and far whose ongoing work, both on-site and off-site, makes it possible to continue the promulgation of the Truth. We ask for your prayers and support that the work of spreading the Gospel message will continue this coming year. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JANUARY 1—“O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.”—Psalm 66:8,9 (Z. '03-3 Hymn 45)

JANUARY 8—“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.”—I Thessalonians 5:15 (Z. '01-297 Hymn 267)

JANUARY 15—“What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”—Micah 6:8 (Z. '02-172 Hymn 312A)

JANUARY 22—“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.”—Psalm 31:24 (Z. '01-79 Hymn 126)

JANUARY 29—“The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”—Psalm 111:10 (Z. '96-155 Hymn 89)

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

Australia

January 19-February 9

Melbourne

Canberra

Sydney

Brisbane

Nimbour

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

R. Sconyers

St. Petersburg, FL January 18



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 Esther Shallieu, Portland, OR—October 28. Age, 93

Brother William Roach, Mooresville, NC—November 2. Age, 88

Sister Berna McNee, Vancouver, BC—November 3. Age, 84

Sister Mary Gale Zembik, Prince Albert, SK—November 11. Age, 89

Sister Sophie Sochacki, Livonia, MI—December 1. Age, 72

CONVENTIONS

These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, January 3,4—La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85203. For hotel reservations, contact L. Williams. Phone: (602) 993-0800, ext. 5582. Other information, contact J. Zardja. Phone: (602) 363-2612

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 25—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA. Contact R. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 13,14, 15—The Clarion Hotel, 2600 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact K. Ajise. Phone: (916) 421-0755

SOUTHWEST WINTER CONVENTION, February 28-March 1—Sunnyslope High School, 35 W. Dunlap Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85021. Contact S. Humphreys. Phone: (623) 322-9082

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 7,8,9—Clarion Hotel-Altamonte Springs, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify "Florida Bible Students" for special rate until February 20. Other information, contact J. Wesol. Phone: (407) 699-1829

FRESNO PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 27,28,29—Vagabond Inn Executive, 2141 N. Parkway Drive, Fresno, CA 93705. Contact B. Wilson, 2103 N. Price, #112, Fresno, CA 93703. Phone: (559) 255-2241

COLUMBUS PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION,

March 28,29—Der Dutchman Restaurant, 445 S. Jefferson Avenue, Plain City, OH 43064. Contact T. Alexander. Phone: (614) 519-8282

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 4,5—Macomb Community College, Building “K”, 14500 Twelve Mile Road, Warren, MI 48088. Contact P. Nemes, 2183 Babcock Drive, Troy, MI 48084. Phone: (248) 649-6588

BOISE CONVENTION, April 24,25,26—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street, Boise, ID. Contact D. Allers by April 3, 2009 at 7558 W. Hathaway Lane, Boise, ID 83714. Phone: (208) 375-6873

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, PA. (See Bulletin, page 55, this issue). Contact M. Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

*Precious sons of Zion!
Like gold refined and pure.
Esteemed as earthen pitchers,
Moulded to endure.*

*Precious sons of Zion!
True branches of the vine.
At one with Christ our Master,
In spirit and in mind.*

*Precious sons of Zion!
His bride we're called to be,
To share his throne of glory
And reign eternally.*

—Poems of the Way

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING, AND POLISHING of 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