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December 2005

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The Birth of a Savior: Tidings of Great Joy

“The angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”

—Luke 2:10,11

WHEN THE ANGEL OF THE

Lord appeared to the shepherds with the announcement of this most wonderful event, the birth of our Lord Jesus, little did they realize at that time the tremendous impact that his birth would ultimately have upon the whole human creation. It was truly God’s greatest gift to his human family, and it will become fully manifest to all in due time, including the multitudes waiting in their graves, as well as to those who are yet unborn.

THE BIRTHPLACE

We marvel at the humble circumstances that surround the birth of this precious Christ child.

“She [Mary] brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7) There is no evidence of complaint by either of our Lord’s parents concerning the lowly nature of their accommodations with no place for them at the inn. Perhaps if some of those who were at the inn that night had realized that the newborn infant was the long-promised Messiah, they would have gladly made some changes to provide for a more suitable and comfortable room for the mother and her new baby.

THE SHEPHERDS

We learn from the scriptural account that the Heavenly Father’s purpose was to use his angel to make this extraordinary announcement of the birth of his dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus, to those humble shepherds who were on watch that night in the Judean hills.

“There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch [*marginal translation: night-watchers*] over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.” (vss. 8,9) No doubt they were overwhelmed by the glorious scene that had appeared before them, but the angel assured them and calmed their fear by saying, “Fear not.”—vs. 10

THE “SIGN”

After the angel’s announcement to the shepherds, they were promised a “sign” that would enable them to properly identify the newborn child. “This

shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (vs.12) The word ‘sign’ points to an indication, or evidence, that pertains to a certain thing. We note that, at Jesus’ baptism thirty years later, John was witness to two indications—one visible and one audible—that indicated our Lord’s baptism had been accepted by the Heavenly Father. First, he saw the Holy Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Jesus, and then he heard a voice from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—Matt. 3:16,17; John 1:32-36

THE HEAVENLY HOST

The heavenly host responded to this most blessed event as a single chorus of voices singing praises to God for his unspeakable gift to mankind. “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (Luke 2:13,14) The angels were singing about God’s ‘good will toward men’—his goodwill and love which was at that time being manifested in the birth of a Redeemer for the world. The expression goodwill toward men has been confused to suggest ‘good will among men,’ which has not always been true among the human creation since Jesus came into the world. Christian people observe the fact that there is no more goodwill among men now than before Jesus was born, but we are assured that this characteristic of perfection will become a reality under the administration of Christ’s kingdom.

In further evidence we read, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) This was the greatest of all gifts, and one that will yet benefit all the peoples of the earth. At a future time, under the administration of the kingdom of Truth and righteousness, the whole world will come to know and sing praises to God.—Acts 17:31

With the birth of a Savior, a turning point had been reached in the outworking of God’s plan of redemption and reconciliation. It was a long-range plan for the ultimate recovery of the human family from the sentence of sin and death that had been placed upon them because of disobedience. His plan had moved forward with Jesus as the central figure of both Old and New Testament promises. With that birth, this promise of a Savior had been finally realized.

ISAIAH’S PROPHECY FULFILLED

Many centuries before this blessed event had occurred, the Prophet Isaiah was moved by the Holy Spirit of God to write the familiar and inspiring words that often come to mind during this special holiday season. He wrote, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for

ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

This wonderful prophecy outlines some of the important roles earth’s new ruler will assume when his kingdom will be established upon his mighty ‘shoulder.’ Jesus, as the antitypical David, will then assume the several offices of the kingdom that will bring God’s purpose of reconciliation to fulfillment. At that time, whosoever accepts him will not perish, but will receive everlasting life as promised.

As the Wonderful Counsellor, our Lord Jesus, together with his faithful bride, will act as a shepherd to lovingly guide and instruct each one of earth’s family to walk in the way of Truth and holiness, that they may gain everlasting life here on a perfected earth. Jesus, as a powerful being, will then be known as the ‘mighty God’ who will establish his kingdom with ‘judgment and with justice’ for all. Those who strive to obey the just laws of the kingdom then in operation will be assisted and encouraged in the way of holiness.

He will also assume his role as ‘everlasting Father’ in the great work of restoring humanity to life. As the Heavenly Father is the source of all life, so too will Jesus be given the role of everlasting Father—or life-giver—to the world of mankind. Finally, he will assume the role of ‘Prince of Peace’ over all the earth, and will ultimately bring about peace between God and man, as well as peace between man and his neighbor.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

Although numerous dates, including December 25th, had been considered during the early centuries

of the Christian era, there was no general consensus of opinion among church leaders before the fifth century to establish a fixed date to celebrate Christmas [ie: the mass of Christ]. It was acknowledged early on that calendars should now be drawn up to reflect our Lord's birth as a turning point in the history of the world, and thus the terms B.C. and A.D. became familiar symbols by which to designate whether an event had occurred before Christ's birth or afterward.

An elaborate cycle of Christmas festivals gradually emerged, around the observance of the special day of nativity, which consisted of Christmas Eve vigils. These became important celebrations of solemnity inasmuch as it was not possible for the church leaders to scripturally determine the precise time of Jesus' birth. They were sure, however, that it had occurred during the night, drawing attention to the passage from Luke's account, "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8) The four Sundays before Christmas were then known as preparation days for the approaching special festival and were called Advent Sundays.

The observance of Christmas is not of New Testament origin, and students of the Bible agree that the date chosen by the early scholars cannot be proven by scripture. They suggest that a more appropriate date to mark the birth of our Lord Jesus would be around October 1st. (See Luke 3:1-3 for the account of John, who was born six months earlier). A possible suggestion for the popularity of the December 25th date necessitates counting back nine months from October 1st to the end of the

previous December, as an approximate time when God planted the seed of life in the womb of Jesus' mother, Mary.

A FESTIVE SEASON

Most people in our modern Christian world will agree that the Christmas celebration has become the most anticipated and popular holiday in the entire year. Many remarks are often heard concerning the joyful spirit that is prevalent during the days leading up to Christmas. The holiday season is sometimes the only time during the entire year that some family and friends may stay in touch with one another through the exchange of greeting cards or social gatherings. It is also marked by decorations of all kinds including the bringing of trees into the home for ornamentation and lighting. Christmas Day is anticipated to be a joyful time for families to exchange gifts, and with food and drink, followed by a sumptuous meal. The festive season then continues until a new year is ushered in a week later. Christmas has become a well-established and important annual custom in our western society.

MODERN COMMERCIALISM

The religiously inspired Christmas holiday that was established many centuries ago centered around Jesus and his birth, and in earlier times there was a great deal of attention focused on the sacredness of the event. With the rapidly changing events of our modern world, there is less attention now being focused on the meaning of our Savior's birth.

Christmas has become an increasingly commercialized and artificial event in a mad frenzy to buy

gifts, that often cannot be afforded, to be given to those who may not especially want what they have received. This has generated a rush by retailers and customers alike who begin soon after the Thanksgiving Day holiday ends, to obtain profits and bargains. Many go into debt during this time and are then faced with postholiday depression when the festivities are over and the reality of everyday life returns.

A DATE OF REMEMBRANCE

Although the Scriptures do not teach us to celebrate Jesus' birth, they do, however, clearly instruct us to remember his death. This is because his death accomplished the satisfaction of Divine justice for the sins of the whole world. The reason we call him our Savior is because he paid the price for sin as "a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:5,6

Every year, in either the months of March or April, depending on the Hebrew cycle of the moon, brethren gather together on the scripturally designated evening of the 14th day of Nisan for the purpose of remembering Jesus' death, as he has instructed us to do. In Luke's account of the Lord's Memorial Supper, Jesus teaches us that wine would be used as a symbol to represent his shed blood, and that bread would represent his body which was broken for us. With further instructions, he then invited his disciples, and subsequently us, to partake of these sacred emblems together. "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of

me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:19,20) He invites us to participate each year on the anniversary of this sacred occasion and to observe this simple ceremony in remembrance of him and his sacrificial death.

TIMES OF DISTRESS

The poor, groaning creation seeks ways to divert attention away from the increasing levels of frenzy and stress that mark our day, and they easily get caught up in the spirit of holiday festivities. Eventually, though, they must return to the normal pursuits of everyday life. There is much evidence in the world that we are in the closing years of the present Gospel Age and its social order, as predicted by God’s prophets and others. Luke describes our day as a time of great perplexity and distress among nations. “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”—Luke 21:25,26

The human family is faced daily with increasing levels of violence, particularly with the continuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that have caused so much human suffering.

Many other parts of the world are also enduring lawlessness and terrorism. Even nature itself seems to be increasingly unpredictable and violent. We recall the recent terrible tsunami in Asia, widespread flooding in Europe, tornados in the central plains states, hurricanes in Florida, and most recently the devastating storm Katrina that struck the gulf coast region of America.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Katrina has been described as the greatest natural disaster in the history of the United States. Tens of thousands of people were forced to evacuate the city of New Orleans as storm surges crested over the city's levees. As people made their way to so-called shelters they were forced to wade in deep, filthy water to get there. The living conditions in these places have been described as appalling because of the lack of all necessities of life. This has been met with tremendous outpouring of men and resources, and great sums of money, to help ease the distressful conditions in the once proud city, and bring some kind of order out of near total disaster. Now health officials speak of the flood waters as potential severe hazards to health.

A NEW ERA

The world entered into a new era of its long and convoluted history with the birth of Jesus. The full manifestation of the importance of this great event will not be realized until all men have come to know him. No other person in the history of mankind has ever marked so many and far-reaching changes in the affairs of men, as that of Jesus Christ. His birth created a dividing point in the reckoning of time, and in numerous other ways his influence has surpassed that of all other notables combined.

The angel's prophecy that through him would come peace on earth, however, has yet to be realized, except for a few who have appreciated the blessings of his earthly ministry and have taken up their cross to follow him. (Matt. 16:24) This completes the grand arrangement of universal peace

made available through the redemptive program centered in Christ, and which will ultimately be established between God and men. With universal peace will come blessings of everlasting life to all who strive to walk in the ways of Truth and righteousness under the terms of his kingdom arrangement.

A TOKEN OF GOD'S GOODWILL

We now see and appreciate the everlasting token of God's goodwill toward men with the birth of his Son, Jesus. This was but a preparatory step toward the restoration of all God's earthly children. The saving work of the Redeemer will be manifest to all the obedient through the grand work to be accomplished during his long-promised kingdom that we trust is soon to come.

Let us praise God for the gift of his own Son who came to earth to die for us as our Savior. Joy and everlasting peace will surely manifest itself to the whole groaning creation in due time. ■

Season's Greetings

*Our thots again with Christmas here,
Turn to our loved ones far and near—
Turn to God's greatest Gift to man,
The very center of His plan.*

*In that provision we rejoice
With thankful heart we lift our voice,
And pray that He will haste that day
His reign on earth shall hold full sway.*

—Poems of the Way

Christ is Born

THE BIRTH OF Jesus confirmed the truthfulness of the prophetic testimony concerning a coming Deliverer, and deliverance for the sin-cursed race. The angel in announcing Jesus' birth said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:10,11,13,14

It was a dramatic moment for those shepherds on the Judean hills to whom the angel announced the birth of the Savior, the Messiah. . . . This heavenly host of angels had served God faithfully for the many centuries during which he was making his promises of a coming Seed that would bless the people. They did not understand all the implications of those promises, but they knew that they were expressions of God's good will toward his fallen human creatures. How enthusiastically, therefore, they must have proclaimed the birth of Jesus, knowing it to be a manifestation of this foretold good will, and the beginning of the fulfilment of God's promises!

—Excerpt, *The Creator's Grand Design*

Serving Others

Key Verse: *"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles."*
—Isaiah 42:6

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 42:1-8

A FORETASTE OF GOD'S plan for future blessings upon all the families of the earth was recorded many years ago in the Old Testament.

Isaiah notes the accomplishment of this grand work through a servant of God's choosing. "He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."—Isa. 49:6

The identity of this servant is not specifically recorded but seems to fit the role of Christ who will administer blessings to mankind at the close of this present period of sin and sorrow.—Isa. 42:1

At his First Advent, Jesus manifested qualities well suited to achieve the Father's purpose. His voice was not "to be heard in the street." (vs. 2) Even though he was a specimen of perfect humanity, he was humble rather than proud. As one filled with sympathy for the oppressed and those of low estate, his ministry touched the hearts of the common people who gladly heard him. He was approachable, and healed many who were sick. His opposition came from the religious leaders who

thought themselves superior to the other inhabitants of Israel.

The compassion of Christ stands out as he notes human frailties in this Gospel Age. (vs. 3) If there is any evidence of smoldering faith, he will nurture that quality, especially in those who desire to become members of his church. When Satan is bound during Christ's thousand-year kingdom, the glorified Lord, along with his church, will constitute a merciful priesthood that will offer every possible opportunity for mankind to turn from sin to righteousness.

Despite the immense task of restoring humanity back to perfection, Isaiah assures us concerning Christ, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." (vs. 4) Our confidence in him should be further strengthened by repeated scriptural declarations that a time of blessing would come upon the human family. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."—Acts 17:31

Our Key Verse says, 'I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.'

By virtue of his precious shed blood, Jesus Christ is the "mediator of the new covenant." (Heb. 12:24) His faithful followers of the Gospel Age are accepted as part of his body. (Eph. 1:5-7) How wonderful it is that the church as "able ministers of the new testament [covenant, *Revised Standard Version*]" will share with Christ in blessing both Jews and Gentiles during the coming kingdom of righteousness. (II Cor. 3:6) The prophecy continues and points out the further work of Christ in that kingdom, that he is "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."—Isaiah 42:7 ■

Strength from God

Key Verse: *“The Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.”*
—Isaiah 50:7

Selected Scriptures:
Isaiah 49:5,6; 50:4-9

SPEAKING PROPHETICALLY

of Messiah at his First Advent, Isaiah acknowledges God as his instructor. “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”—Isa. 50:4

Throughout his ministry, Christ relied upon the Heavenly Father for his every undertaking. Immediately after his baptism he was filled with the Holy Spirit and received enlightenment from God concerning his mission on earth. While fasting in the wilderness, he meditated upon the Scriptures to learn how he was to fulfill various prophecies regarding himself.—Matt. 4:1,2

Prayer enabled Jesus to receive strength to do the Father’s will. Before selecting the twelve apostles, Jesus communed all night with God to determine how this crucial task was to be executed. When he delivered his sermon regarding attitudes to be manifested by his disciples, the wisdom and insights he received from above were clearly manifest.—Luke 6:12,20

Jesus did not shirk from proclaiming the good news of a future kingdom of blessings for mankind

even though it was not well received by the scribes and Pharisees. "The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." (Isa. 50:5) He realized the shameful and horrifying death of crucifixion that awaited him, in order to deliver Israel from condemnation because of their failure to keep the Law Covenant.—John 3:14,15; Gal. 3:13,14

On his final night on earth, Jesus endured many indignities while submitting to the Father's will. The source of his strength was the knowledge that God was well-pleased with his faithfulness in bearing these painful and demeaning experiences. "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."—Isa. 50:6

After being sentenced to death, many thoughts must have entered Jesus' mind. Israel was unwilling to receive him as their Messiah. Peter had denied knowing him and Judas had betrayed him. The previous evening the apostles were arguing among themselves as to who would be the greatest.—Luke 22:24

Our Key Verse illustrates the mental attitude of Jesus as he walks towards Golgotha, speaks to the weeping daughters of Jerusalem en route, and ultimately is nailed to the cross. "The Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." Christ was able to faithfully endure every difficult experience contained in the cup that was poured for him. (John 18:11) The source of his strength was his total reliance upon the Heavenly Father.

Each footstep follower of the Master similarly must derive strength from the precious promises of the Scripture for sustaining grace in the quest to successfully "walk, even as he walked."—I John 2:6 ■

Hope for Those Who Suffer

Key Verse: “*His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*”
—**Luke 1:50**

Selected Scriptures:
Isaiah 53:1-3; Luke 1:47-55

FOR MANY YEARS THE

Jewish people longed for Messianic deliverance from the persecution and suffering they had been enduring. This hope was sustained by Old Testament prophecies which foretold of a coming ruler who would establish peace throughout the earth.—Isa. 9:6,7; Ps. 72:8,11

A pure, unmarried virgin named Mary was selected to be the mother of Jesus, who in God's due time would establish a kingdom of peace, not only for Israel, but ultimately for the entire family of mankind. The honor of delivering this message to Mary was given to the angel Gabriel. As he revealed the details concerning this matter, Mary was puzzled as to how this could occur since she had no husband, but was informed a miraculous conception would take place within her through the power of the Holy Spirit.—Luke 1:26-35

After being told that her previously barren and aged cousin Elizabeth was with child, Mary went to visit her. Speaking under inspiration, Elizabeth confirmed that Mary was indeed blessed among women in that she would have the privilege of bearing the Messiah.—vss. 39-45

Mary's response to the sentiments expressed by Elizabeth was an outburst of joy and praise to the Heavenly Father for the magnificent honor bestowed upon her. She acknowledges her humble state, and with gratitude speaks of God's great might and holiness. (vss. 46-49) Our Key Verse expresses a truth that should inspire reverence and adoration by all who look to God for his favor—and 'mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.'—vs. 50

Mary continues her hymn of praise by asserting that God puts down those who are haughty and powerful, but exalts those who are lowly, and concludes by magnifying the LORD for his faithfulness to Israel and for keeping the promises made to Abraham and his seed.

The fulfillment of the promised blessings to Israel and mankind was not realized during the First Advent of Messiah. Instead, another prophecy declared he would not be received as Israel's Savior, but would be rejected and put to death as a blasphemer.—Isa. 53:2-9

The glorious outcome of his sacrifice is yet future as it awaits the completion of the church, who will share in his exaltation and bless all mankind. "It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."—Isa. 53:10-12 ■

Be Joyful

***Key Verse: “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”
—Luke 2:11***

***Selected Scriptures:
Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke
2:8-20***

THE FIRST INTIMATION OF Jesus’ birth was given to humble shepherds tending their flocks in the field at night. (Luke 2:8) An angel of the LORD appeared in their midst causing terror to their hearts, but he gave them comforting words of assurance with the good news of great joy for all people.—vss. 9,10

Our Key Verse indicates the cause for rejoicing in that the long awaited Messiah had been born in nearby Bethlehem. ‘Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.’

How astonishing it must have been for the shepherds to learn about the humble origins of this great Deliverer who would be found lying in a manger. (vs. 12) Suddenly an angelic choir broke forth in song, praising God for his great mercy towards mankind by sending forth his Son into the world to bring peace to the human family and establish goodwill among men.—vss. 13,14

Once the angel departed, the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem, located Mary and Joseph, and found the infant Jesus lying in a manger. The shepherds revealed what the angel had declared and it brought great wonderment to all. Mary considered in her heart, how and when Jesus would become the Prince of Peace as fore-

told in prophecy.—vss. 15,19; Isa. 9:6

After Jesus reached manhood, he was baptized and received the Holy Spirit. Shortly thereafter, while at the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the Scriptures, “The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” (Isa. 61:1,2) He then applied this passage to himself.—Luke 4:21

As the angelic good tidings of peace and joy, proclaimed at Jesus’ birth, occurred so long ago it may be asked whether those promises will ever materialize. The seeming delay in their fulfillment can be explained by the fact that it was necessary for Jesus to die as a sacrifice to redeem Adam and the entire race from sin and death. Jesus also needed to be raised from the tomb with Divine power and glory before establishing the kingdom of peace.

Since God desired to have a church associated with Christ in this glorious undertaking, believers who follow the path of holiness and self-sacrifice will also share in the work of bringing forth a righteous government on earth. “God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take . . . a people for his name. . . . After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, . . . That the residue of men might seek after the Lord.”—Acts 15:14-17

During Messiah’s kingdom, peace and joy will fill the earth, for we read, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17

What a wonderful time of blessings that will be! ■

The Spirit on All Flesh

***“It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.”
—Joel 2:28***

OUR TEXT REVEALS THAT

God’s Holy Spirit—his miracle-working power—will be exercised for the blessing of all mankind—‘all flesh.’ This prophecy is located in a context of predictions pertaining to the transition period between the present Gospel Age and the Millennial Age of Christ’s kingdom. The general testimony of the prophecies related to this time is that there would be “great tribulation” upon all nations, in which both Jews and Gentiles would be perplexed and distressed. (Matt. 24:21) The prophecies reveal, nevertheless, that in the midst of this time of trouble the dispersed people of Israel would be returned to their own land and that God’s favor would be manifested upon them in a marked way.

The word ‘afterward’ in our text is a revealing one. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting disciples, the Apostle Peter quoted this prophecy, and instead of

using the word ‘afterward’ he said the “last days”—in the “last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.” Peter quoted the prophecy in full, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”—Acts 2:17,18

Peter also quoted part of Joel’s prophecy which, in highly symbolic language, describes certain aspects of world conditions leading up to and associated with the time of ‘great tribulation’ with which the present Gospel Age comes to an end—“I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.” (vss. 19,20) So, when the apostle said, as quoted in verse sixteen, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel,” we are not to understand all the prophecy that he quoted was fulfilled at Pentecost. Peter wanted his hearers to be sure to recognize the prophecy from which he was quoting, even though only a portion of it was then being fulfilled.

What actually happened at Pentecost was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Lord’s ‘servants and handmaidens,’ but ‘afterward,’ as Joel states it, or in the ‘last days’ as Peter interprets Joel, it is to be poured out on ‘all flesh.’ Joel’s prophecy, pertaining to the shedding forth of the Holy Spirit in the outworking of the Divine plan, covers briefly this entire feature of the plan. It began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, but the outpouring upon all flesh

is yet future, although there is every reason to believe that it is not a too distant future.

In pouring out the Holy Spirit upon his servants and handmaidens at the beginning of the Gospel Age, the LORD's providences directed that it first be upon the Jewish believers assembled in the "upper room" in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:13) A short time later there was another outpouring upon the Gentiles to demonstrate the Divine acceptance of Cornelius and his household into the body of Christ. (Acts 10:44,45) The Scriptures indicate that there will be a similar sequence in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh.

In Ezekiel 37, there is another prophecy depicting the restoration of Israel. In this chapter the "whole house of Israel" is likened to a valley of "dry bones." (vss. 11 and 4) In the vision of restoration given to Ezekiel, he saw the 'bones' come together, "and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath [life] in them."—vss. 1-8

Then Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy, "Thus saith the Lord GOD, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (vss. 9,10) This does not portray the resurrection of the dead, but the restoration of Israel to God's favor. The next verse reads, "Son of man [Ezekiel], these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts."—vs. 11

Then Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy further “and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live.” (vss. 12-14) The ‘graves’ here are symbolic, even as are the ‘dry bones’ in the graves. The graves evidently depict the various countries in which the Israelites throughout the ages of their dispersion were domiciled. They surely were ‘cut off’—that is, separated from other segments of their people—and all of them symbolically said, ‘Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost.’

But, since we are now living in the last days, this situation has already undergone a marked change. A goodly representation of all Israel has been brought up out of their graves. As a people they do not feel so cut off. Considerable flesh has appeared on the dry ‘bones,’ and ‘skin,’ too. But as yet they do not ‘live.’ Few of them associate their changed position with the promises of God. The vast majority of them have little or no hope in the God of Israel. There is one more event in their foretold experiences which is yet to occur, and must occur, ere this prophecy is completely fulfilled.

The LORD did not say that his people would know him when he merely brought them out of their graves. It is when he has not only uprooted them from the countries where as dry bones they were living, but when he has put his Spirit in

them, that they shall know him and live. "Then shall ye know that I the LORD hath spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD." (vs. 14) Our particular interest at the moment is in the fact that here the LORD indicates that he will put his Spirit in the regathered Israelites, and that as a result of this they will 'know' that he is the LORD, and will live.

The following two chapters of Ezekiel (38 and 39), prophetically outline the major developments in a sequence of events associated with Israel's regathering in the Holy Land. Enemies are shown to attack them, and when the attackers are defeated by Divine intervention, their eyes will be opened to behold the glory of God. The Israelites also will recognize the providence of their God in the mighty deliverance that is wrought for them. Then, in the last eight verses of chapter thirty-nine, we are presented with an explanation as to the significance of the events foretold in these three wonderful chapters—37, 38, and 39. The principal point in this explanation is that "the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward."—Ezek. 39:22

In the last verse of the chapter, the LORD says, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD." The point is that as a result of God's deliverance from a situation which would otherwise have meant utter ruin for the regathered Israelites, they learn to know their God, and God's explanation is, 'I have poured out my spirit' upon them, and I will not 'hide my face any more from them.'

FIRST UPON HIS SERVANTS

The Holy Spirit, shed forth at Pentecost for the blessing of the entire church of the Gospel Age, led to certain gifts of apostles, pastors, and teachers. These, together with their Head, Christ Jesus, have served as channels through which the Holy Spirit of Truth has flowed out to all the consecrated believers. The entire church, in turn, through the ministry of that Spirit, is prepared to be to Israel and the world what the glorified Jesus was to her; namely, the source of the outpoured Spirit, in association with Jesus.

The pattern designed for the enlightenment and blessing of the church by the Holy Spirit during this Gospel Age will have its counterpart during the Millennial Age. Then, also, there will be ‘servants and handmaidens’ who will be used by God as channels of the Holy Spirit—hence, the instructors of the people in the ways of Truth and righteousness. These will be the ones described in Psalm 45:16 as “princes in all the earth.” In Isaiah 1:26, these are referred to as “judges” and “counsellors,” and the promise given to Israel, “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning.”

Judges served Israel during the period of the judges. These were raised up by God in special times of need, and through them the people were delivered from their enemies. A case in point is Othniel, Caleb’s younger brother. Through this judge the Israelites were delivered from King Chushan-rishathaim, whom they served eight years. The secret of Othniel’s ability to deliver the Israelites was that the “Spirit of the LORD came upon him.”—Judges 3:9,10

Now, if the judges will be raised up to serve the Israelites 'as at the first,' it follows that the Spirit of the LORD will be upon them also, even as, in a special manner, it came upon Jesus at Jordan and upon the apostles at Pentecost. This enabled them to perform miracles of various sorts. These served as signs which contributed greatly to the establishment of the Early Church.

Evidently it will be the same in connection with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. There will be miraculous demonstrations of Divine power. The Divine intervention to save Israel from her enemies in the final phase of the great Armageddon struggle will never be forgotten. Since this will lead into the manifestation of kingdom authority in the earth, and since the Ancient Worthies are to be the human representatives of that kingdom, it must be that their awakening from the sleep of death will take place at about this time.

This, in itself, will be a most convincing sign that Divine power is operating on behalf of Israel and the whole world. Through the use of Divine power, plus their perfection of manhood, the Ancient Worthies will quickly become the recognized leaders, under the spiritual phase of the kingdom, in the new world.

WHAT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED?

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit of Truth upon all flesh will not accomplish all the things for the world of mankind that it has for the church of this Gospel Age. It will not be, properly speaking, a 'baptism' of the Spirit, because in the church the only way to come under this baptism of the Spirit

is individually to be baptized into the death of Christ. It will, however, lead to full surrender to do God's will.

It will not be an 'anointing' of the Spirit, for the anointing signifies appointment to a special office of ambassadorship now, and to reign as kings and priests in the kingdom. The world of mankind will not be thus commissioned to serve. The Holy Spirit will not beget believers of the next age to a new, spirit life, for the willing and obedient then are to be restored to human perfection, not exalted to spirit nature. The 'witness' and 'seal' are also functions of the Holy Spirit, through the Word of Truth, which apply specifically to its working in and for the New Creation class of the present Gospel Age.—II Cor. 5:17

Spirit-begotten believers of the present age find themselves surrounded by an unfriendly, and often antagonistic, world. Satan is the "god of this world," and the "prince of this world." (II Cor. 4:4; John 12:31) And Satan's spirit, or influence, among the people is far from holy. Instead, it induces sin. It is the spirit of deception, ignorance, superstition, anger, malice, hatred, and strife. Today the Spirit-begotten children of God have to resist these influences of Satan with which they are surrounded. In order that the various manifestations of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, meekness—may manifest themselves, the spirit of Satan has to be overcome.

It is Satan who, in his attacks against the Seed of promise, stirs up enmity and persecution against those who are now blessed by the Holy Spirit of Truth. But, during the Millennial Age, Satan will

be bound. (Rev. 20:1,2) No longer will it be necessary to suffer for righteousness' sake. No longer will all the Satan-inspired, unholy influences which war against the people of God now, be permitted to hinder progress in righteousness by those upon whom God pours his Spirit during the Kingdom Age. Isaiah wrote of that time that the LORD will take away the "rebuke of his people . . . from off all the earth."—Isa. 25:8

While there will continue to be a measure of imperfection manifested in the world until the work of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh is completed, righteousness and Truth will predominate. That is why Peter foretold that it would be a world—"new heavens and a new earth"—"wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. 3:13) How different, then, will be the position of the people of God in that age from what it is today!

Even as now, however, believers in Israel and throughout the world, if faithful to the privileges granted to them at that time, will become filled with the Spirit. But this will not mean the same for them as it does for the Spirit-begotten children of this age. Now, to be filled with the Spirit implies, among other things, zeal in sacrificing the flesh and its interests, and the setting of affections on things above, on heavenly things, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. But not so during the Millennial Age. Then the righteous will not be called upon to sacrifice earthly blessings and joys, but will be encouraged to "plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them," to "build houses and inhabit them," and to "long enjoy the work of their hands."—Isa. 65:21,22

In this Gospel Age, the calling of God, through the Holy Spirit, leads those called to enter into a covenant of sacrifice. (Ps. 50:5) But in the Millennial Age, beginning with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, those who come under the influence of the Holy Spirit as poured out on all flesh, will enter into what is styled a “new covenant.” This New Covenant does not call for sacrifice. The promise is, “After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—Jer. 31:31-34

This salutary work of righteousness in the hearts of the people will be accomplished by the Spirit of God. Just as God’s Spirit during this age ministers to the church through the written Word of Truth, we may know that in the next age there will be definite courses of instruction for the people which will reveal to them the holy will of God, and inspire them to obedience. This is clearly implied in the prophecy which states of that time that “the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (Micah 4:2) This is the manner in which the desire of the people will be met—those, that is, who say, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the LORD, . . . and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” Isaiah, in a very similar prophecy informs us that “all nations shall flow unto it.”—Isa. 2:2

It has long been recognized by students of the Bible that the 'Zion' of this prophecy symbolizes the spiritual phase of Christ's kingdom, and that 'Jerusalem' represents the human phase in which the Ancient Worthies will be the princes, the judges. Through these, the 'word of the LORD' will go out to all people, and we can be certain that the Word of the LORD will be inspired by the Holy Spirit, even as the Word of the LORD through the Holy Spirit of Truth reaches us.

The consecrated attitude of the people who then will say, "he will teach us of his ways" is also revealing. They say, "we will walk in his paths." Just as the Holy Spirit of Truth in this age has no power over those who do not surrender to its directions, even so it will be in the Millennial Age. Only those who yield themselves in obedience, declaring their determination to walk in his ways, will have the law of God written in their hearts. 'The law shall go forth of Zion,' the prophet declares. This is the law of the New Covenant. The Word of the LORD which goes forth from Jerusalem—the earthly phase of the kingdom—will be the interpretation of that law in the sense of its proper application in the lives of the people.

Then, even as now, in order to enter into covenant relationship with the LORD it will be necessary to repent of sin, and accept Jesus as the Redeemer and Savior from sin. Jesus, together with his body members, will be the mediators of that New Covenant, and will have to be recognized as such by all those who wish to obtain life under its terms. "It shall come to pass," Peter said, "that every soul, which will not hear that prophet"—Christ

and his joint-heirs—“shall be destroyed from among the people.”—Acts 3:23

A PURE LANGUAGE

Zephaniah 3:8,9 is another prophecy pertaining to the time of great tribulation which immediately precedes the establishment of Christ's kingdom, and shows that in that kingdom the Word of the LORD will be diffused among the people in order that all may have an opportunity to serve him. In this prophecy, all the nations of the earth are mentioned, and the indignation of the LORD is shown to come upon them, with the whole symbolic earth—the present social order—being “devoured” by the “fire” of God's “jealousy,” or zeal.

All the prophecies pertaining to the time of trouble with which the present Gospel Age ends, reveal in one way or another the later outpouring of God's blessings upon the people. So, in this prophecy of Zephaniah, we are assured that after the present symbolic earth—“this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4)—ends, the LORD will “turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.” This ‘pure language’ is the LORD's message of Truth, the Word of the LORD which will go forth from Jerusalem—that is, from the earthly phase of the kingdom, the resurrected Ancient Worthies.

Thus, again, we see that the pouring out of God's Spirit upon all flesh will be reflected in the knowledge of the Divine will which will then fill the earth. It will be this true understanding of God and his laws that will enable the people of all nations to

call upon and to serve him. When all serve the LORD, and are in covenant relationship with him, there will be peace and joy everywhere. Isaiah wrote, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9

In Revelation 20:12, the diffusion of the knowledge of the LORD, which will result from the Holy Spirit being poured out upon all flesh, is symbolized by the opening of "books." The truths contained in these 'books' will be the basis of judgment among the people—all the people, even those who have died and will then be awakened from death. Those who yield themselves in obedience to the truths in the opened books will have their names enrolled in the "book of life." This also is symbolic language, but the thought is that obedience to the law of God—the law revealed in the books which are then opened by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—will lead to life—not spiritual life, but restored, earthly life.

It is this full obedience to the pure language, the knowledge of the LORD, and the truths revealed by the opened books, that is described in the promise of the New Covenant as the law of God being written in the hearts of the people. This means a return to human perfection. It is this work of restoration that is described by Peter as the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19-21) Then the human race will be in the same covenant relationship with God as Adam was before he sinned.—Hos. 6:7, *Marginal Translation*

Then, through agencies beyond our ability to comprehend, the Holy Spirit of God will provide all the assistance needed in order that the glorious objective of the Divine plan for the recovery of mankind from sin and death might be accomplished. It will reach down into the tomb and restore the dead to life. This will be as a regeneration, a re-creation of the human race, and by the same mighty power that accomplished the original creation. The psalmist said concerning God, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they [the dead] are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the LORD shall be forever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works."—Ps. 104:30,31, *Marginal Translation*

It is only because sin and death will be destroyed, and the earth filled with a perfect and happy people in keeping with God's original design in Creation, that he will 'rejoice in his works.' Then, too, his name will be honored and glorified by all. Isaiah wrote, "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh [the 'all flesh' upon whom the Spirit of the LORD will then be poured out] shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."—Isa. 40:5

What a glorious prospect! May we continue to rejoice in it, and pray for it, "until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."—Isa. 32:15-17 ■

A Very Present Help

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

ANOTHER YEAR IS ENDING

and for those not acquainted with the plans and purposes of God it has been a year of increasing tension and fear. To us to whom it has been given to know “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11), the “Fear not” announcement of the angel on the night Jesus was born has never meant more. (Luke 2:10) Every circumstance in the world which causes fear to strike deeper into the hearts of those who do not put their trust in God,

causes us to “look up” and “lift up” our heads, knowing with increasing certainty that our deliverance “draweth nigh.”—chap. 21:28

Our sympathy goes out to the suffering world, and we long for the time to come when, if we are

found worthy, we will enjoy the blessed privilege of shining forth with Jesus as the sun in that glorious kingdom in which none will molest nor make afraid, and peace and health and life will be assured to all. This sympathy is an active one. By it, we are moved to do all we can to tell the suffering world about the kingdom that is so near. What a joy the proclaiming of the kingdom message has brought to those who love the LORD.

Because God 'is our refuge and strength' in this time of trouble, we will not fear, says the psalmist, 'though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.' Throughout the year, those who have been taking heed to the sure Word of prophecy have seen the signs that betoken the removal of the symbolic earth, that is, the social order which Paul described as "this present evil world." (Gal. 1:4) The people of the world have also seen this removal taking place, but not knowing the ultimate purpose of God in connection therewith, their hearts have been filled with fear.

"There is a river," David continues, "the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." (Ps. 46:4) These 'streams' seem clearly to symbolize the many promises of God which outline the Divine plan, and they rejoice the hearts of those who have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son—that 'city' which is represented in the people of God who are "alive and remain" during this time of the Master's presence. (I Thess. 4:15) While fear fills the hearts of others, these are made 'glad.'

Above all things, we rejoice in the LORD. Through the Truth we have learned to know him, and to put

our trust in him. We rejoice in the Truth that has revealed his wisdom, justice, love, and power to us. We rejoice also in one another, in the privileges of fellowship we enjoy with the LORD's people of "like precious faith." (II Pet. 1:1) In this respect there are many evidences that the brethren have been drawn together more closely than ever, that the 'blest tie' which 'binds our hearts in Christian love' has been strengthened.

This is as we should expect, for each year brings us a little closer to the kingdom, and if our preparation for the kingdom keeps pace with passing time, each year should find us more emptied of self, and more filled with, and controlled by, the Holy Spirit. It is by this "one Spirit," Paul wrote, that we have all been "baptized into one body." (I Cor. 12:13) The more that self-will is conquered, and the will of the LORD allowed to control our minds and hearts, the stronger will be our affinity for other members of the body, and the greater our joy in fellowshiping with them.

The time of trouble that is upon the world is leading to increasing chaos everywhere, and along all lines of human endeavor. The 'earth' is truly being 'removed,' just as the psalmist foretold. Paul prophesied the same ending of Satan's world saying that the Lord at this time would "shake not the [symbolic] earth only, but also [the symbolic] heaven." The apostle then speaks of "those things which cannot be shaken," and explains that he refers to a "kingdom which cannot be moved."—Heb. 12:26-28

How beautifully this harmonizes with David's assurance that "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her when the

morning appeareth.” (Ps. 46:5, *Marginal Translation*) The ‘earth’ is being removed, the ‘mountains’ are being carried ‘into the midst of the sea,’ but ‘she shall not be moved.’ Since the First Advent of Christ, the Lord has been preparing his kingdom. Now that work is nearly complete, and he is especially in the midst of the last members of the kingdom class. This kingdom cannot be removed. As individuals, we could lose our place in it by unfaithfulness to our vows of consecration. From this standpoint we should take to heart Paul’s admonition, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1) We do not fear because the earth is being removed, but we should have this ‘fear’ mentioned by Paul—that is, an alertness, or watchfulness, to make sure that we are not neglecting any of the means of Divine grace by which we are kept from falling, or from being removed from the kingdom class. Peter expresses a similar thought saying, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”—II Pet. 1:10

To this blessed assurance, Peter adds, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (vs. 11) This is the kingdom that shortly will manifest itself in power and great glory, the kingdom we are ‘receiving,’ during this time when all earthly kingdoms are being removed. We are the “children of the kingdom” now (Matt. 13:38), but if we are faithful even unto death we will be with our Lord in glory, and will actually reign with him “a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:4

‘God shall help her,’ the psalmist declares. Every consecrated follower of the Master can testify that throughout the year the LORD has indeed been a ‘refuge and strength,’ that he has provided help in every time of need. The ‘help’ here mentioned is a special reference to the use of Divine power in the final deliverance of the last members of the church. This is the help that is given to the LORD’s people ‘when the morning appeareth.’

The “day star” (II Pet. 1:19), which introduces the morning is now present. One by one the ‘feet’ members of the body are passing over, receiving their abundant entrance into the kingdom beyond the veil. For all the faithful remaining ones the time is short. Shall we not, then, as Peter admonishes, “gird up the loins” of our minds, and “be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought” unto us “at the revelation of Jesus Christ”?—I Pet. 1:13

As we look ahead to the new year, it is with confidence that regardless of what our experiences may be, whether bitter or sweet, the LORD will be with us to give wisdom and strength in every time of need. The shortness of the time in which to make our calling and election sure should increase our zeal to know and to do the Father’s will; not only with respect to the personal application of the Truth in our own lives, but also in making known the glad tidings to others. Opportunities for bearing witness to the Truth were never greater.

It is the time foreseen when the troubles of this Day of Jehovah will give opportunity for preaching the good tidings of coming good, such as is seldom afforded, and blessed are they who will follow in

the footsteps of the Master, and be the good Samaritans binding up the wounds and pouring in the oil and wine of comfort and cheer.

Those who sacrifice time, strength, and means to proclaim the kingdom message can all testify to the rich blessings their efforts have brought into their own lives. The Truth becomes more precious to us, and is a more powerful influence in preparing us for the kingdom, if we use it for the blessing of others. This will continue to be true throughout the coming year, and all the years to come.

Let us then rejoice in all the wonderful opportunities the LORD is giving us to proclaim “good tidings unto the meek,” and “to bind up the brokenhearted.” (Isa. 61:1-3) Not only should we rejoice that through the Truth the LORD has removed fear from our hearts, but we can also be joyful in the fact that he has commissioned us to “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.”—Isa. 35:4 ■

When Jesus is King

Praise to our King who is coming to reign.

Glory to Jesus the Lamb that was slain.

Life and salvation His empire shall bring.

Joy to the nations when Jesus is King.

Men shall learn right in His kingdom of Peace.

Freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase.

Foe shall be friend when His triumph we sing,

Sword shall be sickle when Jesus is King.

—*Hymns of Dawn*

Children of the Most High

"I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."
—*Psalm 82:6,7*

THROUGHOUT MOST OF the western world today the idea of the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man is being stressed. If this viewpoint were true it would mean that all human beings are children of God. In

Luke 3:38, Adam is declared to be the "son of God," but because he transgressed Divine law he forfeited his inheritance as a son, was rejected by God, and sentenced to death. Legally, his children also were born outside of the Creator's parental jurisdiction, not being considered by God to be his children.

However, God has continued to love his disinherited children. Through the redemptive work of Christ he made provision for them to return to his family and again share in the joys of the restored relationship as human sons. This restoration to the family fold, so far as the world in general is concerned, will be fully realized at the end of the Millennial Age when, to those who qualify for eter-

nal life under the judgment and kingdom regulations of the thousand years of restoration, Jesus will say "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—Matt. 25:34

Meanwhile, the world in general, alienated from God through wicked works, are not the children of God in the truest sense. However, man was originally created in the image of God, and varying traces of that image still remain in the hearts of the people. It manifests itself in conscience, and in all noble traits of justice and benevolence that we so often see unselfishly displayed by those with whom we are surrounded. These remaining remnants of the Divine image, which still exercise such a power of good in an otherwise evil and selfish world, are but reminders of the grandeur and nobility of character which Adam must have possessed before he sinned and thereby began his journey over the "broad" road, which leads to "destruction." (Matt. 7:13) It helps us to realize also, to some extent, the superb qualities that will be possessed by the human race when restored to perfection and reinstated as human sons of God at the end of the millennium.

The broad view entertained today—that all human beings are the sons of God—was not held by the people in Jesus' day, especially by those of the Jewish nation. Divine sonship was considered very sacred, and beyond the reach of any member of the fallen race. To claim the status of sonship with God was construed within the religious circles of Israel to be blasphemy, and, according to the Law, made one worthy of death. It was this viewpoint that helped to bring about Jesus' crucifixion.

IGNORANT OF THE PROPHECIES

Had the religious leaders of Jesus' day not been so ignorant of the prophecies they would have known that in the Divine plan for human salvation God had made provision for some to become his sons, his children. Our text is one of these prophecies. In it, God addresses those whom he calls 'children of the most High,' referring to them as 'gods.' True, the scribes and Pharisees, even if they knew of this prophecy, would have no idea to whom it might apply.

Jesus gives us this information. It was on one of the occasions when his own sonship was called in question, and he was being charged with blasphemy. In his reply to his accusers, Jesus quoted this prophecy and explained that it applied to those "unto whom the word of God came," meaning, of course, his disciples, and those who believed on him through their teachings. (John 10:34-36) There are many texts of scripture to show that the Word of God was designed for, and came to, the church of the Gospel Age. Jesus said to his Father concerning his disciples, "I have given them thy word." (John 17:14) Peter explains that the Old Testament scriptures were written, not particularly for the benefit of the people during the Jewish Age, but "unto us."—I Pet. 1:12

It is, then, to the followers of Christ during the present Gospel Age that our text applies. It is these who, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, are made spiritual children of God. John, who reported Jesus' application of our text, seemed particularly impressed with this sonship viewpoint. In his first epistle, he writes, "Now are we the sons of God,

and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2

Just as the truth of his sonship helped to lead Jesus to his death, those who then espoused his cause and, like him, professed to be sons of the Creator, thereby placed themselves in jeopardy, especially among the people of Israel. But sacrifice and suffering are one of the present heritages of the sons of God. This is indicated in the verse of our text, in which the LORD says, ‘Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.’

This does not mean that the great God—Creator of the universe—is incapable of protecting his children from harm. It is unthinkable to suppose that they die like men because he is disinterested in them, or is unable to prevent them from being overwhelmed by their enemies. The only conclusion to be reached is that these sons of God, these children of the Most High, die like men because it is the Divine will for them to die.

The full meaning of the text is more readily understood when we consider the further expression explaining that these ‘fall [in death] like one of the princes.’ The word princes is translated from a Hebrew word meaning a ‘tribal or family head.’ Since the Divine plan of salvation pertains to the human race, we can properly think of one of the princes referred to in this text as Adam, the head of the entire human family.

Adam, the perfect human son of God, was created not to die, but to live. He went into death because he transgressed Divine law. He died as a sinner, condemned to death, losing both his sonship

and his right to live. His children, likewise born in sin, have continued to die as condemned sinners.

But surely the ‘children of the most High’ do not die as sinners under condemnation to death! These to whom the Word of God has come during the Gospel Age, and who have accepted that Word, are given eternal life. (John 5:24) They are no longer under condemnation, but have passed from death unto life. Yet they die, as the psalmist says, ‘like men.’

How true this is! All the faithful followers of the Master, from Pentecost on, have died like men. From the human standpoint there has seemed to be no difference between the death of a saint and the death of a sinner. The vast majority of both classes die of sickness or of old age. Some sinners die by accident and, likewise, some saints. Many true Christians earlier in the age died as martyrs for the cause of Christ, and many non-Christians also died as martyrs for one cause or another.

LIKE ‘ONE’ OF THE PRINCES

God has a different viewpoint. While seemingly, and to all outward appearance, these children of the Most High die like men, actually they fall in death ‘like one of the princes.’ We have seen that one of the princes referred to in this statement is Adam. He died because condemned to death. But the children of the Most High have, through faith, been released from the condemnation of sin and death that is upon the human race through its princely head, Adam. They do not, therefore, die as he died.

But there is another prince—that is, Prince Jesus. As the “last Adam,” he is the new Head of the

human race. (I Cor. 15:45) Through regeneration he will become the father who will give everlasting life to those who lost life through Prince Adam. In order to accomplish this Divine plan for the restoration of Adam's children to life, Jesus also died. But, unlike Prince Adam, he did not die as a condemned sinner, but as a sacrifice for sinners.

Jesus did not forfeit his life through disobedience to Divine law, as did Prince Adam, but voluntarily gave up his life in order to take the sinner's place in death. Thus his was a sacrificial death. Writing to the church at Rome, to the children of the Most High in that congregation, and to us as well, Paul spoke of being "planted together in the likeness" of Jesus' death. (Rom. 6:5) So it is that we die like 'one' of the princes, that is, like Prince Jesus, who voluntarily poured out his soul unto death that the world might have an opportunity to live.

Jesus and the apostles had much to say about our privilege of dying with him, and like him. Jesus asked two of his disciples, who requested special places with him in his kingdom, if they were able to be baptized with his baptism. (Mark 10:38) Paul referred to this as being "baptized" into Jesus' death.—Rom. 6:3

Peter wrote, "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." (I Pet. 2:21) In Revelation 14:4, John identifies those on Mt. Sion with the Lamb as the ones who had followed the Lamb—followed Jesus, that is, into sacrificial death. They are described as those who are "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God."—Rev. 20:4

A TYPE OF CHRISTIAN DYING

In Hebrews 13:13, Paul speaks of the children of the Most High of this age as going forth unto Christ “without the camp, bearing his reproach.” This is a reference to a part of the ceremony that occurred on Israel’s typical Day of Atonement. On that day two animals were sacrificed, and their blood was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled on the mercy seat to make atonement for Israel’s sins—first a bullock and then a goat. The goat was treated exactly like the bullock in every way.

These animals were slain by the high priest. Their fat and life-producing organs were burned on a brazen altar in the court surrounding the Tabernacle proper. The carcasses of the animals were taken out of the court, ‘without the camp,’ and burned. The priest took coals of fire from the brazen altar in the court, together with his hands full of incense, went into the first Holy of the Tabernacle, put the coals of fire on a golden altar which was situated there, and sprinkled the incense upon the fire. The sweet odor of the burning incense penetrated into the Most Holy, preparing the way for the priest’s entry to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy seat.—Lev. 16:1-19

Since Paul admonishes us to go to Jesus without the camp it is clear that, in his mind, the two animals sacrificed on the typical Day of Atonement represented first Jesus (the bullock), and then the church (the goat). To go to Jesus without the camp means that we have the opportunity of suffering and dying with him, and under similar circumstances. We have the privilege of sharing in his ignominy, and of being outcasts from the world.

There is a more comprehensive picture for us in Israel's Atonement Day sacrifices than merely the opportunity it points out to us of sharing in the suffering and death of Jesus. As we have seen, three sacrificial fires burned on that day—one without the camp, another on the brazen altar in the court, and the third on the golden altar in the first Holy. These seem designed to picture three viewpoints of Jesus' life of sacrifice, and ours as his followers.

Obviously, the burning of the carcasses of the animals without the camp in view of all Israel pictured the manner in which the unbelieving world, views the sacrifice of true believers. Their minds being blinded by the "god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4); to them true Christian sacrifice is more or less obnoxious. They look upon zealous Christians as foolish, and wasting their time and effort. Because these sacrifices manifest themselves largely in bearing witness to the Truth, and because the darkness of the world hateth the light of the Gospel, they become a stench in their nostrils, leading oftentimes to persecution.

This is merely the viewpoint of the unbelieving world. The burning of the fat and life-producing organs on the brazen altar in the court represents the viewpoint of fellow sacrificers, the household of faith. If we, as individuals, are falling (in death) like one of the princes—that is, like Prince Jesus—we will appreciate the position of those who are likewise presenting their bodies a living sacrifice. Instead of hindering them, we will do all we can to help them. Instead of adding to their burdens, we will endeavor by kind words of encouragement to help them bear their trials.

Fat burns furiously, so the fire upon the brazen altar would also represent the consuming zeal of our Master, and a like zeal on the part of his true followers. Of Jesus it was written, that the zeal of God's house consumed him. (Ps. 69:9; John 2:17) His example of self-sacrificing devotion to the will of the Heavenly Father is a pattern for us; and, like him, we too will want to be consumed in serving our Heavenly Father's cause, cooperating zealously with him in whatever share of his work he gives us to do.

If we are not as zealous ourselves as we should be, we might be tempted to be critical of those who are laying down their lives faithfully in the service of the LORD, instead of our being inspired by their faithfulness to greater diligence and zeal. When Paul was in prison in Rome, the church at Philippi sent a gift to him by Epaphroditus. (Phil. 4:18) It was a hazardous undertaking and Epaphroditus became "sick nigh unto death." (Phil. 2:25-30) Paul then wrote to the Philippian brethren instructing them that they should hold this faithful servant "in reputation." Instead of suggesting that Epaphroditus did not have the spirit of a sound mind, Paul indicated that he greatly appreciated his self-sacrificing zeal. This is the viewpoint of all fellow sacrificers, as antitypically we note the burning 'fat' of our brethren in Christ who, together with us, are falling in death like Prince Jesus.

There is still another viewpoint of Christian sacrifice—namely, that which was represented by the burning incense on the golden altar in the Holy. This is primarily God's viewpoint, although as New Creatures in the Holy we should also be aware of, and appreciate, the sweet odor of praise pictured by the

burning incense. Paul speaks of this as the “sacrifice of praise to God,” which all who are faithful to their covenant of sacrifice offer to God “continually.” (Heb. 13:15) This is not a different sacrifice from that which is pictured by the burning carcasses outside of the camp. It is merely another viewpoint of that sacrifice, and another viewpoint also of the same sacrifice pictured by the burning fat in the court. It indicates that what is misunderstood by the world, and obnoxious to them, is a sweet-smelling savor to God.

It is true, of course, that the LORD also sees the burning carcasses without the camp. He is aware of the reproaches that this brings upon his people. He knows of the shame and ignominy which is often heaped upon them, and it is only by his sustaining grace that the sacrificers are able to continue thus to lay down their lives as Jesus did. We can always rely upon him to encourage and strengthen us, and when the trials become too severe, to provide a way of escape.

The LORD also appreciates the zeal of his people, as pictured by the burning fat on the brazen altar in the court. Through Christ, he has called us to be a “peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14) In this text, the Greek word translated ‘peculiar’ means special, or extraordinary. Those who are truly zealous for the LORD, and for the cause in which he has invited them to participate, are a very special people to him. He loves them, treasures them, and protects them.

As pictured by the burning incense, their sacrifice is as a sweet odor to him which penetrates beyond the veil, into heaven itself, as pictured by the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. It was this odor of the burning incense, penetrating beyond the veil, that pre-

pared the way for the priest to enter with blood to sprinkle upon the mercy seat. Had he not carried out every detail of the Atonement Day service exactly as he had been instructed by the LORD, including the burning of the incense on the golden altar, he would have died as he passed under the second veil.

This was true, antitypically, of Jesus, and it is also true of us who, like him, are falling sacrificially in death. Paul tells us that God “hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him [Jesus] from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) This ‘assurance’ is in the fact that Jesus’ resurrection by his Father proves that his sacrifice was acceptable, and that he has now entered into the “holiest” of all, there “to appear in the presence of God for us,” and later, for all mankind.—Heb. 10:19; 9:24

In entering into the antitypical Most Holy, Jesus was our “forerunner.” (chap. 6:20) This means that we follow him into death, and thus also pass under the antitypical second veil. This is one of the special privileges of the Gospel Age sons of God. Paul explains that in “bringing many sons unto glory” it was the Father’s plan to make the “captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10) This suffering was typified by the three fires which were used on the typical Day of Atonement in completely consuming those typical sacrifices, and it is our privilege, as part of the ‘many sons,’ to present our bodies “a living sacrifice” to be consumed by those fires.—Rom. 12:1

It is essential for us, as it was for Jesus, to be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, faithful even unto death, if we are to hear the “Well done” on the other side of the veil. (Matt. 25:21) “Be thou faithful unto death,” Jesus said, “and I will give thee a

crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) If, in being planted together in the likeness of Jesus’ death, we are faithful until the sacrifice is wholly consumed, then we will share in his resurrection.

This glorious hope of resurrection—to live and reign with Christ—seems clearly shown in the verse following our text, although the thought is obscured by an inappropriate translation. The sequence of thought seems obvious. ‘I have said, Ye are gods,’ the LORD declares, ‘but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.’ This traces the experience of these children of the Most High into sacrificial death with Prince Jesus.

Then comes the statement, “Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.” (Ps. 82:8) As this translation reads, it would seem to have no relationship at all to the preceding verses. The fact is, however, that the Hebrew word here translated ‘God’ is the same one that is translated ‘gods’ in the statement, I have said, Ye are gods. It is the plural form of the Hebrew word meaning ‘mighty ones.’

These whom the LORD himself declares to be gods, and who are the children of the Most High God, go down into death sacrificially—they fall in death like Prince Jesus. Having fallen in death, in the next verse these same gods are bidden to ‘arise.’ It seems reasonable that this is a prophetic summons to the church to arise in the first resurrection that they might live and reign “with Christ a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:4

These children of the Most High are promised that, if they are faithful, they will, together with Jesus, judge the world. (I Cor. 6:2,3) They are also promised, upon the condition of faithfulness that,

together with Jesus, they will ‘inherit all nations.’ How much in keeping with this glorious prospect is the statement, ‘Arise, O gods, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.’

Jesus assures us that it is God’s plan that his faithful followers shall enter into this inheritance with him. He said, “He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”—Rev. 2:26,27

It was this honored position in the Divine plan that Jesus ‘received’ of his Father in a wonderful promise recorded in the second Psalm, and upon the basis of the fact that he was the faithful Son of God. The promise reads, “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”—Ps. 2:7-9

Just as the Heavenly Father said to Jesus, ‘Thou art my Son,’ to us, his footstep followers, who are being planted together in the likeness of his death, he also affirms this precious relationship—‘I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.’ When we begin to realize the implications of this marvelous declaration, we can understand John’s feelings when he wrote, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” (I John 3:1-3) May we ever keep in mind the conditions upon which this may be true of us—that we fall like one of the princes. ■

Dawn Bible Students Website

TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY HAS created various new methods of witnessing the beauty of God's plan for mankind. One of the newer methods is the Internet. By this method people from every part of the world are able to view Truth literature of interest to them on their personal computer.

The Dawn has taken advantage of this new means of witnessing, and established their own website. *The Dawn's* worldwide web appearance began in May 1997. Since its inception it has grown in features, and has proven to be a blessing and a valuable tool for many seeking the word of God.

The Dawn is able to count the number of times a person comes to their website. This is called a 'hit.' *The Dawn* averages 60,000 hits a month.

The Dawn website features *The Dawn* magazine. Each monthly issue is on the web for all to read. It can also be downloaded and printed for later reference. The website features *The Dawn* magazine in five languages. This is valuable for those who can read these various languages, whether living in the U. S. or abroad.

The site features thirty-six booklets *The Dawn* offers on various subjects. All one has to do is click

on the booklet of the subject of their choice and the entire text will appear on the screen. These, too, can be downloaded and printed out for future reference, or be given to someone.

The Frank and Ernest Radio programs can be listened to via the website. The entire program, as heard on various radio stations, can be heard. When it is finished, one can click on the booklet offered, and read it on the subject presented by the radio program. *The Frank and Ernest* radio, and *The Bible Answers* television program, station listings can be found on the website, including city, day, and time.

A daily devotional feature is the *Daily Heavenly Manna* and *The Songs in the Night*. By clicking on either one, *The Manna* or *Songs in the Night* for that day can be viewed. Various Bible Student conventions held by Bible Student classes are listed. This is continually updated so one can plan ahead for a convention by consulting this listing.

A guest book is featured for those who wish to comment on the website. When reading these entries, one can see the blessings *The Dawn* website has brought to those seeking God's word, including Sunday school teachers who use the International Bible Studies feature of *The Dawn* magazine. These teachers say how helpful these lessons are in their study preparations. The *God's Promises Come True* booklet for children is also on the website. From the guest book entrees we see that this is indeed a blessing for younger persons.

In the table of contents is a feature titled, "The Dawn—Its Ministry." This gives a history of *The Dawn*, how it started, and details up to the present time how it is witnessing throughout the world.

Here is a listing of some of the countries who have visited *The Dawn* website: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saint Kitts, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, West Africa, and Yugoslavia.

May the Lord continue to bless this wonderful means of proclaiming the gospel to all. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 1—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—Matthew 22:39 (Z. '99-72 Hymn 354)

DECEMBER 8—"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you."—John 15:18 (Z. '01-300 Hymn 261)

DECEMBER 15—"The LORD is my shepherd."—Psalm 23:1 (Z. '02-365 Hymn 87)

DECEMBER 22—"If a man therefore purge himself, . . . he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."—II Timothy 2:21 (Z. '02-319 Hymn 208)

DECEMBER 29—"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."—Ecclesiastes 11:6 (Z. '02-71 Hymn 210)

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

GIVEN HOPE

Dear Friends: I thought these past few weeks that I had lost my faith. Your November 2005 issue of *The Dawn* magazine came today. Your work through the Holy Spirit has enlightened my knowledge and given me hope.

Your work is the most comprehensive and thorough work I have read, and I truly believe the message.

My fondness of your work continues to be in my heart. May God continue to bless you and your kind and wonderful work.—OH

AN OLD AD FOUND

Dear Bible Answers: I found an old *National Geographic* (1970) with your ad in the back. I'm very interested in how *Archeology Proves the Bible*. Please send this to me if you are still in operation. Thank

you and God bless.—PA

GIVING FAMILIES HOPE

Dear Sir: I have been a subscriber to your publication for quite some time. As I was reading the March 2005 issue, I read a letter to the editor from a funeral director. She stated she had given the publication *Hope* to all of the families she serves. I, too, had received an order of this same publication and I, too, had given them out. This book was given to each family at the end of the funeral. I wanted them to know there was still hope, although it seemed dark and lonely at that time.

I would like for you to send me some more of this publication so I can continue to spread God's Word and assure families at their time of need that there is still hope. Respectfully—NJ

“I Wish I Knew What To Do!”

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below, in cooperation with the Dawn, are invited by individual classes, or their services have been arranged by their home classes:

E. Blicharz

Atlanta, GA

December 4

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 Lucille Buck, Whitefish, MT—October 25. Age, 96



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CONVENTIONS

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

DETROIT CHRISTMAS GATHERING, December 17—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road. Contact N. Zendler. Phone: (248) 399-8843

CHICAGO NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 31, January 1,2—Elk Grove High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60007. Contact R. Tabac 4N233 Norris Avenue, West Chicago, IL 60185 Phone: (630) 231-1874

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 31, January 1,2—La Quinta Inn, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85203. Contact J. Porcolab, PO Box 5432, Sun City West, AZ 85376. Phone: (602) 363-3612

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 17,18,19—The Clarion Hotel, 2600 Auburn Blvd. Contact D. Burke, 10771 Wood Reed Court, Nevada City, CA 95959. Phone: (503) 265-8252

ROCKLAND ANNUAL CONVENTION, February 26—Comfort Inn, Nanuet, NY. Contact D. Shallieu, 1041 Johnston Drive, Watchung, NJ 07069. Phone: (908) 756-4954

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 4,5,6—Clarion Hotel, Orlando International Airport, 3835 McCoy Road, Orlando, FL 32812. Phone: (407) 859-2711 or (888) 266-2711. Specify "Florida Bible Students Group" in order to guarantee convention special rate. Other information, contact R. Sconyers, 601 S. Winter

Park Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 339-0970

NEW YORK SPRING CONVENTION, March 15—Wellesley Inn, Two Bridges Road & Exit 52, Route 80, Fairfield, NJ. Contact D. Gorecki. Phone: (845) 758-0223

FRESNO CONVENTION, March 31-April 2—Best Western Garden Court Inn, 2141 N. Parkway Drive, Fresno, CA 93705. Contact B. Wilson, 2103 N. Price Avenue, #112, Fresno, CA 93703. Phone: (559) 255-2241

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 7,8,9—Macomb Community College, 14500 12 Mile Road, Warren, MI. Contact F. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588

BOISE CONVENTION, April 28,29,30—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street, Boise, ID. Contact D. Allers, 2438 Bruins Circle, Boise, ID 83704. Phone: (208) 375-6873

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 15-20—University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown, PA. Contact Michael Nekora, 1425 Lachman Lane, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272. Phone: (310) 454-5248

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 6-11—Nowy Sacz, Poland. (International Youth Seminar follows in Baia Mare, Romania, August 14-18. Contact T. Machacek. Phone: (219) 662-8107



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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