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DECEMBER 2012



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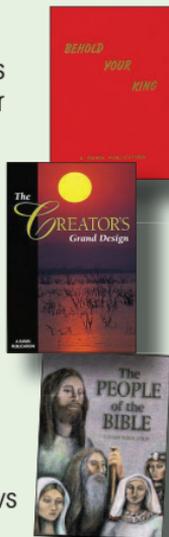
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

- A World-Shaking Event
—Largely Ignored 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

- Spiritual Blessings in Jesus Christ 16
One in Jesus Christ 18
Unity in the Body of Christ 20
Live in the Light 22
Christ's Love for the Church 24

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

- Searching the Scriptures—Part 36
The Power of the Scriptures 26
“What Seek Ye?” 39
The Good Samaritan 53
Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 15

OBITUARIES 52

TALKING THINGS OVER 61

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 63

CONVENTIONS 63

A World-Shaking Event

—Largely Ignored

*“Unto you is born
this day in the city
of David a Saviour,
which is Christ the
Lord.”*

—*Luke 2:11*

AS THE YEAR 2012 DRAWS to a close, we see many things taking place in the world that may, as they develop further, become what might be termed “world-shaking events.” Among these are the ongoing turmoil and tensions in the Middle East—involving countries such as Libya, Syria, Iran, and Israel. Then there is the continued bloodshed of war in Afghanistan and the growing instability of its neighbor, Pakistan. The uncertain economy of the United States and the even more fragile economic conditions of the “Eurozone” are continually in the back of everyone’s mind as potentially world-shaking. Increasing the economic volatility and uncertainty is the looming “fiscal cliff,” which some say could send this country back into another severe recession.

At the time of this writing, our country's Presidential election has just taken place, with President Obama winning re-election to another four-year term. This, too, will no doubt factor largely in shaping many events of 2013 and beyond. Even natural disasters, such as the recent "super" storm that plowed up the eastern seaboard, flooding the nerve center of banking and commerce in New York, carry the potential of having a great impact on the world scene. Only the passage of time, of course, will reveal clearly to us which events currently at the forefront of the news will truly be "world-shaking," and which will end up being of relatively little consequence to the majority of the world. In either case, however, the myriad and tumultuous events shaping our world as the year draws to a close fit well with the prophetic words of the Apostle Paul, who likened the events of our day to variously severe spasms of trouble, "as travail upon a woman with child."—I Thess. 5:3

There is yet another event which has a vital bearing on the world situation today, although it is one which is given virtually no consideration in the diplomatic and political deliberations of the nations. There is one, a leader and statesman such as this world has never known before, who will soon establish a worldwide kingdom. He will restore political, social, and economic order worldwide, and establish genuine peace that will be not merely for "our times," but for all times. This leader was born more than twenty centuries ago, lived to the age of thirty-three and one-half years, and then was crucified by pagan Roman authorities in response to the clamorous demand of his brethren, the Jews.

He was called Jesus, and we join with all those who reflect on his birth and life during this season of the year. It is, in fact, the event of his birth which we gladly proclaim as truly being “world-shaking,” and which will eventually bring blessings to all the families of the earth. The name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, meaning “Savior.” The Scriptures, so familiar to many, say that Jesus’ birth was announced by an angel to a little group of shepherds watching their flocks by night on the Judean hills. These shepherds, evidently somewhat alarmed by the sudden appearance of that which they recognized as supernatural, were bidden by the angel that addressed them to “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

Then suddenly a multitude of angels, supplementing the announcement of glad tidings, in unison sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” (vs. 14) Whether or not these shepherds were sufficiently well acquainted with the testimony of their prophets to realize that this announcement of the birth of Jesus signaled the beginning of the fulfillment of what had been foretold concerning a new kingdom that was to be established, and a new day that would dawn for the blessing of the world, we are not able to say. Nevertheless, the prophets had foretold the birth of this Savior, Prince, and King, and had pointed out the scope of work designed by God for him to do.

PROPHETIC TESTIMONY

For example, Isaiah declared, “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 prophecy, if inspired alone by the enthusiasm of a Hebrew prophet, would be a very ambitious one indeed. It envisions the deliverer of Israel in the combined role of Counselor, Father (or life-giver), a mighty God, and a Prince of Peace. The pharaohs, kings, and princes of empires such as Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and others, had endeavored, by force and trickery, to extend their domains far and wide throughout the then known world. Yet this humble, but enthusiastic prophet, foretelling the birth of a future Israelite king, was bold to assert that there would be “no end” to the sphere of influence of “his government and peace.” Furthermore, he claimed that—being worldwide in its administration—it would also be established “with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.”

In view of all the shocking escapades of selfish men that history reveals, and in view also of the present world of tumult in which man lives, we might justifiably feel that Isaiah, while a commendable ideologist in his outlook, had closed his

eyes to reality when he penned his description of a future utopia of righteousness and peace. Even well-wishers in countless generations of human experience have had reluctantly to admit that his words have not yet been realized. There is a statement in this prophecy, however, which we should not overlook—one which should form a basis for the reexamination of all the facts related thereto—namely, that “the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

GOD IS ABLE

God is able! This is the belief that followers of Christ the world over have professed for twenty centuries. Upon the basis of this belief, the human mind can readily conceive of the untold possibilities of accomplishment in a distraught world if, indeed, there is a God who is as able and willing to oversee and carry out such a plan. That our God is willing to do for man what man cannot do for himself is abundantly attested by the many prophecies and promises he has made of his intention to perform—“the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

The angelic message to the shepherds announcing the birth of the one who had been promised makes it clear that these promises had not been forgotten hundreds of years after they had been made. However, the question remains today. Have the promises relating to the accomplishment of these things been forgotten? Is the birth of Jesus, now so widely celebrated every year, merely a legendary incident—part of a series of fairy tales? Do these promises, while supposedly backed up by an

all-powerful and loving Creator, have any real foundation in fact? Do they contain evidence of genuine divine inspiration?

This is the great challenge to many today who profess belief in Christ. It is a challenge now more than ever before, because there is seemingly less evidence in the world than ever before to indicate that the kingdom of righteousness and peace, which the prophets foretold, will ever be established by the one born in Bethlehem so long ago. Throughout the ensuing two thousand years, there has been no genuine or lasting peace and goodwill in the earth. Wars and rumors of wars have marred the hopes of peace for each generation. The fact that aggressor nations sometimes have labeled their acts as “holy wars” has made these no less bitter and devastating in the hearts and lives of those affected.

Nevertheless, “hope springs eternal in the human breast,” and is not easily destroyed. Millions, throughout this entire period, have believed that Jesus was born, and that he is the Prince of Peace. They continued to sing their anthems of praise to this King of glory, despite the roar of cannons and the shrieks of the dying on battlefields supposedly made hallow by the misguided prayers of church leaders. Meantime, there was always the hope of a better time coming. The “heroic dead” of each generation, it was hoped, would make, by their sacrifice, future generations safe for peace. The realities of today’s worldwide troubles, however, continue to cloud such hope. As never before, believers in Christ as the Prince of Peace are challenged to show cause for persisting in their belief in a hero

who was crucified, and whose cause in the earth has been, apparently, so utterly defeated.

JESUS' VIEWPOINT

Perhaps the most logical avenue of approach in meeting this present-day challenge to those professing to follow Christ is to consider Jesus' own viewpoint. What were his expectations? Did he realize that twenty centuries from his day the world would be in the dilemma it is in today, with no serious consideration being given to his teachings by the leaders of any nation, while an increasingly greater part of the world considers his followers their enemies? Did Jesus expect this apparent defeat of his cause in the earth? Does the prophetic vision which tells of his birth and ultimate glory as King of earth include and explain the many historic developments of past centuries which, to the casual observer, belie the enthusiasm of the prophets? If the answers to these questions are "no," then we might properly wonder what is to become of Christianity.

Jesus, as well as the prophets and the apostles, did foresee and foretell the utter collapse of what, to many, appears to be the cause of Christ in the earth. For example, concerning the time of his Second Coming, Jesus raised the question as to whether or not there would then be any faith in the earth. (Luke 18:8) In answering questions put to him by the disciples as to what would constitute signs of his return and Second Presence, Jesus outlined a series of events culminating in what Daniel the prophet describes as "a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." (Dan. 12:1;

Matt. 24:21) Other scriptures give evidence that it is this very “time of trouble” that is to bring about the collapse of the present order of things, including the various religious systems of today, both Christian and non-Christian. Indeed, then, the present increasing defeat of manmade efforts to establish peace and goodwill in the earth has not come as a surprise to the Lord. Most importantly, it does not indicate the failure of his cause in the earth.

COUNTERFEIT KINGDOM FORETOLD

One of Jesus’ parables of the kingdom is that of the wheat and tares. The “wheat” in this parable—sown by Jesus himself in the establishment of the Early Church—he declares to be the “children of the kingdom.” The “tares”—imitation, or counterfeit wheat—represent the “children of the wicked one.” “While men slept,” that is, after the apostles and other faithful ones in the Early Church fell asleep in death, these “tares” were sown.—Matt. 13:24-30; 36-43

These imitation followers of the Master soon became more numerous than the true wheat class—the children of the kingdom. Soon they set upon the task of establishing Christ’s kingdom themselves, without waiting for the return of the King, as they should have done. Lacking the necessary power requisite to the functioning of a real kingdom, the tare class united with the arm of the state. Thus, through the unauthorized union of church and state, a pseudo-kingdom of Christ was established, and for hundreds of years endeavored to function as the real kingdom.

In the parable, Jesus explains that the true children of the kingdom and those of the counterfeit kingdom were to be permitted to grow together until the “harvest.” This would be, he declared, in “the end of the age.” Then both the wheat and the tares would be dealt with. The tares, the Master declared, would then be destroyed—burned up. This would not be literally, and not as individuals, but rather symbolically as tares. That is, the true identity of the tares would then become generally recognized, and the counterfeit kingdom arrangement they represented would be destroyed. The wheat, on the other hand, the Master explained, were to be gathered into the “barn,” which he interpreted as meaning that “then shall the righteous [the wheat] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

TRUE KINGDOM PROMISED

In the parable of the wheat and tares, therefore, we have a clear indication from the Master that the establishment of the true kingdom of God would not be until “the end of the age,” and meanwhile counterfeit “children of the kingdom” would grow up in the field. It is the fulfillment of this prophetic parable that has caused much confusion in the minds of the people generally. The counterfeit has been taken for the real, and now that the foretold revealing of the tares is in progress, there is a great lamenting. As a result, millions are losing faith in what they had supposed was the true Gospel of Christ and its purpose.

However, it is not the elements of the true kingdom that are now crumbling under the impact of

forces let loose by the increasing light of our day. The true kingdom is not yet recognized by the world. In that kingdom, the parable promises, “the righteous shall shine forth as the sun,” and will enlighten and bless the world with universal peace and everlasting life. One of the Old Testament promises of this Messianic kingdom pictures Christ as the “Sun of righteousness,” which shall “arise with healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2) The followers of the Master, the wheat, are promised a share with him in that glorious kingdom. In that role, they too, according to the parable, shall “shine forth as the sun.”

It is evident, then, that Jesus himself did not expect that the wonderful promises of a worldwide kingdom of peace and happiness to be established through him as the Messiah would be fulfilled until after his Second Advent, and that one of his first works upon his return would be that of overthrowing the counterfeit arrangements set up by men. To realize this helps materially in understanding the significance of what is now occurring in the world. It means, not a failure of Christ’s ultimate purpose, but a setting aside of failed systems and their related false teachings. Thus, the way can be cleared for the people to learn about the true God of love, and the blessings of life and happiness he has provided for all through the redemptive work of Christ.

“FALLING AWAY” FORETOLD

The Apostle Paul also foretold the development and eventual destruction of a false system which claimed Christ as its leader. In II Thessalonians 2,

he explains that there would come a great “falling away” from the faith, and that a “man of sin”—a system in reality opposed to Christ—would grow up in the earth. He also declares that this system would eventually be rendered powerless and finally destroyed (according to the Greek text) by the “bright shining of his presence.” (II Thess. 2:3,8) That is, the enlightening influences set to work in the earth as a result of the Second Presence of Christ would bring about this foretold destruction.

Jesus, after his resurrection, gave the wonderful vision of Revelation to the Apostle John. It is not until the end of the vision that we see the nations being healed and restored by the waters of the river of life. (Rev. 22:1-5) Prior to this, however, John sees in vision the nations and religious systems of the world gathered unto the great battle of Armageddon, the culmination of the great Time of Trouble previously spoken of, and the time in which all these systems will come to an end.

In other words, the Revelation vision portrays, not the ever-increasing and widening influence of the true Messianic kingdom purpose beginning at Pentecost, but the flourishing for a time of the forces of wickedness, deception, and falsehood, under the direction of Satan. It does reveal, however, a faithful few who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” It reveals these faithful ones as at last being exalted to kingdom power and authority with Jesus, and that his kingdom will truly lead mankind to the “water of life.”—Rev. 14:4; 22:17

DIVINE POWER TO BE EXERCISED

In foretelling the birth of Jesus, the prophet declared that the “government shall be upon his shoulder.” This is another way of saying that he will assume full responsibility for its success. He can do this, for after his resurrection he declared that “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matt. 28:18) This means that he will not depend upon the arm of fallen man or human governments to enforce his decrees, as did those who established the imitation kingdom arrangements. Jesus now possesses “all power,” and will use it to guarantee the success and efficacy of his kingdom.

Is this not what we should expect of Jesus? We believe in the miracles he wrought during the period of his First Advent. Should it be hard to believe that now that he is raised from the dead he is able to accomplish even greater things? True, many long centuries have passed since Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the storms, but this does not mean that divine power will never again be exercised on behalf of mankind. Indeed, it will be so, and that, we believe, in the near future.

Think what that will mean for distressed humanity! No longer will the world be ruled by power politics, or by “balances” of power, for divine power will sweep aside all of the selfish arrangements of man. The kingdom agencies put in place by Jesus himself, by the authority given to him by God, will cause righteousness and peace to spring forth in all the earth. Yes, he will truly be “The Prince of Peace” and “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” As “The everlasting Father,” or life-giver, Jesus will restore mankind to

life, so that not only will they have peace, but they will have health and life also. Soon the whole world will have the opportunity of receiving these blessings, brought to pass by the salvation provided through this wonderful Savior.

The fact that so many have misunderstood the real purpose of Jesus' life and the Gospel message he declared will in no way interfere with the successful carrying out of that purpose. The message of the Gospel of Christ will yet be recognized as a glorious success when, through the kingdom agencies, "the knowledge of the glory of the LORD" fills the whole earth "as the waters cover the sea."—Hab. 2:14; Isa. 11:9

The real work of God, through Christ, during this age has been a success. That work has been, not the converting of the world and the establishing of Christ's kingdom, but the gathering out from among all nations a people to be associated with Jesus in the kingdom when it is established. (Rev. 5:10; Acts 15:13-15) This work of selecting "a people for his name" has gone on unnoticed by the world. It has been supervised by divine wisdom, and its final completion, near at hand, is guaranteed by divine power.

When it is complete, and the righteous "little flock" are all selected and gathered, and united with Christ in glory, then the promised blessings to the world will no longer be held back. The kingdom will be here indeed. All mankind will know for the first time the real significance of the divine program that was initiated twenty centuries ago, when the shepherds heard that glad announcement, "Fear not, . . . For unto you is born this day in the city of

David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” Then the world will know also that the “zeal of the LORD of hosts” has completed all the glorious things foretold to be accomplished through the Savior who was born in Judea, crucified on a hill called Golgotha, and raised to divine power at the right hand of God Almighty. These will then truly be recognized as “world-shaking events” for mankind to rejoice in eternally! ■

*“The people walking in darkness have seen
a great light; . . .*

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and
the government will be on his shoulders.*

*And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.”*

—Isaiah 9:2,6,7, New International Version

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 6—“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”—Proverbs 25:28 (Z. '01-295 Hymn 183)

DECEMBER 13—“Lay not this sin to their charge.”—Acts 7:60 (Z. '01-331 Hymn 186)

DECEMBER 20—“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”—II Timothy 2:15 (Z. '02-318 Hymn 99)

DECEMBER 27—“Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”—I John 5:21 (Z. '02 -284 Hymn 71)

Spiritual Blessings in Jesus Christ

Key Verses: *“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*
—Ephesians 1:5,6

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 1:3-14

The child’s biological mother and father, they have all the same rights as if they were the birth parents. In our relationship to God, he “adopts” us into his spiritual family when we accept the merit of his Son’s redemptive sacrifice, and present ourselves in consecration—complete dedication—to him. If our consecration is sincere, we are released from the sinful condition inherited from our “biological” father, Adam, and made “accepted [to God]

AS THE TITLE OF OUR LESSON suggests, spiritual blessings can only come to us from God through a relationship with his son, Jesus Christ. God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Eph. 1:3) Indeed, it was God’s desire “before the foundation of the world” that a small group of chosen ones would be made “holy and without blame” in his sight, and thus have spiritual blessings bestowed upon them.—vs. 4

The Key Verses liken our relationship with God to that of an adopted child. While the adoptive parents are not the

in the beloved [Jesus].” Paul continues, “We have redemption through his [Jesus’] blood, the forgiveness of sins.”—vs. 7

Verses 8 and 9 of our lesson identify some of the spiritual blessings we receive when adopted into God’s family: “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.” Here Paul mentions wisdom, prudence, and the mystery of God’s will. The word “wisdom” means to be clear—clear in our understanding and application of God’s will in our life. The word “prudence” refers to the related actions resulting from wisdom. Having both wisdom and prudence then allows us to know and carry out the “mystery,” or secret, of God’s will in our lives.

Paul continues to identify more of our spiritual blessings, saying, “In the dispensation of the fulness of times he [God] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” (vss. 10,11) These verses tell us that it is God’s plan to eventually bring back into oneness and harmony with him “all things.” The phrase “all things” really is a reference to all mankind, whom God intends, through the coming kingdom of his Son, to restore to the perfection lost in Eden so long ago. In carrying out this purpose, God is now selecting a “little flock” to share a heavenly “inheritance” with his Son. These, having gone through suffering and sacrifice in this life, will join with the glorified Jesus in administering the blessings of the kingdom to the remainder of mankind, that they all might be gathered together “in one.”

If we have “heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” and have been “sealed” by God’s Holy Spirit, then we have the blessing of the “earnest [pledge] of our inheritance.” (vss. 13,14) Many are the rich spiritual

One in Jesus Christ

Key Verse: *“In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”*
—*Ephesians 2:21*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 2:11-22

PRIOR TO JESUS’ FIRST Advent, God’s dealings for nearly two thousand years were primarily with the nation of Israel. They were in covenant relationship to him through the Mosaic Law arrangement, while other nations and peoples—Gentiles—were not in any direct relationship to God. Jesus’ death as a ransom for Adam and his race, however, not only redeemed the Israelites, but all mankind, since all were “in Adam.”—I Cor. 15:22

Jesus’ life, death, and subsequent resurrection, also opened up a new arrangement—“a new and living way.” (Heb. 10:20) By this, not only Jews, but also Gentiles, would now have the opportunity to come into a relationship with the Heavenly Father. Jews and Gentiles could be considered, as our title states, “One in Jesus Christ.” This was because Jesus died a “ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:6) This is the focus of our lesson as found in the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians.

The Ephesian brethren in time past, Paul points out, were “Gentiles in the flesh,” “aliens from . . . Israel,” “strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope,” and therefore “without God.” (Eph. 2:11,12) Paul continues, “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he

is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.”—vss. 13-16

Paul’s words tell us that prior to Jesus’ redemptive work, the Gentiles were considered “far off.” A “middle wall of partition” separated them from the Jews, and both groups considered themselves at “enmity” one with the other. The blood of Christ, however, did away with these divisions, reconciling both groups to God “by the cross.” Faith in Jesus’ blood was the requirement for both Jews and Gentiles to become reconciled to God, and thus be “one” with him and with one another. This same faith continues, even today, to be the means by which any who desire to gain a relationship with God must come. “Being justified [made righteous in God’s sight] by faith, we have peace [oneness] with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 5:1

Continuing our lesson, Paul told the Ephesian brethren that through Jesus both Jewish and Gentile believers had access to the Heavenly Father through the power and influence of his Holy Spirit. Gentiles who entered would no longer be considered “strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:18,19) The verity of Paul’s statement is emphasized by his assurance that this new Gospel Age arrangement was built upon a sure foundation—the words of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ himself as “the chief corner stone.” (vs. 20) Our Key Verse states that this symbolic spiritual temple, composed of both Jew and Gentile, would be “fitly framed together” as “an habitation of God through the Spirit.”—vss. 21,22 ■

Unity in the Body of Christ

Key Verses: *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism.”*
—*Ephesians 4:4,5*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 4:1-16

UNITY IN THE BODY OF

Christ has many features. As considered in our previous lesson, it first means that the relationship to God of each individual consecrated member of the body of Christ is based on the same foundation—faith in the redeeming blood of Jesus. In this we are unified, with Jesus as our common source of life in God’s sight.

There are other features to this unity. We must have unity in the sense that we all are to strive to follow the same pattern of character and life that Jesus set as an example for us to follow. We are to “walk worthy of the vocation” to which we have been called, developing the same character traits Jesus exemplified—“lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” (Eph. 4:1,2) Developing in this way helps us to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—vs. 3

Our Key Verses, and also verse 6, speak of several aspects of unity that relate to fundamental teachings of the Bible. There is only “one body” of Christ being developed by God. There is “one Spirit,” God’s Holy Spirit, by which we are begotten. There is “one hope” of our calling—the hope of glory, honor, and immortality.

There is “one Lord,” our Lord Jesus Christ; “one faith” based on his redemptive work; and “one baptism” into his sacrificial death. There is “One God and Father of all,” emphasizing the fact that God is a separate being from the “one Lord” Jesus and the “one” Holy Spirit.

Paul tells us in our lesson that to help implement the unity of the body of Christ, God provided “apostles,” “prophets,” “evangelists,” “pastors and teachers.” These have all proclaimed harmoniously the message of truth to God’s people throughout the Gospel Age, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (vss. 11,12) The ultimate “unity of the faith,” however, will not come until the body of Christ is complete, having faithfully unto death reached “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”—vs. 13

We must take great care to maintain our unity in Christ, and be not as “children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” (vss. 14,15) Notice that Paul mentions two important things concerning our growth into Christ. First, we cannot grow into him if we are tossed about with every “wind of doctrine” we may hear. Jesus proclaimed one unified message of truth, not two or three, and we must claim as our own that one message of the Gospel. Secondly, growing up into Christ means that we will speak this one message of the Gospel—the Truth—in love, and by doing so, “grow up” into his character likeness.

The last verse of our lesson provides a fitting conclusion to this consideration of unity in Christ: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—vs. 16 ■

Live in the Light

Key Verse: *“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.”*
—*Ephesians 5:1*

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 5:1,2,6-14

to describe three distinct features of the lives of those who are seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus: 1) Light is the illumination of God’s Word which has shined into the minds and hearts of God’s people; 2) The followers of God and his son Jesus are to be lights and shine forth to others; and 3) Those striving to follow Christ must walk in the light they have received by living their lives in accord with its principles.

“All things . . . are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” (Eph. 5:13,14) An important principle given here is the fact that light makes “all things” manifest, revealing them to those whose eyes are open to see. In the case of God, he has made manifest his truth—his plans and purposes—to those sincerely seeking to know them. He has done this through his Son, Jesus Christ. It was Jesus, the representative of God, that came to earth to “bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37), shedding forth the light of the Gospel message to his disciples. It is this message of truth,

THE WORD “LIGHT” AP-

pears five times in today’s lesson. This term, as used in the New Testament, signifies that which shines, illuminates, or makes manifest. In the verses of our lesson, Paul uses “light”

authored by God himself, and manifested by his Son, which has continued to shine into the hearts of Jesus' footstep followers throughout this present Gospel Age.

In another verse of our lesson, Paul uses the term "light" to describe the followers of Jesus themselves. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." (Eph. 5:8) Prior to the Lord's followers receiving the light—the illumination of truth spoken of previously—they were in darkness. Not only was this darkness in their heart and mind, but it also was "reflected" in their manner of life as displayed to others. Once the light of truth illuminated these, however, they became a reflection of light, rather than darkness. Jesus, in his sermon on the mount, admonished his disciples in this regard, saying, "Ye are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works."—Matt. 5:14,16

The third aspect of light which Paul speaks of in our lesson is found in these words: "Walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8) This describes the responsibility of all the Lord's consecrated people to daily live their life—"walk"—in a manner which befits the source of the light they have received. As we have already considered, that source is God, and his Son, Jesus. In verse 11, we read, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." This provides a clue as to how one should "walk in the light." If, as Paul says, the works of darkness are "unfruitful," that must mean that the works of light, or walking in the light, must be those which are "fruitful." The fruits which give evidence of walking in the light are the "fruits of the Spirit," which Paul lists elsewhere in his writings: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. (Gal. 5:22,23) Thus, by receiving the light, being a light, and walking in the light, the child of God can fulfill the words of our Key Verse, and be "followers of God, as dear children." ■

Christ's Love for the Church

Key Verse: **ONE OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS** used by the Apostle Paul to picture Christ and his church is that of a husband and wife. In this symbol, the husband is pictured by Christ, and the wife is illustrated by the church.

“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”
—**Ephesians 5:21**

Selected Scripture: This picture is similar to the illustration used by Apostle John in which he speaks of the church as a “bride.”—**Ephesians 5:21-33**
See Rev. 19:7; 21:2,9

There are many lessons contained in Paul's usage of a husband and wife as symbolic of Christ and the church. He says that the church, as the espoused bride of Christ, is to “submit . . . unto the Lord, . . . as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, . . . the church is subject unto Christ.” (Eph. 5:22-24) Although these words may not necessarily fit the imperfect human marriage arrangement of today, they do, in fact, properly illustrate the relationship that should exist between the church and her espoused husband, Christ. Christ has set forth a perfect example in every way to his future bride. Therefore, it is not only appropriate, but necessary, for his bride, the church, to submit to his leading and guidance.

The Key Verse of our lesson points out another important element of the church's “submitting” to Christ.

Submitting “one to another” reminds us that this bride class is made up of many members, and they each have a responsibility one to the other. The phrase “submitting yourselves” actually means to “arrange yourselves,” as the verse continues, “in the fear [or reverence] of God.” This means that the relationship between the fellow members of the bride of Christ should be such that, together, they mutually submit to their bridegroom, Jesus, with an attitude of reverence toward God.

Another important aspect of Paul’s illustration of a husband and wife is the deep, mutual love which exists between them. He says, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives . . . even as the Lord the church.” (vss. 25-29) Although Paul’s words stress the love of Christ for his church, we realize that it is necessary for the church to return that love to Christ. This is done, as previously noted, by submitting to him and his will, and by following as closely as possible in the footsteps of his perfect example.

One of the beautiful characteristics of a successful marriage is the unity of purpose that exists between a husband and wife. Paul puts it this way, saying, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” (vs. 31) They are “one flesh” in that they share the same love, the same goals, and the same purposes in life. Translating this thought to the marriage of Christ and the church, Paul says, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (vss. 30,32) This “mystery” is the wonderful privilege the church has been given to become “one” with Christ as his bride and members of his body. ■

The Power of the Scriptures

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”
—*I Thessalonians 2:13*

IN THIS FINAL INSTALL-ment of the lesson series entitled “Searching the Scriptures,” we will examine the all-encompassing power of the Scriptures as they profess God’s wonderful plan of the ages in simplicity and in truth. It is this “word of God,” as stated in our opening text, that we daily thank him for, and which we desire to have “effectually” work in all those who have implicit faith and trust in its testimony.

The written Word of God in Paul’s day consisted largely of the Old Testament scriptures. Then came the Gospels of the New Testament, the Book of Acts, the various letters written by the apostles, and the Book of Revelation. The apostles leaned heavily on the Old Testament scriptures in

their teachings, but since they were inspired servants of God, their teachings could also be considered the Word of God. The only exceptions were in those rare instances where they explained that they were not speaking by divine inspiration, as in the case of Paul and his advice on the subject of marriage.

Jesus said to his Heavenly Father, concerning his immediate disciples, “I have given them thy word,” and he prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:14,17) Thereafter, these statements by the Master applied to all his faithful followers—those who would believe on him through his own words and the words of the apostles. All these true followers of the Master have come under the sanctifying power of the Truth, or, to again use Paul’s language, it has worked “effectually” in all who have believed.

THE PSALMIST’S TESTIMONY

The psalmist wrote, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” “I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.” “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”—Ps. 119:11,14-16,105

Notice that in these various quotations the Word, or testimony, of God is shown to be active in the hearts and lives of those who sincerely believe it and love it. It is a cleansing and a strengthening influence. It is a light to guide us in our walk in the narrow way. As our theme text indicates, it works

in the hearts of all true believers.

David also wrote, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear [reverence] of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”—Ps. 19:7-11

“Who can understand his errors?” David asks. The obvious answer is, no one, except as he is guided by the Word of God, enlightened to know his will, and strengthened to do it. “Cleanse thou me from secret faults,” he continues. This cleansing is accomplished by the power of the Word of God. We can only know of our secret faults as they are revealed to us by the Word.—vs. 12

Having our secret faults revealed will help keep us from “presumptuous sins,” and we will pray, “Let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (vss. 13,14) If our hearts are pure and sincere before God, the truth of his Word as found in the Scriptures will indeed be a power in our lives to cleanse us and to set us apart to the doing of his

holy will.

NOT THE TRADITIONS OF MEN

The religious ruling class in Israel was not wholly satisfied with the truth of God's Word, so as time went on many traditions of men were added. At first, these traditions were passed on from one to another by word of mouth, but later put into written form and called the Talmud. Likewise, down through the ages, there has always been a tendency for many of the Lord's people to substitute the teachings of men for the simplicity of the word of God—the Scriptures.

Blessed are those true servants of God who rejoice in the privilege of helping their brethren understand the Word of God more clearly as they progress in the pathway of the just, which is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. (Prov. 4:18) This is a blessed service, but may we never attempt to set forth our own teachings unsupported by the Word of God. This is what has happened many times, and has largely accounted for the promulgation of many false doctrines and other teachings not supported by the Scriptures.

Paul admonished Timothy, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 3:14,15) Timothy had been greatly favored by God, since from childhood he had known the Scriptures, and Paul admonishes him to con-

tinue in the things he had learned from God's Word. Paul had pointed out to Timothy from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah of promise, and the Redeemer and Savior of the world, and he wanted his "son" to continue in this knowledge because he had proven it to be supported by the Word of God.

While in prison in Rome, and expecting to be executed soon, Paul continued his letter to Timothy, saying, "All Scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for Teaching, for Conviction, for Correction, for that Discipline which is in Righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for Every good Work." (II Tim. 3:16,17, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) The emphasis here is on the divinely inspired Scriptures. It is these which are to be understood and appreciated by those who are seeking to know and to do God's will. To such, the enduring power of the Scriptures is evident by the many "profitable" benefits Paul says result from our consideration of them.

PROFITABLE FOR "TEACHING"

The inspired Scriptures are profitable for "Teaching." We are not to teach the traditions of men which are unsupported by the Word of God. We are not to teach our own opinions unless they are thoughts which have become ours because we found them supported by the Word of God. Paul was very definite on this point—so definite that in others of his epistles he wrote that even if "an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel" than the "gospel of Christ," which is "the power of God unto salvation," it was not to be believed, and the

one who did this was not to be considered a servant of the Lord.—Gal. 1:8; Rom. 1:16

Paul again wrote to Timothy instructing him to “Charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith.” (I Tim. 1:3,4) It is not clear just what Paul refers to as “endless genealogies,” but it was a subject of discussion which undoubtedly had little bearing on the Gospel of Christ. It raised questions more than answering them, and was unprofitable for the furthering of true Christian fellowship, which would build them up in the most holy faith.

Indeed, how easy it is to indulge in speculations concerning matters which do not concern our relationship to God, or to each other as brethren in Christ. The fundamental teachings of God’s plan, however, are not based on speculation, or mere philosophy, but upon the teachings of the Scriptures. Even the manner of Christ’s Second Presence, and the signs which establish the fact of his return, are clearly and definitely set forth in the inspired Word of God.

It is very important to note the main topics of the Truth which were set forth by Jesus and the apostles. They are our guides in the narrow way, as we follow in the footsteps of Jesus. They are the inspired interpreters of the Old Testament scriptures. Thus they are our guides with respect to God’s plan as set forth in the entire Bible. In our fellowship and in our ministry, we can do no better than to follow these inspired guides. Should there be a difference of opinion, or we are uncertain in

our own minds as to what the proper understanding might be on any given subject, let us consult Jesus and the apostles. If they have not spoken on the matter at all, we might well ask ourselves how important it is to our spiritual growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

In presenting this viewpoint, it is with the realization that in reality the whole plan of God was presented in the Old Testament, but remained hidden until the meaning was revealed by Jesus and the apostles. The purpose of the creation of Adam and his fall into sin and death are given their proper setting in the New Testament, where Paul showed us how “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”—I Cor. 15:22

God’s oath-bound promise to Abraham is also explained in the New Testament, where we are informed that Christ is the seed of Abraham, which will bless all the families of the earth, and that as many as have been baptized into Christ are included in that seed, and therefore are “heirs according to the promise.” (Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) Likewise, the purpose of the Law Covenant, and the typical meaning of the Tabernacle and its services, are set forth in the New Testament.

The prophet Micah, in foretelling the birth of Jesus, wrote of him, “Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Mic. 5:2) No one could understand the real meaning of this prophecy until the New Testament revealed the truth concerning the prehuman existence of Jesus as the “Logos,” the Word of God.

The death of Jesus as man’s Redeemer was foretold in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and

elsewhere in the Old Testament, but these wonderful prophecies and promises were not understood until the ransom feature of God's plan was brought to light by Jesus and the apostles. The prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the "day of the Lord"—the day of his wrath—were shrouded in mystery until light was thrown upon them by Jesus and the apostles. Now we can understand that these prophecies were descriptive of events in the world at this end of the age, during the period of Christ's Second Presence.

Think of all the wonderful promises of the restoration of health and life on earth, and the resurrection of the dead which are recorded in the Old Testament. Peter gave the key to the meaning of these promises by his reference to "the times of restitution of all things," and said that this future time of blessing, following the current period of trouble, had been foretold by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began.—Acts 3:20,21

In the last verse of the prophecy of Obadiah, he speaks of "saviours" (plural) who will come up on Mount Zion, when "the kingdom shall be the LORD'S." This is one of the veiled references in the Old Testament to the fact that the Messiah would have associates in the work of the kingdom. Paul explained this, saying, "The body [or Christ] is not one member, but many." (I Cor. 12:14) In the New Testament, this glorious truth opens to our minds that grand and glorious heavenly calling of the footstep followers of Christ. It is referred to as the "mystery," hidden from ages and generations, but now "made manifest to his saints."—Col. 1:26,27

We could continue to go from point to point and note the manner in which the New Testament interprets the Old Testament, and actually makes it for us the living Word of God. The understanding of God's plan of salvation, the Gospel of Christ, which has come to us through Jesus and the apostles, enables us to turn back to the Old Testament and read much of it almost as though we had always understood it. Think how meaningless most of it would be, however, without a knowledge of God's plan.

True, there are many precious devotional truths set forth in the Old Testament which have been an inspiration and blessing to the people of God in all ages. The Book of Psalms contains many of these precious gems of comforting truths, assuring us of God's help in times of need—of his guidance, of his tender care, and of his willingness to forgive. Jesus and the apostles drew heavily upon these precious promises, and so should we. How wonderful it is to realize that God will "give strength unto his people," that he will "bless his people with peace."—Ps. 29:11

FOR "CONVICTION" AND "CORRECTION"

The *Diaglott* translation says that the inspired Scriptures are also profitable for "Conviction" and "Correction." Our convictions are those things of which we have been assured, or convinced. Our conviction concerning the things of God is that his plan of salvation is the Truth, and therefore the sure foundation of our faith. Such an important conviction cannot stand secure upon the teachings of men, except as those teachings are supported by

the inspired Word of God. Paul was pleased that the Thessalonian brethren understood the matter this way, as stated in our theme text, and had accepted the Gospel as being from God, not from men.

“Correction” is another profitable result of considering the Scriptures. This has to do, for one thing, with developing the character of Christ. By nature, we are all sinners, and imperfect, and from time to time need to be corrected in our conduct. We cannot depend upon our conscience for this correction, except as our conscience is enlightened by the inspired Scriptures. Likewise, we cannot depend upon the advice of our friends—not even the brethren—unless the advice is supported by the Word of God. Not only must our conscience be enlightened by the Bible, but it should be tender, and receptive to every instruction of the Scriptures, if our lives are to be regulated by God through his Word. The Bible speaks of those who “tremble at his word.” (Isa. 66:5) Do we, in reverence and obedience, humbly tremble at the instructions contained in the holy Scriptures?

Not only do the Scriptures correct us in matters of conduct, but also in doctrine. It is easy to get temporarily turned aside from the path of pure truth. We may develop viewpoints of our own, and because we suppose that we have discovered something new and important we hesitate to give it up or put it aside. However, if we are quick to hear the Word of God when its truths are pointed out to us, and are humble before him, we will gladly turn to the truth contained in the Scriptures and continue to rejoice in it.

This does not mean that we should not make progress in our understanding of the Truth. Indeed, we are admonished to grow in grace and in knowledge. As the hymn suggests, the Bible is like a mine, deeper than mortal can ever go; and even though we search for many years, we continue to find additional rich gems of truth. This should be the experience of every dedicated follower of the Master. If we develop the idea that we now know everything and understand every detail of the Truth, and there is nothing more to be learned, this also means we are in need of "Correction."

"DISCIPLINE"

The *Diaglott* translation says that the inspired Scriptures are profitable for "that Discipline which is in Righteousness." The thought of discipline is a little stronger than that of "correction," although it does not necessarily imply punishment. The Word of God does not itself discipline us, for this comes through his overruling providences in our lives. The part God's Word plays in these experiences is to explain their meaning to us.

Hebrews 12:5-8 reads, "Have you forgotten the exhortation which reasons with you as with Sons? 'My Son, slight not the Discipline of the Lord, neither be discouraged when reproved by him; for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines, and he scourges Every Son whom he receives.' If you endure Discipline, God deals with you as with Sons; for is there any Son whom a Father does not discipline? But if you are without Discipline, of which all have become Partakers, then truly you are Spurious, and not Sons."—*WED*

Paul speaks of “that Discipline which is in Righteousness.” Such discipline is in keeping with the righteous character of God, and designed to develop and establish the principles of divine righteousness in the lives of his people. We are all more or less subjected to these disciplines of the Lord. May we, through the Scriptures, recognize their purpose and conform our lives to that purpose.

“COMPLETE”

The *Diaglott* again gives us a clear thought when it says that the inspired Scriptures are given “so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for Every good Work.” So far as inspired teachings for the man of God are concerned, the Bible is indeed complete. Nothing needs to be added to it. It contains the entire glorious design of the Creator for his earthly creation, including the two salvations—the earthly for the world, and the heavenly for the followers of Jesus. We do not need to look elsewhere for inspired guidance.

God, in his love and overruling providence on our behalf, has provided pastors, teachers, and evangelists for the building up of his people in this most holy faith. Their ministry, too, is limited to the teachings of the inspired Scriptures. It is, in fact, the privilege of every consecrated child of God to encourage one another by gathering together to study his precious Word of Truth.

Think of the blessings which have come to us through those special servants whom God has raised up during this Gospel Age. Their ministries have been a blessing to us because they honored the Scriptures as the only source of divine inspira-

tion for the people of God. They urged all to prove everything they said and wrote by the inspired Word. May we show our appreciation of these faithful servants of the Lord by ourselves honoring the Bible as they did.

Jesus was and is God's greatest gift to his people. We believe it would be proper to say that the inspired Scriptures by which we are sanctified are also a tremendous gift that has come to us from God. Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, which is also a gift of God, may we continue to show our appreciation for his Word by our faithfulness to it. May we also continue searching the Scriptures, and more fully realize the power contained in them—the "power of God unto salvation."—Rom. 1:16 ■

*Blessed Bible, precious Word!
Boon most sacred from the Lord;
Glory to his name be given,
For this choicest gift from heaven.*

*'Tis a ray of purest light,
Beaming through the depths of night;
Brighter than ten thousand gems
Of the costliest diadems.*

*'Tis a fountain pouring forth
Streams of life to gladden earth
Whence eternal blessings flow,
Antidote for human woe.*

*"Tis a mine, aye, deeper, too,
Than can mortal ever go;
Search we may for many years,
Still some new, rich gem appears.*

—*Hymns of Dawn*

“What Seek Ye?”

“Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?”

John 1:38

THE WORDS OF OUR TEXT

were spoken by Jesus shortly after he was baptized by John at the river Jordan, and as he began the selection of his twelve disciples. John had declared, when he saw Jesus coming toward him to be baptized, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) The day after Jesus was baptized, John stood with two of his disciples, and upon seeing Jesus he repeated the words, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (vs. 36) The two disciples, after hearing John’s words, made the decision to follow Jesus. He then spoke to these two the words of our theme text. The account continues, “They said unto him, Rabbi (. . . Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see.” (vss. 38,39) By these words to his first disciples, Jesus illustrated the sense in which his footstep followers would be drawn of the Father to him. He would later reiterate this through the words: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”—chap. 6:37

Before looking further at this question asked by Jesus—"What seek ye?"—we should first realize that those of the household of faith even now should be able to answer as these disciples did. We should be able to say, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45) Those who believe on him should additionally understand and confess that he is "the Son of God," his true Father from heaven.—vs. 49

THE PROMISED MESSIAH

This is the season of the year when those in the Christian world celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. So it is proper to consider the importance of, and focus our minds on, the fulfillment of the words that the angel of God spoke to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. The angel came to them as they were watching over their flocks, and announced to them the birth of the promised Messiah, saying, "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

As we read the scriptural account concerning the birth of Jesus, we realize that this was not the beginning of God's interest in mankind. We have recorded throughout the Old Testament writings the Heavenly Father's dealings with his chosen people, the nation of Israel. These were types and shadows of greater blessings to come, beginning with the birth of the one who was to be Israel's Messiah. Even before this, however, the Old Testament provided God's wonderful promise made to

Abraham, “In thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3, 28:14) The announcement by the angel of the birth of Jesus, who came to fulfill the promises made to the faithful ones of old, was one of the first outward manifestations to the entire world of mankind of God’s great love and sympathy for his fallen human creation. The salvation to be provided by Jesus would be extended to all, eventually being dependent upon their passing the test of heart obedience.

Mankind, however, has needed first to learn the lessons of divine justice and power as they have been exercised through the permission of evil. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “Sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” (Rom. 7:13) Man will also come to know another aspect of the character of God, centered in love. Of divine love, we read, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”—I John 4:9,10

GOD’S WONDERFUL GIFT

This is also the season of the year in which many people throughout the world bestow gifts on those they hold dear. As we think upon this, our thoughts should be centered on the greatest gift of all, our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 3:16,17, 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. For God sent not

his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”

We have been given knowledge and insight into the Heavenly Father’s plan concerning the meaning of this great gift through his Holy Word. To be able to understand these things, which have been revealed to us by the power and influence of the Holy Spirit, is a wonderful privilege. For example, God has provided us with the understanding, through his character of love, that the world of mankind is not being punished by God, and that the world in general is not on trial for life at this time. We further know the promise made by God, as recorded in the words, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) We understand the Scriptures to teach that there will one day be a restored, perfect earth; that there will not be any more sickness, sorrow, hatred, or fear. These things and all other influences of sin will be done away with. “The former things [related to sin] are passed away.” (Rev. 21:4) This will be the wonderful end result of God’s great gift, and is part of the answer to the question, “What seek ye?”

TAUGHT OF GOD

The world of mankind, under the kingdom arrangement described above, will be given the opportunity to be taught of God, to progress up a “highway . . . of holiness,” and to live on earth forever in peace. “An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: . . . And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and

sighing shall flee away.” (Isa. 35:8,10) These arrangements will bring about a fulfillment of the words, “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 kingdom arrangement will also bring fulfillment of these prophetic words, “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

The death of Jesus and his subsequent resurrection is the basis upon which the millennial kingdom will be established. His death constitutes the ransom price provided to redeem Adam and his posterity, the whole world of mankind. Based upon this ransom provision, Jesus’ resurrection to divine glory, honor, and power will result in a thousand-year kingdom reign for the uplift and restitution, or restoration to perfection, of Adam and his race. This is the purpose for which Jesus was born and died twenty centuries ago. (I John 2:2; Acts 3:20,21) The accomplishing of this purpose will bring to pass the promise, “All shall know me [the Father], from the least to the greatest.” (Heb. 8:11; Jer. 31:34) Thus, Christ’s coming kingdom is an important feature of what the sincere child of God is seeking.

BLINDNESS CONTINUES

Not all have learned the relationship between the birth of Jesus, his earthly life, his crucifixion, and the future glorious outworking of God's love for the human race. Many resist the truth and believe the creeds and false doctrines of men. Many deny the true Son of the living God, and some even reject God himself. Those who reject the truths concerning God and his only begotten Son also fail to understand and consider many other truths found in the Bible.

In reality it is the great adversary, Satan, who has blinded the hearts and minds of many in the world, causing them to deny the hope, of which the Scriptures clearly teach, for a future opportunity of life for the entire world of mankind. Paul speaks of those in blindness as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." (Eph. 4:18) The lifting of this blindness is also part of what we seek.

KNOW THE TRUTH

We recall the words of Jesus, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) Knowing the truth makes us free from lies, superstitions, doubts, and fears. God has hidden the truth concerning his plan of the ages, and concerning his character, from most of the wise and powerful of this present world. Jesus spoke of this saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." (Matt. 11:25) These "babes"—teachable

children of God—should be thankful each day for the understanding they have been given. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” (chap. 13:16) God has revealed these things to those who have a heart attitude of humility. An important evidence of this humility is a sincere sorrow for sin. “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”—Ps. 34:18

Those who “know the truth” have been given God’s Holy Spirit of understanding in order that they may know and do his will, and be developed as his “peculiar people.” Peter says concerning this, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) It is the Heavenly Father who does this calling, and, through the example of his Son, we are given assistance to walk faithfully to the end of this narrow way. We are assured that God, through Christ, will finish the good work that has been started in us. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.”—Heb. 12:2

What Jesus did at his First Advent was a preliminary work in the carrying out of God’s plan, but one that was all-important. Only by the cancellation of the death penalty upon Adam could he and his sinful posterity be recovered. It was a perfect man, Adam, who sinned, and came under the just penalty of death. Therefore, it was necessary that the redeemer also be a perfect man, and one willing to die, “the just for the unjust.”—I Pet. 3:18

Some may ask as to the reason for such a long delay between the providing of the ransom price and the restoration of the purchased possession. In this intervening period of time, God has called out a people for his name, his “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” (Heb. 12:23) God has been calling this “little flock” out of this world to be footstep followers of Jesus throughout the present Gospel Age. Jesus spoke to these, saying, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

These called ones will, if faithful, have a share in the first resurrection, as Christ’s bride, and share in his inheritance. (Eph. 1:11-14) They will attain glory, honor, and immortality. (Rom. 2:7) This faithful company has God’s promise that “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” (II Tim. 2:12) These, along with their head, the glorified Jesus, will be the righteous rulers of the coming kingdom, during which the remainder of mankind will be restored to the perfection lost by our first parents. This great inheritance is another glorious portion of that which we seek.

THANKFUL TO GOD

As we approach the end of the year, it is a proper time for reflection, for remembering God’s leadings and dealings with us. We should be thankful for his providential care over all of our affairs of life, both great and small. Such thankfulness to God must be part of our answer to the question, “What seek ye?” We should remember that our blessings come from his rich storehouse, and be thankful that he has blessed and guided us through

another year. We do not know what the Lord's providence may permit in the year ahead, but we do know that "Faith can firmly trust Him, Come what may."

Each step in our "narrow way" walk should reflect a renewed effort to put God first in our lives, as we remember Paul's words in Philippians 1:21: "For to me to live is [to live for] Christ." Living for Christ means keeping the "new commandment" he gave to his disciples, saying, "Love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34; 15:12) Apostle John commented on this new commandment, saying to his fellow brethren, and to us, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16) Our Heavenly Father desires that we meditate seriously upon this matter of brotherly love, because it is one of the chief tests of our character likeness to his Son. Our love for the brethren should be based on these sentiments: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."—Ps. 19:14

To truly show our thankfulness to God, we should desire to speak words of comfort to the world, telling them of Christ's kingdom of peace which will surely be established and will show the many wonders of God's love and blessings to all people. We are commissioned by God to plant seeds of hope and encouragement in those who most need them—first in the household of faith, but also in those of the world who mourn, in desperate need of hope. Sharing the beautiful prophecies and promises of the Scriptures may provide a message of comfort to those around us. As followers of Christ,

we do not all have the same opportunities for witnessing, but we can all provide an example to others, reflecting the character of our Lord. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 5:16

SEEKING GOD THROUGH HIS SON

We must consider soberly this question, “What seek ye?” Are we seeking things of earthly advantage, earthly honor, or social and political influence and preferment? The world seeks these, along with wealth, fame, ease, and pleasure. The worldly mind, in many cases, even equates these with being right in the sight of God, and knowing him. If we are truly seeking to know God, we realize that he never promised his Son, nor did he promise the apostles or us, worldly wealth and glory among men. To the consecrated child of God, such honors are but the pastimes of an hour that will soon fade away. Rather, we should seek the things that moth, rust, and corruption cannot destroy—heavenly treasures which no man can give to us, or take away.—Matt. 6:19,20

Seeking after God means to also seek after righteousness. This is a requirement in order for us to have fellowship with him and his Son. This means the forsaking of sin so far as our heart is concerned, and the abstaining from evil in thought, word, and action—even from those things which have the appearance of evil. We are weak according to the flesh, however, and need the covering “robe” of Christ’s righteousness. This robe covers our fleshly imperfections, and makes it possible for us, through Jesus, to have a standing before God.

As footstep followers of Jesus, we must come to understand that there is great glory, honor, and dignity associated with seeking after, and receiving, the things of God. Jesus told us that we should seek chiefly “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” (Matt. 6:33) To do so means we must take much care in our every thought, word, and deed, for the kingdom of God cannot be reached by an unrighteous path. All iniquity, selfishness, and indulgence in sin are paths that lead in directions that are opposite from God.

Seeking after the Lord should also take this form, as expressed by the psalmist, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?” (Ps. 116:12) Having consecrated ourselves to “render” our all to God, and by his acceptance of that consecration, we dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. (Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 91:1) We are assured of his protection and care over all of the consecrated footstep followers of Jesus, those who are daily striving to live as close as possible to the standard of the Master that is set before us.

The Scriptures tell us that “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Matt 10:30) This shows the extent of the Heavenly Father’s watchful eye over every affair of our lives. The providential care of God should be more and more evident to us as we go onward in our life’s journey, and as we resist the inclinations of our fallen flesh, its weaknesses and resistance to sacrifice. Surely God’s providence in all these things is something we should seek continuously.

OUR TRIALS

Jesus told us, both by word and by his own example, that to live Godly at this present time will bring us trials and persecution, as it did him. Part of what we “seek” is to be properly exercised by these experiences. Our Lord’s encouragement to us in this regard is: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.”—Matt. 5:11,12

We are assured that in every experience, whether it be joyous or sorrowful, whether it is a heavy burden or light, the hand of our Heavenly Father will be there. The Scriptures state that he will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear. (I Cor. 10:13) Thus, it is possible for us to say, even as David expressed in Psalm 91:2,3, “I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.”

We are to pray to the Father to keep us from the weaknesses of the fallen nature, and to help us resist the things that would harm our spiritual growth. We know that the tools of the great Adversary are varied and many. Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion, and may be somewhat easy to spot. Other times, however, he is more subtle, wily, and deceptive. He even uses our fallen flesh, if we allow, to draw us from God. These subtle attacks are appropriately called “little foxes, that spoil the vines.” (Song of Sol. 2:15) These “little foxes” could be things such as envy, strife, hatred, pride, doubt,

and discouragement. These foxes must be dispelled with love, truth, righteousness, and faith. To those who do so, the “wicked one toucheth him not.”—I John 5:18

SEEK GODLINESS

To seek godliness, or “God-like-ness,” is to develop “love-like-ness,” for God is love. Godly love is a reflection of “the wisdom that is from above,” that is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.” (James 3:17) To attain this wisdom, and to have the pure law of love fulfilled in us, we must not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts [desires], we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for . . . the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”—Tit. 2:11-13

The development of godliness requires that we keep ourselves separate from the world. Jesus prayed concerning his followers with these words, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” (John 17:16) Our Heavenly Father has separated us from the world by his divine call and by the begetting of his Holy Spirit. Therefore, our loyalty must only be to him, to seek his character likeness with sincerity and honesty. Seeking godliness means the bringing forth of the fruits of the Spirit. These are the qualities of character which Paul speaks of, when he says, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance.”—Gal. 5:22,23

In conclusion, we ask once again, "What seek ye?" To this we answer, We seek the Heavenly Father and his dear Son, Christ Jesus. We seek the Truth. We seek those of our brethren who have likewise sought and found these things. We seek to have fellowship with the Lord and become his disciples. Finally, we seek to be a joint-heir with Christ in his heavenly kingdom, for the purpose of blessing all the families of the earth. All of these things we diligently seek! ■

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 Wilma Shannon, St. Augustine, FL—October 20. Age, 83

Sister Harriet Dychton, Huntington, VT—October 21. Age, 83

Brother Wade Austin, Fairview, OR—November 2. Age, 63

Sister Maruja Lupsor, Buenos Aires, Argentina—November 3. Age, 79

Sister Jean Filip, Chicago, IL—November 8.

Brother Ray Zaboski, Ford City, PA—November 8. Age, 80

Sister Evelyn Zaboski, Ford City, PA—November 9. Age, 75

The Good Samaritan

“Behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

—*Luke 10:25*

MANY OF THE RICH TREASURES of truth revealed by Jesus were set forth by him in response to questions asked by the religious leaders of his day. An example of this is the parable of the good Samaritan. This para-

ble was prompted by the question contained in our opening scripture, asked by “a certain lawyer” of the Jews, probably a Levite. Here the temptation, spoken of in our text, was to induce Jesus to say something that could be misconstrued as being against the Law given to Israel by Moses.

Jesus, however, turned the question back to the lawyer, asking him what the Law said. (Luke 10:26) The lawyer was well acquainted with the Law, and he quoted Moses’ own summation of it: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” (vs. 27; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) Jesus replied to the

lawyer, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”—Luke 10:28; Lev. 18:5

Jesus knew that God had promised to anyone who could keep this commandment of the Law inviolate, “thou shalt live.” By answering the lawyer’s question in this way, the religious rulers could not accuse him of setting aside the teachings of Moses. Jesus knew, of course, that the lawyer could not actually gain eternal life by his efforts to keep the Law. This was not the fault of the Law, but was due to the imperfection of the people, resulting from original Adamic sin. As Paul explained, the Law was designed to give life, but failed only because of the inability of fallen humans to measure up to its requirements.—Rom. 7:10-14

SIMILAR QUESTION FROM A YOUNG RULER

Jesus, who was able to read the hearts of his opponents, knew that the lawyer was not sincerely inquiring about the way leading to life. Had he been, doubtless the Master would have directed his mind beyond the Law as a source of life. He did do this in the case of the rich young ruler, who asked him essentially the same question as did the lawyer. (Matt. 19:16-26; Luke 18:18-30) In answer to the young man’s question, Jesus said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Then the young man asked, “Which?” Jesus quoted some of the Ten Commandments, and also the one, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The young man claimed that he had been keeping these commandments. Evidently, he had been sincerely trying. Mark’s account informs us that Jesus loved this young man, and replying to him said, “One

thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.”—Mark 10:21

Because this young man was earnestly seeking the way of life, Jesus introduced him to the only way that would be open during the Gospel Age. It was to be a costly, narrow, and difficult way. It was a way to life that, first of all, would lead into death, as symbolized by the cross. The young man, having great possessions, did not find it in his heart to make the great sacrifice outlined by the Master, so with some regret “he went away sorrowful.” (Matt. 19:22) However, Jesus did present the opportunity to him, and even emphasized the heavenly nature of the life the young man would receive if he accepted the Master’s invitation and proved faithful unto death. “Thou shalt have treasure in heaven,” Jesus said.—vs. 21

Going back now to the account of the lawyer and his question as to how he might inherit eternal life, he could find no fault with the reply Jesus gave. After all, Jesus had referred him back to the Law, and he was of the group which professed great loyalty to the Law. Wishing, however, to perhaps justify himself in the sight of his friends, he asked Jesus for a clarification of the commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” He asked, “Who is my neighbour?”—Luke 10:29

THE PARABLE GIVEN

It was in response to this question that Jesus related the parable of the good Samaritan. In this parable, a “certain man” traveling from Jerusalem

to Jericho “fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” (Luke 10:30) Then a “certain priest,” traveling the same route, noticed the robbed and wounded man. Instead of stopping to assist the unfortunate one, however, the priest “passed by on the other side.” “Likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.”—vss. 31,32

Here were two people who, according to their standing as religious servants, should have shown compassion for the robbed and beaten man, regardless of who he may have been, but they did not. They “passed by on the other side,” as though to ease their conscience by not getting too close a look at the suffering man, and that he might suppose they had not seen him or heard his cries for help.

The parable continues by saying there was “a certain Samaritan” who, “as he journeyed,” also came across the man who had been robbed and nearly killed. The Israelites despised the Samaritans, who, so far as they were concerned, were not God’s people at all. This made the lesson of the parable all the more pointed to Israel’s religious leaders, to whom it was first addressed, for this despised Samaritan did show compassion for the man lying almost dead by the roadside. He bound up the man’s wounds, “pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” He even arranged for the innkeeper to continue caring for the man, promising to pay any balance of the bill when he returned that way.—vss. 33-35

A TRUE NEIGHBOR

After relating the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer which one of these three men was “neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves.” There was only one answer the lawyer could give, which was that the man who showed mercy was the real neighbor. Then Jesus said to the lawyer, “Go, and do thou likewise.” In other words, Jesus told the lawyer that if he manifested the same spirit of compassion and helpfulness toward those in need, as the Samaritan did, he would be fulfilling the commandment to love his neighbor as himself.—vss. 36,37

When the lawyer quoted the Law correctly, Jesus said to him, “This do, and thou shalt live.” Jesus did not imply by his response that the lawyer could gain eternal life apart from the provisions of the ransom. It was simply that Jesus did not consider it the due time to explain that feature of God’s plan to this man, who he knew was merely seeking to find something against him.

FAITH AND WORKS REQUIRED

No one can gain life, either in this age or in the age to come, apart from faith in the shed blood of the Redeemer. Additionally, however, as James wrote, “Faith without works is dead.” (James 2:17,20,26) This means that one’s life—their words and actions—must be brought into conformity with faith in the ransom to fully prove obedience to divine law. As we have seen, in the present age it is God’s will that believers lay down their lives in sacrifice, following in the footsteps of Jesus. It is thus that they demonstrate faith—by their conduct associated with a life of sacrifice.

The great principles of the Law given by Moses are binding upon these, but in addition Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you." (John 13:34; 15:12,17) Jesus' love for his disciples, and indeed for the whole world, led him to lay down his life in sacrifice on their behalf, and his faithful followers are "planted together in the likeness of his death." (Rom. 6:5) It is thus that they demonstrate their wholehearted love for the Heavenly Father, and for the Lord Jesus.

As we have noted, when Jesus invited the rich young ruler to give up all that he had in sacrifice, he said he would receive "treasure in heaven." The "calling" of the present age is a heavenly one. (Heb. 3:1) Those who meet the conditions of this call by being faithful unto death will attain "glory and honour and immortality." (Rom. 2:7) They will be made like Jesus and share with him the place which he went away to prepare following his First Advent.—John 14:1-3; I John 3:1-3

During the next age—the period in which will be the "restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21)—those who attain eternal life will also need to accept the provision of life made for them through the redemptive work of Christ. They, too, will have to conform to the laws of God as they will be expressed through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom. As we see then, God's law, in principle, never changes. During the coming kingdom it will be essential for all who attain life eternal to love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and also to love their neighbors as themselves, even as set forth by Moses.

ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION

A further illustration of these principles is brought to our attention in the parable of the sheep and the goats. (Matt. 25:31-46) The “sheep” in this parable represent those who will gain eternal life during the kingdom period, or judgment “day.” (Acts 17:31) To these, Jesus (represented by the “King” of the parable) said, “I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”—Matt. 25:35,36

Note the similarity of these good deeds mentioned by Jesus to those performed by the good Samaritan. It is clear that these “sheep” of the parable had imbibed the true spirit of divine law. They had seen opportunities for helping those in need, and they grasped those opportunities. They had done this so wholeheartedly, and it was so much a part of their nature to act in this manner, that they were not even aware that they had done anything different or extraordinary.

In the parable, the “sheep,” the “righteous,” replied to the King, “When saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” The King’s reply was, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”—vss. 37-40

The “least” of the King’s [Jesus’] brethren are those of the kingdom period who will believe, obey,

and attain to eternal life as humans. The parable thus clearly indicates that the righteous of that time will be those who become filled with the spirit of the divine law and delight in extending a helping hand to those of their fellow-man, their “brethren,” in need. Thus they will be in heart harmony with the work of the Lord being accomplished at that time, which will be the writing of the divine law in the hearts of the people.—Jer. 31:31-34

ALL WILL BECOME NEIGHBORS

All of this is implied in Jesus’ statement to the lawyer to the effect that if he kept God’s Law as it had been summed up by the great lawgiver, Moses, he would have eternal life. Jesus did not then explain that a truly favorable opportunity to do this would not be offered until the kingdom, the period of the “restitution of all things.” The lawyer was not then ready to receive further truths than what Jesus imparted to him. We can now, however, rejoice to realize that all will be given an opportunity, and all the needed assistance, when the due time comes, to practice the divine law of love. All who will live forever on the earth will become true neighbors to one another—good Samaritans—in a worldwide paradise. ■



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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

E. Blicharz

St. Augustine, FL December 2

L. Griehs

Chicago, IL December 29,30

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.

IBADAN CONVENTION, December 1—Place of Fellowship, Ibadan Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. E-mail: egbucaje@gmail.com

CHICAGO NEW YEAR CONVENTION, December 29,30—Addison Park District, 120 E. Oak Street, Addison, IL 60101. Contact L. Manzuk. Phone: (630) 660-1874

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 19-21—La Quinta Inn Phoenix North, 2510 W. Greenway Road, Phoenix, AZ 85023. Phone: (602) 993-0800. Contact J. Zardja, PO Box 8123, Surprise, AZ 85374. Phone: (602) 363-2612

AUSTRALIA CONVENTION, January 25-28—Wilkin Baptist Camp, 57 Noble Street, Anglesea, Vic. 3230, Australia. Contact G. Smith. E-mail: graemedawn@gmail.com

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 27—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact J. Wojcik, 12807 Elkwood Street, North Hollywood, CA 91605. Phone: (818) 872-6253

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 15-17—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact J. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4655

NIGERIAN SEMINAR, February 22-24—Obudi Agwa Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact: C. Egbu, #2 Darlington Street, Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. E-mail: egbucaje@gmail.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 2-4—Howard Johnson Hotel, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. Hotel reservations, phone: (407) 862-4455. Specity “Florida Bible Students” for special rate. Deadline for special rate is February 18. Other information, contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

GREATER NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 10—Society Road, East Lyme, CT. Contact V. Grillo. Phone: (860) 823-7099 or E-mail: millennialview@sbcglobal.net

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 16,17—Quality Inn-Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Hotel reservations, phone (248) 689-7500. Specify “Detroit Bible Students” for special rate. Other information, contact P. Nemes. Phone: (248) 649-6588

BOISE CONVENTION, April 26-28—Owyhee Plaza Hotel, 1109 Main Street, Boise, ID. Contact D. Allers, 7558 W. Hathaway Lane, Boise, ID 83714, by April 7. Phone: (208) 375-6873

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

*Blest are the sons of peace,
Whose hearts and hopes are one,
Whose kind designs to serve and please
Through all their actions run.*

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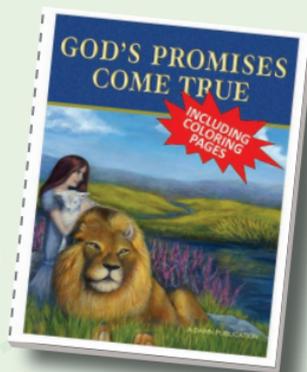
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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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 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

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