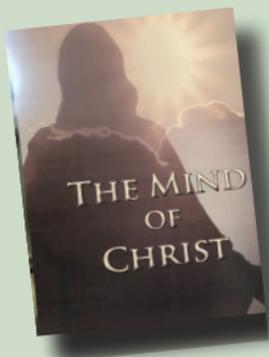


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The Promise of Deliverance

“The LORD God said unto the serpent, ... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

—*Genesis 3:14,15*

MAN, THE HIGHEST OF ALL

God’s earthly creatures and endowed with faculties reflecting the image of the Creator, failed to pass the simple test of obedience to which he was subjected. He had transgressed the law of God and now must die: “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen.

3:19) From then on, all of

Adam’s progeny inherited his death penalty. All are born imperfect and unable to resist the ravages of disease. All ultimately die, for “the wages of sin is death.”—Rom. 6:23

However, God still loved his errant human children, and even while necessary to sentence Adam and Eve to death, he gave an indication that an opportunity of deliverance from the penalty would be provided. This promise of deliverance is clearly implied in the statement to the “serpent” that the

“seed” of the woman would bruise his head. Even this obscure assurance seemed to give our first parents a measure of hope that the Creator would remedy their plight, for when Seth was born Eve said, “God ... hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.”—Gen. 4:25

Eve, of course, did not understand that the seed spoken of by God would be the great Deliverer, the Messiah of promise and prophecy, and that it would be more than six thousand years before the “head” of the serpent would be “bruised,” or crushed, by this seed. As the Creator’s plan unfolds throughout his Word, it becomes evident that the work of deliverance implied by God’s statement to the serpent would be accomplished by no less than a powerful government, or kingdom, under the control of the seed of promise.

In the 20th chapter of Revelation, we are provided with further information concerning this kingdom and the deliverance it will bring to humanity. According to the assurance here given, even the dead are to be restored to life. First, however, comes the binding of “that old serpent.” Verses 1 and 2 read, “I saw an angel come down from heaven, ... and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.” In these descriptive terms, we are able to identify the serpent’s activity in Eden and connect him to man’s great adversary and deceiver. Together with the remaining verses of the chapter, we are assured that the “bruising” mentioned by the Lord implies a complete deliverance from the scourge of sin and death into which humanity was plunged when induced by Satan to

disobey God's law. To state the matter plainly, sin and death are not to continue forever.

PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

A more expanded promise of deliverance was given to Abraham. To him God said, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18) In the New Testament, this promise to Abraham is called "the gospel" [Greek: to announce glad news in advance] by the Apostle Paul, who explained that Christ is the "seed" that will bless all nations. (Gal. 3:8,16) What is the blessing that God promised would come to all the families of the earth through the seed of Abraham, which is Christ?

This question is answered by the Apostle Peter in Acts 3:21-25. This passage of Scripture is part of a sermon delivered by Peter in which he drew a lesson from the miracle just performed by him and John—the healing of a man who had been lame from his birth. (vss. 1-10) He explains in his sermon that following the second coming of Christ there would be a time of general restoration, or "restitution," as it is translated in our *King James Version Bibles*, and that just as this one man was restored to health, so all are to be restored in the "restitution" period of God's plan. Then Peter concludes, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."—vs. 25

JACOB'S PROPHECY

The promise of deliverance which God made to Abraham was reiterated to his son Isaac and to his

grandson Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons, and toward the end of his life he gathered them around him and pronounced blessings upon them individually. These parental blessings took the form of prophecies. To his son Judah, Jacob said, “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”—Gen. 49:9,10

This prophecy was uttered by Jacob while he was living in Egypt, and the reference to the couched lion reflects this. In Egypt at that time the claimed royal right of the Pharaohs to rule was symbolized by a couched lion. By thus employing this symbol Jacob was saying in his prophecy that the “sceptre,” the right to rule so far as the promises of God are concerned, belonged to his son Judah, and that in due time there would be born a descendant, or seed, of Judah whose name would be Shiloh. To him the people of the world would be gathered in due time; that is, through Shiloh all the families of the earth would be blessed.

The name “Shiloh” means tranquil, or peaceful. It is one of the Old Testament titles assigned to Christ the Messiah and suggests that this promised deliverer would be a peacemaker. Indeed, Christ will not only establish peace among the people and nations, but will also be peacemaker between God and mankind, restoring the harmony that existed before man transgressed divine law. In one of the notable prophecies of Jesus’ birth he is referred to as “The Prince of Peace,” and we are assured that

“of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:6,7

In this same prophecy we are informed concerning the Prince of Peace that “the government shall be upon his shoulder.” This is the government over which Shiloh, the peacemaker, holds the sceptre, or the right to rule. It is the Messianic kingdom, and in Micah 4:1-4 it is presented under the symbol of a mountain—“the mountain of the house of the LORD.” We are assured that in this mountain, or kingdom, the people will learn God’s ways. As a result, they will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks,” and will learn war no more.

OTHER KINGDOM BLESSINGS

In Isaiah 25:6-9 the Lord presents us with another promise descriptive of the blessings which will reach the people in his “mountain,” the Messianic kingdom. One of these blessings will be the destruction of death. The Lord will “swallow up death in victory,” the promise reads, and shall “wipe away tears from off all faces.” Another blessing to reach mankind through Christ’s kingdom is described as the destroying of “the face of the covering cast over all people.” This is a “covering,” or veil of superstition and misunderstanding pertaining to God and to his loving purpose in the creation of man, and his plan for restoring him to life.

Included in this “covering” which has hidden God’s truth from the people, are all the God-dishonoring theories arising out of Satan’s lie to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die.” (Gen. 3:4) The

majority have been pleased to believe that “there is no death.” We thank God, though, that this beclouding lie, together with all the other false notions which Satan has woven into a “covering” and “cast over the people,” will be removed.

THE SOUR GRAPE OF SIN

Another very interesting and reassuring promise of deliverance from the result of original sin is found in Jeremiah 31:29,30. This passage reads, “In those days [the days of Messiah’s rule] they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.” The lesson here is obvious. It was father Adam who ate the original “sour grape” of sin. The result has been passed on to the entire human race. All have suffered from this act of disobedience; all have died or are dying.

However, this is to change, the Lord assures us. “In those days,” when the promised seed of Abraham is ruling as “The Prince of Peace,” he will also be dispensing blessings of health and life. This will be possible because Jesus took the sinner’s place in death, and during his reign he will offer to every individual of the human race an opportunity to obey and live. No longer will people die because of Adam’s sin. If they die at all, it will be because they have individually eaten the “sour grape” of sin. During the “times of restitution of all things,” Peter explains, it will be only those with full knowledge who willfully disobey that will lose life.—Acts 3:23

CHRIST IS BORN

The birth of Jesus confirmed the truthfulness of the prophetic testimony concerning a coming deliverer and set the stage for future assurances such as noted in the foregoing words of the Apostle Peter. The angel in announcing Jesus' birth said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. ... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." —Luke 2:10-14

The expression, "Unto you is born this day," marks the essential difference between this angelic announcement and the promises which the Creator had previously given through the holy prophets. These promises and prophecies now began to be fulfilled. One of the prophecies identified the city in which the promised ruler would be born. It was to be Bethlehem, the ancient "city of David." (Mic. 5:2; Luke 2:4) When the angel announced the birth of Jesus, he called special attention to this, saying that the Savior was born "this day" in the city of David. All of God's promises, beginning with his statement in Eden that the serpent's head would be bruised by a seed of the woman, implied a coming deliverance from death. Now the angel confirmed this. The one who was born in Bethlehem was to be Jesus Christ, the Savior and Messiah of promise.

It was a dramatic moment for those shepherds on the Judean hills to whom the angel announced the birth of the Savior. Suddenly, we are told, a

multitude of the heavenly host joined the angel, praising and giving glory to God, proclaiming “on earth peace, good will toward men.” This heavenly host of angels had served God faithfully for the many centuries during which he was making his promises of a coming seed who would bless the people. They did not understand all the implications of those promises, but they knew that they were expressions of God’s good will toward his fallen human creatures. How joyously, therefore, they must have proclaimed the birth of Jesus, knowing it to be a manifestation of this foretold good will, and the beginning of the fulfillment of God’s promises!

JESUS’ MINISTRY

Jesus entered upon his ministry at the age of thirty. (Luke 3:21-23) It was a ministry which fully harmonized with the prophetic testimony concerning him. We read that “he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.” (Luke 8:1) These glad tidings, the angel had said at his birth, were to be “unto all people.” The Creator had sent a Savior and had made provision for the establishment of a kingdom in due time through which the blessings of salvation from sin, sickness, and death would reach the people.

It did not at once become apparent to the followers of Jesus that his kingdom would not be immediately established. Only later did they realize that it was necessary for the Savior to die for those he had come to save before they could be permanently delivered from sickness and death. Indeed, he announced to them that he would give his flesh “for the life of

the world.” However, they did not understand from this statement that his humanity would go into death as a substitute, or ransom, for the forfeited life of Adam, and for the entire human race.—John 6:51; I Cor. 15:21,22,45; I Tim. 2:3-6

His twelve chosen apostles were with Jesus as he “preached and showed” the glad tidings of the kingdom. They witnessed his miracles of healing the sick, of cleansing lepers, of casting out devils, and of even raising the dead. They cannot be blamed for supposing that this was the beginning of the actual foretold work of deliverance, and that his kingdom would imminently be established with its blessings of health and life extended to “all the families of the earth” as God had promised would be done through the Messiah, the promised seed.

Jesus’ disciples did not realize at the time that the marvelous miracles he performed were intended merely as illustrations of the worldwide program of deliverance and blessing they thought was then beginning. They did not yet understand that these blessings must await the accomplishment of other aspects of the Creator’s grand purpose for mankind’s deliverance. It is still gloriously true that in God’s due time all the blind eyes will be opened; all the deaf ears unstopped; all the halt and the lame made sound of limb; and none of the people will say, “I am sick.”—Isa. 35:5,6; 33:24

In that due time those who “sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” (Dan. 12:2) The sentence of death, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,” will have been set aside by the sacrificial death of the Savior. (Gen. 3:19) That sentence will no longer be effective against the billions who have

long been locked in the great prison of death, for all will be called forth from the grave.—John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15

NO MORE CURSE

In Revelation 22, the last chapter of the Bible, we have the hope of deliverance through Jesus and the kingdom presented to us in meaningful symbolic language. First, we see a throne, “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” (vs. 1) The throne symbolizes a kingdom. It was the glad tidings concerning the establishment of this kingdom that Jesus and his disciples so faithfully preached. The Lamb is symbolic of Jesus and his sacrifice on behalf of mankind. Thus we are shown that God’s promised blessings of life will reach humanity through the agencies of a divine government, being made available through the death of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

These promised blessings are pictured by “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,” which flows from “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, ... and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” (Rev. 22:1,2) This language takes our minds back to Genesis, when Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden to prevent their partaking of the tree of life and living forever. (Gen. 3:23,24) In the Messianic kingdom life will again be made available, not to Adam and Eve alone, but to all mankind.

Revelation 22:3 declares, “There shall be no more curse.” A terrible curse has rested upon humanity—

the curse of sin and death. Even the ground was cursed when our first parents sinned. (Gen. 3:17) These curses have blighted the peace and happiness of mankind. No one has been free from them. All die as a result of Adam's transgression. However, God loved the race of lost and dying sinners, and provided a Savior, the seed of promise, who as the Lamb gave his life in sacrifice as the price of redemption. Now, here in this last chapter of the Bible, we are assured that from the throne of God and of the Lamb, the "water of life, clear as crystal," will flow out to all mankind. All will be invited to partake of this lifegiving water. "Come, ..." the word will go out, and "take the water of life freely." —Rev. 22:17

THE LARGER SEED

We have focused attention on Jesus as the promised seed of blessing, the one who would bruise the serpent's head. Certainly, all honor should be given to him for the place assigned to him by the Creator in the divine plan for deliverance of the human race from sin and death. However, the Scriptures point out that Jesus will have associates in his work of ruling and blessing the people. The Apostle Paul reveals this. After telling us in Galatians 3:16 that Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham through whom the people would be blessed he explains further, saying, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."—Gal. 3:27-29

There are many texts of Scripture which corroborate this point. Paul wrote that those who suffer and die with Jesus will live and reign with him.

(II Tim. 2:11,12) This group of faithful followers of the Master is also identified in Revelation 20:4,6, and here we are told that they will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. In order that these might live and reign with Christ, they are brought forth from death in what the Scriptures describe as “the first resurrection.”

A MYSTERY

The fact that the Messiah of promise would have associates who share his Messianic name and glory had been kept secret by the Lord throughout all the ages prior to the coming of Jesus at his First Advent. Writing to the Colossian believers the Apostle Paul said, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” —Col. 1:27

In I Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul uses a human body to illustrate the relationship between Jesus and those associated with him in the Messianic arrangement. In this illustration Jesus is the Head, and his faithful followers are the members of his body. One of the main points of the lesson set forth in this chapter is, as Paul states it in verse 27, that “ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.” As we have seen, Christ is the seed that was foretold by God in Eden when he said that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head, and the Apostle Paul wrote, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” —Rom. 16:20

Jesus’ original disciples believed that he was the promised Messiah, and that he would establish his kingdom at his First Advent. Not until after being

enlightened by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost did they understand that before the kingdom could be established, those to be associated with Jesus as rulers in that kingdom would have to be called from the world, tested, and otherwise made ready for their exalted position with Jesus in his kingdom.

This preparation of the body members of Christ has been the work of the Lord in the earth throughout the centuries since Jesus' death and resurrection. It has been accomplished largely through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel itself contains the invitation to those who hear and believe to take up their cross and follow the Master into sacrificial death. (Matt. 16:24) Jesus commissioned his followers to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and this commission has been carried out by the faithful in each generation.—Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8

A SPIRITUAL HOPE

Man's deliverance from sin and death through the agencies of Christ's kingdom will see mankind restored to life as perfect humans here on the earth. This is in keeping with the Creator's original design. However, those who qualify during this present Gospel Age through obedience and sacrifice to live and reign with Christ in his kingdom will receive a spiritual, or heavenly reward. Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go, ... I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—John 14:2,3

Jesus prefaced his promise in verse 2 to "prepare a place" for his followers with the statement, "In

my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you." Jesus did not promise these existing mansions to his followers but said that he would go to prepare a place for them. As for the mansions, he simply observed that they already existed in his Father's "house." It seems reasonable to conclude that the Father's house is the entire universe. It all belongs to him and is all his domain. In this domain are various mansions, or dwelling places—planes of existence or spheres of life.

The earth is one of these spheres of life. It is the one in which God designed that his human creatures should spend eternity—the "mansion" which God created for man. Furthermore, "he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." (Isa. 45:18) As Jesus promised his disciples, however, he went away to prepare a place for them. Much is said in the Bible concerning this place. It is vaguely foretold in the Old Testament and described in the New Testament as an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." Those for whom this place is prepared are said to be "partakers of the heavenly calling." —I Pet. 1:4; Heb. 3:1

In our study of the Bible, it is essential to keep in mind that its heavenly promises are only to the foot-step followers of Jesus during the present age—a "little flock." (Luke 12:32) These followers are to be associated with Jesus in the grand work of restoring all mankind to life on the earth in the coming Messianic kingdom. Keeping this distinction in mind, we will find harmony in the many wonderful promises of the sacred Word concerning the prospect of deliverance for God's human creation! ■

God Reigns

Key Verse: “*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!*”
—Isaiah 52:7

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 52:1-12

MANY OF ISAIAH’S PROPHECIES, besides applying in his day, have additional fulfillments; such as during Jesus’ earthly ministry, at his Second Advent, or future applications in the glorious kingdom of God. For this lesson in Isaiah chapter 52, we will consider its future application to natural Israel, whom Jehovah refers to as “my people.” (vss. 4,6; Exod. 3:7-10; Jer. 31:31-34) God chose Israel “to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth,” and has “set his love” upon that

nation because he is faithful and keeps “his commandments to a thousand generations.”—Deut. 7:6-9

Isaiah’s prophecy states: “Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck.” (Isa. 52:2, *Revised Version*) We believe this points forward to the time when God will deliver Israel from the experience of “Jacob’s trouble.” At that time Israel’s “yoke,” which includes following errors of human tradition, will be broken. Instead, they will “serve the LORD their God,” by their acceptance of God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.—Jer. 30:3-9; John 5:22,23

Our Heavenly Father, the source “of whom are all

things,” has arranged that Israel’s deliverance during Jacob’s trouble will be implemented through his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who will bring Israel and all mankind back into harmony with him. (I Cor. 8:6) When God rescues Israel from Jacob’s trouble, he will speak to them with authority. “My people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.”—Isa. 52:6

Paul quotes part of our Key Verse, stating, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:15) Those sharing with others the Gospel, or “glad tidings,” of the ransom given for all, and the consequent blessings to come to all mankind, are pictured as the “feet” of the Christ. This privilege of preaching the Gospel has been an essential aspect of each consecrated believer’s responsibility and has served as a means of strengthening the body of Christ for nearly two thousand years.

Observing conditions throughout the world today, there is clearly a longing by most people for peace and relief from the various troubles faced by mankind. Yet, despite efforts by governments, scientists, educators and philanthropists, no real and lasting solutions have been found to solve these problems. Our Key Verse declares that God has a plan which will satisfy all the longings of mankind, bringing good tidings, peace and salvation.

God, through the invisible presence of his exalted son, Christ Jesus, is in control of all earth’s affairs during this present, turbulent time. (Ps. 46:1-9) When the body of Christ is completed, God will then intervene and, as the psalmist writes, “maketh wars to cease.” After the great time of trouble is ended, the Lord will issue the command, “Be still, and know that I am God,” and he “will be exalted among the heathen,” and “in the earth.” (vs. 10) Then there will be great rejoicing as his will is done for the blessing of all mankind. ■

New Heavens and a New Earth

Key Verse: *“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”*
—Isaiah 65:25

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 65:17-25

THE CONDITIONS WHICH will exist on the earth in the future millennial kingdom are described by the Prophet Isaiah, along with other writers of the Scriptures. Isaiah likens Christ’s kingdom to a “new heavens and a new earth.” It will be so wonderful that “the former [kingdoms] shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” The “former” kingdoms are those which Paul later describes as being of “this present evil world.”—Isa. 65:17; Gal. 1:4

God’s creation of “new heavens and a new earth” is not a reference to a new literal heaven or planet Earth, but rather to a new arrangement. The Bible tells us that the “earth abideth forever,” and that God “created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited.” (Eccles. 1:4; Isa. 45:18) What will be “new” is the governing forces of the kingdom, which will be Christ and his church, made up of the faithful followers of the Master during the present Gospel Age. (Rev. 5:10; 20:6) Together, they will be the heavenly rulers of the kingdom, rather than Satan, whom God has allowed for

a time to reign over mankind. (II Cor. 4:4) This “old” rulership of earth by the great Adversary will be replaced by the “new heavens” of the Christ, head and body.— I Cor. 12:12,27; Col. 1:18

Conditions on earth itself will also be new during the kingdom and very different than that which fallen man has created: “They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat. ... They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble. ... Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” (Isa. 65:21-24) In our Key Verse we are told that “the wolf and the lamb” will feed together, and nothing will be allowed to “hurt nor destroy” throughout God’s entire kingdom realm.

These wonderful conditions described by God’s holy prophet are certainly a time everyone should look forward to with great anticipation. Isaiah was not the only one to speak of a “new heavens and a new earth.” His prophetic words are confirmed in the New Testament by the Apostle Peter, who writes, “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—II Pet. 3:13

The Apostle John also saw this in a vision, and wrote, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.” John saw additional details concerning the kingdom, saying, “I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Rev. 21:1-4) What a wonderful time that will be! ■

The Restoration of Israel

Key Verses: *“I will make a covenant of peace with them ... an everlasting covenant ... and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*
—Ezekiel 37:26,27

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 37:21-28

and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezek. 37:6) As Ezekiel prophesied he observed that “there was a noise, and behold an earthquake, and the bones came together.”—vs. 7, *Revised Version*

The bones coming together in Ezekiel’s prophetic vision may well point forward to the Zionist movement which began in the late 19th century. In 1878 the first

IN THIS LESSON EZEKIEL

records a vision God gave to him of a valley which was full of “very dry” bones. (Ezek. 37:1,2) As the vision progresses it is stated: “These bones are the whole house of Israel.” (vs. 11) Originally founded upon the promises made to their forefather, Abraham, they enjoyed a privileged status as God’s favored people until they rejected Messiah and were dispersed.—Amos 3:2; Luke 1:67-75

In the prophet’s vision, Jehovah spoke to the dry bones: “I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live;

Jewish resettlement was established and the name chosen for it was “Petah Tikva,” which means “door of hope,” words found in a prophecy given to Hosea regarding Israel’s restoration. (Hos. 2:14,15) The “noise” and “earthquake” of Ezekiel’s vision may refer to the persecutions and trouble which led to many more Jews coming back to the land of Israel during the ensuing decades.—Jer. 16:14-16

The vision states what happened to these bones. “Lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh, ... and skin covered them: ... but there was no breath in them.” (Ezek. 37:7,8, *RV*) “Sinews” may denote the temporal organizations and efforts in building homes and preparing the land for recultivation. Literal “flesh” and “skin” are outwardly visible, and might be a picture of Israel’s increased temporal prosperity, including their recognition as a nation since 1948.

Verse 8 states that “there was no breath,” or life, in these bones. We believe the “breath” state of development is still future, when God will infuse breath or spirit into Israel and the nation will return to covenant relationship with him. In our Key Verse the Lord has promised to make an everlasting “covenant of peace” with Israel. The Prophet Jeremiah describes it as a “new covenant,” when God will put his “law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.” The Lord promises that “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, ... saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”—Jer. 31:31-34

In Ezekiel’s prophetic vision the Lord also promises, “My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” However, these wonderful promises are not limited to only Israel, because the Lord then states, “And the nations shall know that I am the Lord that sanctify Israel.” (Ezek. 37:28, *RV*) This is wonderfully confirmed by the revelation given to the Apostle John.—Rev. 21:1-4 ■

God Will Save

Key Verse: “*The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.*”
—**Zephaniah 3:17**

Selected Scripture:
Zephaniah 3:14-20

ZEPHANIAH PROPHESIED that desolation and ruin would strike Judah and the surrounding nations because of the wrath of God upon their sin. (Zeph. 1:1-18) Repeatedly in this prophecy is the lesson that a judgment time was coming when Israel’s sins would be dealt with. Shortly thereafter, in fulfillment of these prophecies, Judah, the two-tribe kingdom of Israel, was taken captive to Babylon.

Today, as in Zephaniah’s day, there are increasing troubles among the nations. Jesus associated this with the end of the present age. “At that time there will be great suffering, the kind that has not happened from the beginning of the world until now and certainly will never happen again.” (Matt. 24:21, *International Standard Version*) Great “distress” and “perplexity” will befall all nations as they seek answers to the endless problems of our time, finding them all beyond human solution and with no way out of the impending doom.—
Luke 21:25

Zephaniah symbolically described “the day of the LORD” in these words: “Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may

assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”—Zeph. 1:7; 3:8

The prophet then describes the time after the day of wrath is over, when God’s designed purpose of humbling his people will have been accomplished. Mankind will call upon the Lord, and upon hearing their cry God’s favor will return to them and evil will no longer be permitted. “The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.”—Zeph. 3:12-15

The prophecy reveals one of the very first and most important works of Christ’s newly established kingdom on earth, which will be vital to the promised blessing of Israel and all mankind. God says, “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.” (vs. 9) No longer will God’s Word be heard as a confused message, but the people will hear the pure message of truth, uncontaminated by human error or tradition.

Through God’s Word and the influence of his Holy Spirit which will then be poured out upon all flesh, the Lord will reveal his glorious plan. The outworking of the features of his plan will cause all to see his divine attributes of justice, wisdom, love and power. Thereby they will come to fully know and appreciate the true and loving God.

The Prophet Jeremiah, describing the making of a new covenant with Israel during the earthly phase of the Messianic kingdom, writes that the Lord has promised to “put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and [I] will be their God, and they shall be my people. ... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—Jer. 31:33,34 ■

“O Ye Corinthians”

*“O ye Corinthians,
our mouth is open
unto you, our heart
is enlarged.”*

*—II Corinthians
6:11*

IT SEEMS REASONABLE to conclude that the Lord overruled in the affairs of the various congregations of the Early Church in such a manner as to suggest to the

apostles the subject matter found in their various epistles. The Heavenly Father knew in advance that this general pattern of attitudes and experiences would be found among his people throughout the Christian age. Thus, the apostles would, in writing these letters, actually be ministering to the entire church in a timely and effective manner. Certainly there was much in the church at Corinth that is prevalent among the Lord's people today. A great deal was praiseworthy, but some was not.

In his first letter to the Corinthian brethren, Paul reveals their carnal, or fleshly, spirit of attaching themselves to one or another of the teachers who came among them. Some said, “I am of Paul,” others said they were “of Apollos,” and still others claimed to be “of Cephas.” (I Cor. 1:12) These various teachers

were not themselves to blame for this situation. Inasmuch as they all proclaimed the same Gospel, there was no doctrinal basis for the brethren to favor one above the other. They were all laboring in the same divine cause. As Paul explained, he had planted, and Apollos had watered, but it was God who gave the increase.—I Cor. 3:6

The fact that there was something for all the brethren to do in the Lord's service, and the importance of recognizing Christ only as the Head of the church, are set forth in much detail in chapter 12 of this first letter. In this chapter Paul is careful to emphasize that God sets every member in the "one body" of Christ as it pleases him. (vss. 12,18) In view of the situation existing among the Corinthian brethren, this instruction was very timely, and has continued to be important for the Lord's people in every part of the age, including today.

The church is commissioned to be the "light of the world." (Matt. 5:14) This calls for life and activity. In Paul's reference to the various members of the "body," with Jesus as the Head, he emphasized that there is something for each member to do. In the realization of this, however, there is the possibility of becoming engrossed in the spirit of activity, while losing sight of the proper motive which should prompt service in the Lord's vineyard. Hence, in I Corinthians 13 we have that heart-searching treatise on love, showing that without love all else is vain.

GROWTH IN GRACE

By the time Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthian brethren they had given evidence of

considerable growth in grace. He does not now mention their carnality. He implies that they now appreciated more fully the fact that Christ alone was their Head, saying, "He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."—II Cor. 1:21,22

Nevertheless, there was one point on which at least some of the Corinthian brethren were not yet clear. This pertained to Paul's position of authority in the church as one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. He mildly hints at this in the opening of chapter 3, asking, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves?" Toward the close of the letter he touches very definitely on this point, emphasizing that he "was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles."—II Cor. 11:5

Paul did not press this point in order to glorify himself, but he realized the danger they were in by not recognizing that he did speak under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, to seemingly exalt himself appeared foolish to Paul from the human standpoint. He wrote, "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."—II Cor. 11:1-3

After Paul's cautious reference to this point in the beginning of chapter 3, he proceeds to outline that great truth of the Gospel that during the present

Gospel Age, the disciples of Christ are “workers together” with the Lord. (II Cor. 6:1) Those found faithful unto death will be qualified to be “ministers of a new covenant,” and as associates with Christ shall restore mankind back to God during the Messianic kingdom. (II Cor. 3:6, *International Standard Version*; Rev. 20:4,6) This lesson begins with verse 3 of chapter 3, and continues into chapter 6, embellished, of course, with important side thoughts.

WORKERS WITH THE LORD

It is in the beginning of chapter 6 that we read, “Working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (for he saith, At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, And in a day of salvation did I succor thee: behold, now is an acceptable time; behold, now is a day of salvation): giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that the ministration be not blamed.”—II Cor. 6:1-3, *Revised Version Improved and Corrected*

Drawing from his own rich background of experience, as an example to them, Paul continued, “In everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in a holy spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;

as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”—II Cor. 6:4-10, *RVIC*

Here is a wonderfully complete summary of what it really means to be an ambassador for Christ, a worker “together with him.” Not all have as many trying experiences as those which came to Paul, but all who are faithful will have more or less tribulation. Everyone who has covenanted with God by sacrifice should examine this summary in order to know what it means to be faithful. These words also help us to know the qualifications for the ministry, which are love, purity, kindness, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the proper use of the “armor of righteousness.”

“O YE CORINTHIANS”

It is immediately following this presentation of qualifications, and of what faithfulness will mean in terms of sacrifice and tribulation, that Paul exclaims, “O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.” To this he adds, “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.”—II Cor. 6:11-13

Paul had presented a beautiful and comprehensive outline of the marvelous grace of God which had made provision for all the true disciples of Christ to be workers together in the ministry of reconciliation. However, he seemed to question whether or not the Corinthian brethren had matured spiritually to the point where they could fully appreciate the great privilege the Heavenly Father had extended to them.

Were they willing to be unknown by the world in order to be known and loved by God? Were they ready actually to die with Christ in order to live and reign with him? Were they agreeable that their faithfulness in the ministry should lead to experiences of trial and difficulty, yet be able to rejoice in the Lord and in the power of his might? Were they willing to make themselves poor, that through their ministry of the Truth others might be made rich in faith and hope? Were they prepared to give up everything so that in reality they would have nothing, yet in faith rejoice that as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ they possessed all things?

Paul wondered if their hearts had been sufficiently “enlarged” by the message of the Gospel, and by the love of God reflected through his Word, to enable them to enter into the real spirit of the ministry. Such a spirit would permit them to stop at nothing, that the joy of the Truth might be communicated to others. This is a test which confronts all who undertake no longer to live unto themselves but unto the Lord.—II Cor. 5:14,15

It may not be too difficult to say, “Lord, I give to you my all.” The test comes when we undertake to carry out this promise. True, the Corinthian brethren had been generous in donating to the physical needs of their brethren in Jerusalem. Paul compliments them on this, and says that he had even boasted of their liberality. Even so, he considered it expedient to encourage them further along this line. (II Cor. 9:1-7) Shrunken indeed would be the Christian heart which felt no impelling desire to assist brethren who needed food and clothing.

A HIGHER LIBERALITY

The ministry of the Truth, however, called for a higher type of liberality, one that was based on faith, and motivated by the spiritual needs of others. It was such a ministry which also often led to “distresses,” “stripes,” “imprisonments,” and “tumults.” They could donate money for the aid of their needy brethren, and be rewarded by appreciation. Yet, if they faithfully bore witness to the Truth, the immediate result could easily be tribulation or even bitter persecution.

To be faithful ministers of reconciliation has always been a test upon the consecrated. Jesus admonished us to seek “first the kingdom of God,” permitting the material needs and comforts of life to become of secondary consideration. (Matt. 6:33) We start out with the determination to be guided by his admonition, and let us seek strength from the Lord that we may continue in it, for there is always the danger of becoming “weary in well doing.” (Gal. 6:9) Let us not assume that the Lord will be pleased if we give to him merely the “leftovers” of life. Surely no consecrated follower of the Master means to take this position.

A common expression in the world, descriptive of the lifelong noble aims and efforts of the majority of people, is “making a living.” Most of the Lord’s people, likewise, find it necessary to make a living. Ordinarily, nothing is permitted to stand in the way of this important responsibility. Those of the family who are employed do not stay home from work because the weather is not favorable, nor because those who may work next to them are uncongenial. There is a living to be made, and the

unfavorable circumstances associated with the task are not permitted to interfere.

So it should be with us as disciples of Christ. Spiritually speaking, we also are making a living—striving for “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom. 2:7) So far as the flesh is concerned, there is much that is unpleasant involved in our effort. We have to give up everything in order to “possess all things.” Ultimately, we actually must die in order to live. Shall we be any less devoted to the task of attaining the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus than we are in securing the physical needs of this temporal life?—Phil. 3:13-15

ENLARGED HEART

Paul told the Corinthian brethren that his heart was enlarged, both toward them, and for the promotion of the ministry generally. However, he was not so sure about their hearts. He had done all he could to expand their understanding and love, yet he wrote, “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.” (II Cor. 6:12) The Greek word here translated “straitened” means “narrowness of room,” or to be “hemmed in.”

The Corinthian brethren had restricted their own capacity to love and to serve. Their view of the Lord’s service and of the brethren was too “hemmed in.” They had not caught the spirit of love which prompted God to give his Son that sinners might be reconciled to him and have life. Their prejudices and their fears were standing in the way of a whole-hearted ministry of reconciliation.

Chapter 10, verse 7 of this epistle may reveal one of the reasons for the Corinthians’ “hemmed in”

attitude. We quote: "Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." Perhaps the Corinthian brethren, while sure that they belonged to Christ, were reluctant to acknowledge that certain others also belonged to the Master, basing their opinion on outward appearance.

There is nothing more restricting than a viewpoint of this kind. We knew from the time that we were first enlightened by the Word of God that every member of the Adamic race is fallen and imperfect. We know that our standing with the Heavenly Father is not upon the basis of our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. (Rom. 3:10; Phil. 3:9) However, when we note the imperfections of other brethren it may be easy to conclude that they do not belong to Christ at the same level as we do.

In addition, what we see when we "look on things after the outward appearance" may not be anything which is displeasing to the Lord. It may simply be that the other brother or sister is different from us in some ways. The "hemmed in" mind would like to have everyone think and act alike, with the pattern, of course, being our own way of thinking and acting.

Paul's viewpoint was the correct one because it was the viewpoint of an "enlarged heart." To paraphrase his thought, it would be this: "You have confidence that you belong to Christ and are enjoying the Lord's blessings; but remember I have the same confidence. We both believe that we are striving to be pleasing to the Lord. I may not like some of the things which you say and do, and you are often annoyed with me, but this gives us no reason

for judging each other.” Such a viewpoint properly sees things as Paul later wrote to Timothy, that “the Lord knoweth them that are his.”—II Tim. 2:19

NOT LIBERAL IN PRINCIPLE

There can be a wide difference between being broad-minded and having an enlarged heart. In saying this, we are thinking of liberality from the standpoint of overlooking violations of the great principles of truth and righteousness set forth in the Word of God. No true follower of the Master will do this.

The Holy Word clearly sets forth the fundamental elements of God’s plan of salvation. We cannot truthfully say that it makes no difference to the Lord whether or not we believe such plainly stated teachings. Not only are we to adhere faithfully to these principles and Christ’s doctrine, but in addition, we are admonished to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) We are to “fight the good fight of faith” and help others to do the same in order to be pleasing to the Lord and thus “lay hold on eternal life.”—I Tim. 6:12

However, as Paul urged the Corinthian brethren, we should permit the Truth to enlarge our hearts toward our brethren in Christ and also toward the whole world of mankind. The imperfections of the flesh are sure to be manifested from time to time in our fellowship. Each one of us is different in some respects from others. If our hearts are restricted, “hemmed in,” these differences, which in reality are most often unrelated to fundamental doctrine itself, might very well cause us a great deal of concern, and rob us of much of

the joy we might otherwise have in fellowshiping with those of “like precious faith.”—II Pet. 1:1

An enlarged heart, on the other hand, gives us a happier outlook on every aspect of the Christian life, especially in our associations with the Lord’s people. This does not mean that we condone the wrongdoing of others. Nevertheless, we should accept our brethren in Christ because they are the called of God, remembering that when the Lord called them he knew all about those traits and characteristics they possess which perhaps annoy us so much. In addition, it will help to keep our hearts enlarged if we remind ourselves occasionally that we too have traits which may be just as trying to others as theirs are to us.

It was Paul’s largeness of heart that enabled him to rejoice that the Gospel was being proclaimed even though the motive some had in doing it was to add to his suffering. (Phil. 1:15-18) It is unlikely that any of the Lord’s people during this end of the age will ever be confronted with an experience of this kind as Paul was. We cite it merely as an illustration of the wholesome outlook an enlarged heart will give us in all the difficult experiences we may encounter as we labor together with the brotherhood in the glorious ministry of reconciliation.

JESUS’ PERFECT EXAMPLE

Jesus was perfect, and the imperfections of his apostles must have been very apparent to him, yet he loved them, and did so to the end. In praying for them, Jesus said, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” (John 17:6) Do we always remember that our brethren have been given to us by our

Heavenly Father in the sense that he called them, even as he has called us? To think of our brethren in this light should help to keep our hearts enlarged toward them. Surely we would not want to criticize God's choice.

The psalmist wrote, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." (Ps. 119:32) Important among the Lord's commandments is the one given by Jesus that we should love one another as he loved us. (John 13:34,35) If we thus love our brethren we will lay down our lives for them, not merely by manifesting an interest in their physical needs, but in their spiritual welfare also. If our hearts have been truly enlarged by love we will rejoice in our privileges of association with the brethren, laboring together as ministers of reconciliation.

As we go forward unitedly in this ministry, we will encounter opposition from various outside sources. If our hearts have been enlarged we will not add to these burdens, but will do all we can to help bear them. Certainly we will see fleshly weaknesses in our brethren, and they will see such things in us as well. At times, however, what we look upon as a weakness may be but a scar, "gained on some hard-fought field, where we would only faint and yield," as the poet has written.

Let us, therefore, not judge, but with hearts enlarged, go forward together in the pathway of sacrifice, spending and being spent for one another, and for the Lord. Let us do this in the certain knowledge that God "is able to make all grace abound" toward us, that having all sufficiency always, and in all things, we "may abound to every good work."—II Cor. 9:8 ■

“Who Is Wise?”

“Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.”

—*James 3:13,*
English Standard
Version

WISDOM CAN BE BRIEFLY

described as the ability to properly use and apply knowledge in the daily conduct and decisions of life. A person might possess a high degree of knowledge along various lines, yet not be wise. For example, one might have an excellent knowledge of national and international politics, yet not be a wise statesman. A certain degree of knowledge is essential in every aspect of human endeavor, but to be successful in a chosen field one must have, or acquire, the ability to make proper use of knowledge, and it is this that constitutes wisdom.

What is true in human pursuits is also true in our relationship to God and to one another as brethren in Christ Jesus. It is important that we acquire knowledge of the plans and purposes of God; but beyond this, it is essential that we make the proper application of this knowledge in our daily service to the Lord and to his people. Paul wrote that the “wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.” (I Cor. 3:19) Therefore, if we are to be

wise according to God's standards it is essential that we acknowledge the superiority of his ways and seek to be guided by them. Solomon wrote, "The fear [Hebrew: reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."—Prov. 9:10, *ESV*

A true reverence for the Lord will manifest itself in an earnest desire to become acquainted with his plans and purposes, particularly as they relate to his will for us as individuals. Through study of his Word, we will learn that by heredity we are members of a fallen and dying race which is alienated from God because of sin, and that we therefore have no standing before him in our own righteousness. (Rom. 3:10-12,23) It requires humility to acknowledge this. If we do, we will rejoice in the provision the Lord has made, upon the basis of devoting ourselves to the doing of his will, to accept us into his favor through Christ and cover us with the robe of his righteousness.—Isa. 61:10; Rom. 5:21

The acceptance of these truths and our obedient response to them are initial steps in the pathway of wisdom. However, the spirit of humility before God manifested by dedication to his service must remain with us. It serves as a proper background to every decision we make and every act we perform in our earnest desire to know and to do God's will. Self and its interests have no place in the life of one who is endeavoring to be filled and guided by heavenly wisdom.

God's will for his people of the present age is that they lay down their lives sacrificially in his service, even as Jesus did. Those who have accepted

this viewpoint, and are attempting to be guided by it, are following the course of heavenly wisdom. To the extent that they hold back from carrying out the terms of their consecration, they are unwise. To the world the course of a consecrated Christian seems foolish, but if we are wise, we will not allow the world and its viewpoints to swerve us from the path of sacrifice and service.

JESUS' EXAMPLE

Jesus was guided by heavenly wisdom, and his example is of great value in helping us to determine the course we should take. Near the close of his ministry Jesus revealed to his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem where he expected to suffer many things, and to be killed. The disciples knew of the enmity that existed in Jerusalem toward Jesus, and Peter concluded that he was making a mistake to go there, especially since he knew what would result if he did so. Peter said to Jesus, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." To this the Master replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."—Matt. 16:21-23

Jesus, of course, did not mean that Peter was actually Satan. Rather, in trying to dissuade Jesus from going to Jerusalem to suffer and die, Peter had assumed the role of an adversary in an effort to prevent his Master from laying down his life as he had covenanted to do. In doing this Peter had expressed a selfish human viewpoint. It was a position that, generally speaking, is considered wise in worldly circles.

Then Jesus pressed the lesson further by explaining that this way of sacrifice would have to be accepted by those who desired to be his disciples. He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." (vss. 24,25) To tell a person of the world that the only way to save their life would be by losing it, would certainly seem foolish. Yet, for the followers of the Master, this is the course of true wisdom.

What a wise course it is! Because of our reverence for God and our willingness to be instructed by him, we have learned that those who suffer and die with Jesus will live and reign with him. In "the first resurrection" they will be exalted to "glory and honour and immortality." (Rev. 20:6; Rom. 2:7) This glorious reward, however, will be given only to those who are "faithful unto death." (Rev. 2:10) This being true, how unwise it would be to hold back from laying down our lives in doing our Heavenly Father's will.

Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) To the worldly mind it would seem most unreasonable to present one's body in sacrifice, but not so from the standpoint of divine wisdom, for the apostle says this is a "reasonable service." Again, Paul wrote, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (II Tim. 1:7) The "sound mind" which the Lord has given us through his

Word is not a mind with a disposition to hold back from sacrifice lest the way become too difficult. On the contrary, it is a mind that urges on to greater service and sacrifice, and when needed, corrective self-control.

The Lord has also given us the spirit of love, and if we have love it will be manifested in our willingness to lay down our lives for the brethren, and in bearing witness to the Gospel. For a consecrated child of God to view the Christian life in any other way would be manifesting the spirit of an unsound mind and a lack of the heavenly wisdom with which the Lord has endowed us through his Word. In the following chapter Paul writes to Timothy, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." (II Tim. 2:11,12) How unwise it would be to take a course of unfaithfulness which might result in our being denied by the Lord!

James wrote, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." (James 1:5-7) The "all men" in this passage to which James says the Lord gives his wisdom liberally should not be construed to mean the entire human race, but rather those who are in Christ Jesus and have taken up their cross to follow the Master in the way of sacrifice and service. To these God will give wisdom.

Another important lesson from this passage is to be able to accept the Lord's answers to our prayers for wisdom. James suggests the possibility of wavering in our requests, and the cause of this might well be a lack of faith in God's response to our prayers. He continues, stating that "a double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (vs. 8) Those who are double-minded are not wholly devoted to the Lord's ways. They are not guided entirely by heavenly wisdom. They know they should lay down their lives, but their flesh holds back. When these ask God for wisdom, they are hopeful that he will show them an easier way to follow in the Master's footsteps, and they will not be prepared for the answer which they receive. Thus, their unreasoning mind may conclude that the Lord did not hear their prayers.

If we are truly wise toward God, we will be prepared to accept whatever he gives us in answer to our prayers, whether our prayers be for wisdom or other assistance. Our material welfare should occupy a relatively minor place in our prayers, and then primarily to the extent which is related to our life of sacrifice in the divine service. The burden of our prayers should be in the nature of thanksgiving for all the Lord's goodness to us, and for his promised guidance and strength as we walk in the narrow way which leads to life in association with our blessed Master.—Matt. 7:14

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

The Christian life is one of sacrifice, but in his Word God has laid down certain principles for guidance and wisdom in our daily walk. To know

these principles and to practice them is also to be guided by heavenly wisdom. In our opening text, James asks the question, "Who is a wise man?" He begins his answer by stating that wisdom is gained by means of "good conduct." Continuing, James adds the following: "But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."—James 3:14-17, *ESV*

Here the apostle presents some details pertaining to heavenly wisdom. He says that this wisdom that is from above is "first pure." No matter what undertaking we might have in mind, especially in connection with our service to the Lord and association with his people, we should see to it that our motive is pure, and that we are not seeking to accomplish our ends by worldly methods of any kind. We should also not compromise with our flesh, which is fallen and untrustworthy. Heavenly wisdom requires that we hold fast to the pure, fundamental teachings and principles of the Scriptures which we have learned through study and fellowship with our brethren in Christ.

Furthermore, we are to lay down our lives in making known the glorious Gospel of the kingdom, and in serving our brethren in Christ. This is the will of God for us. The wisdom from above will guide us in doing this in the Lord's way, which is in purity. If we are controlled by heavenly wisdom, we

will not engage in efforts to impress others with the “great works” which we are accomplishing. Purity and holiness will mark our words and conduct if heavenly wisdom is ruling in our hearts.

“Then peaceable,” James adds. We should both desire, and work toward, peace and unity of the spirit among fellow members of the body of Christ. (Eph. 4:2,3) Paul expands this thought by saying that so far as possible we should endeavor to “live peaceably with all men.” (Rom. 12:18) Heavenly wisdom urges that we dwell together with our brethren and others in unity and peace if this can be done in purity and without compromising divine principles which might be involved.

The wisdom from above is “gentle,” James tells us. Those who possess heavenly wisdom, and are guided by it, will not be of a harsh disposition. They will not run roughshod over others. Worldly wisdom often dictates that one should show authority even to the point of being unkind to those over whom he wishes control. This is rule by fear, not by love, and is unwise from the divine standpoint. We should ourselves endeavor to be governed by love, and our associations with others should be upon the basis of love, and “love is kind.” (I Cor. 13:4) This does not mean that we should not stand firm for what we believe to be right, but heavenly wisdom dictates that we should never be unkind in our firmness, but always gentle and mild-mannered.

Another facet of heavenly wisdom as set forth by James is that described by him as “open to reason,” or as the *King James Version* renders it, “easy to be intreated.” This means a willingness to hear the viewpoints of others, and where principle is not

violated, a willingness to take them into consideration in reaching conclusions. This is particularly important where such non-essential matters are viewed differently between brethren. Under such circumstances, to take the viewpoint that one is entirely right and another member of the body of Christ is completely wrong would display a lack of heavenly wisdom.

We are all frail and deficient. Differences exist because of imperfections of the flesh, and because none of us have complete knowledge on every subject. Even the Apostle Paul stated, "Now I know in part." (I Cor. 13:12) This is one of the first lessons we learned in acquiring heavenly wisdom. Even now we should remember its importance in our dealings with others. We should not set ourselves above being approached, but humbly "be intreated" and willing to listen and consider the viewpoints of others.

"MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS"

Another element of heavenly wisdom is mercy. When we think of the degree to which our Heavenly Father is continually extending mercy toward us, how unwise it would be for us not to exercise mercy toward others. The quality of mercy is revealed by our willingness to forgive others for their trespasses against us. The Scriptures make it clear that unless we are willing to forgive others, neither will our Heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses against him.—Matt. 6:14,15

In this connection we recall a statement by the Prophet Jeremiah shortly after the nation of Israel had been overthrown and taken into captivity

because of her sins. He wrote, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” (Lam. 3:22,23) According to the terms of the Law, God could have justly destroyed the people of Israel. Instead, he simply permitted them to be taken into captivity to be punished, and this was due to his mercy.

Indeed, as Jeremiah indicates, God’s mercies are daily manifested toward his people, and that is just as true now as it was in the case of the Israelites. God’s mercies are “new every morning,” and how wonderful it is that we can have this assurance as each day we embark upon our various activities. The Heavenly Father wants us to be like him in this as well as in all other respects. Are we wisely conforming ourselves to his will by being merciful to others when they offend us because of their inherited weaknesses? Jesus’ lesson to Peter concerning the forgiving of those who sin against us even to the extent of seventy times seven, impresses the fact that our mercies, like those of our Heavenly Father, should be new every morning. We should never become weary of exercising mercy. It is a vitally important ingredient of heavenly wisdom.—Matt. 18:21,22

James includes with mercy what he describes as “good fruits.” These are the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22,23; Eph. 5:9) If the Holy Spirit is not producing the proper fruitage in our lives, then we will be lacking in heavenly wisdom. Thus again the difference between knowledge and wisdom is emphasized. The Lord wants us to study his Word and thereby become more and more acquainted

with the various features of his glorious plan of salvation. The primary purpose of this knowledge is that we might show ourselves approved by conforming our lives to the principles of righteousness set forth by the Truth. (II Tim. 2:15) If we merely attain a knowledge of the Scriptures, and then fail to apply its principles in our lives, we will be severely lacking in the wisdom which is from above.

IMPARTIAL

James reminds us that heavenly wisdom is impartial in its dealings with others. In the previous chapter of his epistle, he gives us an illustration of partiality, which he declares to be a sin. "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" To this James adds, "If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin."—James 2:1-4,9

This illustration is based upon conditions which existed in the days of the Early Church. Nevertheless, it points out the fact that if we are guided by heavenly wisdom, we will not be partial in any of our dealings or associations with the Lord's people. According to the flesh, it is natural to be drawn to some persons more than to others. In itself, this is not necessarily wrong, but if we permit ourselves

always to be favoring some, and ignoring others, then we are not being guided by heavenly wisdom.

It is possible for us to practice a degree of partiality in our association with the brethren without our being aware of it, thereby missing blessings which we might otherwise be enjoying. It is well to seek to fellowship with those whom ordinarily we might be inclined simply to greet casually. We do not know what may be in the hearts and minds of others unless we converse with them. There may well be blessings waiting for us if we make it a point to become better acquainted with those who we may not often speak with at length.

SINCERE

Wisdom, James says, is sincere. The Scriptures are firm in their denouncement of the sin of hypocrisy, which is the opposite of sincerity. A hypocrite has no rightful place among the people of God. One cannot be guided by heavenly wisdom, and at the same time be a hypocrite. Paul spoke of being all things to all people that he might save some, but he did not mean by this that he was playing the part of a hypocrite. (I Cor. 9:19-23) Jesus said that we should be wise as serpents and harmless, or simple, as doves in our presentation of the Gospel message so as not unnecessarily to offend the hearers, but again this does not imply hypocrisy.—Matt. 10:16

If we are guided by heavenly wisdom we will be open and sincere to all. We will not be deceivers either by word or deed. Sincerity of heart is one of the essential elements of true Christian character. Without it we cannot be pleasing to the Lord, nor will we be able to make our calling and election

sure to a place in the kingdom with Christ. May we indeed endeavor at all times to be sincere, and may the Truth quickly cleanse us from the slightest encroachment of the sin of hypocrisy!

WISDOM—FROM THE LORD

King Solomon, who asked for wisdom in order to rule righteously over Israel, was given much of this highly desirable quality by God. (II Chron. 1:8-12) He recognized that God was the source of wisdom and wrote of that fact, thus agreeing with James that it comes only from above. We too receive this heavenly wisdom from our Heavenly Father through his Word of Truth and our obedience to it.

We quote Solomon's words concerning wisdom: "The LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints." If we search for this wisdom through earnest study of God's Word and through prayer, and if we are willing to have our lives guided by it, then we will "understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path."—Prov. 2:6-9 ■

*Happy the man who learns to trace
The leadings of Jehovah's grace;
By wisdom coming from above,
He reads and learns that God is love.*

*Wisdom divine! who tells the price
Of wisdom's costly merchandise?
Wisdom to silver we prefer,
And gold is dross compared to her.
—Hymns of Dawn*

The Congregation at Thessalonica

*“Remembering
without ceasing
your work of faith,
and labour of love,
and patience of
hope in our Lord
Jesus Christ, in the
sight of God and
our Father.”*

*—I Thessalonians
1:3*

EARLIER IN THIS MONTH’S issue, we examined some of the Apostle Paul’s exhortations given to the church at Corinth. He had established this ecclesia located in the region of Achaia, part of present day Greece, during the latter part of his second missionary tour. Earlier during

that same journey, Paul formed churches in the region of Macedonia, about two-hundred miles north of Corinth. They were among the first Christian congregations on the continent of Europe. One of these was a group organized at Thessalonica. —Acts 18:1-18; 17:1-9

Our opening text indicates that those who made up the church at Thessalonica abounded in faith, love and hope. Their faith worked, their love labored, and their hope enabled them to wait patiently for the return of their Lord, when all the precious promises pertaining to their share in his kingdom

would be fulfilled. It was because all three of these Christian graces were so well blended and manifested in the lives of the Thessalonian brethren that the Apostle Paul was able to write to them in such a complimentary manner.

The apostle loved all his brethren in Christ, especially those to whom he was instrumental in giving the Truth. Those at Thessalonica were among the many who first heard the Gospel from the lips of this inspired servant of God. This local group of Christians was composed mostly of Greeks, but there were a number of Jews also, these having been convinced by Paul's preaching that Jesus was their Messiah. When Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica following their imprisonment at Philippi, they first visited the Jewish synagogues in order to witness to their own countrymen. On three successive Sabbaths they proclaimed the Gospel, with the result that a few Jews were convinced and accepted Jesus as their Redeemer.—Acts 17:1-4

Paul and Silas' work among the Greeks, from the standpoint of numbers, brought greater results. We are told that "of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few" believed. The Jews of the city who did not believe as a result of Paul's preaching began to oppose the work. They succeeded in stirring up some of the citizens of Thessalonica, and with them sought to lay hands upon those who had become followers of Jesus.—vss. 4,5

Apparently the new congregation of Christians held more or less regular meetings in the home of one of the brethren named Jason. It was there that the crowd gathered to assault the house and force

the group to appear before them. Perhaps the brethren had been warned, because a majority of the ecclesia were not there at the time. Jason and a few others were taken by force, brought before the rulers of the people, and charged with conspiracy against Caesar. The rulers, however, did not press the charge too severely. They allowed Jason and his friends to go free under a bond to keep the peace.—vss. 5-9

Meanwhile Paul and Silas went to Berea to give the witness of Jesus Christ and him crucified. (Acts 17:10) Paul did not remain in Thessalonica long enough to observe the growth of grace in the hearts and lives of the new converts. As time went by he doubtless often wondered how the group was getting along and perhaps thought as to whether the seed he had planted there had fallen on good ground, on stony ground, or among thistles. He knew that some of the seed had started to grow, but only the test of time and circumstance could prove how deep-rooted it was in the hearts of the brethren.

Paul knew that the storms of persecution had burst upon the budding Christians at Thessalonica. He knew that these experiences would test their faith and love and hope. No wonder he was anxious to know about them! He endeavored to visit the Thessalonian brethren again, but, as he explains, Satan hindered him. Still anxious to learn of their welfare in Christ, he sent Timothy to serve the ecclesia and to bring back a report of the brethren's spiritual growth.—I Thess. 2:17,18; 3:1-5

Timothy brought a good report, and Paul was much pleased. (vss. 6,7) His first letter to this church seems to have been written, partly at least, as an

expression of his joy in learning that these dear brethren of his were standing fast in the Lord and in the Truth. In the letter he refers to them as his “glory and joy,” and his “crown” of rejoicing.— I Thess. 2:19,20

A TRUE BROTHERLY VIEWPOINT

Paul’s interest in the brethren at Thessalonica indicates how richly the Spirit of God filled his own heart. Nothing should bring greater joy to the Lord’s people than to know that their brethren are prospering spiritually. Proper love for the brethren prompts to sacrifice in order to serve them. Our hearts should reach out to all our brethren, wherever they may be. It may be proper to conclude that “true charity begins at home,” but a Christian who has the welfare of all the brethren at heart will not be satisfied to express love only on behalf of those who may happen to cross his or her pathway.

The brotherhood of the saints is international, and if we are members of this fellowship we will be genuinely and deeply interested in our brethren the world over. Paul was not satisfied to know that once he had preached the Gospel in Thessalonica and that some believed. He wanted to know how these believers were prospering spiritually. When he learned that they were holding fast the profession of their faith, he rejoiced.

From the apostle’s letter to them we can understand somewhat the nature of the report Timothy brought to him. Our text speaks of their “work of faith,” their “labor of love,” and their “patience of hope.” Evidently, however, the report was more specific than merely that they had faith, love and

hope. It indicated that they had a faith which worked, a love which labored, and patience which was the practical outgrowth of the hope with which they were inspired.

HOW FAITH WORKS

The Apostle James tells us that faith without works is dead. (James 2:17-20) However, the faith of the Thessalonian brethren was very much alive. “From you,” the Apostle Paul wrote to them, “sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.” (I Thess. 1:8) What a testimony of a working faith! They not only believed the Gospel themselves, but they believed in it so wholeheartedly that they were laying down their lives to let others know about it. Thus they were “ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.”—vs. 7

We may say to ourselves and to others that we have absolute faith in the truth of the Gospel, but is our faith working? Genuine faith always works. By faith “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.” By faith Enoch “pleased God.” By faith Noah built the ark. By faith Abraham left his native country and lived in tents in a strange land. By faith he prepared to offer Isaac in sacrifice. By faith Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. Indeed, all the great things which were accomplished by these ancient servants of God were wrought by faith.—Heb. 11:4-29,39,40

Faith is a moving power in the lives of the Lord’s people. Faith in God and in his plan makes that

cause our own, one for which we are willing to die, and without asking how, when, or why. If we really believe in the divine purpose for mankind nothing can prevent us from talking about it. Belief that in the near future the Creator of the universe will use his power to establish upon this earth a righteous government which will bring peace and health and life to the people should lead all who possess such faith to sacrifice even life itself in appreciation of this knowledge.

LOVE THAT LABORS

The work of faith and labor of love are closely related and, in reality, inseparable in the true Christian life. However, the Apostle Paul's use of the two expressions helps to give us a more comprehensive understanding of the manner in which the zeal of the Thessalonian brethren was demonstrated in what they did for others. Their work of faith was an expenditure of energy along the lines of giving witness to the Gospel, while their labor of love was the practical evidence of their interest in the brethren. We get this thought from the apostle's language in Hebrews 6:10, where we read, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."

Timothy's report to Paul of the condition which prevailed in the Thessalonian church must have convinced the apostle that these brethren did indeed have a true love for all the Lord's people. He writes to them, saying, "As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed

ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.”—I Thess. 4:9,10

Just as the faith of the Thessalonian brethren had caused them to engage in the work of spreading the Gospel far beyond their own immediate vicinity, so their love prompted them to serve the brethren throughout all Macedonia. Evidently Jesus’ commandment to love one another had taken on a wider meaning to them than that of doing what they could merely for their own congregation. Their labor of love for the brethren had reached out and become a blessing to the saints in the entire region. The fact that Paul complimented the Thessalonian brethren for this all-embracing love indicates that without doubt he shared their attitude and was pleased with their efforts.

Could any other viewpoint be wholly pleasing to God? Were not the last words which Jesus uttered to his apostles in the nature of a command that they should go into all the world and preach the Gospel, making disciples from among all nations? (Matt. 28:19,20, *Revised Version*; Acts 1:8) Making disciples involves a great deal more than giving them the opportunity to hear the Gospel. Those who hear and believe need to be built up in the most holy faith. They need to be comforted and strengthened. They need sympathy, understanding, and the love of their brethren. They need to be warned, too, against the encroachments of the Adversary, who is ever on the alert to attack the saints through various means and deceptions.

All the opportunities of service thus represented are as universal in scope as is the command to preach

and make disciples. Our vision of them should embrace “all the world,” and our use of them should be limited only by circumstances which make it impossible for us to reach out farther in our labor of love. “All Macedonia” was a wide field of service for the one church at Thessalonica, and their labors in this field indicate that they took seriously the command of Jesus to serve in all the world within their reach.

In I Thessalonians 5:11, Paul writes, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” The expressions “yourselves together” and “one another” are evidently intended by Paul as references not merely to the church in Thessalonica, but to all the brethren they so lovingly served. Paul admonished them to comfort all of these, not because they were failing to do so, but because he wanted them to know how pleased he was that they were doing it—“even as also ye do.”

Not only was their labor of love manifested in their comforting the brethren throughout Macedonia, but they were also to warn the unruly, support the weak, and be patient toward all. They were to see to it that none rendered evil for evil, and were to encourage the brethren to follow that which is good, both among themselves, and to all. It was the doing of all these things that constituted their labor of love.—I Thess. 5:14-23

PATIENCE OF HOPE

“For we are saved by hope,” wrote the apostle to the church at Rome. Yet, as he explains, “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not,

then do we with patience wait for it.” (Rom. 8:24,25) All the unfulfilled promises of God to the followers of Jesus combine to give them hope. Outstanding among these are the promises concerning the coming and appearing of the Lord Jesus. Paul speaks of this particular hope in his letter to Titus, saying, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”—Titus 2:13

In both of Paul’s letters to the church at Thessalonica there is much to indicate the brightness of their hope in the return and appearance of Christ. Evidently their patience of hope was manifested particularly by their keen interest in the subject of our Lord’s return. However, their interest in the Second Coming of Christ was by no means unrelated to their Christian activity. Indeed, the outgrowth of their hope in the Lord’s return, and their patient waiting for the fulfillment of that hope, was their faith that worked and their love that labored. Paul wrote to them saying, “The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end that he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming [Greek: presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”—I Thess. 3:12,13

Brethren in the Early Church did not realize that the return of Christ would not occur until many centuries after they had fallen asleep in death. The Apostle James wrote that “the coming [Greek: presence] of the Lord draweth nigh.” (James 5:8) Peter and Paul understood that Christ would not come again until after their death, but how long

afterward they do not indicate. In Peter's second epistle he writes much about the Second Coming and explains that he wanted the epistle to be a means of establishing the brethren after his death.—II Pet. 1:15

A lack of patience in waiting for the fulfillment of this blessed hope could easily lead to an erroneous conclusion concerning what the apostle wrote to them. In I Thessalonians 4:16,17, Paul indicated to them that following Christ's return there would be a short period during which those who are "alive and remain" would continue here in the flesh. This, coupled with the further thought that Christ's presence would be unknown during this period to the world in general may have been misinterpreted to mean that the day of Christ had already come. It was an incorrect conclusion, but expressive, nevertheless, of their enthusiastic desire for Christ's return in order that their kingdom hopes might be realized.

FIRST, A FALLING AWAY

That some in the Thessalonian church did get this wrong thought from the Apostle Paul's first epistle is apparent from what he said in his second letter. He wrote: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming [presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."—II Thess. 2:1-3

Paul did not say that the brethren at Thessalonica had misunderstood what he had written concerning the manner of Christ's coming and presence. The only argument he offers to counteract a wrong conclusion that Christ had already returned was that an important prophetic event must first take place. This was the development of the great system which he terms "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," "the mystery of iniquity," and which is depicted in the Scriptures under the figure of "Babylon." The apostle explains not only that this system would develop and become manifest before Christ's return, but also that the brightness of his presence would be the power which would destroy it.—vss. 4,7,8

Thus we are furnished with a helpful example of proper and improper interpretations of prophecy. All of us at times may become impatient in our waiting for the fulfillment of our hopes, and because of our impatience indulge in speculation concerning the date for the glorification of the church and the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Our position with relation to the prophecies is, of course, somewhat different from that of the Thessalonian brethren. We believe the fulfillment of prophecy shows that our Lord Jesus is now invisibly present. The great falling away and the development of the mystery of iniquity spoken of by Paul are matters of history. The bright shining of the Master's presence is even now exposing Satan's evil order in all its various forms and preparing for its complete destruction, to be supplanted by the peaceable and righteous kingdom of Christ, which will bring blessings to all people.—Isa. 25:6-9; Zeph. 3:8,9; II Pet. 3:12,13; Rev. 21:3-5

It is given to us to be of those who are “alive and remain.” Nevertheless, we still need to exercise the patience of hope. Not until we are faithful unto death and exalted to be with our Lord in the spiritual phase of the kingdom will our hopes be realized. (I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 2:10) We long for that consummation. Some would hurry it if they could; but we should remember always that our times are in the Lord’s hands, and we should be willing to leave them there.—Ps. 31:15

We know that we cannot actually change God’s times and seasons, but there is a temptation to speculate concerning them. It is well to be watchful, to be alert, and earnestly to desire the speedy fulfillment of all our hopes. However, let us not run ahead of the Lord by attempting to decide dates and events of which he has given us no certain knowledge. To do this, it seems, would indicate an impatient waiting rather than patience of hope.

It is well to remember that we have dedicated ourselves to the Lord for all eternity. Whether it is his will for us to serve on this side of the veil or on the other side should not be permitted to weigh against our endeavor to make our “calling and election sure.” (II Pet. 1:10) It is a privilege and an honor to serve God in any capacity and under all circumstances and conditions. How blessed indeed is our lot, while patiently waiting for the realization of our hopes, to have the opportunity of proving our faith by our works and of laying down our lives in a labor of love on behalf of our brethren!

Well might we all take to heart Paul’s admonition to the saints in Thessalonica, “Be not weary in well doing.” (II Thess. 3:13) Even though we now live

during the closing period of the Gospel Age, until we are glorified with him we must still patiently wait, just as the “husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it.”—James 5:7

While waiting, we can rest in the assurance that there is no actual tarrying of the divine program. Hence in God’s due time, if we continue faithful, we will hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (Hab. 2:3; Matt. 25:21) We will hear these blessed words of reception into the kingdom if we have been “good and faithful” servants—if we have shown our faith by our works; if we have laid down our lives in a labor of love; and if we have manifested the patience of hope. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 1—“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”—John 14:21 (Z. ’95-75 Hymn 145)

JUNE 8—“He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”—James 5:20 (Z. ’95-203 Hymn 22)

JUNE 15—“And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”—Isaiah 55:3 (Z. ’96-29 Hymn 178A)

JUNE 22—“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. ... Every man according to his several ability.”—I Corinthians 4:2; Matthew 25:15 (Z. ’07-63 Hymn 210)

JUNE 29—“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”—Matthew 5:8 (Z. ’00-71 Hymn 208)

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752. A visit will be arranged whenever possible.

G. Balko

Columbus, OH June 13
Reynoldsburg, OH 14
Greenfield, OH 15,16

B. Keith

Vernon, BC June 26,27
Red Deer, AB 28
Prince Albert, SK 29,30

T. Krupa

Prato/Florence, Italy June 3,4

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

N. Charcharos

Portland, OR June 17,18

O. B. Elbert

Delaware Valley, PA June 3

B. Keith

Vancouver, BC June 10,11

A. Kocczyk

Portland, OR June 17,18

T. Malinowski

Vancouver, BC June 10,11

H. Montague

Portland, OR June 17,18

J. Parkinson

Portland, OR June 17,18



MOVING?



If you are moving, please let us know six weeks before you move so that we can change the address on your Dawn subscription.

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 3—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

PRATO, ITALY CONVENTION, June 3,4—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Hotel Delta Florence. Contact V. Prepelita. Email: prepelita.violeta@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 10,11—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC Canada. Contact B. A. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 17,18—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wojcik. Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com

BEREAN & SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1,2—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Siwak Farm, R. R. #1, Prince Albert, SK S6V 5P8. Contact B. Siwak. Phone (306) 960-5526 or Email: bswk77@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 15-20—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2,3—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd St., Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact J. Christiansen. Phone: (360) 633-5644 or Email: jrchristiansen@comcast.net

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 23,24—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Salvation Army Little Pine Island Camp and Retreat Center, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Contact K. Osterman. Email: kenosterman@gmail.com

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Paul Manikyam, Coonoor, India—November 2022. Age, 84

Brother Vijay, Tiruppur, India—March 23. Age, 56

Brother Joseph Christopher, Coimbatore, India—April 1. Age, 64

Brother Alexander, Bangalore, India—April 4. Age, 84

Sister Ila Hicks, Santa Barbara, CA—April 18. Age, 88

Brother Stanisław Koterba, Grywałdz, Poland—April 21. Age, 88

Sister Maria Sitarska, Nałęczów, Poland—April 25. Age, 96

Sister Sneha, Erode, India—April 29. Age, 26

Brother Edward Pilarski, Chorzów, Poland—May 2. Age, 78

Brother Bogusław Szopa, Świdnik, Poland—May 7. Age, 63

Sister Opal Williams, Victoria, BC, Canada—May 8. Age, 90

Brother Ignacy Miksa, Kościelisko, Poland—May 10. Age, 90

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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

