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ARGENTINA: A. Lupsor, Calle Almirante Brown 684, Monte Grande C.P., 1842 Buenos Aires

AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 77204, Nova Iguaçu, Rio de Janeiro, CEP 26210-970

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

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GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 USA

INDIA: The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

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The Future of Israel and the World

“By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, . . . In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

—*Genesis 22:16,18*

IN PART ONE IN OUR

consideration of this subject, we reviewed various events which have shaped the history of Israel. We saw that many of these were foretold in prophetic language by the Word of God, including their long period of Dispersion, their reestablishment as a nation in 1948, as well as the series of events beginning in 1914 which led to that momentous occurrence. In this article we will look at additional Scriptural testimony concerning the future of Israel and their role in God’s plan. We will also consider the glorious hope for all the world of mankind, which is peace, safety, and life, promised through the establishment of the righteous rule of Messiah’s kingdom. Let us, then, continue our examination of this important and timely topic.

BROUGHT BACK FROM THE SWORD

In the 38th chapter of Ezekiel there is an outline of conditions to prevail in Israel which are still future. The people are described as being at peace and dwelling safely, or confidently, having been “brought back from the sword.” (vs. 8) Today Israel has attained much of her present standing in the midst of military strife, and still depends upon her military strength for security in this war-threatened world.

Ezekiel’s prophecy reveals that at some point in time, following Israel’s return to her homeland, an aggressive army from the “north” under the leadership of a symbolic character named “Gog,” from the land of Magog, mounts an attack against the Israelites, which threatens their destruction. Prophecy reveals that when this occurs God will intervene on behalf of his people and deliver them from their enemies. This deliverance will be so marked and so manifestly of the Lord that it will result in his name becoming “known in the eyes of many nations.”—Ezek. 38:2,14-23

By this demonstration of God’s protection over them, the Israelites will come to realize that their return to the land promised them was accomplished by the providences of God. The Lord foretold, “So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; . . . and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD.” (chap. 39:7) From this point onward the Israelites will look to God for direction in their affairs. The world in general also will know that God has delivered his people and that Messiah is ruling over them.

THE NEW KING

When Israel's last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown, the Lord said, "Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:26,27) The one "whose right it is" is Israel's Messiah, the next to sit on David's throne, following the overthrow of Zedekiah.

Isaiah foretold the birth of the Messiah and his exaltation to rulership over Israel and the world. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."—Isa. 9:6,7

Prophecy further concerning the Messiah, Isaiah wrote, "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. . . . Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."—chap. 32:1,16-18

ALL ISRAEL

Our understanding of the future blessings to be enjoyed by Israel and the world would come far short of the glorious reality set forth in the Scriptures if those blessings were to be limited to those who are living at the time the Messiah imposes his rulership, or to those who might be born from that time forward. God's promises were made to all Israel, to every generation of Israelites. Included in those promises is Theodor Herzl, as well as the thousands of his fellow Zionists who hoped and toiled for the restoration of Israel to their land, even though these are now sleeping in death.

Throughout all the hundreds of weary years of the Dispersion there were ardent, God-fearing Jews who longed and prayed for the release of Israel from subservience to Gentile nations. The Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is a vivid reminder of the desperation with which the disconsolate Israelites endured their frustrations while they waited for evidence that God still loved them and in due time would deliver them. However, these too, are now all asleep in death.

The lot of Israel, even before the Dispersion, was not always a happy one. There were times when the nation enjoyed a measure of prosperity and peace, but other occasions when she was bled by war and oppression. However, God's promises of Messianic blessings were to these also, yet they died with no evidence of their fulfillment.

Moses said to the Israelites of his day, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." (Deut. 18:15) This

is another promise of the coming Messiah, but those to whom it was made are all dead. However, this and other Messianic promises will be fulfilled to them, and to every generation of the Israelites, because they will be raised from the dead.

There are many promises which assure us of this. In a prayer to Israel's God, Moses said, as recorded by the psalmist, "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men." (Ps. 90:3) The Lord said to the Prophet Daniel that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) Restoration to life for all Israelites is promised in Ezekiel 16:55, and an assurance that their children shall be awakened from death is recorded in Jeremiah 31:15-17.

Concerning the time of Messiah's kingdom, the Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear [reverence] the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."—Isa. 29:22-24

Like all members of the fallen and dying race, Jacob's face waxed pale with illness and old age, and he finally died. According to Isaiah's prophecy, however, he will be restored to life, and he will see his "children"—every generation of them, down to the present time. Then his face will not "wax pale," since that will be the promised time of health and everlasting life, as well as peace and security for

Jacob, his descendants and for the whole world of mankind.

ISRAEL'S FUTURE PRINCES

In another prophecy concerning the Messiah, Isaiah foretold, “A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.” (Isa. 32:1) The psalmist prophesied that the “fathers” of Israel would become “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) The Lord stated, “I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.”—Isa. 1:26

In this last prophecy, the Israelites are reminded of the various ways God had ruled over them. First, under the direction of Moses there were his assistants, the “counsellors.” Then there was a period of 450 years during which they were ruled by judges. Following this came the period of the kings. David set up his government in Jerusalem, which was looked upon as their capital city. In the Messianic government there will be the counterpart of the counselors and judges, who will represent the king—the Messiah. Together these will thenceforth assist in enabling Israel to be called “the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Those who will serve as Israel's “princes,” representing the Messiah, will be the ancient faithful ones from each generation who proved worthy of this high trust which will be placed in them. Outstanding among these will, of course, be their former righteous leaders and prophets—their “fathers.” These will be eminently qualified to represent the Messiah! One of these was the great

lawgiver, Moses, who laid down his life in service for his people. There was also Daniel who, as a Hebrew captive in Babylon, served as prime minister.

In a final message to Daniel, the Lord said, "Go thou thy way: . . . for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (Dan. 12:13) "The end of the days" here referred to is the end of the long period of persecution of the people of God. The promise is that Daniel will be restored to life and will then stand in his lot, undoubtedly as one of Israel's princes in the Messianic government.

The psalmist prophesied, "God reigneth over the heathen [the nations]: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." (Ps. 47:8,9) We read further concerning the "shields" or protections of the people in the Messianic kingdom: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom]: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."—Isa. 11:9

"In that day," Isaiah continues, "there shall be a root of Jesse [the Messiah], which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the

outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”—vss. 10-12

The number of Israelites now gathered in the land promised to them by God is only a small portion of the total whom the Lord will eventually restore. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that Messiah’s rulership is to be for a thousand years. During that time, even those who are now held captive in death are to be restored to life, both Israelites and Gentiles. Surely, the future of Israel and the world is a glorious one—as bright as the promises of God!

NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION

To the followers of Jesus, the New Testament is an explanation and a confirmation of the Old Testament, the first five books of which is the Torah of the Jews. The New Testament presents Jesus as the Messiah of promise, the one who was to sit on David’s throne. (Luke 1:31-33) While Jesus died as the Redeemer of the world, he was raised from the dead by divine power, thus confirming our faith in all God’s promises to restore the dead to life.—Acts 17:31

Basic to every Jew is the promise God made to Abraham that through his seed “all families of the earth” would be blessed. (Gen. 12:3; 22:15-18) The New Testament presents Jesus as this promised “seed” of blessing. Paul wrote, “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”—Gal. 3:16

The New Testament explains that Jesus, after having provided redemption for the world by his

death, was raised from the dead and exalted to a plane of life higher than human so that now, like the angels, and like the great Creator of the universe, he is invisible to human eyes. Thus he will be the powerful, but invisible, ruler of the world.—Col. 1:15

Writing to the disciples of Christ, Paul said, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”—Gal. 3:27-29

This simply means that the true, self-sacrificing followers of Jesus will be rewarded with the privilege of sharing in his spiritual kingdom and, together with him, take part in the work of blessing all the families of the earth, as promised to Abraham. In Hebrews 3:1-6, the Apostle Paul explains that just as Moses was faithful over his “house,” so there is another “house” over which Jesus is faithful, and those in Jesus’ house are partakers of a “heavenly calling,” meaning that these are to be a part of the invisible ruling house of God.

In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, the Apostle Paul calls further attention to both of these groups. He names many of the ancient faithful ones, and outlines some of the hardships they endured in order to be worthy of a “better resurrection.” (vs. 35) To this he adds that “they without us [of the spiritual house] should not be made perfect.” (vs. 40) Thus, while the ancient faithful servants of God first proved their devotion and their worthiness to serve in the Messianic kingdom, they must wait, in

the sleep of death, for the completion of the spiritual “seed” of Abraham, before being raised to perfection of life to begin their work as “princes in all the earth.”

The earthly “seed” is made up largely of the natural descendants of Abraham, while the spiritual seed will be made up of both Jews and Gentiles. Indeed, this opportunity first went exclusively to the people of Israel, and after their rejection of Jesus it was extended to others.

The principal qualification mandatory for those who will serve in any capacity in the Messianic kingdom is heart devotion to the Lord and loyalty to the divine principles of righteousness, for which they would be willing to die if called upon to do so. This was a characteristic of all the Ancient Worthies. It was true of Jesus, and it is true of all his faithful followers.

SETTING UP THE KINGDOM

We can understand clearly the teachings of the Bible only by taking into account, and believing, its many promises concerning the resurrection of the dead. If our faith is able to lay hold upon these promises and believe them, then the Bible has a message of assurance and comfort for us. This is particularly true with respect to its prophecies pertaining to the setting up and work of the Messianic kingdom.

That the kingdom might become a reality, it was first necessary that Jesus be raised from the dead, for he is to be the divine ruler in that kingdom. Then, as the New Testament reveals, those who are to share with him in the spiritual phase of the

kingdom must also be raised from the dead. In each generation from Jesus' day until now, some have proved their worthiness for such a high honor. Concerning this group, we read, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: . . . they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."—Rev. 20:6

Then, as we have already noted, the Ancient Worthies, who will be the human representatives of the divine Christ, will also need to be raised from the dead. Jesus testified concerning these, "I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom." (Matt. 8:11) Luke's account of this adds, "all the prophets," and explains that the people would come from the north, south, east, and west, and sit down before these as their instructors "in the kingdom of God."—Luke 13:28,29

FUNCTIONING OF THE KINGDOM

Thus will be the arrangements of Messiah's kingdom, in which he will be the divinely appointed ruler—the king. The generation of Israelites regathered to their land who are living when the great miracle of divine intervention for their protection takes place and who acknowledge Christ's sovereignty will be the first to receive the opportunity of blessing under the beneficent rulership of these Messianic kingdom arrangements. Those who show their loyalty to the new regime will cooperate in extending its blessings by their example of obedience.

A prophecy pertaining to this reads, "It shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the

heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days [of the Messianic kingdom] to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.”—Zech. 8:13-17

The divine principles of righteousness here set forth, which the Israelites will need to observe and obey in order to receive the blessings of Messiah, will also have to be observed by the people of all nations, that they, too, may receive the blessings of the kingdom. Those who do will be blessed and will likewise have the privilege of cooperating in that great project of blessing which ultimately will be extended to include “all families of the earth.”

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Another precious kingdom promise reads, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake: . . . But this shall be the covenant that I will make

with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”—Jer. 31:31-34

A key element of this prophecy is the promise that God will put his law in the “hearts” of his people and write it in their “inward parts.” We believe that this describes the condition of man in the image of God. It was thus that Adam was created, and God’s promise is that through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom man is to be restored to this state of perfection and fellowship with God.

When originally created, man was given dominion over the earth. (Gen. 1:27,28) This dominion is also to be restored. Jesus assured us of this in one of his parables. He pictured the people of all nations being judged, some showing goat-like dispositions, while others were like sheep. To these sheep it will be said, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”—Matt. 25:34

A study of this parable indicates that the character qualification necessary for inheriting the original dominion given to man will be an unselfish interest in others. Selfishness has been a killing blight upon humanity throughout all the centuries of fallen man’s experience. Under the Messianic kingdom arrangements, love will replace selfishness. Then

the full meaning of the Law which God gave to ancient Israel through Moses will be recognized and accepted as the rule of life for all mankind. Moses gave that law its true meaning, saying, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."—Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18

With such a standard of righteousness as the guiding principle in the lives of all the people, having been redeemed from original sin and restored to perfection of life, what a glorious place this earth will be! In harmony with God's standards, those who refuse to obey and cooperate after being given sufficient time to respond positively to the kingdom arrangements, will not be permitted to live, for death will remain the penalty for willful sin. This means that there will be nothing to mar the happiness of the restored race.—Acts 3:22,23

While many of the wonderful Messianic kingdom promises are made, in the first instance, to the Israelites, the Bible assures us that they will also have a fulfillment in the people of all nations, for Israel was used by God as a prototype of the world.

RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS

All the prophets of God were eloquent in their forecasts of blessings coming to both Jews and Gentiles through the agencies of Messiah's kingdom. In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter describes the period when these prophecies will be fulfilled as "times of restitution of all things," which, he adds, "God hath spoken by the mouth of

all his holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20,21

When Peter thus summed up the meaning of the united prophetic testimony concerning Messianic kingdom blessings, he was addressing a Jewish audience, so he added, “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.” (Acts 3:25) Here Peter explains that God’s promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth is to be fulfilled by the “restitution” of all things. We know that God confirmed his promise to father Abraham by his oath, and Peter tells us that he also confirmed it by the testimony of all his holy prophets.

Restitution means restoration to a former condition. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines the word that Peter used in this passage of scripture as “restoration of the perfect state before the fall.” Viewed in this manner, we see that the most important thing to be restored to the people is life. Because they transgressed the divine law, our first parents lost the privilege of living forever, and their children were born imperfect and dying. Sin and death have continued to reign over the earth ever since, causing untold sorrow and suffering among the people of all nations.

The Prophet David wrote of this long period of human suffering, describing it as a nighttime of weeping. As a prophet of God, however, David added the good news that “joy cometh in the morning.” (Ps. 30:5) In other words, the blight of sin and death is not to remain forever. As Jesus stated

concerning the grand purpose of his coming to earth: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”—perfect human life lost because of Adamic sin. (Luke 19:10) This is the essence of the restitution period’s purpose of which Peter spoke.

Isaiah, another of God’s holy prophets, described the future age of restitution as a day in which the inhabitants of the world would no longer say, “I am sick.” (Isa. 33:24) He also wrote that then blind eyes would be opened and deaf ears unstopped. (chap. 35:5) Additionally, he prophesied that the people would “build houses, and inhabit them,” and “plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.”—chap. 65:21,22

Truly, the future of Israel and the world is bright. The earth is to be “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD.” (Hab. 2:14) There will be no more war, nor the fear of war. All will be economically and culturally secure, as symbolized in the prophecy of everyone dwelling under his own “vine and under his fig tree.”—Mic. 4:1-4

The ultimate and glorious result of the rulership of that world government will be peace between God and man, and among men, with the righteous laws of the Creator respected and obeyed by all mankind. The Prophet David eloquently foretold this. We quote: “Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.”—Ps. 85:11-13 ■

Judgment on Israel and Judah

Key Verse: *“Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked.”*
—Amos 2:4

Selected Scripture:
Amos 2:4-8

son, Rehoboam.—I Kings 11:9-13,28-37

Later, during the reign of a second King Jeroboam, son of Joash, the northern kingdom of Israel enjoyed

KING SOLOMON'S REIGN

had brought great prosperity throughout the kingdom of Israel. Peace ruled within its borders during his lifetime, and those borders were extended to include many adjoining nations. With these blessings, however, came many responsibilities with regard to managing such a vast kingdom. Solomon appointed princes and officers to assist in this work. (I Kings 4:1-21) Additionally, in an attempt to keep the diverse population content, Solomon took wives from many conquered nations along with their idols. Angered by this disobedience, God declared he would take away the nation from Solomon, divide it into pieces, and give the ten northern tribes to Jeroboam instead of Solomon's

one of its most prosperous periods. (II Kings 14:23-28) He recovered land which had been lost by his forerunners, subdued the kingdom of Moab, and captured parts of Syria. At the same time, the two-tribe kingdom, Judah, under the reign of Uzziah, also was enjoying great prosperity. Many people in both the northern and southern kingdoms became very wealthy, and began to lead a luxurious life. Unfortunately, this prosperity brought a collapse of moral standards. Ignored were the great ideals and commandments of God to help the poor, and to practice justice and loving-kindness. The rich oppressed the poor. Might was right, and it was a time of great corruption.

In response to this gross disobedience, God sent the Prophet Amos not with a warning, but with a sentence. The phrase in our Key Verse—"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions . . . and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof"—is stated eight times in the first two chapters of Amos' prophecy. The expression "for three . . . and for four" has the thought of repetition—that which goes toward excess—sin in this case. This foretelling of a speedy doomsday applied especially to Israel and Judah because they were God's chosen and peculiar people.

God had not made himself known to any other nation, nor made a covenant with any other people, except Israel. He had given his laws only to them, and they had a special responsibility to keep his commandments, as they had promised at Mount Sinai. (Exod. 19:8) However, instead of God's favor making them loyal in heart to him, they had continually despised his favor through disobedience.

In foretelling the troubles he would bring upon Israel because of their misused privileges and opportunities, God wanted them to know distinctly that these judgments were not matters of accident or chance, but of divine providence. How reassuring, but also sobering, to know that there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning in the words and promises of our God.—James 1:17 ■

God Is Not Fooled

Key Verse: “*Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.*”
—Amos 5:24

Selected Scripture:
Amos 5:14,15,18-27

THE MESSAGE DELIVERED

by the Prophet Amos was one of certain punishment which would come upon a perverse nation. As a herdsman, his opening words—“The LORD roars out of Zion”—are very descriptive of the most terrifying sounds imaginable to one tending a flock. (Amos 1:1,2, *Amplified Bible*) Using similar words, he reminds them of God’s use of chosen prophets to deliver messages to his people saying, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?” (chap. 3:7,8) In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter also speaks of a “roaring lion” when describing Satan’s desire to destroy those called of God in the present Gospel Age. He says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”—I Pet. 5:8

Peter’s words were a warning to spiritual Israelites. Amos, however, leaves no doubt that his prophecy was not a warning, or yet another call to repentance, delivered so many times in the past to natural Israel. His prophecy was a verdict of punishment upon them for continually turning away from God. The provisions of God’s covenant with Israel were clear. He had chosen them alone to be his special people among all the nations on the earth.

(Deut. 7:6) In return they promised to follow all of God's arrangements and serve only him. Their actions, however, betrayed their promise as time and time again they turned to their own sinful desires. They ignored God's instructions and worshipped idols. (Isa. 2:8) They paid no heed to his warnings and killed his prophets. (Neh. 9:26; Matt. 23:31) They also ignored natural disasters brought upon them, as described by Amos, designed to bring them back to God.—Amos 4:6-10

In the verses of today's lesson, God declares that he knows Israel's heart and will not be fooled or swayed by hollow actions intended to show obedience. The feast days and various offerings established to give honor and thanks to God were no longer acceptable to him because of their sins. He further declares that he will no longer hear the noise or melody of their songs. (chap. 5:21-23) Then, Amos speaks the words of our Key Verse. Over three-thousand years earlier, the disobedient act of Adam resulted in the promised punishment of death to him and all of his progeny, according to God's law of justice. The prophet says that this same perfect justice must now be meted out to Israel without regard to what they might attempt to hide or cover up.

Here we see an important feature of God's character. What he promises he will fulfill, whether they be blessings or punishments. He knows what is best for his human family and declares that his ways are higher than our ways. (Isa. 55:9) Therefore, our trust in him must be complete and without the hypocrisy of mere lip service to his instructions.

Let us earnestly embrace Paul's instruction as he hearkens back to Israel's unrighteousness: "With many of them God was not well pleased: . . . Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [ages] are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—I Cor. 10:5,11,12 ■

Rebuked for Selfishness

Key Verse: “*Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock.*”
—**Amos 6:12**

Selected Scripture:
Amos 6:4-8,11-14

God pronounced by the Prophet Amos were first against Israel’s neighboring enemies, then Judah, and finally against the ten northern tribes of Israel. As cited in our previous lesson, the punishments against Judah were largely because they had abandoned their covenant relationship with God. The punishments against the ten northern tribes of Israel were additionally the results of their sins of greed, selfishness, and coldness of heart, and are the focus of today’s lesson from Amos’ prophecy.

This was a time in the northern kingdom’s history when many had become wealthy and settled into a life of ease and luxury. This self-gratification resulted in their indifference to the conditions of the poor. Such wealth brought perhaps a sense of position and satisfaction, but the words of Amos were, “Woe to them.” (Amos 6:1) The Law Covenant required every Israelite to see to the needs of their neighbors in every aspect of life. Once again, however, the imperfections and desires of the flesh blinded many to their obligation and promise to keep God’s commandments. Their own actions condemned

them for they were “not grieved and sick at heart over the affliction and ruin of Joseph (Israel!)”—vs. 6, *Amplified Bible*

Our Key Verse shows the coldness of their hearts. They would not think of running their horses or plowing their oxen upon rocks because it would result in injured animals and personal loss. While they would never do anything so irrational regarding their personal wealth and possessions, when it came to applying God’s principles to their brethren, Amos says, according to the *New American Standard Bible* of the Key Verse, these same greedy persons “have turned justice into poison And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.”

Greed and selfishness are characteristics of the fallen flesh. For those possessing wealth it often produces indifference to the needs of the poor. For the poor it frequently produces resentment and anger toward the wealthy. For the world in general such an attitude is perhaps understandable. To the chosen Israelite, however, it was a breach of their covenant with God. Amos asks, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3) The greedy and selfish were clearly not “agreed” with God and were, therefore, worthy of the punishment meted out.

Just as God held natural Israel to a higher standard than that of the world, he similarly holds us, as spiritual Israelites, to an elevated level of expectation. God has reminded us that Israel’s experiences were a type, or example, to help us avoid making the same mistakes they made. (I Cor. 10:6) Paul reminds us that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, not servants as were the Israelites. (Rom. 8:14) God punished Israel for their ultimate benefit. Likewise, he chastens us, as a father disciplines his own children, so we might grow in righteousness. (Heb. 12:5-8) He reassures us that in all these experiences he will never leave us or forsake us, and will not give us experiences that we cannot bear.—Heb. 13:5; I Cor. 10:13 ■

God Takes Action Against Sin

Key Verse: *“He said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.”*
—Amos 8:2

OUR CONSIDERATION OF the prophecy of Amos concludes with today’s lesson. In our Key Verse, the prophet sees before him a basket of summer fruit—ripe and not fit for preserving. This is an apt illustration of the nation of Israel, for they had repeatedly broken their covenant with God. They would no longer be preserved, for they were ripe to be soon destroyed as a nation.

Selected Scripture: As a nation, Israel was indeed cut off less than two centuries after the time of Amos. Still, they would be given one last chance to remain God’s chosen people by accepting the Messiah when he arrived. However, they failed that opportunity also when they refused to accept Jesus as Israel’s promised king. Jesus lamented their rejection just days before his crucifixion: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.”—Matt. 23:37,38

Jesus was in complete harmony with his Heavenly

Father. He declared, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 40:8) He knew of his Father's love for Israel, and he loved them as well, despite their rejection of him. Many have read the prophecies concerning Israel and missed the tender love toward Israel shared by God and Jesus. Millions have concluded that Israel's own prophets condemned Israel, much of the world of mankind, and the earth to total destruction. Such might be a logical supposition if we were to end all of the Bible's prophecies before their conclusions are noted.

Many prophets have declared much trouble and destruction to come upon Israel and the world, but subsequently speak of blessings to follow. For example, in the prophecy of Zephaniah, God speaks of his "fierce anger" and the "fire" of his "jealousy," but immediately says that after this period of trouble, "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." (Zeph. 3:8,9) This is but one example of blessings promised by the prophets of Israel after prophesying of destruction.

Amos also declares this destruction for repeated sins is not the end of Israel in God's plans. He declares, "In that day [after the period of their desolation as a nation] will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, . . . and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old." (Amos 9:11) James quotes this prophecy in Acts 15:13-18 as evidence of Israel's part in God's plan "from the beginning of the world."

The Apostle Paul also frequently emphasized Israel's part in God's plan. He said, concerning Israel and their people, "Unto them were committed the oracles of God;" "God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew." (Rom. 3:2; 11:2) Paul's conclusion with regard to Israel is that although their failures brought blindness upon them, it will be removed, and they will be recovered, when they recognize their Messiah and his kingdom is established.—Rom. 11:25-27 ■

Christian Stewardship

The Pounds and Talents

*“Let a man so
account of us, as of
the ministers of
Christ, and
stewards of the
mysteries of God.*

*Moreover it is
required in
stewards, that a
man be found
faithful.”*

*—I Corinthians
4:1,2*

A DEDICATED FOLLOWER

of the Master is one who has committed all that he has and is to the service of the Lord, to be used in keeping with the divine will. This includes time, strength, talents, influence, money—everything. The Lord does not take these away all at once, but leaves them in the custody of the giver to be

used as indicated by his sanctified judgment until completely consumed on the altar of sacrifice. Thus every true disciple is a steward over his own assets.

However, our text is speaking of another phase of Christian stewardship. Paul explains that as “ministers of Christ” we are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” These “mysteries of God” are

not what we give to the Lord, but what he gives to us. Briefly stated, these mysteries are the Truth as revealed to us by God's Holy Spirit. Jesus also identifies these, using the expression, "mysteries of the kingdom of God."—Luke 8:10

TWO PARABLES

Jesus related two parables which illustrate our privileges and responsibilities as stewards of the truth. One is the parable of the pounds, found in Luke 19:11-27, and the other is the parable of the talents, recorded in Matthew 25:14-30. In the parable of the pounds, Jesus likens himself to a "nobleman," and in the parable of the talents, to a "man." In both lessons, after delivering to his servants the "pounds" and "his goods," Jesus represents himself as going away and returning at a later time.

In the two parables, when the Master returns there is a reckoning with his servants based upon the use they have made of that which was entrusted to them. In the case of the pounds, only one is delivered to each servant, but rewards in differing amounts are administered to the faithful. In the other parable, varying numbers of talents are distributed to the servants, but at the time of reckoning, all the faithful receive the same reward.

It is evident that both parables refer to the work of the Lord in the earth throughout the Gospel Age, and to the fact that it is accomplished by servants who are faithful to their stewardship over that which is entrusted to them for this purpose. The differences in the two parables are not contradictory, but illustrative of two important facets

of the manner in which the work of God throughout the present age is accomplished.

It is important to notice that in these two lessons, that which was distributed to the servants was not previously theirs. The “pounds” belonged to the “nobleman,” and the “talents” to the “man.” The parables related by Jesus are merely illustrations of truths which are elsewhere set forth in the Bible in straightforward language. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal just what it was that Jesus gave to his disciples, his servants, at the beginning of the Gospel Age in order that they might be properly equipped to go forth in the divine service.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples before his ascension—his “going away” according to the parables—he said to them, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) Previously, he had promised to send the Holy Spirit, which, he said, would “guide” his disciples “into all truth.”—John 16:12-15

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of truth,” and very properly so. We cannot receive the Truth contained in the Scriptures into our hearts and be guided and strengthened by it without the aid of the Holy Spirit, nor can we possess the Holy Spirit apart from the Truth. Thus, when the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost it enabled them to know the Truth—to understand the marvelous teachings of Jesus which previously they could not “bear.” It was through this gift of the Holy Spirit that the

“mysteries of God” became theirs to know and to use as the Lord’s stewards.

There is a close relationship between the use of our own abilities in the Lord’s service and our stewardship of the mysteries of God. Indeed, it is the Spirit of the Truth, the Holy Spirit, which energizes, or quickens us to perform faithful and acceptable service as ambassadors of Christ. It is by faithfulness in the use of the Truth that the work of the Lord during the Gospel Age is carried forward.

THE SAME TO ALL

In the parable of the pounds—a pound being a sum of money—each servant received the same amount, which was one “pound.” This represents those blessings received from the Lord which are common to all his servants, and which enable them to render acceptable service in his cause.

It seems evident that the pound represents something which the Scriptures teach is actually furnished by the Lord to his people. First, we were drawn to the Lord and to the point of full consecration by the power of the Truth. After making a full consecration to do God’s will, we received the begetting and anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit which, in particular, authorizes us to be partners in the work of the Lord. To assure us that our labors would be acceptable, despite the imperfections of our flesh, we also received the robe of Christ’s righteousness for our justification.

It is through the proclamation of the Truth that God’s work during the Gospel Age is accomplished in the earth. Paul wrote, concerning that work:

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then [because of this] we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—II Cor. 5:19,20

THE TALENTS

The parable of the talents presents a different viewpoint—another aspect of Christian stewardship. The number of talents given to each servant varied. Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.”—Matt. 25:14,15

The word “several” in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word *idios*, and has the meaning of “self” or “own.” In addition, the word “ability” in this passage, translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, means “force” or “miraculous power.” The *Emphatic Diaglott* literal translation of this portion of the verse reads, “. . . to each according to the own power.”

In the New Testament, this same Greek word, *dunamis*, is translated “miracles” eight times and “miracle” once. In many other usages, miraculous power or authority is implied. For example, Peter wrote concerning the Master’s followers that they are “kept by the power [*dunamis*] of God through faith unto salvation.” (I Pet. 1:5) Jesus said to his disciples, “Ye shall receive power

[*dunamis*], after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you.”—Acts. 1:8

Based upon the general use of the Greek word *dunamis* in the New Testament, and the literal translation of the Greek in the Diaglott—“the own power”—we suggest that the expression, “according to” refers to the exercise of the power and authority of the “man” of the parable in the distribution of his own “goods,” rather than the power of the servants. This does not relieve the servants in the parable of the responsibility to use their own natural endowments in the service of the Master, but emphasizes that the “goods” distributed by the Lord quicken and energize these to make their use effective and acceptable in his sight.

This suggestion is in keeping with II Peter 1:2,3, which reads, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power [*dunamis*] hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” Here we are reminded that “all things” pertaining to our service for the Lord and our relationship with him are gifts distributed in accordance with, and by, divine power. This would include the “talents” of the parable.

This distribution of gifts to Jesus’ followers is said to be “through the knowledge” of the Lord—in other words, through the Truth. We receive this knowledge through the revealing power of the Holy Spirit. This is why the expression, “Spirit of truth,” is used by Jesus in promising the disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit.

From one standpoint, as illustrated in the parable of the pounds, the Lord's consecrated people, through the Truth, receive a common endowment which enables them to render acceptable service to God. From another perspective, however, their opportunities and abilities to serve differ, and this is indicated by the parable of the talents.

In Ephesians 4:7,11,12, Paul explains what the impartation of the Holy Spirit means to the disciples of Jesus with respect to the work of the ministry. He wrote, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ"—in keeping with the manner in which, by divine authority, Christ distributes the "talents." We read further, "He gave [or made] some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting [*Diaglott*: "complete qualification"] of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

In I Corinthians 12:4-11, Paul presents a similar thought: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations [*Diaglott*: "services"], but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh

that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he [the Lord] will.”

The gifts of the Spirit referred to by Paul which were outwardly miraculous in nature were given only to the twelve apostles and certain other individuals in the Early Church to whom the apostles imparted some of these powers. Thus, these special “gifts” were only in operation for a limited period of time—until the apostles and those of that generation “fell asleep” in death.” However, there are many other “diversities of gifts” with which the true followers of the Master in every part of the Gospel Age have been endowed.

In Romans 12:3-8, we read, “I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”

Paul admonishes further in this account that in the use of these gifts “love” should “be without dissimulation,” that we should “abhor that which is evil,” and “cleave to that which is good.” “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly

love; in honour preferring one another.” To this he adds that we be “not slothful,” but “fervent in Spirit.” (Rom. 12:9-11) Possibly Paul had in mind the unfaithful servant in the parable who was described by Jesus as “wicked and slothful.”—Matt. 25:26

The Apostle Peter confirms Paul’s view of Christian stewardship, and also exhorts to faithfulness in the use of the gifts with which we have been endowed by the Holy Spirit. He wrote, “As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability [Greek: “forcefulness”] which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.”—I Pet. 4:10,11

In this passage, the Greek word which is translated “manifold” means varied, or diversified. We are made stewards of the “diversified” grace of God, manifested in the many spiritual gifts by which we are qualified for the ministry. It is these many and varied gifts given by God, operating through our natural, but imperfect faculties, which seem to be represented by the talents of the parable.

On the other hand, as we have noted, those treasures of the Holy Spirit imparted through the Truth which are received in common by Jesus’ true followers may well be represented by the pounds of the other parable. We need both the pounds and the talents, and the spiritual guidance to use them properly, to be acceptable and efficient servants of the Lord.

FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness to our stewardship of the mysteries of God calls for the dedication and use of all our natural endowments. These we have given to the Lord, and he allows us to keep them to use for him, sacrificing them in the faithful discharge of our stewardship. Our natural abilities play a part in the work of the ministry, and without doubt are taken into consideration by the Lord. However, some of Jesus' own apostles were ignorant and unlearned men according to the standards of this world, yet through the power of the Holy Spirit they were used mightily in the divine service. By contrast, Paul was well equipped with natural talents, and he used them faithfully, sacrificing them in the interests of his stewardship. He wrote, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."—Phil. 3:7

Though highly talented in many ways, when Paul's vision became impaired, which no doubt hindered him to a degree in his ministry, the Lord did not deem it best to restore his eyesight. In humility, he wrote, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations [with which God had blessed him], there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. . . . For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power [*dunamis*] of Christ may rest upon me."—II Cor. 12:7-9

The power of the Holy Spirit could operate in and through Paul regardless of his infirmities. This is true of all the Lord's consecrated people. In order

for it to be a reality for us, however, we must yield up our all for his use. Only thus can we be faithful in our stewardship of “the mysteries of God.”

THE INCREASE

According to both parables, faithfulness resulted in the increase of the “goods” which were delivered to the servants. The one who was given five talents gained five more, and the one who was given two talents gained an additional two. Each of the servants in the parable of the pounds was given a pound. One gained ten pounds, and another five.

In considering what is represented by these increases, we should at first remember that we cannot expect a parable to fit the intended lesson in every detail. The evident principal purpose of the two parables under consideration was to encourage zeal on the part of the Lord’s people throughout the Gospel Age. They teach that the Lord Jesus was going away, and that he would return to reckon with his servants. The parables further show that to render acceptable service the Lord’s servants would be endowed with gifts from him, and that they would be rewarded for their faithfulness.

These two parables illustrate the partnership of Jesus and his footstep followers in carrying out the divine will. We know that according to God’s plan, his work throughout the earth during the Gospel Age has been that of calling and preparing a “people for his name” to live and reign with Christ. (Acts 15:14) To begin with, these people are of the sin-cursed and dying world. Through the ministry of those who are endowed with the Truth and its Spirit, these are reached and reconciled to God through

their belief in Christ and their full consecration to do the Lord's will. It is thus that they receive the Spirit of sonship, and are authorized to serve as "ambassadors for Christ" in the work of the ministry, conducted through the use of the "word of reconciliation."

The Bible assures us that as a result of the reign of Christ the earth will be filled with a "knowledge of the LORD." (Isa. 11:9) This does not mean that it will be written across the skies. It simply means that the hearts and minds of the people will be filled with that knowledge. Concerning those of the Gospel Age who are endowed with God's Holy Spirit, to the extent that their faithful service contributes to the implanting of the same Spirit of the Truth in the minds and hearts of others, this could be considered an increase.

This thought seems to be further borne out by noting the rewards administered to the faithful ones of the parables. In the parable of the pounds, the one who gained ten pounds was given authority over ten cities, and the one who gained five pounds was given authority over five cities. The rewards given in the parable are those of rulership.

In the parable of the talents, the promise to all the faithful is twofold—they were to be made rulers over many things, and were bidden to enter into "the joy" of the Lord. Thus both rulership and rejoicing are assured to those who faithfully use their talents.

With these rewards in mind, let us note what Paul wrote in his letter to the brethren at Philippi. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons

of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights; . . . Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” (Phil. 2:14-16) Thus Paul indicated that if the brethren at Philippi remained faithful they would be a proof “in the day of Christ” that he had “not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.” This, he explained, would lead to his rejoicing in that day, his “joy of the Lord” promised in the parable.—Matt. 25:21,23

Even more pointed in this connection is Paul’s statement to the Thessalonian brethren. To them he wrote, “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” (I Thess. 2:19,20) Here Paul explains that both his “crown”—representing rulership—and his rejoicing when reckoned with by Jesus at his return would be his because of these faithful brethren to whom he had ministered the Truth. They would be part of the increase, having been endowed with the Spirit of the Truth and proven faithful to their stewardship.

Along the same line, Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth, “Ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (II Cor. 1:14) Peter, Apollos, and others had also labored in Corinth, and thereby assisted in establishing the Corinthian brethren in the Truth and in the Lord. Likewise, the brethren in Corinth had contributed to some extent to Paul’s own upbuilding in the faith. It was concerning the Lord’s work there that Paul wrote,

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man [the gifts pertaining to the ministry]? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”— I Cor. 3:5-8

Thus the increase resulting from our faithful use of the Lord’s goods seems clearly indicated. It is also encouraging to realize that the cooperative efforts of the brethren are also mentioned by Paul in connection with the increase with which the Lord blesses their efforts. There are some who might feel disappointed that the Lord has never used them individually to interest others in the Truth and bring them to the point of full consecration. Yet, it is also true that there are probably few instances in which an interested one has been found and brought to a knowledge of the Truth, except by the cooperation of many of “like precious faith.”

It is because all of his servants work together that the Lord’s work prospers. In this way, all can have a share in it. Not all have received the gift of prophecy—public speaking. Not all are teachers. However, all have, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, been endowed with some talent which can be used in the general ministry of the Truth, the ministry of reconciliation. As quoted earlier, Paul explains that our gifts differ “according to the grace that is given unto us.” All the Lord’s consecrated people have been given the privilege of “ministry”

as one of the gifts of the Spirit. Ministry simply means service, and there are many ways in which we can serve the Lord, the Truth, one another, and all those with whom we come in contact.

Paul also mentions “he that giveth [impart or share],” and “he that sheweth mercy.” (Rom. 12:8) One who is filled with the Spirit would be specially qualified to show mercy, and thus contribute to the building up of those who need to be helped along this line. What a blessing to others are those who are able to “impart” love and sympathy for the comfort of the Lord’s people!

The Holy Spirit energizes those who receive it. Paul says that God has not given us the “spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound [disciplined] mind.” (II Tim. 1:7) The Holy Spirit gives strength to the timid and fearful, enabling them to serve in ways and to an extent that would not be possible if they depended only upon their natural abilities.

The Lord has also given us the Spirit “of love.” Paul wrote that the “love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.” How worthless would be our ministry if it were not motivated by love. It would be nothing more than “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”—Rom. 5:5; I Cor. 13:1

Through the gift of the Spirit we are also enabled to have a “sound,” or disciplined, mind. Such a mind is one that is endowed and regulated by the truth of God’s plan and his character. This gift also is vital to an acceptable and effective service to the Lord. How futile would be our efforts as ministers of reconciliation apart from having the Spirit of a disciplined mind.

THE “WICKED” AND “SLOTHFUL”

The servant who was given one talent and buried it in the ground is described as “wicked and slothful,” and the servant who wrapped his pound in a napkin is described as “wicked.” The practical lesson of both parables is the importance of faithfulness in our stewardship, regardless of how much of the Master’s “goods” he may have entrusted to us. The Scriptures indicate that those who are faithful or unfaithful in things which are “least” will likewise be faithful or unfaithful in “much.”—Luke 16:10

Speaking of his servants, Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world,” and he admonished them not to put their light under a “bushel.” (Matt. 5:14-16) In the parables, the wrapping of the pound in a napkin and the burying of the talent in the earth seem to suggest the same idea of permitting the Truth to be hidden from others through our unfaithfulness.

The unfaithful servant in both parables speaks of the hardness of their master. This seems to be but an excuse. Jesus explains that if this is what the servants really believed, it should have spurred them on to faithfulness, rather than otherwise. Here we are reminded that the human heart is very deceitful. Let us be watchful lest we be found making excuses for unfaithfulness.

Let us keep before our minds the practical lesson of both parables, which is that “it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” We have been made “stewards of the mysteries of God.” In whatever way, or ways, we have been endowed by the Holy Spirit to minister the Truth and its blessings to others, let us do so with diligence, for this is

the great project upon which we have embarked. With the Lord's blessing, we know that his eternal purpose can and will succeed. God's work will be accomplished, and through our own faithfulness we can share in his joy. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 4—"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—I Peter 1:7 (Z. '95-135 Hymn 197)

JUNE 11—"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended."—Philippians 3:13 (Z. '95-250 Hymn 196)

JUNE 18—"In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."—Psalm 16:11 (Z. '96-54 Hymn 337)

JUNE 25—"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."—Colossians 4:2 (Z. '96-163 Hymn 241)

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Marian Gepfert, Buffalo, NY—April 17. Age, 97

Brother Ray Luke, Orlando, FL—May 20. Age, 94

Must Christians be Persecuted?

*“All that will live
godly in Christ
Jesus shall suffer
persecution.”*

—II Timothy 3:12

THE TRUTH OF THE GOS-pel message, God’s great plan for human salvation, has never been popular in the world. Jesus, the central figure in this glorious kingdom message, the one who brought “life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Tim. 1:10), was crucified because he proclaimed unpopular truth and exposed popular error. Some of his apostles and others in the Early Church suffered violent deaths, and for the most part all the early Christians were bitterly opposed by unbelieving Jews of that time, as well as by Gentiles.

Throughout the entire Gospel Age, there have been many martyrs to the Truth. Some have been burned at the stake. Others have suffered many cruel forms of physical torture and death. Imprisonment has been the lot of many. The experiences of all these have been quite in harmony with the terms of the “narrow” way of sacrifice which Jesus outlined for his disciples, when he said, “If any

man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”—Matt. 7:14; 16:24

Jesus also said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) As appraised by human wisdom, it would seem that the world had overcome Jesus. He was cruelly put to death by self-seeking human elements of the religious world of his day. However, in this experience Jesus was the real overcomer. Because he knew it was his Father’s will that he should die as the Redeemer of the fallen and dying race, he meekly surrendered to his enemies, and continued to love them even though they put him to death.

Just as during the age many of the faithful followers of the Master were persecuted, so also during the present harvest period at the end of this Gospel Age, those who have espoused the cause of truth, and who have faithfully let their light shine, have often found themselves the targets of those who, under the influence of the “god of this world,” hate the light, and therefore oppose the light bearers.—II Cor. 4:4

However, to a considerable extent, with some notable exceptions, the position of religious leaders in the world has changed during the last sixty to seventy years. While some fundamentalist groups of professed Christians, as well as some non-Christian groups, are quite outspoken in their opposition to present truth as presented in the Scriptures, the modernistic attitude has become one largely of indifference to doctrinal viewpoints. The idea of religious liberty and tolerance is stressed so much

in our day by many of the major groups of churchianity that it has led to a large degree of freedom from persecution for those who are actively engaged in proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom.

Through our contacts with the Lord's people in many parts of the world, we have perhaps found that some are wondering just where we stand today with respect to the matter of being persecuted. If those who live godly in Christ Jesus must inevitably suffer persecution, are we not lacking this witness of the Spirit if we are not being persecuted? We may find that on the part of some there is even a desire to make our message a little more radical—perhaps of a “smiting” nature—in order to draw persecution upon ourselves.

This surely is a matter for serious consideration. It would be tragic indeed should the Lord's people today be refraining from letting their light shine in the manner enjoined upon them in the Scriptures, and because of this, discover later that this was the reason for escaping the bitter persecution which in former days came upon other followers of the Master. It is important, therefore, that we examine our position carefully, for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not the present lull in bitter opposition against the Truth on a wide scale is necessarily out of keeping with what we should expect, or is an evidence of a lack of faithfulness on the part of the consecrated in letting their light shine.

LOOKING AT THE PAST

It is true that Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, was bitterly persecuted and finally put to death upon the cross by those who hated the light of the

Gospel which he proclaimed. Yet, there were times during his ministry when he experienced comparative quiet and peace. He was not always being attacked, and on many occasions the opposition leveled against him was merely in the nature of word battles. The Lord's people today who are faithfully bearing witness to the Truth frequently encounter this sort of opposition.

It was not until the Father's due time that the bitterness of Jesus' enemies was permitted to manifest itself in the death sentence which was inflicted upon him. The providence of the Lord operated in a similar manner toward the apostles and others in the Early Church. Ananias was instructed to inform Saul of Tarsus, upon his conversion, as to the great things he would suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus, and he did suffer many things. Indeed, Paul finally suffered martyrdom in a Roman prison at the hand of Nero.

Nevertheless, Paul enjoyed seasons of freedom from severe persecution. We note, for example, the time he spent in Antioch, when he and Barnabas labored together in this part of the Lord's vineyard. There is no record of special persecution during that lengthy period. Under the leadership of Paul and Barnabas, the ecclesia at Antioch prospered spiritually and increased in number. Moreover, the Lord raised up a number of able servants in Antioch, and it was decided by the congregation to send Paul and Barnabas on a missionary tour, since their services by this time could be spared in the home ecclesia.—Acts 11:25-30; 12:25; 13:1-3

On that first missionary tour they frequently found themselves in the center of a storm of

opposition. One of these occasions was at Antioch in Pisidia—a different city from the aforementioned Antioch where the ecclesia grew rapidly under the leadership of Paul and Barnabas. These manifestations of hatred toward the Truth, however, did not seriously interfere with the proclamation of the message.

The record informs us in connection with Paul's ministry in Corinth that the Lord especially protected him from "hurt." In a vision, Jesus said to Paul, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." (Acts 18:9,10) The desire to persecute Paul was in the hearts of many in Corinth. In fact, they called the apostle before the deputy in charge, so that he would be punished, but the case was dismissed.

"I have much people in this city," the Lord told Paul. In other words, there was a work to be accomplished in Corinth which would have been greatly hindered had the prejudices of the people been permitted to operate in outward and violent attacks against God's servants. This brings before us a very important consideration in connection with the Heavenly Father's dealings with his people. It reveals that while, at times, he may permit persecution in severe form to come upon them, at other times he provides freedom from such occurrences because he has a certain work to be accomplished which can best be done while his people experience a measure of peace.

Brethren in the Early Church recognized this. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions,

and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” (I Tim. 2:1,2) Paul recognized that it was the Lord’s will for his people at this time to be free from severe persecution. The apostle would not have recommended a prayer to this end had it been contrary to God’s will.

Those of the Lord’s consecrated people who have been called upon to endure persecution because of their faithfulness have not always experienced the same degree of suffering. In Hebrews 10:33, the apostle speaks of those who were made “a gazing-stock,” and also those who “became the companions of them that were so used.” This was based on the principle that when one member of the body suffers, they all suffer.—I Cor. 12:26

Even today, while the members of the body of Christ in many parts of the world are enjoying a period of comparative freedom from persecution, there are still brethren in certain countries who are much more apt to experience severe suffering because of the Truth. We may not have much opportunity, except through prayer, to manifest our sympathy toward these dear ones, yet if our sympathy is genuine we will be counted as “companions of them” in these experiences.

On the whole, at the present time the Lord’s people are remarkably free from physical persecution. However, there is no need to conclude that this is due to lack of faithfulness in proclaiming the Truth. Neither is it necessary to wonder whether or not the Lord’s people have been sufficiently outspoken, or forthright, in their manner of witnessing. The

real reason is, we believe, that God has a work to be accomplished through a widespread witness of the Truth which could not be done if he permitted the forces of opposition to have their way. Jesus said emphatically, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations.”—Matt. 24:14

Just as the Lord held back the opposition in Corinth because he had “much people” in that city to be reached by the brethren, and just as Paul recognized the need of the consecrated at times to have peace, and recommended prayers to this end, so now the brethren seem to be in one of those periods. The lack of bitter persecution today is not because of unfaithfulness, but to the Lord’s making possible the outworking of his purposes through the united efforts of his people to herald wide the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

It is critical, then, that we utilize our present favorable opportunities to study and meditate upon the Truth, to meet in fellowship with those of “like precious faith,” and to daily apply the principles of the Truth in our lives. Let us also zealously use every privilege we have of proclaiming “good tidings of good.” (Isa. 52:7) If we do this, we will find that even now, in this time of less open persecution, the Truth is not popular and mostly ignored, if not scoffed at.

Indeed, even in this time the Lord’s people have to endure the cold indifference of an unbelieving world. We are looked upon by many as deceivers, anti-Christian, and even members of a cult. To endure this mild opposition will help to prepare us for greater opposition later if, or when, it comes.

Certainly, if we are not faithful now when the cost of discipleship in terms of persecution may not be as high as it has been during other periods of the age, we would not be faithful if called upon to endure the fiery flames of persecution.

The truth of the matter is that we do not know exactly what the future may hold for the consecrated, as the present Time of Trouble becomes more and more severe upon the world. Whether increased—even physical—persecution will come to the remaining members of the body of Christ dwelling on this side of the veil, we cannot say with surety. However, if our characters are properly prepared, we should be able to say with Paul that nothing can “separate us from the love of Christ,” whether it be “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, . . . or sword.”—Rom. 8:35-37

Let us not forget that although he had quiet periods of activity in the service of the Lord, Paul was persecuted in many ways. He was stoned, imprisoned, and finally martyred, but he was not harmed as a New Creature. His life, and all its interests, were “hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 3:3) Knowing this, shortly before his execution he wrote, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:8

We do not, like Paul, have to fight with “beasts at Ephesus.” (I Cor. 15:32) However, we do war against our bitter, and sometimes “bestly,” enemies—the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Yet, no matter how severe the battle rages, our life as a

New Creature is “hid with Christ,” as Paul’s was, and we are protected so that no harm can come to our spiritual life. Our outward man may perish, and the things of earth which the flesh is so prone to cling to may one after another slip away. What does this matter, however, if we are setting our affections on things above?

If we are “risen with Christ,” we will, Paul says, “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” (Col. 3:1) We will long to be in our heavenly home, a “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (II Cor. 5:1) Let us have increased faith, which will enable us to lay hold of these heavenly treasures with a firmer grip as the days go by, and may our appreciation of “things . . . above” increase as faith’s vision becomes more keen.

We should even more fully determine that our “light affliction, which is but for a moment,” will continue to work for us “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (II Cor. 4:17,18) Truly, the prospect before us is glorious and transporting! Therefore, let us “give diligence” to make our “calling and election sure” that, in the Lord’s due time, this hope may mature into the actual and eternal glory of the “everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:4-11 ■

*“Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach,
because we trust in the living God.”
—I Timothy 4:10*

Hearts Opened to God

“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”
—*Hebrews 4:12,13*

IT IS NOT SURPRISING TO

be reminded by the Scriptures that the great Creator of the universe is able to read our thoughts and to discern even the intents of our hearts. It would be unreasonable to suppose that he who created man would not be able to read the thoughts which are recorded on the brain. We are reminded of this in connection with the anointing of David to be the successor of Saul in the rulership of Israel. David was the youngest of several sons of Jesse. When

the Prophet Samuel came to anoint one of these to be king of Israel, David was not even considered. He was left in the field to care for the sheep.

The rejection by God of the other sons of Jesse was indicated, and when Samuel asked if there

were still others, David was brought in. He proved to be the Lord's choice. God's explanation to Samuel was that while man looks on the outward appearance as his way of judging character, "the LORD looketh on the heart."—I Sam. 16:7

The fact that the intents of our hearts are "naked and opened" before God should make us exceedingly careful of our words, thoughts, and doings. What a control this should produce upon our actions and motives! According to the foregoing, even if the words remain behind our lips, the Lord would know they were there.

On the other hand, the knowledge that God knows our weaknesses should not be a great discouragement, for it reminds us that because we have a sympathetic High Priest, we can seek mercy when we have failed and find grace to help in time of need. We are encouraged through our knowledge of the atoning blood of Christ to go "boldly unto the throne of grace" if we are sincere in our hearts. (Heb. 4:16) Sincerity and a conscience in harmony with the Lord's will are two of the vital needs of a follower of Jesus.

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE

In Psalm 40, verse 9, we find Jesus prophetically speaking of himself, and saying, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest." Knowing that God can read our hearts, can we say to him as Jesus did, "O Lord, thou knowest"? Can we declare, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts"?—Ps. 139:23

The Apostle Peter seemed sure of the determination of his heart to serve the Lord. We have an

example of this in his conversation with Jesus on the shore of Galilee after the Master had been raised from the dead. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15) On the night before the crucifixion, when Jesus said that all his disciples would forsake him, Peter affirmed that even if all the others did he would not. Thus he claimed a greater love for Jesus than did the others. It turned out that he was the only one who openly denied Christ. So now Jesus was asking, "Lovest thou me more than these?"

Peter did not then claim to love Jesus more than the others did, but he did affirm his love. He said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Then Jesus asked Peter again the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep." Then Jesus said to Peter the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved because Jesus had asked him the same question the third time, and he replied to the Master, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."—vss. 16,17

Peter's experience in denying the Lord had taught him that his Master, like the Heavenly Father, could read the thoughts and intents of the heart, for Jesus had told Peter of his forthcoming denial, even though Peter asserted that he would never do anything like this. He did, however, so now he knew that Jesus could read his thoughts and the intents of his heart. God knew Peter's heart, and he knows ours. This would be terrifying but for

the knowledge that we have an Advocate with the Father, who is Jesus, and who in his love made provision through his blood for our unwilling imperfections.—I John 2:1,2

I KNOW THY WORKS

As evidenced in the foregoing example, the ability of our Heavenly Father to read the thoughts and intents of our hearts was also possessed by Jesus. In the risen Lord's messages to the seven churches, as recorded in the second and third chapters of Revelation, this is brought very vividly to our attention. To the church at Ephesus, Jesus said, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."—Rev. 2:2,3

Is this true of us, or would the Lord also say to us as he did to the church at Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"? (vs. 4) Perhaps we can recall our "first love"—our enthusiasm over the vision of truth. At that time nothing could stand in our way. There was no task in connection with the service of God that was too difficult, and no sacrifice too great. The mundane cares of life took on a brightness we never knew before. We loved the Lord's people continually, and were willing to lay down our life for them at any time. We sought out every possible opportunity for service to the brethren, and for bearing witness to the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

This was our first love. We trust that we can say to the Lord, as Peter did, "Thou knowest that I love thee." Yea, I love thee and love thy people and love the Truth today more than I ever did before. Thou knowest that I have lost none of my enthusiasm, none of my first love and zeal. Thou knowest that today, even as when you revealed yourself to me through the Truth, I have the same consuming zeal to serve thee as I had at the beginning. Surely, we would not want to confess to the Lord that this was not true.

TO THYATIRA

To the church at Thyatira, the resurrected Jesus said, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." (Rev. 2:19) This was a wonderful commendation, and it should be also true of us. Instead of losing any of our first love and zeal, it should increase. Our works, as we progress in the school of Christ, should be more than at the beginning. The Lord is the same, and the Truth is the same. We should not allow ourselves to change and become indifferent to the privileges the Lord has opened up to us through the Truth. We should have more charity, or love—a love that manifests itself toward the Lord, the brethren, and the Truth. This love should continue to urge us on to sacrifice time, strength, and means in the promotion of the Truth, and to bear witness to it.

We should also have more faith. Indeed, since we first knew the Lord, the outworking of his plan in fulfillment of prophecy should have enlarged our

faith. The overruling of his providential care in our lives should also have increased our faith. The joys of sacrificial service for the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren should likewise add to our faith.

In our earnest desire to please the Lord and to be worthy of his love, we should go to him in prayer and give assurance that we are aware that he knows all things, even the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We should ask him to help us overcome any selfish spirit we may have. We should solicit his help to detect any sin in our hearts and to cleanse us from secret faults. Since he knows all things, he knows that the greatest desire of our hearts is to hear him say, “Well done,” and to know when we hear this that he is speaking to us.

PROMISES TO THE CHURCHES

In addition to Jesus’ appraisal of the heart condition of his people in the seven churches, he also makes promises to the truly faithful among them. Surely we want to be worthy of the Master’s love, that these promises may in due time be fulfilled in us. We want to be worthy in order that we may “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” and to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the promised crown of life. We desire to be worthy of eating of the “hidden manna”—the antitype of the golden bowl of manna which was placed in the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. We long to be found worthy to receive a “white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.”—Rev. 2:7,10,17

We want also to be worthy of receiving “power over the nations,” even as Jesus promised, so that in the outworking of God’s great plan we may ultimately have the opportunity of blessing all those who come into harmony with the righteous rulership of the glorious kingdom of righteousness and life. We aspire to be worthy of having our names written in the “book of life,” as well as experiencing the unspeakable joy of having our names confessed before the Father and before the angels. What a joy it will be also to have written upon us the name of our God and the name of the city of our God—the new Jerusalem. We know that all these wonderful promises will be fulfilled in the bride of Christ, who throughout the age has been making “herself ready.”—Rev. 2:26; 3:5,12; 19:7

Here, at the end of the age, and in the time of the Master’s Second Presence, we have heard his knock, and have invited him to come into our hearts and “sup” with us. May we each hear and obey what “the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (chap. 3:20-22) Let us ever remember that we are “naked and opened” before him, and that he can read our thoughts and the intents of our hearts. May we earnestly say to him, “Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” ■

“Dawn Devotional Radio” Internet Radio Station

www.live365.com/stations/dawn_radio

INTERESTING QUESTION

Does Jesus have the same power to heal today as when he was on earth at his First Advent?

YES, AND HE also has power to raise the dead, just as at his First Advent. In “due time,” and very soon we believe, that power will again be exercised. Then all the sick and afflicted who seek his help upon the basis of belief and obedience will be healed. In addition, all who are in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of Man and come forth.—John 5:28,29

The present, however, is not the time for the divine program of healing and resurrection to operate. Jesus’ miracles at his First Advent were illustrations of the coming age of worldwide healing of all the willing and obedient, and of the fact that then all the dead will respond to his voice of authority and be awakened from the sleep of death. John wrote, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”—John 2:11

We do not say that the Lord does not at times overrule in such a way as to restore one of his ill disciples to health. He will do this if it is in the best spiritual interest of the one in question. However, no follower of the Master should expect this, for every true disciple has entered into a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice—a covenant which leads to sacrificial death. (Ps. 50:5) Every true Christian should be fully submissive to the Lord’s will as to how, and when, this sacrifice will be consummated in actual death. ■

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

DawnBible: Please let me know more about you.

I love Pastor Russell's *Studies in the Scriptures*.—MO

FROM CHINA

DawnBible: God bless your work. It is noticed here on this side of the world.—China

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

DawnBible: This website is my best ever, because of the spiritual benefits God has deposited through the Bible students association. Glory be to God.—Nigeria

FREE BOOKLETS

DawnBible: Please send me the free booklets on *Israel in History and Prophecy* and *Why God Permits Evil*. Thank you.—NC

READING ON TABLET

DawnBible: Thanks for this great webpage. I really enjoy reading your publications on my tablet computer. Keep up the good work.—Finland

SPREADING THE GOSPEL

DawnBible: This is the first time I am coming across the site. However, I believe you are doing a great job spreading the gospel, having checked all that you have published; and for the fact that it's directed towards the youth makes it laudable.

God bless your ministry.—Nigeria

READING ON THE COMPUTER

DawnBible: What a blessed privilege to be able to read the *Manna* text and vow, and *Songs in the Night* from the computer! What a marvelous, wonderful age we live in!

Bless God for his kingdom blessings made possible because of the faithfulness of his dear precious Son.—TX

VERY RELIABLE

DawnBible: Your publications are always very reliable and a guide for my Bible Study.—MA

FARMER'S ALMANAC

DawnBible: I found you on page 22 of the 2015 *Farmer's Almanac*.

I want a copy of *Israel in History and Prophecy*. It sounds like an interesting topic that I will enjoy reading.—MS

FAITHFUL SERVICE

DawnBible: Thank you for your faithful service in making this knowledge available to everyone who is seeking the true meaning of God's Word.—GA

OUT OF FEAR

DawnBible: I spent 20 years a Jehovah Witness, and recently discovered the "Ransom for All." What a wonderful message, out of the fear of Armageddon and second death and into the love of Christ and Jehovah. My favorite is the "Frank and Ernest" show.

Keep up the good work and may Jehovah bless you brothers working diligently there at *The Dawn* publishing house.—CA

USEFUL FOR US

DawnBible: Good evening all of you. *The Dawn* magazine is very useful for us. We read it at prayers. Thank you very much.—India

THE TRUE WORD

DawnBible: I would like to know the true Word of God, by understanding the Bible.—South Africa

NEED SPIRITUAL ARTICLES

DawnBible: I would like to have regular editions of *The Dawn* magazine. We need these spiritual articles regularly. If you don't mind, send to me some publications. Thanks, in anticipation.—Nigeria

IMMORTAL SOUL

DawnBible: The position you have outlined from scripture makes so much more sense. It is far more logical than anything I have heard about an immortal soul that goes "somewhere" after death. Thank you for your careful review.—unknown ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

O. B. Elbert		Lutterworth	17
Toronto, ON	June 13,14	Castle Donington	17
J. Freer		Kempsey	18
<u>Netherlands:</u>		Lydney	18
Pijnacker	June 1	Prees	19
<u>Germany:</u>		Chesham	20
Hamburg	1,2	West Wickham	21
Hannover	3	R. Gorecki	
Dortmund	4	Albuquerque, NM	June 7
Bruchhausen	5	S. Jeuck	
Ludwigshafen	6,7	Albuquerque, NM	June 7
<u>Croatia:</u>		Dallas, TX	14
Sisak	12-14	New Orleans, LA	16
<u>England:</u>			
Chesham	16		

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

T. Alexander		E. Kalinski	
Vancouver, BC	June 13,14	Detroit, MI	June 14
M. Balko		B. Keith	
Delaware Valley, PA	June 7	Vancouver, BC	June 13,14
M. Davis		E. Kuenzli	
Portland, OR	June 19-21	Portland, OR	June 19-21
R. Goodman		G. Passios	
Atlanta, GA	June 7	Delaware Valley, PA	June 14
L. Griehs		D. Rice	
Vancouver, BC	June 13,14	Vancouver, BC	June 13,14
Portland, OR	19-21	T. Ruggirello	
K. Humphreys		Portland, OR	June 19-21
Vancouver, BC	June 13,14		

CONVENTIONS

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

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 7—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 13,14—Jaycee House, 1251 Lillooet Road, North Vancouver, BC V7J 3H7. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or Email: bas@telus.net

DETROIT JOINT CONVENTION, June 14—Pleasant Ridge Community Center, 4 Ridge Road, Pleasant Ridge, MI. Contact G. Zandler. Phone: (248) 399-8843 or Email: ngzandler@wowway.com

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19-21—June 19 at BSRC. Remaining days at Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. Contact B Hislop. Phone: (503) 691-2699 or Email: bwhislop@aol.com

ONITSHA CONVENTION, June 20—Nweje Primary School, Ezenwekwe Street, Ochanja Roundabout Onitsha, Anambra State, Nigeria. Contact J. Ogbunike Onitsha. Phone 234-803-779-1498 or Email: newjolac47@gmail.com

PRINCE ALBERT-SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 3-5—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or Email: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

EAST SASKATCHEWAN CONVENTION, July 10-12—Sturgis Community Hall, Highway #9, Sturgis, SK. Contact N. Paley, Box 1522, Canora, SK S0A 0L0. Phone: (306) 563-5441 or Email: thepaleys@sasktel.net

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 18-23—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

OKPUALA NGWA CONVENTION, August 8—Okpuala Ngwa Class Meeting Hall, Isiala Ngwa North, Abia State, Nigeria. Contact G. C. Adiele. Phone: 234-811-611-1533 or Email: godwin.adielle@yahoo.com

COLORADO CONVENTION, August 21-23—Double-Tree by Hilton Hotel Denver - Stapleton North, 4040 Quebec Street, Denver, CO. Contact L. Turner. Phone: (303) 809-1957 or Email: twink94@comcast.net

NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 21-23—Emmanuel College, Owerri Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu, #24 Fayemi Street, Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Phone: 234-803-333-9949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 5,6—Wyndham Garden Huntsville Airport, 8721 Madison Blvd., Madison, AL 35758. Contact R. Armstrong. Phone: (256) 281-9556 or Email: robin@exzaktec.com

JACKSON LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 5,6—Holiday Inn Jackson NW, 2696 Bob McClain Drive, Jackson, MI 49202. Contact V. Lumley, 2531 Ashton Road, Jackson, MI 49203. Phone: (517) 782-7252 or Email: raylumley2531@comcast.net

NEW YORK LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 5,6—DoubleTree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

SEATTLE LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 5-7—Seabeck Conference Center, 13395 Lagoon Drive NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822, (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us