

# The Dawn

*A Herald of Christ's Presence*

**DECEMBER 2016**



# The DAWN

VOLUME No. LXXXIV, Number 12  
(USPS 149-380), December 2016

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*First-class postage paid at Rutherford, NJ. Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.*

*\$12.00 a year.*

**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 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

**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

**GERMANY:** Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Postfach 11 03, 64368 Ober-Ramstadt

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

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

**SPAIN/ITALY:** El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

### HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

"The Word Was Made Flesh" 2

### INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

God Promises a Savior 16

The Affirmation of the Promise 18

God Promised Zacharias a Son 20

God's Promised Savior Is Born 22

### CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

The Work of Faith 24

Of One Mind—In Christ 37

Sowing the Seeds of Truth 50

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 15

### TALKING THINGS OVER 61

### OBITUARIES 49

### SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 63

### CONVENTIONS 63

# “The Word Was Made Flesh”

*“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”*

—John 1:14

**IN OUR OPENING VERSE,** the expression “Word” is a translation of the Greek—*logos*. A footnote in *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* for this verse explains the meaning of *logos* as it applied to the customs of the ancient world.

Paraphrasing the footnote: In ancient kingdoms, an officer was designated by the king to be his “word” or voice. The officer would stand on the steps adjacent to the throne, separated from the king by a lattice window. The window was covered with a silk drape, but had openings through which the king would give commands to the officer. The officer would, in turn, communicate the king’s commands to the officers, judges, and attendants as necessary. Thus, using the Greek rendering, this officer was considered the *logos* of the king.

Using this Greek word as a title given to Jesus, John refers to him as the Word or Logos, during his

prehuman existence, when he lived as a spirit being in the heavenly realm. Paul states that Jesus, as the prehuman Logos, was the “firstborn of all creation,” and was used by God to create “all things in the heavens and upon the earth,” and “they all, through him and for him, have been created.” (Col. 1:15,16, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Similarly, in Revelation 3:14, the Logos is referred to as “the beginning of the creation of God.”

Our Scripture states that the Logos, the highest of all created spirit beings, humbled himself and “was made flesh.” That is, by the power of God, he underwent a change of nature from a spirit being to a human being. He was “born of a woman,” with a nature “lower than the angels,” and dwelt upon earth as the perfect man Jesus. (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:9, *Revised Version*) In this perfect human form, he willingly “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:6) Paul, speaking of Jesus’ wonderful example of humility, stated: “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (II Cor. 8:9) Paul also said concerning Jesus: “Though being in God’s form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God, but divested himself, taking a bondman’s form, having been made in the likeness of men; and being in condition as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”—Phil. 2:5-7, *Diaglott*

## **A MIRACLE PERFORMED**

Jesus’ earthly life did not begin after the usual manner of human conception. He did not have an earthly biological father. Instead, his Heavenly

Father took the life principle previously found in the Logos and, by a miracle, implanted it into the womb of Mary as an embryo human being. To announce this, “The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, . . . and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.”—Luke 1:26-28

When Mary saw Gabriel and heard his message, she was “greatly troubled, and began to deliberate, of what kind, this salutation might be.” (vs. 29, *EBR*) The angel reassured her, saying: “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.” (vss. 30,31) We are later told that the announcement to Mary by Gabriel concerning the birth of Jesus had been made “before he was conceived in the womb.” (Luke 2:21) Thus we have confirmation of this great miracle performed by God.

### **GOD’S TIMETABLE**

The time of Jesus’ birth was a favorable one, and doubtless overruled by God. The previous reign of the Grecian Empire had resulted in Greek being the accepted language over much of the world. Thus one common language could be used to convey and record such a momentous event. Additionally, it was also a time of relative peace, because the Roman Empire had conquered much of the world. Therefore, it was a most favorable time for the beginning of the Gospel, centered in Jesus. Many

other valuable lessons are found in the Scriptures concerning God's overruling providences surrounding Jesus' birth.

"It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. . . . And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David)." (vss. 1-4) Through God's providence, just at the right moment in time, the Roman Emperor issued a decree regarding the taxing of his worldwide empire. This decree required that every male report to the city of his family lineage which, for Joseph, was Bethlehem. In this providential way, Joseph and Mary were brought to the very city prophesied by Micah. "Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—Mic. 5:2

Mary, ready to give birth to Jesus at any moment, journeyed nearly seventy miles with Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. We can well imagine the difficulty and discomfort she must have had during this journey. Arriving at Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary found "there was no room for them in the inn." She "brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." (Luke 2:7) The word "manger" refers to a feeding trough for animals. Few babies in the history of Israel were likely ever born in such humble surroundings.

Notice, however, there is no record of the slightest complaint or dissatisfaction from Joseph and Mary with these arrangements and conditions. We are reminded of the important lesson Jesus later gave to his followers “not to be over-anxious” about things of this present life, because our “Heavenly Father knows that you need these things.” Instead, Jesus said, “make His Kingdom and righteousness your chief aim.”—Matt. 6:25-33, *Weymouth New Testament*

## **HUMBLE SHEPHERDS**

God announced the great event of Jesus’ birth as a human being by his mighty angels. Although worldly wisdom would have dictated otherwise, the angels were sent to humble shepherds who were in their fields, watching over their flocks at night. At that time, it was critical that shepherds remain with their flocks at night to guard against thieves and wild animals. Such a humble, yet important task, is a reminder to us of the importance God places on this quality of character, as we are told: “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”—James 4:6

Shepherds typically did not have much formal schooling. However, they were known to be a group of people who reasoned and thought deeply, because they had many hours to reflect upon and discuss with one another various subjects as they watched their flocks. Those who turned their thoughts to God perhaps meditated often on the words of the shepherd David, saying with him, “My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I . . . meditate on thee in the night watches.” (Ps. 63:5,6) As they

looked up into the starry heavens, more of the psalmist's sentiments would most assuredly come to their minds: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."—chap. 19:1

It was to this group of humble shepherds that God sent the first message concerning his only begotten Son being made flesh. The account reads: "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (Luke 2:8-10) The expression "good tidings" comes from a Greek word which means "to announce good news." Elsewhere in the New Testament it has been translated as the familiar word "gospel." The angel of the Lord explained what these good tidings were, saying, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—vs. 11

Continuing, the angel said to the shepherds, "This shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." (vs. 12) This information was necessary, not only to identify which baby in Bethlehem was the Savior, but also to draw the shepherds' thoughts and attention to the humble beginnings surrounding Jesus' birth. "Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (vss. 13,14) We have

not yet seen peace throughout the earth, nor good will toward all men. At the present time we continue to see wars, violence, injustice, sickness, sorrow, and death. This is because the work of selecting and completing the body of Christ still continues, as we are told: “All creation . . . is waiting and longing to see the manifestation of the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:19, *WNT*) Once this work is finished, the words spoken by the heavenly host will be fulfilled.

After the angels left the shepherds, they said, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.” Returning to their flocks, the shepherds glorified and praised God “for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”—Luke 2:15-18,20

## **EXEMPLARY PARENTS**

“Mary was closely observing all these things, putting them together in her heart.” (Luke 2:19, *EBR*) Mary and Joseph were dedicated and caring parents of Jesus, that they might raise and watch over him in a way which would please God. In obedience to the law given to Israel, Joseph and Mary had Jesus circumcised on the eighth day. (Lev. 12:1-3; Luke 2:21) Thirty-three days later, “when the days of her purification according to the law

of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”—Luke 2:22-24

Under the Jewish Law, they were to bring a “lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering.” (Lev 12:6) However, the Law also provided that “if her means suffice not for a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves, or two young pigeons; the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.” (vs. 8, *RV*) By this we learn that Joseph and Mary must have been poor, because no mention is made in the Luke account of a lamb, but of two turtledoves or pigeons.

## **WISE MEN FROM THE EAST**

Matthew’s gospel states: “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.” (Matt. 2:1,2) We note that the Bible nowhere states how many wise men came, although it is generally believed there were three, since that is the number of gifts they brought.—vs. 11

Looking for the King of the Jews, the wise men naturally went first to the palace of Herod, the Roman ruler over the region of Judaea, to make

inquiry. "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." (Matt. 2:3) Herod likely felt threatened regarding his own rule. Others in Jerusalem were also troubled, perhaps referring to those who might have gained some advantages because of Herod's position as ruler.

Herod "gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together," and demanded that they tell him where Christ would be born. Being familiar with the prophecies regarding the Messiah, the chief priests and scribes immediately answered, "Bethlehem of Judaea." Herod called the wise men privately and asked them as to exactly "what time the star appeared." He then sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." This was a deception by Herod, because if he knew exactly where the child Jesus was he could then kill him, thus protecting his own rulership.—vss. 4-8

After the wise men departed from King Herod, "the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was," and "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."—vss. 9-12

Joseph and Mary were no doubt surprised by the generous gifts received from these strangers from a faraway land. Each was precious and given at just the right time. Their costly value could likely be used by this poor family to meet expenses during their flight to Egypt, which would soon follow.

Each of these gifts also had a symbolic meaning. Gold, a relatively rare metal and considered precious throughout history, was a fitting gift for a future king sent by God. Gold is used throughout the Scriptures as a representation of the divine nature and the glory associated with God and his character attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power.

Frankincense comes from a Hebrew word which means “to be white.” Frankincense came from the sap of a particular tree found in parts of Arabia. Bitter to the taste, it produced an aromatic odor when burned. Frankincense was one of the ingredients in the incense crumbled upon the golden altar in The Holy of the Tabernacle. It was also put on top of the shewbread which likewise resided in the same compartment. (Exod. 30:34-38; Lev. 24:7) Because frankincense was used extensively in the Tabernacle arrangement, this gift seems to point forward to Jesus’ priestly service.

Myrrh is an aromatic resin obtained from the sap of a tree native to the Arabian Desert and parts of Africa. Like frankincense, it is also bitter to the taste. In ancient times, myrrh was used in beauty and cleansing treatments. For example, before a woman could see King Ahasuerus, she had to complete various treatments, some of which were with “oil of myrrh.” (Esther 2:12) Myrrh was also one of the ingredients in the “holy anointing

oil.” (Exod. 30:23-25) How beautifully myrrh portrayed in advance the bitter life of suffering for him who would be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” (Isa. 53:3) Indeed, it was this suffering which developed in Jesus the spiritual beauty and purity of his character.

### **LOCATION OF THE WISE MEN’S VISIT**

Nativity scenes have presented the visit of the wise men as taking place in Bethlehem on, or very shortly after, the night Jesus was born. However, numerous scriptural references give indication that the wise men probably came to Nazareth, and that their visit was some period of time after his birth. If the wise men had visited Jesus in Bethlehem shortly after his birth, Joseph and Mary would have needed to wait nearly six weeks, at a minimum, before fleeing to Egypt. This is because of the Law’s requirements, cited earlier, of Jesus’ circumcision on the eighth day, followed by another thirty-three days to complete Mary’s purification. After this, the Luke account says, they went to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice in accordance with the Law. (Lev. 12:6; Luke 2:21-24) However, Matthew’s account states that Joseph did not wait to flee to Egypt, but they left during the night, immediately after the wise men’s departure. We read: “When they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt.”—Matt. 2:13,14

If the wise men had given their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh at the time of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary would have had the means to purchase and bring a lamb for the burnt offering forty-one days later. Surely, knowing the significance of Jesus' birth, they would not have held back from using the gifts received from the wise men to obtain a lamb, the preferred manner of meeting the Law's requirement. However, because the wise men did not visit until after the fulfillment of these obligations, Joseph and Mary did not have the means by which to offer a lamb.

Matthew 2:8, quoted earlier, at first seems to contradict these thoughts, saying that Herod sent the wise men "to Bethlehem," telling them to search there for Jesus. There is nothing in this verse, however, which indicates that Jesus was still there, or that the wise men went there at all. In fact, the account next says that the star "went before them," and guided them to the place where "the young child was." (vs. 9) If Jesus had been in Bethlehem, there would likely have been no need for the guidance of the star, since Bethlehem was located on the main travel route leading south from Jerusalem, and was only a few miles away. However, Nazareth was ninety miles to the north, and the wise men would have surely needed the guidance of the star to find Jesus there. Thus, although Herod may have thought Jesus was still in Bethlehem, and instructed the wise men to go there and report back, the entire matter was overruled otherwise by God.

Some further points should be considered concerning the location and timing of the wise men's visit. Matthew 2:11 states that they came "into the

house” when they presented their gifts to Jesus. In Luke 2:7, the account of the night Jesus was born, the record says that he was “laid . . . in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn”—that is, Joseph and Mary were not in a house at the time of Jesus’ birth. Additionally, on the night of Jesus’ birth the shepherds were told they would find the “babe” [Greek: *brephos*, a newborn infant] wrapped in swaddling clothes. (vs. 12) By contrast, the wise men came to see “the young child” [Greek: *paidion*, a child or little one]. This Greek word is used six times in the Matthew context concerning the wise men’s visit. (Matt. 2:8,9,11,13,14) Finally, when Herod realized he was “mocked of the wise men,” he issued a command to slay “all the children that were in Bethlehem, . . . from two years old and under.” (vs. 16) Here we take note that the command was that all children up to the age of two, not merely newborn babes, were to be killed.

Such detailed and minute distinctions as cited in the foregoing paragraphs may seem unnecessary to our understanding of God’s arrangements concerning the gift of his beloved Son. However, they serve as testimony to our Heavenly Father’s constant overruling and providential care over those with whom he is dealing and using in the carrying out of his eternal purposes for man’s eternal benefit. Let us never lose sight of his unerring wisdom and forethought.

### **MOST “RECEIVED HIM NOT”**

During Jesus’ First Advent very few recognized him as the Son of God. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received

him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” (John 1:11,12) The word “believe” is translated from a Greek word which signifies not merely a mental or intellectual belief, but has a far deeper meaning—to have faith in, to entrust, to commit.

Those who trust and commit fully to follow in the footsteps of the Son of God have the assurance that although he endured “the suffering of death,” he is now “crowned with glory and honour,” having tasted “death for every man.” (Heb. 2:9) In the coming kingdom of righteousness, all mankind will see and realize they have a King who is wise, just, powerful, loving, and merciful—“a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!” ■

## WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**DECEMBER 1**—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Matthew 22:39 (Z. ’99-72 Hymn 354)

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

**DECEMBER 15**—“The LORD is my shepherd.”—Psalm 23:1 (Z. ’02-365 Hymn 87)

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

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

# God Promises a Savior

**Key Verse:** “Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.”  
—Luke 1:31

**Selected Scripture:**  
Luke 1:26-38

and life to all the willing and obedient members of the human family during his Second Advent, were also recorded aforetime.—Isa. 7:14; 9:6,7

The initial fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy occurred when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a virgin living in Nazareth, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph. Gabriel proclaimed that Mary was “highly favoured” of God.—Luke 1:26-30

In our Key Verse, Gabriel informs Mary that she would conceive and bring forth a son who would be named Jesus. Gabriel then provided additional information to Mary concerning this miraculous event. “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”—vss. 32,33

Since she was a virgin, Mary was perplexed as to how she could have a child. Gabriel informed her that she

would conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit. He also declared that her relative, Elisabeth, had conceived a son “in her old age,” and was presently six months into her pregnancy.—vss. 34-36

With great joy in her heart, Mary acquiesced in faith to the divine arrangement that she would be the instrument which would result in God’s Son coming to earth in a human form so as to provide a ransom for Adam and the dying race of mankind because of sin. This demonstration of Mary’s faith in God’s ability to accomplish whatever he proposes to do should inspire us as we meditate upon this portion of Scripture—“With God nothing shall be impossible.”—vs. 37

Following our Lord’s birth, ministry, death, and resurrection, faithful followers of Christ during this Gospel Age have received an invitation to participate in the ministry of reconciliation. “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, . . . and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (II Cor. 5:18,19) This work will be for the purpose of assisting the willing members of the fallen human race in regaining favor with God and attaining everlasting life on earth.

Peter indicates that as the body of Christ, we have received “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.” If we lay hold upon and apply the import of these promises, the result will exceed anything the human mind can grasp. Although the divine nature has been offered to those who do this, were it not for God’s love and magnificent generosity, none among us, as fallen beings mired in the pit of sin, could possibly entertain such a prospect of future exaltation.—II Pet. 1:2-4

The hope of assisting Christ to eradicate sin during the righteous kingdom reign should encourage us to exercise faith in, and obedience to, the Heavenly Father’s word that all of his purposes will be accomplished. ■

# The Affirmation of the Promise

**Key Verses:** “*Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*”  
—*Luke 1:46,47*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Luke 1:39-56*

Holy Spirit, Elisabeth acknowledged Mary’s unique privilege of being the mother of the one who would become the Savior of Israel and all the human family. She said to Mary, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”—vss. 42-45

Our Key Verse reflects Mary’s acknowledgment in being the recipient of such unspeakable favor. It additionally points out a desire to render gratitude to God for bestowing such honor upon her, and the great joy it brought to her spirit.

**AFTER LEARNING THAT** her relative Elisabeth was with child, Mary traveled a considerable distance from her home to visit her. Elisabeth greeted Mary’s arrival warmly, and the record states that her unborn child, John the Baptist, “leaped in her womb.”—*Luke 1:39-41*

Under the inspiration of the

Elisabeth acknowledged Mary’s unique privilege of being the mother of the one who would become the Savior of Israel and all the human family. She said to Mary, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”—vss. 42-45

Our Key Verse reflects Mary’s acknowledgment in being the recipient of such unspeakable favor. It additionally points out a desire to render gratitude to God for bestowing such honor upon her, and the great joy it brought to her spirit.

Mary's song of praise, recorded in the ensuing verses, extols how much God had done for her and that he is her Savior. She acknowledges his mercy, noting his power to displace those who are proud and mighty, yet also being able to exalt the lowly. Finally, Mary gives voice to God's faithfulness towards Israel as she recalls the promises made to Abraham and his seed.—vss. 48-55

After staying with Elisabeth for about three months, Mary returned to her home in Nazareth. (vs. 56) Upon her return, quite likely she became the object of ridicule and slander because she was with child but unmarried. Nevertheless, Mary's sweet temperament and righteous inclinations were undoubtedly factors that made her God's choice to become the mother of his Son, Jesus. Whatever difficulties she may have had to overcome in the eyes of any who were critical of her situation, her trust in God's promises were sufficient for her to be successful in her special calling.

As members of the body of Christ, we should emulate Mary's example of faithfulness. Like her, we should realize that because we are under God's peculiar care, his compassion and supervision of our affairs are ever present, and he is most worthy of our praise—"because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." (Ps. 63:3) He is also a God of comfort. We can, therefore, rely on the promise that nothing shall ever separate us from his love. "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."—II Cor. 1:3,4; Rom. 8:35,38,39

Ultimately, praise also will be an integral part of the human family's make up. In the kingdom, they will realize the scope of what the Heavenly Father has done for them through the magnificent sacrifice of Jesus. Mankind will also recognize the part the body members of Christ will play in helping to bring them back into heart harmony with God during that glorious Millennial reign. Let us be faithful! ■

# God Promised Zacharias a Son

**Key Verses:** *“The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.”*  
—*Luke 1:13,14*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Luke 1:5-23*

## **LUKE BEGINS THIS**

account by mentioning Zacharias, a priest of Israel, and his wife Elisabeth, who would become the parents of John the Baptist. At this time they were childless and both well advanced in age. On one occasion, while performing his priestly duties in the Temple, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zacharias, who became fearful by this sudden visit.—*Luke 1:5-12*

Our Key Verse reveals the angel’s mission, as he informed Zacharias that his prayers had been heard and that Elisabeth would bear a son. He was to be named John, and his birth would

bring them and many others great joy.

The angel continued to speak concerning their future son and his mission: “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts

of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”—vss. 15-17

The seeming impossibility of this promise being fulfilled, because both his wife and he were elderly, caused Zacharias to be skeptical. The angel, who identified himself as Gabriel, informed him that because of a lack of faith he would be unable to speak again until the child was born.—vss. 18-22

After Elisabeth gave birth and her son was circumcised on the eighth day, Zacharias indicated the child should be named John. Zacharias was immediately able to speak again. Freed from his unbelief, and filled with the Holy Spirit through his prophetic utterance, Zacharias praised God, recognizing that he would shortly raise up a “horn of salvation”—the Messiah—who would bring deliverance to Israel from all its enemies as well as provide salvation and remission of sins. As his forerunner, John would be privileged to announce Christ’s presence when his earthly ministry commenced.—vss. 57-79

In our own experiences as followers of Christ, on occasion doubts may creep into our minds concerning God’s promises. At such times we should seek to draw more closely to the Lord by praying for increased faith. After having made such petitions, we need to exercise ourselves in ways that are pleasing to God through fellowship, study, and careful scrutiny of our thoughts, that we may prove to be acceptable.

True faith implies a conviction of the things which God has revealed about himself and then acting in accordance with those beliefs. The faithfulness of Old Testament holy ones such as those recorded in Hebrews 11 should inspire us to act in accordance with our professions. We are to bear in mind that those who ultimately will be united in helping to bless all the families of the earth with our exalted King of kings, are “called, and chosen, and faithful.”—Rev. 17:14 ■

# God's Promised Savior Is Born

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

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Luke 2:8-20*

they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”—*Luke 2:8-10*

Our Key Verse indicates the spectacularly joyous news of the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem, the “city of David.” The angel further informed the shepherds that the Savior would be found wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. An angelic choir then broke forth in song, praising and giving great glory to God for his mercy and promise of peace and good will to all mankind. This obviously was a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, but it should stir the heart of every believer who longs for the kingdom of God, during which this and many other glorious promises will be realized.—vss. 12-14

The shepherds traveled to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph along with the infant Jesus lying in a manger. In view of all they had heard from the heavenly hosts,

## **THE INITIAL INDICATION**

that Jesus' birth was imminent was not given to the religious leaders of the day, but rather to humble shepherds, who were in the field, watching over their flocks. The account states: “Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and

and then seeing the newborn babe, the shepherds were inspired to declare as widely as possible this wondrous event. “They made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.”—vss. 15-19

Towards the end of his ministry, thirty-three and one half years later, Jesus Christ had been fully consumed in the doing of God’s will and gave tangible evidence as to having been sent to Israel by his Heavenly Father. Although rejected by the religious leaders, the Master was well received by the common people, who heard him gladly. He healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the multitudes—on one occasion 5,000 strong, and in another instance the number was 4,000.—Mark 12:37; Matt. 8:16; 14:21; 15:38

Nevertheless, despite all of this marvelous testimony, knowing that the time of his earthly departure was near, our Lord began to demonstrate that the various miracles he performed were a means to an end. He was seeking those who would desire to follow him at any cost with the prospect of being associated with him in God’s heavenly kingdom.—Matt. 16:24; 19:21

There were powerful requirements which the Lord set forth for discipleship. Ultimately, only a holy remnant was willing to accept the Master and follow a life of sacrifice and cross bearing, in exchange for the privilege of reigning with him to bless mankind. Our Lord was faithful unto death in laying down his life on behalf of the human family, while also setting forth by his example the object and manner of the kingdom witness which we may be privileged to emulate.

As prospective members of his body, consecrated believers have been invited to follow in Christ’s footsteps by witnessing to the Truth and leading a life of sacrifice. The shepherds rejoiced to proclaim the Savior’s birth over two thousand years ago. Let us zealously proclaim God’s soon to be established kingdom as the panacea which will bring blessings to all the families of the earth. ■

# The Work of Faith

*“We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.”*

—II Thessalonians

1:11

THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES there have been differences of opinion as to the relative value of faith and works in the lives of those endeavoring to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. According to the testimony of the Scriptures, however, neither of these segments of the Christian life can exist without the other. In our opening text, the Apostle Paul speaks of “the work of faith,” repeating words he had written in his first letter to the Thessalonian brethren. (I Thess. 1:3) It is evident from his words that Paul believed and taught that a living faith in God and his Word will manifest itself in works, and additionally, that all acceptable Christian works must be the outgrowth of faith.

We are accustomed to think of Abraham as a man of outstanding faith, yet the reason we know he had faith is because he demonstrated it by his works. James wrote, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he brought up Isaac his son to

the altar? Thou seest that . . . faith cooperated with his works; and that . . . faith was made complete by the works; and that scripture was verified, which says, And Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness; and he was called a Friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.”—James 2:21-24, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

Paul also observed the faith life of Abraham, stating, “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” (Heb. 11:8) Here the work which demonstrated Abraham’s faith was his obedience in leaving his own country and home, and starting out for a place unknown. A brief way of explaining Abraham’s work of faith is that he obeyed. When we consider all that was involved, however, we can well understand why the Lord was so pleased with him. How many of us would leave home, family and friends, and start out on a mission to unknown parts, with the only assurance being that God would show us where to go and what he wanted done?

## **MOSES’ FAITH**

Paul also said, “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the

king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”—Heb. 11:24-27

Moses' work of faith was his forsaking the riches of Egypt and the high position which he held there, and casting in his lot with his fellow Israelites, who were then in disfavor with Pharaoh. Moses did this at the risk of his life, and as a result had to flee from Egypt. He went to the land of Midian, where he was separated from his people for forty years.

Moses did not forget his brethren, nor did he forget God, who had made such wonderful promises to his father Abraham. When God appeared to him at the burning bush, Moses gave attention to the instructions given to him. His years of exile had an effect on Moses. He was now no longer so sure of himself as when he rose up and slew an Egyptian forty years earlier because he was persecuting one of his brethren.—Exod. 2:11-15; 3:1-10; Acts 7:22-34

This was a good thing, however, for the Lord cannot use those who think they are capable in their own wisdom and strength. Indeed, an important work of faith is to realize one's own insufficiency, and the need to rely on God for grace and assistance in every experience of life. In Moses' case, he at first hesitated, asking, "Who am I," to undertake the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt? He also asserted that he was not "eloquent," but "slow of speech," and unsuitable to approach Pharaoh and ask for the release of his brethren.—Exod. 3:11; 4:10

God promised Moses that he would provide all his needs, even to assigning his brother Aaron as his mouthpiece. (chap. 4:14-16) With these assurances, Moses obeyed the Lord's call to this difficult

task, and for forty years applied himself diligently, not only delivering the Israelites from Egypt, but bringing them to the very border of the Promised Land. Perhaps no one has rendered service in the divine cause that was more challenging than the work of faith carried out by Moses during the final forty years of his life.

### **FURTHER WORKS OF FAITH**

Beginning with Hebrews 11:32, Paul presents to us a list of many who in ages past proved their faith by their works. He tells of “Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.”—vss. 32-35

It should be noted that in this list of those who demonstrated their faith by their works, the Lord visibly rewarded those who thus proved their faithfulness. Gideon was successful in battle against the Midianites, even though by God’s direction his army was reduced to a mere three hundred. Barak, another judge in Israel, was successful in battle, by the Lord’s help. Samson was given strength to accomplish what God wanted him to do. Jephthae, another of Israel’s judges, had his efforts crowned with success.

Likewise, David demonstrated his faith by his works. How wonderfully the Lord blessed him, beginning with his early experience of contending

with the giant, Goliath, and destroying him. Samuel, the last of Israel's judges, surely was faced with many difficult tasks, but through faith he met these challenges, and how wonderfully God blessed his long life of service.

Guided by the power of the Lord, some of the works by which these, Paul says, demonstrated their faith were the conquering of kingdoms, laboring in righteousness, obtaining promises, and stopping the mouths of lions. This last statement is a reference to Daniel, who continued praying to God daily, as was his custom, although the king had decreed that anyone who prayed other than through him should be cast into a den of lions. Daniel knew what the cost of loyalty to his God would be, but he persisted in performing his work of faith, and was cast into a den of lions. The Lord sent an angel and delivered him, but Daniel did not know in advance that this would be the case.—Dan. 6:1-22

The expression, “quenched the violence of fire,” is a reference to the three young Hebrews who defied the edict of the Babylonian king, and did not worship the great image which he had set up. In doing this they did not know what the outcome would be so far as their own personal experience was concerned. They said to the king, “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Here the work of faith was the refusal to worship an image of a heathen king, even though threatened with death for not doing so. God

rewarded the faith of the three Hebrews by miraculously delivering them from the fiery furnace.—Dan. 3:16-27

Others, Paul says, escaped death by the sword, were strengthened even though previously weak, became courageous in battle, and turned away armies of enemy nations. In some cases, the dead were even raised to life again. We may not be able to identify all the individuals here mentioned, but the language indicates that the Lord visibly blessed each of them as a reward for their work of faith.

### **“OTHERS” PERMITTED TO SUFFER**

“Others,” Paul continues, “had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.” (Heb. 11:36) This list continues through verse 38, and all who are mentioned were permitted to suffer. Unlike Daniel and the three Hebrews, God did not deliver these. Nevertheless, they were loyal to him, and faithfully performed the work which came to them, even though it cost them much suffering, and finally death. One of the important lessons brought to us by the experiences of all the heroes of faith cited by Paul in Hebrews 11 is that a true work of faith will have as its motive the doing of God’s will, regardless of what the cost might be.

None of the Lord’s people can know in advance what experiences they may be called upon to go through on account of their faithfulness to the will and work of God. A victorious faith will say that this does not make any difference—that it is our privilege to trust and obey, regardless of the present outcome of any experience. (Prov. 3:5,6; Rom. 8:28)

If this be the case, we will find that some of our days may be outwardly blessed, and others will include distress and suffering. Humble acceptance of such experiences, however, will brighten our days and make them “sweet with accepted pain,” as expressed by the poet.

## **OUR PRESENT WORK OF FAITH**

The work of God in the earth during the present Gospel Age has been the selection and development of those who are to be associated with Jesus in the kingdom as his “bride.” (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7; 21:9) Our preparation to be this future bride of Christ has called for the proclaiming of the Gospel, and the laying down of our lives in the Lord’s service. These labors of faith began at Pentecost, but prior to this Jesus laid the foundation for this work by his own faithfulness in preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and by illustrating what its blessings will mean to the people by the many miracles which he performed.

As Jesus associated with the sin-cursed and dying people of his day, it required a strong faith to believe the promises of his Heavenly Father that the blessings of the coming Messianic kingdom would reach mankind and restore them to perfection of mind and body. Jesus had this faith, however, and it enabled him to go forth day after day and preach the Gospel of the kingdom. This work of faith was costly for the Master, not only in terms of weariness, but also because it brought upon him the enmity of the religious rulers of his day. They questioned, ridiculed, tempted, and persecuted him—finally even unto death.

Satanic darkness has always hated the light which emanates from God through his Word and his people. (John 3:19,20) In Jesus' day, the opinions and traditions of men occupied the chief position of influence in the minds and hearts of those who opposed him. It has also been so throughout the age. Many professing to serve the cause of Christ have been greatly angered when others indicate that much of their theories does not harmonize with the teachings of the Bible. Such has been the case—in Jesus' day, throughout the Gospel period and now in the end of the age.

### **JESUS' FAITHFULNESS**

At the close of Jesus' ministry, he was arrested and brought before Caiaphas, the high priest. He asked Jesus about his disciples, and his doctrine. "Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."—John 18:19-21

How tirelessly Jesus performed his work of faith! In most of the places where he ministered he encountered opposition. He no doubt was often weary, as when he said to his disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately."—Mark 6:31,32

Jesus, however, did not get his much needed rest. A crowd followed him to the "desert place" by making the journey around the lake while watching

the ship off shore, and learning thus where it landed. The crowd was on hand when Jesus arrived. Did he send these people away with the explanation that he had come there to rest and did not want to be bothered? The record clearly states otherwise, that when Jesus came out of the ship, he “saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things.”—Mark 6:33,34

Although Jesus was weary, he did not allow this to deter him from the use of this wonderful opportunity to preach the Gospel. Here was another example of how costly the work of faith can be at times. The record does not state how long Jesus preached to this multitude, but says, “When the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat.”—vss. 35,36

Tired though he was, Jesus did not agree to this suggestion of sending the multitude away. Instead, he had his disciples gather the small supply of food they had on hand, and by a miracle—another work of faith—he increased a few loaves and fishes sufficiently to feed the multitude, which numbered about five thousand. Jesus personally handed the food to his disciples for them to serve the people. (vss. 37-44) Jesus loved the multitude, although he probably realized that most of them would not accept the true Gospel of salvation until the time of his future kingdom, after they had been raised from the dead. Yet, his faith and love prompted him to serve them

with the Truth, and with material food, which likely consumed a large part of the time he had set aside for rest.

## **WORKS AFTER PENTECOST**

The labor and ministry of Jesus were preparatory to the work of the Gospel Age, which began at Pentecost. On the Day of Pentecost, upon receiving God's Holy Spirit and the resulting gift of speaking in foreign languages, we find Peter at first refuting charges that the disciples were intoxicated. He then delivered that wonderful sermon showing that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and had sent the Holy Spirit as he had promised to do before his crucifixion. (Acts 2) Here was an outstanding work of faith, manifested in Peter, which helped to establish the Early Church, but which also continued the opposition of the religious rulers against Jesus and his apostles.

It was shortly after Pentecost that Peter and John were used by the Lord to heal a man who had been unable to walk from the time of his birth. (Acts 3) Peter climaxed his explanation of this miracle by his lesson concerning the "times of restitution," which would follow Jesus' coming at his Second Advent. (vss. 20-25) It was a wonderful sermon, and truly a work of faith. Beginning with Acts 4, we read, "As they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide."—vss. 1-3

Despite these circumstances, the people as a whole who had heard Peter's message, and knew of the miracle which had prompted it, were favorably impressed. The religious rulers decided it would not be wise to hold the apostles in prison, so the next morning they were released. After holding a council in their absence, the rulers called the apostles and asked, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"—speaking of the miracle that had been performed.—Acts 4:4-7

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This [Jesus] is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—vss. 8-12

When these rulers saw "the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." (vs. 13) Jesus had been bold in his work of faith, and Peter and John had observed this. Now that they were his footstep followers, by the power of the Holy Spirit they also displayed this same determination to carry on in the same work of faith, no matter what the cost might be.

## THE APOSTLES' DETERMINATION

The religious rulers talked the matter over further and decided that they would give the apostles their freedom, simply commanding them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus. To this, Peter and John answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (vss. 15-20) So far as Peter and John were concerned, there could be no compromise. They would permit nothing to deter them from their work of faith.

Released, they returned to "their own company" and reported their experience. When the brethren heard it, they raised their voices to God in one accord, saying, "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of . . . Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy

Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”—Acts 4:24-31

## **THE FAITHFUL THESSALONIANS**

We see similar examples of zeal and boldness in the life and ministry of all the apostles, as well as many others in the Early Church. In I Thessalonians 1:3, the Apostle Paul mentions the work of faith being performed by these brethren, and commends them for it. He then enlarges upon what he means: “Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe. . . . For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.”—vss. 6-8

What a compliment this is to the brethren at Thessalonica for their zeal in the work of faith—the work of proclaiming the Gospel, and of sounding forth the Word of God! They had covered that area so thoroughly that Paul found that there was really no need for him to remain, and he could shift his focus to another region.

Paul explains that it was the fervent enthusiasm of these dear ones at Thessalonica that demonstrated their faith to God. It was indeed their work of faith. May we today, as the year 2016 comes to a close and as 2017 begins, resolve to continue zealous in this same work of faith to the fullest extent that the Lord gives us strength and opportunity! ■

# Of One Mind—In Christ

*“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”*  
—*Philippians 2:1,2*

**THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS** is one of the epistles that the Apostle Paul wrote while he was imprisoned in Rome. Years earlier, he had traveled to Philippi, which was in Macedonia, after receiving a vision from God, recorded in Acts 16:9-12. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul expressed his great love for them, but also exhorted them to retain the spirit of unity—the spirit of Christ—which he

had witnessed when in their midst. The focus of this lesson is on chapter 2 of Paul’s epistle, and our title, “Of One Mind—in Christ,” is its recurring theme.

The first two verses of this chapter, used as our opening text, was a wide-ranging exhortation to the Philippian church. While this letter was addressed specifically to these brethren, it is also written to the entire family of God. Therefore, it is good counsel

for consecrated believers everywhere, because it is an exhortation to unity, and to have an abundance of love one for another. These verses show that if we are to appreciate and enjoy the spirit of oneness and harmony, we should remember the life and example of our Lord—that our unity is in Christ.

We are also to remember the sweet “fellowship of the Spirit” that the Truth has brought into our life. Those who have not seen the emptiness of the friendship of this world cannot understand what the apostle speaks of when he refers to this spiritual communion. Remembering the delight of our fellowship, we will be careful to protect it, lest we lose its joy. Let us recall, too, our position in the body of Christ, that we are “many members,” but “one body.”—I Cor. 12:12

Paul continues in these opening verses by admonishing us to live in harmony with one another—be “of one accord.” Those at Philippi gave evidence of being in accord by desiring to know the will of God, and that should be true with us today. Each of us is interested in knowing the will of God, and it is the desire of every consecrated heart to do his will. There will be times when others do not act exactly as we might want. Nevertheless, as we consider our brethren, we are fully confident, as Paul was, that the consecrated desire of each one is to know and do God’s will.

## **RIGHT THINKING**

Verses 3 and 4 read, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the

things of others.” In these verses, Paul is telling us that if we want to do the things mentioned in the previous verses, we must first learn to have our thoughts in accordance with certain principles of righteousness. He emphasizes this truth again later in this epistle, where he exhorts: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (chap. 4:8) The Apostle Paul knew that right thinking leads to right actions. If we have properly examined ourselves, we know that the apostle was laying down a wonderful standard by saying, “think on these things.” Thus, in our earnest desire to do right, let us realize the importance of thinking right.

Let nothing be done for self-seeking or private gain. Let nothing be done that will create strife, friction, or factions in the body of Christ. Let nothing be done for vainglory or for the purpose of exalting self. These were the exhortations Paul gave to the Philippian brethren, and to us. How may we keep from trying to exalt self, or from doing things for vainglory? The apostle says we avoid this by thinking properly, humbly, “in lowliness of mind.” In so doing, we will be like the Master, who said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11:29) Jesus was humble in heart, and Paul encourages us to be of the same disposition. Only by doing this will we be able to see in others qualities which are better than we possess in ourselves.

We should strive to see in every other member of the body of Christ something that is developed to a better degree than it is in ourselves. When we find this, and think upon that special quality which our brother possesses, the battle is won, and we have followed the exhortation of the Apostle Paul and the Master. Hence, let us forget the things in which we might excel, if they are keeping us from seeing that in which our brother excels. If we can appreciate those things in which our brethren do well, we will have little trouble in esteeming them better than ourselves.

### **THE MIND—DISPOSITION—OF CHRIST**

Quoting from *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*, verses 5-11 read: "Let this disposition be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though being in God's form, yet did not meditate a usurpation to be like God, but divested himself, taking a bondman's form, having been made in the likeness of men; and being in condition as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And therefore God supremely exalted him, and freely granted to him that name which is above every name, in order that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those things in heaven, and of those things on earth, and of those things beneath; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God the Father."

Jesus was originally a spirit being, known as the Word of God—his chief representative and mouth-piece. Yet he was willing to leave this high station and come to earth in order to fulfill God's purposes. He did not try to exalt himself as Satan had done

when given some authority as Lucifer. Jesus was desirous to do only the Father's will. He was without pride, or any spirit of self-seeking, and had no vainglory. He gave up his heavenly home and became a man.

Jesus, who with God had created man, became the servant of man, by providing the redemptive price for Adam and his progeny. In Luke 22:27 Jesus said, "Who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves." (*New American Standard Bible*) Even if Jesus had not shared in the work of bringing man into existence, his human life's experiences would have been a demonstration of humility. His was a greater demonstration of humility, however, when we realize that, as the chief instrument of his Father, he created the human race, and yet had become a man in order to lay down his life for their salvation.

There were some who appreciated Jesus as a perfect man, and marveled at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. (Luke 4:22) Even his enemies recognized that no man had ever spoken to them as this man had done. (John 7:46) Nevertheless, he was rejected and condemned to death, humbling himself still further. Jesus died, but even in this he did not die an ordinary death. It was by crucifixion, an ignominious form of death, between two thieves. Three and one-half years earlier, the Heavenly Father had declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and as he hung upon the cross, that is all that mattered to Jesus.—Matt. 3:17

Because of Jesus' faithfulness unto death, and his subsequent resurrection and exaltation to glory, Paul declares in Philippians 2:10,11 that those in heaven and in earth, as well as every tongue, will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God's glory. He even speaks of those "beneath" the earth who will likewise confess the name of Christ. Those beneath are the multitudes of mankind now in their tombs, but who will come forth in the resurrection of the dead. These are wonderful words of life, for they tell of the blessing to come to all the families of the earth because of our Lord's humility.

We think again of verse 5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," because Christ Jesus is our example of humility. Let us have the same spirit as Christ, the same disposition of humility, realizing our weaknesses due to imperfection. Jesus gave up much in every way. How little, by comparison, we have to give up. We have no cause for vainglory, nor for seeking to exalt self. What we do have, has come to us because of the love and grace of God.

### **THE HOPE OF GLORY**

The Philippian brethren knew that if they humbled themselves, they would be exalted and share Christ's kingdom, and we know the same thing. The Apostle Peter wrote, "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." (I Pet. 5:5,6) What a wonderful description of humility is found in these words.

Pride is the sin of a heart uplifted against God, and usually includes being wise in one's own conceit. As a quality, pride can be based upon many things. One can be proud of his material possessions, or of the honor and esteem given him in the circles in which he lives and moves, in either social or business life. One can have pride in natural beauty or talents. Pride can also be an expression of human folly and disrespect toward others, simply because one thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think. Any of these things is pride, which God utterly opposes.

Humility is the grace of modesty, and the virtue of not worshiping self to any degree. It is based upon reverence for God, and is developed through the wisdom of maturity. Anyone who is mature and able to consider true worth as it exists within himself, will be modest, and cannot be proud. This is the reason humility is a mark of genuine greatness.

God resists any who are proud, vain, or self-seeking among his people, because they have been enlightened. They, above all others, should appreciate that it is only by God's grace, or unmerited favor, that they are in covenant relationship with him. (Eph. 2:4-9) Indeed, God's grace can only be given to the humble, the meek, the modest—those who exalt him alone in their hearts. Only such are in a condition by which God can exalt them in due time. Thus, the text, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," takes on deeper meaning. Humility in the household of God is the basis of unity, and is the foundation of oneness with God, his beloved Son Jesus, and within the body of Christ.

## FURTHER EXHORTATIONS

The Apostle Paul continues in verses 12-18 of our lesson: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. 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 in the world; 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. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”

There are several interesting thoughts in this part of the apostle’s letter. We first note, in verse 12, the use of the words “presence” and “absence.” This was given as a contrast, that the brethren at Philippi would continue to be faithful, whether Paul was in their presence or was absent from them. The word translated “presence” is the Greek word *parousia*. It is the same word that is used when the disciples asked Jesus, “What will be the sign of thy presence [*parousia*], and of the consummation of the age?” (Matt. 24:3, *Diaglott*) This helps us to understand an important truth, because it is definite as to what *parousia* means in Paul’s use of it in Philippians 2:12. It denotes “presence,” not “coming,” even though it is sometimes thus translated in the New Testament. Therefore, Paul’s words “my presence,” in our lesson are something we should remember

when discussing the Lord's Second Advent and the meaning of the word *parousia*, for here the word is used in a way that the definition "coming" would not fit at all.

"Work out your own salvation," Paul says. Certainly this clear statement does not teach the thought of "once in grace, always in grace." At first, it may appear that Paul's words are in conflict with the Scriptural truth that salvation, through the redemptive work of Christ, is a free gift from God. (Rom. 3:24; 5:15-21) Indeed, salvation from Adamic condemnation is free, but once we have received this gift, and become justified in God's sight, there is further work to be done, as Paul indicates. We must faithfully do God's will. We must prove ourselves worthy of eternal life and "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality."—Rom. 2:7

We are to work out our salvation "with fear and trembling," the apostle says. This does not imply slavish terror, but deep concern and diligence so as to not fall short of the goal. This is not the reverential fear spoken of in certain Scriptures, but is a different Greek word. It is used by Paul in another place in this way: "Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves, . . . bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." (II Cor. 7:1, *English Standard Version*) We must be deeply concerned about the work of "bringing holiness to completion" in our Christian walk.

## **FAITHFULNESS IN WITNESSING**

Verses 13 and 14 of Philippians chapter two contain an important lesson. Paul indicates that the working out of our salvation, which both we

and God are together engaged in, should result in others, even in the world, viewing us as “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke.” In this manner we will, the apostle says, “shine as lights in the world.” We are not surprised in this epistle that the brethren at Philippi would be encouraged to shine forth the light of the Gospel message. This exhortation applies today also, for God’s people now also have the privilege of shining as lights in this present world of darkness and perplexity.

If we did not have that spirit, the “gospel of the kingdom” would not be “preached in all the world for a witness.” (Matt. 24:14) However, because the saints of God at this time desire to shine as “lights in the world,” the proclamation of the message of the kingdom, in its clarity, goes out. Through the printed page, radio, television, the Internet, YouTube, and many other forms of electronic media, the Truth reaches nearly every corner of the globe. This has all been possible because of those who continue to shine forth as lights, both individually and cooperatively.

## **THE WORD OF LIFE**

In verse 16 of our lesson, Paul urges the brethren at Philippi to hold forth “the word of life” so that he could rejoice, knowing that his labors on their behalf had not been in vain. We are to preach the word of life, the apostle says, not man-made creeds, theories, human traditions, or unsupported conclusions. The word of life is God’s Word of Truth. (John 17:17) We are to hold forth his Word just as we would give a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. Let

us proclaim the message of the kingdom to the people of the land, knowing that a few, here and there, are thirsting for it.

The apostle also refers to “the day of Christ.” That day, we believe, does not refer to the Gospel Age, but to the coming Messianic Age, or kingdom. If we are faithful in holding forth the word of life now, we will be able to rejoice with Paul in the day of Christ’s kingdom. It will be in that day when those on earth and those who now sleep in death in their graves will be fully enlightened, and “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Paul rejoiced at the faithfulness of this small group of brethren in Philippi, and we rejoice now in the opportunities we have to give a word of comfort to a hearing ear, but how much greater this joy will be in the kingdom, when all shall know God, “from the least to the greatest.”—Heb. 8:11

### **LABORERS FEW**

Verses 19-24 read: “I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.”

These words are a heartfelt reminder of what the Master said concerning the work of preaching the Gospel: “The harvest truly is great, but the labourers

are few.” (Luke 10:2) Years later, the Apostle Paul looked to see whom he could send to encourage the brethren at Philippi. He lamented that most were only looking out for themselves, not the things of Jesus Christ. Timothy was an exception. Paul could depend on faithful Timothy, ever willing and glad to serve the Lord. Here is a lesson for us. As it was in Jesus’ day, and in the days of the apostles, so it is now. Laborers in the harvest are few, but if we are willing to sacrifice ourselves in his service, the Lord assures an overflowing blessing.

### **FAITHFUL EPAPHRODITUS**

Verses 25-30, the final portion of our lesson, read as follows from *The Amplified Bible*: “I thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to you. He has been my brother and companion in labor and my fellow soldier, as well as having come as your special messenger and minister to my need. For he has been . . . longing for you all and has been distressed because you had heard that he was ill. He certainly was ill too, near to death. But God had compassion on him, and not only on him but also on me, lest I should have sorrow over him coming upon sorrow. So I have sent him the more willingly and eagerly, that you may be gladdened at seeing him again, and that I may be the less disquieted. Welcome him home then in the Lord with all joy, and honor and highly appreciate men like him. For it was through working for Christ that he came so near death, risking his very life to complete the deficiencies in your service to me which distance prevented you yourselves from rendering.”

Surely, this was a sweet expression of appreciation. The meaning of the name Epaphroditus is “lovely,” and he was indeed lovely in his character likeness to Christ. He endured much in order to serve the Lord, risking even life itself to perform the service entrusted to him. He was serving the Apostle Paul, and he was serving the brethren at Philippi. Actually, however, we are told he was working for Christ. Similarly, everything we do for the brethren we are assured by Scripture is actually serving the Lord. When we serve one of the least of his little ones, and he accepts our service, it is counted as having been done unto him.—Matt. 25:40

We do not know how Epaphroditus hazarded his life in carrying out the opportunity that was given to him. All we know is that he did it gladly, graciously, and based on love. Let us, therefore, be like Epaphroditus in our service to the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. Let us serve in a loving, unselfish, and humble way. Whether it be in little things or in bigger things, may all our service be “of one accord, of one mind”—in Christ Jesus. ■

## **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 Barbara Ann Thornton, Royal Oak, MI—  
October 29. Age, 78

Sister Marguerite Shuck, New Haven, CT—October  
30. Age, 84

Sister Ruth Chambers, Vancouver, BC—November  
2. Age, 100

# Sowing the Seeds of Truth

*“In the morning  
sow thy seed, and  
in the evening  
withhold not thine  
hand: for thou  
knowest not  
whether shall  
prosper, either this  
or that, or whether  
they both shall be  
alike good.”  
—Ecclesiastes 11:6*

**AS ANOTHER YEAR DRAWS** to a close, we are very thankful for the privilege the Lord has afforded The Dawn to continue to give forth the message of Truth throughout the earth. Indeed, in these troubling times, we believe it is more important than ever before to bring a message of comfort and hope to this groaning creation. It is our desire that the words of this lesson will stir up the minds of our readers to likewise be engaged in spreading the seeds of Truth and proclaiming the wonderful “gospel of the kingdom” to all with a hearing ear.—Rom. 8:22; Matt. 24:14

In the literal sowing of seed, we have a very fitting illustration of the consecrated believer’s privilege of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ and the good news of his kingdom. It is an illustration which properly applies to any and all efforts we may make

to tell the glad tidings to others. Our text indicates that it is proper to do this sowing at all times—“in the morning” and “in the evening.”

We could consider this as meaning the literal days which make up our lives. Surely, throughout each day we should always be on the alert to use every possible opportunity to bear witness to the Truth. In a more general way, we could think of this as a reference to the entire Gospel Age—its morning time, or beginning, and its evening, or close. Which-ever application we make, the lesson is that we should constantly be on the alert to sow the seeds of Truth whenever and wherever we can.

From a dispensational standpoint, the Scriptures give us a progressive picture of the Gospel Age, in which there is a sowing in the beginning and a reaping at the end. “The harvest is the end of the age,” the Master declared. (Matt. 13:39, *New American Standard Bible*) However, in the outworking of God’s plan, even the harvest work at the end of the age is accomplished in great measure by sowing the seeds of Truth. We are to thrust in the sickle and reap, but this is done by making known the Gospel message far and wide, so that those who have a hearing ear may understand and be blessed.—Rev. 14:14-16; Matt. 13:16

Thus we see that the general illustration of sowing is applicable at all times, and there is no reason why the Truth should ever be withheld when an opportunity presents itself to proclaim it. Some, however, may find reasons not to sow. The Lord foresaw this and called attention to it in the chapter from which our opening text is taken. Verse 4 reads, “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he

that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." In ancient times sowing was done by hand, and apparently when the wind blew, much of the seed would be lost, and carried to places where it was not intended to go. Because of this, one who was expecting to sow would most likely hold back from doing it if the wind were blowing.

Whether this was a wise procedure on the part of the sower need not concern us, but the prophet indicates that it is not the right course for those who would sow seeds of Truth. It suggests the finding of excuses not to sow. Many excuses can be made to withhold the Truth from others if we yield to the preferences of the flesh to find them. The apostle speaks of "every wind of doctrine," or teaching. (Eph. 4:14) For the most part it is this sort of "wind" that may influence us not to sow the seeds of Truth.

### **EXCUSES IMPROPER**

These winds of false teachings are many and varied. Some may conclude that the time is past for sowing, and we should now be reaping, forgetting that the reaping work is accomplished by the dissemination of the Gospel message. Others, perhaps, believe that the door to the High Calling is closed, so we should no longer preach the Truth. These overlook the fact that they have no definite knowledge concerning the door being closed, and that even if it were closed we should continue bearing witness to the Truth. Still others might say that this is not the time to convert the world, hence we should confine our activities among ourselves, working out our own salvation. These disregard the fact that no

truth-enlightened Christian has ever supposed that the world would be converted in this age, and that the very best way to be prepared for the kingdom is to actively engage in making known the glad tidings to others.

The prophet also says that those who “regardeth the clouds” will not reap. This also may describe the viewpoints and experiences of some as applied to the reaping work in this harvest time at the end of the age. Clouds are a symbol of the great time of trouble with which the Gospel Age comes to an end. We might be tempted to decide that since these clouds are hanging ominously over the world today, we should not endeavor to do any more work in the Lord’s vineyard. Here again, however, we do not believe this should be the attitude of the consecrated believer.

It is easy for our fallen flesh to decide what the Lord can and cannot do, or what he ought to be doing. We should be thankful that he has revealed to us many of the details of his plan. Nevertheless, let us not attempt to fill in matters which are not revealed in the Bible, and decide that the Lord’s work should be confined to the pattern we have set. Let us remember that we know not the way of the Spirit, and it is, therefore, not for us to determine what might be accomplished by the work God has given us to do.

## **PARABLE OF THE SOWER**

God does not daily reveal to us what may be accomplished by our self-sacrificing efforts to make known the glad tidings of his kingdom. In the parable of the sower, however, Jesus has given us

a broad outline of what to expect. In this parable, recorded in Matthew 13:3-8, we learn that the seed which was sown fell on various types of ground. Some fell by the wayside, some on stony ground or among thorns, and other seed fell on good ground. This indicates that much of the effort we put forth in sowing the message of Truth brings little or no tangible results at the present time. Only that seed which falls on good ground produces plants which bring forth fruit.

In Jesus' explanation of this parable, found in verses 18-23, he brings to light the reasons why so few are prepared at the present time to receive the Gospel message. First, there is the seed which falls "by the way side." (vs. 19) This class of hearers, Jesus says, receive the Truth into their hearts temporarily, but do not understand it. Not understanding it, they have no real desire to hold it, and thus the Adversary is able to snatch it away before it has a chance to take root. How much in keeping this is with what often occurs when the Truth is proclaimed.

Many may initially give some attention. They may pick up a tract and read part of it, and believe that its message is quite reasonable. Perhaps they send for the booklet which it offers, but before it arrives forget they sent for it. They might hear the message over radio, television, or electronic media and be sufficiently impressed to send for literature, but lose interest even before it arrives. It might be one of our neighbors to whom we try to explain the Truth. He listens attentively, and we rejoice, thinking we have found a hearing ear, but later when we again meet, there is no interest and he indicates that he would rather talk about something else.

The importance of this lesson is that it should prevent us from becoming discouraged when seemingly so few take a deep interest in the Gospel of the kingdom. It is very easy to conclude that because the results of our efforts are so meager we should cease sowing. This is the wrong viewpoint, for the results have always been small. Most of the seeds of Truth which have been sown throughout the entire age doubtless have fallen by the wayside, yet the Lord wants his people to keep sowing, regardless of visible results, for we know not what will prosper, “this or that.”

### **ON STONY GROUND**

Jesus next speaks of those who receive seed into “stony places.” (Matt. 13:20,21) These hearers of the message, he says, are those who at first greatly rejoice in it, even accepting it as the Truth. They acknowledge that it is the most wonderful thing they have ever heard. In our initial opportunities for fellowship with them, it is all they want to talk about. Perhaps they attend several meetings and give every evidence of fully embracing the message. They may even get a supply of literature to give to others, for they have found that which satisfies their longings as nothing else could do, and they want to share it with others.

Then we notice that they only come to the meetings sporadically, and finally, not at all. Wondering what has happened, a brother or sister contacts them, only to find that their interest has cooled off. In such a case, Jesus points out in the parable that some form of tribulation or persecution has perhaps arisen, and they did not have sufficient depth of soil in their

hearts to stand up under the opposition. Like the tender plant rooted only in the shallow earth between the stones, which withers under the heat of the sun, so these wilt under the sun of persecution.

When they first hear the Truth and become interested in it, many do not realize that the vast majority of their friends will treat them coolly as a result. It does not occur to them that a friend or family member might even say they are “going crazy on religion.” They perhaps do not expect that their pastor might be opposed and would warn them against heresy and the danger of being condemned as a result of their new-found beliefs. When some or all of these situations develop this group is unprepared for them. Wilting under the heat of trial, they choose to give up the Truth rather than their friends. Here again, let us not be discouraged if we find that some whom we believed to be coming fully into the Truth turn out to be those who receive it into “stony ground.” Jesus gave us the parable of the sower in order that we might be prepared for experiences of this kind.

### **AMONG THORNS**

“Some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them,” Jesus said when giving the parable. (Matt. 13:7) His explanation, found in verse 22, is that this is a group which permits the “care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches,” to choke the growing plant and prevent it from becoming fruitful. Here also is an illustration which fits many who for a time have rejoiced in the Truth and enjoyed the fellowship of the Lord’s people. Most of us have doubtless observed cases of this kind, in which some have manifested great enthusiasm for

a time. They were not affected by persecution, and even the enmity of the world did not wither them at the start. The roots became reasonably well embedded in a sincere and honest condition of heart, but the time came when they lost interest. What has happened in such cases?

Jesus explains that worldly cares and delusions which result from earthly wealth choke the Word's intended purpose, hindering continued growth in grace. Here are influences which, if permitted, can destroy the life of the New Creature at almost any stage of its development. These thorns can grow even after one has been in the Truth for many years. For this reason, we should all be on guard against such a dangerous course. It is neither a case of suddenly turning to worldly things, nor abruptly laying up treasures on earth rather than in heaven. It is more subtle than that. Thorns do not grow up overnight, but are of gradual development.

It is regrettable that anyone who once rejoiced in the Gospel message and its service should permit worldly cares and ambitions to choke his interest. However, Jesus has foretold that this would be the case. In such cases, it is not something for which the sowers are to be blamed, nor is it an indication that nothing is to be gained from sowing, simply because some who accept the Truth do not remain faithful to it.

In ancient times the sower of literal seed was doubtless confronted with all the difficulties mentioned in the parable, yet he sowed his seed faithfully just the same. He knew that some of it would fall on good ground, where it would grow and bring forth the proper fruitage. Similarly, our responsibility is

to keep on sowing the seeds of Truth, knowing that in the Lord's providence a grain, here and there, will find its way to "good ground," and from this there will be abundant fruitage.

## **THE GOOD GROUND**

The good ground, or proper heart condition, to receive the Truth means, as Jesus explains, that it is not only heard, but understood. (Matt. 13:23) It is clear from this that a knowledge of the fundamentals of the Gospel is essential in order that the Christian may maintain his standing before the Lord, and be one who bears "fruit unto . . . everlasting life." (Rom. 6:22) Accepting the Truth and devoting oneself to God is much more than an emotional feeling, for it must be based on an understanding of his Word. We are to "know whom [we] have believed," and why. (II Tim. 1:12) Like Paul, we must be persuaded, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 8:38,39

Only those who are deeply rooted and grounded in the Truth and in whose hearts the love of God has fully permeated, are able to withstand the heat of persecution and the allurements of the world. Only such will give evidence that the Holy Spirit, operating through God's Word, is transforming their lives and making them daily more like the Master. The apostle speaks of the "fruit of the Spirit," and it is this fruit that manifests itself in the lives of "good ground" followers of Christ. These character qualities—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”—are all elements of Christlike fruitage.—Gal. 5:22,23

It has been said that love is the sum of all the Christian graces. If one is bearing the fruit of love, he is fulfilling the mission for which he was called. The Scriptures tell us that “God is love,” and as we grow to maturity in Christ, the fruit of love will become more manifest in our daily lives. (I John 4:8; 3:16) We will thus become more like our Heavenly Father, and as we do, our zeal for the things of God will increase. His viewpoint will become our viewpoint. As he is continually seeking the good of his creatures, we will be watching for opportunities to bless our fellow men. Not only will the fruit of the Spirit develop into a luscious ripeness in our own lives, but as it does, it will bring joy to the lives of others.

Peter admonishes us to add certain graces of character to our faith—the qualities of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. Then he declares that if these things are in us, and abound, they will prevent us from being barren or unfruitful “in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:5-8

As Peter shows, if love and the other elements of Christian character are in us and abound, they will not permit us to be idle in the Lord’s service. Like faith, which without works is dead, where spiritual fruitage abounds, there is sure to be a reaching out for the blessing of others. Thus the seed of Truth that reaches the good ground multiplies itself, in that the fruit-bearing plant which it produces, in turn becomes a sower of the seed of the glorious Gospel of Christ.

Even among those of the good ground, because they have all been affected in different ways by the

fall, the Holy Spirit controls their lives in varying degrees. Yet, in each case, their hearts are right and pure, and the seed finds a ready reception and sufficient depth of soil to grow and bear fruit—"some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." The Lord knows about our handicaps, and when we do the best we can to crucify the flesh, that the Spirit may have free course in our lives, his blessing is upon us and we can continue to rejoice. All such hearers bear sufficient fruitage to obtain an "entrance . . . abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."—II Pet. 1:11

Let us endeavor, however, never to permit the flesh and its interests to quench the Spirit and thus stunt the growth of fruit which otherwise would manifest itself in our lives. If we are bearing the fruit of love, we will want to be sowing the seeds of Truth, that others might be reached and comforted by a knowledge of God and of his beloved Son. (II Cor. 4:5; II Tim. 4:2) We will want to sow in the morning and in the evening, and we will be faithful in sharing the joys of the glorious Gospel message, irrespective of any visible results.

Indeed, we are happy in the love of God which he has revealed to us, and glad that he has commissioned us to tell the glorious message to others. If faithful unto death, when we get beyond the veil, we will probably discover that in the great economy of God not a single sincere effort that was made by his people to tell forth the glad tidings of the kingdom was in vain. We will then know that in his wise and loving providence, both the morning and evening sowing were "alike good." ■

## TALKING THINGS OVER

# “I Wish I Knew What To Do!”

**HOW OFTEN WE** hear this statement made by those who are zealous for making known the glad tidings of the kingdom. May we suggest one thing that practically all can do is to send one or more *Dawn* gift subscriptions to their friends. Just think, one gift subscription means that *The Dawn* magazine enters the home twelve times during the year as your messenger of Truth. Isn't this something worthwhile doing? Each subscription is only \$12.00, and you can have three names entered for just \$30.00! It is simple to do when you use the coupon(s) below, and on the next page.

---

### **DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, New Jersey 07073

Dear Friends: I appreciate the privilege of proclaiming the Truth through *The Dawn* magazine. Please enter the following subscription, to begin with the January issue:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

New Subscription

Renewal

### **DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, New Jersey 07073

Dear Friends: I appreciate the privilege of proclaiming the Truth through *The Dawn* magazine. Please enter the following subscription, to begin with the January issue:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

New Subscription

Renewal

---

### **DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, New Jersey 07073

Dear Friends: I appreciate the privilege of proclaiming the Truth through *The Dawn* magazine. Please enter the following subscription, to begin with the January issue:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

New Subscription

Renewal

---

### **DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION**

199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, New Jersey 07073

Dear Friends: I appreciate the privilege of proclaiming the Truth through *The Dawn* magazine. Please enter the following subscription, to begin with the January issue:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

New Subscription

Renewal

## SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

### **M. Balko**

Jacksonville, FL    December 4

### **D. Christiansen**

Chicago, IL  
December 31-January 2

## CONVENTIONS

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

**IBADAN END OF THE YEAR THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 3**—Ibadan place of fellowship, #24 Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +234 803 333 9949, +234 808 214 6621, +234 809 857 8588 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com, egbucajetan1@yahoo.com

**CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 31-January 2**—Prisco Community Center, Aurora, IL. Contact L. Larson. Phone: (708) 341-2067 or Email: lambgram@comcast.net. Accommodations, contact A. Pop. Email: accommodations@chicagobible.org

**PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 14,15**—Drury Inn, Happy Valley, 2335 W Pinnacle Peak Road, Phoenix, AZ 85027. For reservations, phone: (800) 325-0720, confirmation #2268162. Mention “Christian Group-Phoenix Associated Bible Students.” Contact A. Mengos. Phone: (480) 390-3767 or Email: samengos@yahoo.com

**LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, January 29**—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91605. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

**SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 17-19**—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95821. Contact K. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

**FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 4-6**—Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32822. For room reservations, call the hotel. Phone: (407) 851-6400. Specify “Florida Bible Students” to guarantee special convention rate. Deadline for special rate is February 25, 2017. For other information, contact M. Balko. Phone: (407) 339-7580 or Email: mbalko@cfl.rr.com

**ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 14-16**—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com



*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”—Luke 2:11*

*Let us rejoice at this joyful season of the year and have our hearts filled with appreciation of the divine love and generosity, which gave us the great gift of Messiah, and thus indirectly a knowledge of the kingdom yet to come . . . which shall bless the world. As we have freely received, let us freely give, and thus copy our Lord and the Heavenly Father. . . . Let us learn to scatter these gifts of grace and truth . . . not merely once a year, but every day and every hour, and not merely upon our friends, but, godlike, upon our enemies also, for “He is kind to the unthankful and causes his sun to shine upon the evil and upon the good.”*

—*Songs in the Night, December 25*