

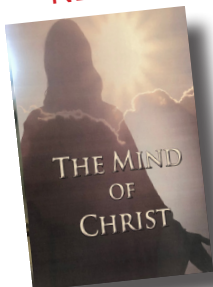
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# The DAWN

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# Jesus and the Resurrection

*“Consider what  
I say; and the  
Lord give thee  
understanding  
in all things.  
Remember that  
Jesus Christ of the  
seed of David was  
raised from the  
dead according  
to my gospel.”  
—II Timothy 2:7,8*

## **WHO IS JESUS, AND WHAT**

part does he have in God’s plan and purpose as it has to do with mankind? Today Jesus is the ostensible head over 2.4 billion humans, or more than 30% of the world’s population. His professed followers are not a united body of people, with tens of thousands of different denom-

inations. Yet these groups, each in its own way, and to varying degrees, do homage to Jesus or at the least honor him “with their lips.”—Matt. 15:8,9

In addition to Jesus’ professed followers, there are billions of others who know about him. Many of these are able to quote some of his sayings, especially parts of his Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, there probably is not a name that is more universally known. The widely variant opinions concerning Jesus, as represented in the thousands of divided groups which confess his name, speak loudly of the

many misunderstandings and differences of thought which exist concerning him.

How, then, shall we find out about Jesus? Shall we consult the viewpoints of the myriad sectarian groups which bear his name? This would be an endless task; and fruitless also, as well as confusing. We think the better way is to go to the fountain of information found in the Bible to obtain the truths concerning Jesus. One of these great sources of information is the Apostle Paul.

Paul was a Hebrew, and well-schooled in the religious beliefs of his people. He knew that the God of Israel, through his holy prophets, had promised to send one who would redeem the people from their sins, and deliver them from the oppressive hand of death. He knew from the testimony of the Scriptures that to accomplish this purpose of redemption it was necessary for the Redeemer to die. No doubt Paul had many times read that revealing statement recorded by the Prophet Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:5) Upon careful consideration, Paul came to understand this prophecy as pointing to Jesus.

Here we have expressed a great truth of God's plan which has come to be misunderstood by a majority of the professed followers of Jesus. It is the doctrine of atonement, and the fact that Jesus could bear the sins of the whole world of mankind, as suggested in the foregoing words of Isaiah. Professed Christians who no longer believe this claim that it is a bloody teaching, hence repulsive, and not worthy of acceptance by reasoning minds.

It is odd that anyone should take such a view of Jesus' sacrificial work on behalf of mankind. Today we laud those who are willing to give their lives to save others, proclaiming them as heroes. It is just this that Jesus did, but on a far grander scale. Paul wrote concerning this: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."—Rom. 5:7,8

Thus we are informed that God's love was manifested toward his dying human creatures by the death of Jesus. This too is a well-established fact of Scripture. John 3:16 reads, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The greatest of all God's gifts is his beloved Son, who in turn willingly gave himself in death that ultimately mankind might have an opportunity to enjoy everlasting life.

## **THE FATHER AND THE SON**

There is no need for any misunderstanding concerning the relationship between the Creator and his beloved Son, Christ Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote, "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (I Cor. 8:6) Here Paul makes a sharp distinction between the Father and the Son, and, at the same time, emphasizes that the blessings the Father desires to provide his human creation are available only through the Son.

The Scriptures present Jesus as “the beginning of the creation of God.” (Rev. 3:14) Paul wrote concerning Jesus: “We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”—Col. 1:14-17

In this comprehensive statement concerning the origin of Jesus, Paul takes us into an area of Truth quite beyond the ability of our finite minds to comprehend. He informs us that Jesus was the “firstborn of every creature,” and that he was “the image of the invisible God.” He explains further that by Jesus all things were created, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible. This implies, though our minds cannot fully grasp it, that there was a time when God was alone, and that Jesus was his first and only direct creation.

This throws light on God’s statement as recorded in Genesis 1:26: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” This is evidently the great God of the universe talking to his Son, “the firstborn of every creature,” who himself had been created in the image of God, even as his Father specified the first man should be created. Thus in a small way we are taken behind the scenes, so to speak, and given a very limited glimpse of creation’s architect and builder at work.

The created things, Paul says, include the “visible” and the “invisible.” There are the angels, for example.

These are real creatures, but the human eye cannot see them, because they are spirit beings, invisible to human sight. It is evident also that Jesus, before he came to earth and became a human being, was the most exalted of all intelligent invisible creations. It was this mighty invisible spirit being who humbled himself and became a man in order that he might give his humanity in death to accomplish redemption for the sin-cursed and dying race.

### **GOD'S SON MADE FLESH**

In the outworking of his loving plan to rescue the world from sin and death, the Creator arranged the miraculous transfer of "the firstborn" from the "invisible" to the "visible," by being born of a human mother. Thus, as John testifies, God's Son "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

As to the purpose of this, the Apostle Paul testifies, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9) How could one man "taste death" for "every man?" The Scriptures reveal that this was because death had come upon all through the one man Adam. Paul states it simply: "Just as all men die by virtue of their descent from Adam, so all such as are in union with Christ will be made to live again."—I Cor. 15:22, *Williams New Testament*

The question might arise as to why any member of the human race who was willing to do so could not have died for the world even as Jesus did? Why



was it necessary for Jesus to humble himself and become a human in order to redeem mankind from death? The simple answer to this question is that every member of the human race is under condemnation to death, and “none ... can by any means redeem his brother.” (Ps. 49:7) The man Jesus, however, was free from Adamic condemnation, and by virtue of the miraculous manner in which he became flesh, he was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” (Heb. 7:26) Jesus therefore had a perfect, uncondemned human life to give in sacrifice for the perfect life of Adam, which was forfeited when he sinned. The Scriptures use the word ransom in this connection and tell us that Jesus gave himself “a ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:3-6) The word “ransom” is defined in the original Greek text as denoting “what is given in exchange for another as the price of his redemption.”—*Thayer’s Greek Definitions*

## **THE RESURRECTION HOPE**

Another important truth concerning Jesus which Paul understood was that after giving his life in sacrifice for the redemption of the world from sin and death, he was raised from the dead by the power of his Heavenly Father. (Gal. 1:1; I Pet. 1:18-21) Many religious philosophies, Christian and non-Christian alike, claim that life continues after death and that those who “seem” to die are more alive than when they were living. The Scriptures, however, emphasize the reality of death, and are consistent in their testimony. The Creator warned our first parents that if they disobeyed his law they would “surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) Four thousand years

later the Apostle Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) Solomon wrote, "The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing."—Eccles. 9:5

The Bible holds out a hope of life beyond the grave, but bases this hope upon the promises of the Creator to restore the dead to life, not upon the mistaken thought that there is no death. The religion of the Bible is the only one in the world that teaches a true and complete concept of the resurrection of the dead, for it is essentially the only source of understanding which acknowledges the reality of death.

In his letter to the church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15:20) From this short scripture we learn three specific things about the apostle's understanding. First, Jesus died; second, he was raised from the dead; and third, he was the "firstfruits" of all others who "slept" in death. Paul wrote further to this effect in the next verse: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—vs. 21

The hope of the resurrection of the dead was not something that Paul had acquired only when he became a Christian. This was a hope which was held by all Israelites who knew and believed the promises of God as set forth in the Old Testament. In testifying before Felix, a Roman governor, and referring to the charges brought against him by some of his countrymen, Paul said: "This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all

things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”—Acts 24:14,15

It is clear from this that the hope of the resurrection of the dead had been set forth in the Old Testament. However, the word resurrection does not appear in the Old Testament, God’s promises of the restoration of the dead to life being set forth there by other terminology. The righteous man Job said, “If a man die, shall he live again?” Then, answering his own question and speaking prophetically, he added, “All the days of my appointed time will I wait [in death], till my change [from death to life] come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.—Job 14:14,15

Here Job refers to himself as the work of God’s hands. This is true of all mankind. As Paul explained in his sermon on Mars’ hill, we are all “the offspring of God.” (Acts 17:29) Our first parents were created in God’s image, and had the ability to obey the Creator’s law. They disobeyed and brought upon themselves the penalty of death. However, this does not mean that God has lost interest in his human creatures. As Job explains, he still has a “desire,” or love, for them, because they are the work of his hands.

## **GOD’S LOVING PURPOSE**

It was this deep interest in his wayward human creatures that motivated the Creator to send his Son into the world to redeem them from death. Because of this loving provision, Job, and the entire

human race, will be awakened from the sleep of death. Poetically, Job speaks of this as responding to the voice of God: "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee." It is the voice of God's authority and power, as it will be exercised through his resurrected and highly exalted Son, that will restore the dead to life.—John 5:28,29, *Revised Version*

Moses, in addition to being Israel's emancipator and lawgiver, was also one of God's outstanding prophets. In a prayer to the Creator recorded by the psalmist, he expressed his hope of the resurrection. We quote: "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men."—Ps. 90:1-3

It was after he had disobeyed divine law that the Creator "turnest man" to destruction. He said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—Gen. 3:17-19

Here the infliction of the penalty of death is likened to a returning to the dust of the ground. Moses said that those turned to destruction will, in due time, be returned from death. Through the Prophet Daniel the Lord gives us further assurance of this, declaring that those who "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) Thus the hope is held out that

those who came under condemnation to death through Adam are to be released from that condemnation and awakened from the sleep of death.

The Lord used the Prophet Isaiah also to set forth the assurance of the resurrection. He wrote, "The ransomed of the LORD shall return ... with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35:10) The expression, "ransomed of the Lord," includes all mankind. It is used, evidently, to remind us that the dead are to return to life because they have been ransomed by the atoning blood of Jesus, who gave himself a "ransom for all."—I Tim. 2:6

It should be noted that joy will abound when the dead return to life. They return with "songs and everlasting joy," and "sorrow and sighing" will be no more. Thus the resurrection of the dead is seen to be a blessed hope of life beyond the grave. Both the just and the unjust will be restored. The just will have appropriate rewards meted out to them, but the unjust will be enlightened and given an opportunity to believe, reform and gain perfect human life.

The hope of the resurrection includes the young as well as the old. This is brought to our attention in Jeremiah 31:15-17. Here we are told of a mother in Israel who was weeping over the death of her children. The prophecy reads: "Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall

be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.”

## **DEATH—AN ENEMY**

In this prophecy death is described as an enemy. Indeed, it is man’s greatest enemy. When it strikes down its victims there is always “lamentation, and bitter weeping.” However, these victims will not remain in the land of the enemy, which is the land of death. “They shall come again to their own border.” Just as there is the land of death, so there is the land of life. Here the resurrection of the dead is described symbolically as crossing over the border, back into the land of the living. What a bright hope this gives us for all children who have died, and the same will be true of all mankind who have died and are also now in “the land of the enemy.”

The Old Testament also speaks of the state of death as being a prison, and the resurrection of the dead is referred to as “the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” (Isa. 61:1) These prisoners of death are likened to “captives,” and their restoration to life as being released from captivity. This language is used in Ezekiel 16:53-55, where God speaks to the Israelites, assuring them, as well as the Sodomites and the Samaritans, that they will all be released from their captivity in death and be restored to their former estate of life.

We quote: “When I bring back their captives, the captives of Sodom and her daughters, and the captives of Samaria and her daughters, then I will also bring back the captives of your captivity. ... When

your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, return to their former state, and Samaria and her daughters return to their former state, then you and your daughters will return to your former state.”—*New King James Version*

Using this same viewpoint of death, the Lord assures us of still others who will be released from their captivity in death. “It shall come to pass in the latter days: I will bring back the captives of Elam, says the LORD.” (Jer. 49:39, *NKJV*) “I will bring back the captives of Moab in the latter days, says the LORD.” (Jer. 48:47, *NKJV*) “Afterward I will bring back the captives of the people of Ammon, says the LORD.” (Jer. 49:6, *NKJV*) Thus the Elamites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites are all to be brought back from their captivity in death. From these specific references to the people of various ancient nations, we are given the assurance that God’s resurrection plan encompasses all mankind.

David wrote prophetically concerning Jesus, “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive.” (Ps. 68:18) This prophecy is quoted by the Apostle Paul, who applies it to Jesus, saying, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives.” (Eph. 4:8, *English Standard Version*) What a “host of captives” there are to be released from their captivity in death! As we have noted, the Scriptures make special reference to many of these—the Israelites, the Ammonites, the Elamites, the Moabites, the Sodomites and the Samaritans. Jesus said that all in the grave would be called forth from death. This includes all of death’s captives, beginning with righteous Abel and all who have died in the past; also those who are dying today; and all who will die tomorrow.

## HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE

It was this comforting hope of life beyond the grave, made sure by the death and resurrection of Jesus, that Paul and the other apostles presented to the people nearly two thousand years ago. In Paul's day, even as now, there were difficult aspects of the resurrection teachings which he found necessary to explain. To the church at Corinth he wrote, "Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (I Cor. 15:35) In his answer to this question Paul explained that in the resurrection some would have "celestial," or spiritual bodies, while others would have "terrestrial," or natural, human bodies.—vss. 40-44

According to the Bible, it is the faithful footstep followers of Jesus who are to receive spiritual bodies. These are "partakers of the heavenly calling." (Heb. 3:1) When Paul wrote that all would be made alive through Christ, he added, "Every man in his own order." (I Cor. 15:23) The Bible reveals that the "order" of the resurrection is that those who receive spiritual bodies are to be resurrected first. This is referred to in the Bible as the "first resurrection," and we are informed that those who participate in the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ "a thousand years."—Rev. 20:4,6

Through Christ's earthly reign, a righteous world government will replace the imperfect and failing institutions of today, which are out of harmony with God and his principles of righteousness. (II Pet. 3:10,13; Rev. 21:1-5) Paul wrote that the last enemy to be destroyed as the rulership of Christ progresses is "death." (I Cor. 15:26) This will require the awakening from the dead all who have died. This



period of Christ's kingdom during which these things will be accomplished is described elsewhere by the Apostle Peter as the "times of restitution [Greek: restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."—Acts 3:20,21

It is those who will be restored to life during the reign of Christ that are to have human bodies. They will be as they were before; knowing their friends, and known by them. Through this mighty project the Creator will reveal himself to mankind, and they will then learn of his wisdom, justice, love, and power, which combine to make known his glory. "The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."—Isa. 40:5 ■

*"For this is good and acceptable  
in the sight of God our Saviour;  
Who will have all men to be saved,  
and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.  
For there is one God, and one mediator between  
God and men, the man Christ Jesus;  
Who gave himself a ransom for all,  
to be testified in due time."  
—I Timothy 2:3-6*

## **2022 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE**

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Thursday, April 14, 2022.

Memorial Services in MP3 format are available for listening or download at:

**dawnbible.com/memorial**

# Jesus' Triumphal Entry

**Key Verse:** “*Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*”  
—Matthew 21:5

**Selected Scripture:**  
Matthew 21:1-11

## IN THE SETTING OF TODAY'S

lesson, we find our Lord Jesus and his disciples, along with others who had followed them, on their way to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Passover, which would take place in a few days. When the group reached Bethphage, a small village on the Mount of Olives, Jesus stopped and sent two of his disciples to another location close by to bring

him an ass, or donkey, and her young colt. (Matt. 21:1-3) The owner of the animals may have been acquainted with Jesus, and if so, would likely have known the two disciples which Jesus sent. The Master was about to present himself to the people after the manner of their kings of the past, who we are told rode in triumph on an ass or mule. (See I Kings 1:33) In this regard, it is of interest to note that this is the only biblical record of Jesus' riding an animal.

Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, just five days before his crucifixion, was in fulfillment of two Old Testament prophecies, which combine in testimony regarding that which is recorded in our Key Verse. “Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh.” “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter

of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” (Isa. 62:11; Zech. 9:9) The Jews were familiar with these prophecies, and for centuries had been waiting for Messiah to fulfill them. Thus, they were without excuse in their rejection of him, though in God’s plan this blindness would, in due time, be turned away.—Rom. 11:25,26

For the moment, however, the multitudes accompanying Jesus seemed to catch the spirit of the occasion. They made a royal pathway for him, some spreading their garments, and others cutting down palm tree branches to lay before him, all of which were long-standing customs for the treatment of honored rulers. They also shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”—Matt. 21:8,9; John 12:13; Ps. 118:25,26

The procession and shouting of kingly honor to Jesus should have had meaning to the Jewish nation—a presentation to them of their Messiah and King. Yet we see, as a nation, Israel failed to receive their king. Jesus soon afterward stated as he wept over the city of Jerusalem, “Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:44) They were left to their own devices, because their hearts were not right, and they were no longer worthy of God’s special favor.—Matt. 15:8; Rom. 11:7,8

We understand that Israel and their experiences were emblematic of the fact that the world in general similarly does not understand the Messiah, the great “Lord of lords, and King of kings,” and the divine purpose through him of blessing not only Israel, but “all the nations of the earth.” (Rev. 17:14; Gen. 22:18) However, those who have faith in God’s promises recognize the importance of these things, and view Jesus as their Messiah, Lord and King. Thus, let us take care that we follow the words of the Apostle Paul, who declared that we are “children of the day: we are not of the night. ... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”—I Thess. 5:5,6 ■

# Memorial Supper Instituted

**Key Verse:** *“I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*  
—**Matthew 26:29**

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Matthew 26:17-30**

Peter links the “lamb” picture to Christ, whom he calls “a lamb without blemish and without spot,” because his life was completely free from sin.—I Pet. 1:19; Heb. 4:15

The Israelites had been instructed to kill the Passover lamb on the 14th day of the first month—Abib—later called Nisan. (Exod. 12:6) In direct correspondence to this, Jesus died as the “Lamb of God” on the exact same day, according to Jewish reckoning. Thus, we are provided conclusive evidence that the sacrifice of Christ was the greater fulfillment of the Passover picture, and so the Apostle Paul directly states, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”—I Cor. 5:7

Jesus and his disciples, being Jews, were obligated to follow the Jewish Passover arrangement. Thus, they

## **OUR LESSON DIRECTS US**

to Jesus’ institution of a “memorial,” or remembrance, of his willing sacrifice and death as “the Lamb of God.” (John 1:29) Centuries earlier, in God’s instructions to Israel concerning their Passover observance, they were told to select a lamb “without blemish” to be sacrificed, the purpose of which would be to secure their release from bondage to Egypt. (Exod. 12:5) The Apostle

gathered together to eat of a literal lamb, with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and the fruit of the vine. (Matt. 26:1,2,17-20; Exod. 12:8) Apparently, it was just as the Passover supper was ending that Jesus took some of the leftover unleavened bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, and gave it to his disciples. He said, "Take, eat." "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."—Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19

Jesus' breaking of the bread provided several lessons which his disciples understood after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. First, it indicated that his earthly body must be "broken" in death before its sacrificial benefits could accrue to the disciples. Second, the fact that Jesus himself broke the bread shows that he willingly gave his life—no one took it from him. (John 10:18) Third, the disciples' eating of the broken bread pointed toward the privilege of appropriating the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice once it was completed.

The "fruit of the vine," or cup, was next introduced by Jesus as part of this memorial of his impending death as man's Redeemer. After blessing the cup, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it." Jesus explained that the contents of the cup represented his blood, "my blood of the new testament [or covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins." What a wonderful picture we see in this "fruit of the vine" of the ransom price value, represented in the shed blood of Jesus, which would be provided on the behalf of the sins of the world.—Matt. 26:27-29; I John 2:2

As Jesus' disciples at the present time, we are invited, by faith, to partake of and appropriate to ourselves the benefits symbolized by both the "bread" and the "cup" of the Memorial Supper. By so doing, we who thus partake of these benefits are reckoned as being members of his "body," and are invited to present ourselves a "living sacrifice" and be symbolically baptized into his death, that we may also be in the likeness of his resurrection.—I Cor. 12:12,27; Rom. 12:1; Rom. 6:3-5 ■

# The Lord Is Risen

**Key Verses:** “*Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen.*”  
—*Matthew 28:5,6*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Matthew 28:1-10*

## THE EVENTS REFERRED

to in our lesson took place on the third day following the crucifixion of Jesus. Concerning the hours immediately following his death, we are provided this account from the Apostle John: “Now in the place where he was

crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day [the next day being the Sabbath]; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”—John 19:41,42

The Bible record indicates that Mary Magdalene was at the sepulchre twice on the morning of the “third day.” Her first visit was brief, and she was alone, arriving while it was still dark. Observing that the stone had been removed from the tomb, she quickly left and informed Peter and John. (John 20:1,2) In the meantime, Mary, the mother of James, and other women also came to the sepulchre, and saw an angel who informed them that Jesus was risen.—Matt. 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-9

It was evidently shortly after the women left the tomb that Peter and John arrived, possibly passing them at some distance, or going another way. Peter and John confirmed the fact that Jesus’ body was gone, though they saw the linen grave clothes and the napkin that had been put around his head, all of which were neatly folded and

wrapped, lying inside the tomb.—John 20:3-7

Verse 8 states that the two disciples, upon entering the tomb, “saw, and believed.” Their belief, however, was not that the Lord had risen, but that his body had been removed, as had been reported by Mary. “For as yet they knew [understood] not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.” (vs. 9) Jesus had told his disciples in advance, speaking of himself, “They shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.” (Luke 18:33) As the events of the “third day” unfolded, Peter and John did not at first make the connection between Jesus’ prior words and the things they were now witnessing. Thus, they went away from the tomb confused.

Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb a second time, upon which she saw two angels sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. When she explained to them the cause for her weeping, that her Lord’s body had been taken away, she turned and saw Jesus, thinking he was the gardener. “Jesus saith unto her, Mary,” to which she replied “Rabboni; which is to say, Master.” (John 20:11-16) By her response, we understand that Mary Magdalene was the first of Jesus’ followers to perceive the reality of his resurrection. What an honor for this devoted disciple of the Master!

While the death of Jesus was the greatest event in human history, without his resurrection mankind would have been left in just as helpless and hopeless a condition as before. Through the love of God he not only gave his son to provide the ransom price, but he also resurrected him by his mighty power. The Apostle Paul states that Christ is “risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (I Cor. 15:20) The resurrection of Jesus is the assurance that all who “sleep” in death shall likewise be raised during his Messianic kingdom. “The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth.”—John 5:28,29 ■

# Freedom in Jesus

**Key Verse:** *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”*  
—**John 8:36**

**Selected Scripture:**  
**John 8:31-38**

## **PRIOR TO SPEAKING THE**

words of our Key Verse, Jesus said to those Jews who believed on him, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) True disciples of Jesus, who heed his words as their great Teacher and continue in all things to be

his pupils, are set free from ignorance and superstition. They are also set free from the service of sin by the development of a new spiritually-focused mind, based upon the Word of truth and the example of the Master.  
—Rom. 8:1-6

To reach such “freedom in Christ,” certain conditions must be met. First, there must be a realization of one’s fallen condition and a desire for reconciliation with God; second, sin is to be fully renounced and forgiveness sought; third, a consecration, or dedication, of one’s heart, mind, and will to the Heavenly Father must be made. The world in general at the present time is not blessed with the freedom described by Jesus, because they do not “know the truth” concerning the plan of God, which has as its objective the blessing of all the families of the earth. (Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25) Freedom in Christ is promised only to those who have responded to the call, “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”—Prov. 23:26



Freedom which comes through Christ and an understanding of God's Word of truth has many positive results. It blesses rather than causing injury. It brings humility instead of pride and boastfulness. It realizes the need for patient endurance instead of anger and complaining. It produces generosity and benevolence instead of spitefulness and selfishness. It gives evidence by bringing joy and peace rather than producing discontent and bitterness of spirit.

As earnest and sincere disciples of Jesus, we should be deeply rooted and grounded in the Truth which makes us free from the errors and pitfalls of the great Adversary. Truth is never found except in the divinely appointed channels. "Thy word is truth," Jesus said in prayer to his Father. (John 17:17) The sources of truth found in God's Word are the inspired words of our Lord, the apostles and the prophets. To continue in the doctrine set forth in their words, to study and meditate upon them, to trust implicitly in them, and to faithfully conform our characters to them, is what is implied in obtaining and continuing in the freedom we have in Christ.

As we grow in the grace of God and in our freedom in Christ, we will gladly heed the words: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear [reverence]: Having a good conscience."—I Pet. 3:15

The freedom we have gained through our Lord must be maintained. We are told to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, ... building up yourselves on your most holy faith." (Jude 1:3,20) "Fight the good fight of faith." "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 2:3) Finally, we have the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. 2:10) Thus, may we "be free indeed!" ■

# The Anointing of God's Spirit

*“The Spirit of the  
Lord GOD is upon  
me; because the  
LORD hath  
anointed me to  
preach good  
tidings unto the  
meek; he hath sent  
me to bind up the  
brokenhearted, to  
proclaim liberty to  
the captives, and  
the opening of the  
prison to them  
that are bound.”*  
—Isaiah 61:1

**THE SYMBOL OF ANOINT-**ing is based on the ancient custom of pouring oil on the heads of priests and kings to signify their divine appointment to office. (Exod. 30:30; I Sam. 16:1-13) This ceremony was called anointing. The symbolic anointing of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, that function by which God's consecrated people are designated, or authorized, to occupy an official position in his plan for the recovery of man-

kind from sin and death.

In the synagogue at Nazareth, near the beginning of his ministry, Jesus read from the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the anointing of the Spirit, and explained, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (Luke 4:16-21) The Apostle Peter confirms this, saying, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth

with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”—Acts 10:38

The significance of the anointing symbol is again indicated in Hebrews 1:7-9. The apostle says, speaking of God, “Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” From these inspired statements, we learn that Jesus was not only anointed to “preach good tidings,” but also to be the highly exalted king in his kingdom, an anointing to such a high position of dignity and authority that “all the angels of God” are commanded to worship him.—vs. 6

From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus was faithful to the service for which he was anointed. As Peter testified, he “went about doing good.” Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me.” (John 9:4) Jesus knew that he had been authorized to preach glad tidings to the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. He proclaimed these glorious truths both by precept and example. We read that Jesus “went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.”—Luke 8:1

## **CHURCH ALSO ANOINTED**

In II Corinthians 1:21 we read, “He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed

us, is God.” The “us” class here refers to those who are in Christ—that is, members of his symbolic body. (Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12:27) All those “in Christ” share in the anointing of the Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus, the “head of the body,” at Jordan. (Col. 1:18) In I John 2:27, the apostle speaks of the anointing which we have received of God and confirms the fact that it is part of the “same anointing” which came upon Jesus, and which has taught us, “ye shall abide in him.”

When Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit, he said it would teach them all things. (John 14:26) In the above scripture, John similarly states that this “anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie.” (I John 2:27) In this same verse, the apostle also says, “Ye need not that any man teach you.” This seems to be a reference to human philosophies present in John’s day, and he is emphasizing that the Holy Spirit teaches the anointed ones everything they need to know concerning God’s plan in order to serve him properly and to abide in Christ.

The Holy Spirit of God miraculously revealed to Jesus an understanding of those truths previously written “in the volume of the book,” that is, the Old Testament scriptures. (Ps. 40:7; Heb. 10:7) A similar miraculous revealing occurred in the minds of the apostles at Pentecost. Through the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, the New Testament was subsequently provided to supplement the Old, bringing understanding to the remainder of the body members concerning the essential elements of God’s plan. Thus, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and all that it implies of instruction for the church as a

whole, provides for us a correct knowledge of the written Word. In addition, God, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, has provided pastors, teachers and evangelists as helpers in our understanding of the Holy Scriptures.—Eph. 4:11

## **STUDY AND PREPARATION**

The authority given to the New Creation by the Holy Spirit is in some respects like a doctor's certification. When we see such a certificate in a doctor's office, we realize that it not only signifies authority to practice medicine, but also implies qualifications acquired through years of study and training. So it is with those who are anointed to preach glad tidings, and to eventually reign as kings and priests. It is not merely that they are honored with this authority, but it also denotes essential study and preparation. This is why both Jesus and John associate being taught "all things" with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [Greek: expound correctly] the word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15) Notice how the matter of correctly understanding and expounding the word of truth is essential to being a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." Many will perhaps be ashamed who thought they were working for God by preaching eternal torture for the wicked. This illustration emphasizes that those who are truly anointed to serve God must be qualified because they have, through the power of the Holy Spirit, come to a correct knowledge of the Scriptures.

## THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

The “anointing” authority to represent God and the privilege of doing so also reaches us through the written Word. Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world.” He further exhorts us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:14,16) These are texts put in the Bible by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to authorize and encourage us as Christ’s body members to proclaim the Truth, and to do so faithfully.

Jesus testified of himself, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) He said this by the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, one of which is found in the words of our opening text. When he said to his disciples, “I am the light,” and then “ye are the light,” the Master indicated that the anointing authority to serve God in the capacity of a “light” in the world would be passed on to them at Pentecost.

The Apostle Paul explains this in more detail. He wrote, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ.”—II Cor. 5:17-20

This is another passage concerning our anointing, provided through the Holy Spirit, which gives assurance that all those in Christ share in the “ministry of reconciliation,” and are “ambassadors

for Christ,” working together with him. While the baptism of the Spirit emphasizes immersion into the divine will, the symbol of anointing emphasizes that one aspect of God’s will is recognition of the honor of serving as his ambassadors, and the manifestation of the same zeal which consumed Jesus as he went about doing good and preaching the “gospel of the kingdom.”—Matt. 24:14

Another Old Testament scripture related to our anointing is Psalm 145:10-12. It reads, “All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.” This is undoubtedly one of the inspired passages that encouraged Jesus to faithfulness as he went from place to place preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom. It should be an equally motivating power in the lives of God’s consecrated people today.

## **GLAD TIDINGS**

The kingdom message that the saints are commissioned to preach is one of “glad tidings,” or good news. This is shown in our opening text, which Jesus applied to himself, and which also applies to every member of his symbolic body, for the one anointing covers all. It is a commission to preach “good tidings unto the meek.” Our anointing is that we might proclaim the message to those who are meek—that is, the teachable. Truly, we are to “sow beside all waters,” but we are not to force the Truth upon anyone. (Isa. 32:20) The meek, after hearing a little of the message, will more readily seek for

more, and these are the ones to whom we should give special attention.

We are to proclaim “liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” The whole world is in bondage to sin and death. The meek who respond to the good tidings should be told that, through faith, demonstrated by a full dedication of themselves to God, they can be free from the bondage of sin and death, and enjoy liberty in Christ. (Rom. 8:1,2; Gal. 5:1) Those who are in the great prison-house of death cannot hear the good tidings, but we can assure their living friends and relatives that this prison house will, in God’s due time, be opened and all death’s captives set free. What a message this is to bind up the brokenhearted!

In the verse following our opening text, other aspects of our anointing are mentioned: “To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn.” (Isa. 61:2) The “acceptable year of the LORD” is a reference to the Gospel Age call to service and sacrifice in the footsteps of Jesus. When explaining this feature of God’s plan, we are to assure those interested that in presenting their bodies a “living sacrifice,” they will be counted “holy and acceptable” to the Heavenly Father. (Rom. 12:1) Jesus, our Head and Exemplar, incorporated this aspect of the gospel in his message when he invited his disciples to deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow him. (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) The Lord knew that beginning with Pentecost their sacrifices would be acceptable in God’s sight.

Another part of the Holy Spirit’s commission is to proclaim “the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort



all that mourn.” Notice that these two proclamations are vitally connected. We should never preach about God’s vengeance without also giving equal or greater time to proclaim the comforting message of the kingdom, which will do away with mourning and crying in the earth forever.—Rev. 21:1-4

There is much said in both the Old and New Testaments concerning the day of vengeance. The Apostle Paul describes it as the “day of the Lord” in which, while the nations are saying “Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child.” (I Thess. 5:1-4) Daniel foretold it to be a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” and Jesus, referring to Daniel’s prophecy, described this period as one of “great tribulation.”—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21,22

It is this day of God’s vengeance upon Satan’s world that brings the present age to a close. Beyond it will come the manifestation of Messiah’s kingdom through which all the families of the earth will be blessed. We are now living in the midst of this day of vengeance and trouble. It is this fact that explains why now there is an almost continuous “distress of nations, with perplexity,” and why the world is filled with fear.—Luke 21:25-28

It is noteworthy that when Jesus quoted Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the commission of the Holy Spirit for service, and indicated that he had been anointed thereto, he did not make mention of the “day of vengeance of our God.” He understood that this day of vengeance was, at that time, many centuries into the future, and thus it would be a misapplication of scripture to announce that it was upon the nations in his day. However, since we are now living

in this climactic “time of trouble,” we are commissioned to proclaim the facts concerning it, and the glorious kingdom which will follow.

This does not imply that we have some special authority to pronounce vengeance upon the world. This is the prerogative of the Lord alone. Our commission is merely to announce the meaning of this period of severe distress among the nations—that a world order is coming to an end because of its sin and selfishness, and that in its place Messiah’s kingdom will be established. Thus, we emphasize again the fact that coupled with the commission to proclaim the day of vengeance is the requirement to comfort all that mourn. The whole world is mourning because of this time of distress and trouble, and a proper explanation of what is taking place becomes a great comfort to those who have faith to believe the promises of God.

Another text of the Old Testament pertaining to our anointed commission reads, “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.” (Isa. 35:4) Here again is indicated that proclaiming the day of vengeance is, in effect, explaining to those who have a hearing ear that the present trouble upon the world is because the Lord has come “with vengeance,” but that his objective is not vindictive, for he “will come and save you,” the prophet says. Therefore, we can say to those who will listen: Do not fear, for the kingdom of Christ is about to be manifested for the blessing of all mankind, and in that kingdom “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”—Isa. 52:10

## **MOURNERS IN ZION**

Isaiah 61:3 mentions another aspect of service commissioned by the Holy Spirit. It is the comforting of those in Zion who mourn, “that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” Zion is one of the symbolic names that the Scriptures give to the spiritual phase of Christ’s kingdom, and aptly applies to God’s consecrated people who are now being prepared for the kingdom. These are the Zion class, and the way of sacrifice in which they walk is a narrow, difficult one.—Heb. 12:22; Rev. 14:1,4

We read these words from the Apostle Paul: “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” “Consider him [Jesus] that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” (Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:3) We also have the statement of the Apostle James, “The prayer of faith shall save the sick [Greek: faint, weary], and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”—James 5:15

“The Lord shall raise him up,” James says of those who are faint and weary. Isaiah 61:3 states that those who are given the “oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” shall be lifted up and called “trees of righteousness.” We are commissioned to do all we can to assist those who mourn, who are weary in well doing or in any way are spiritually faint. Where the heart is right, God will give strength, so that the “lame” will not be “turned out of the way; but ... rather be healed.”—Heb. 12:13

## **ALL BODY MEMBERS ANOINTED**

The anointing of the Holy Spirit of Truth which came upon Jesus reaches down to include all the members of his body. (I Cor. 12:12-14,27) Abilities to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, as well as various other features of the Christian's commission, may differ from individual to individual, but each one is to be faithful and zealous according to the ability possessed. The fact that all are members of the same body suggests cooperation, just as the various parts of a natural body work together harmoniously under the direction of the head.

In I Corinthians 12:12-27, the Apostle Paul goes into considerable detail concerning the symbolism of the body, stating that "the body is not one member, but many." In another of his epistles, Paul explains that God has arranged special services for some who are in the body. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets [expounders or speakers]; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4:11-16) Not all are anointed to serve in these capacities. Aside from the twelve apostles, who were chosen directly by the Lord, these special servants are selected through the vote of his people, the body members, in their local groups, or ecclesias. (Acts 14:23, *Weymouth New Testament*) To have the Lord's approval, however, they must meet the qualifications set forth by the Scriptures.—I Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9

## **FUTURE SERVICE**

In Hebrews 1:9, we are told that Jesus was anointed with the "oil of gladness above thy fellows," signifying a position of honor and service above angels, principalities, and powers. This indicates that the

anointing of the Holy Spirit carries over to the work of Christ and his church in glory, when together they will reign as kings and priests for the blessing of the world with peace, health, life, and joy through the agencies of the kingdom. This means that all the texts of the Bible which give assurance to the faithful that if they suffer with Christ they will reign with him, depict our anointing as including an invitation into a glorious partnership with the Heavenly Father and with his beloved Son to collaborate in his great project of restitution.

One of the texts pertaining to the future work to which all the faithful have been anointed is Isaiah 49:8,9, which reads, “Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.” In II Corinthians 6:1,2, Paul quotes a portion of Isaiah’s prophecy and applies it to those who are in Christ, adding that we have been called to be “workers together with him.”

In the foregoing passage from Isaiah, we are given the assurance, not only that the Lord will help and preserve his people during this time when they are being prepared for kingdom glory, but also that he has authorized them to “establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” Man’s original inheritance was to live on the earth, and to have dominion over it. Through sin he lost both his life and dominion. His “inheritance”

became “desolate.” However, through the Messianic kingdom arrangement, mankind will be given the opportunity to regain their earthly inheritance and dominion. To the worthy ones of the next age, the Lord will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”—Matt. 25:34

We are also anointed to say to the prisoners of death, “Go forth.” (Isa. 49:9) During the present Gospel Age, all the anointed have the blessed privilege of proclaiming the message that in the Messianic kingdom the great prison-house of death will be opened, and that all who are bound therein will be set free. (John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15) However, those during the present age who prove worthy to live and reign with Christ when his kingdom is established, will in fact help to fulfill what they said would take place. Then, instead of merely giving the message that the dead will be raised, they will have the wonderful privilege of actually saying to the prisoners of death, “Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.”

No wonder the apostle said the symbolic “oil” of the Holy Spirit which anointed Jesus to his high position in glory and in the kingdom was the “oil of gladness.” Since we share in the same anointing it will be gladness for us also, joy unspeakable, as we participate with our Lord in wiping tears from the faces of all who mourn. Together with our Head, we will share in destroying the cause of mankind’s mourning, by destroying sin and death, and all the evils which, throughout the ages, have continued to plague a sin-sick and dying race. What a glorious prospect to which we have been anointed! ■

# “The Presence of the Son of Man”

***“Just as the lightning goeth forth from the east, and shineth unto the west, so, shall be the presence of the Son of Man.”***  
—***Matthew 24:27,***

*Rotherham  
Emphasized Bible*

**NEAR THE CLOSE OF** Jesus’ earthly ministry, after his disciples had pointed out the Jews’ Temple buildings in Jerusalem, he said to them: “Verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Then the disciples asked, “Tell us,

when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming?”—Matt. 24:1-3, *King James Version*

In the foregoing commonly used version, the word “coming” is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*, which means “presence.” New Testament translations such as *The Emphatic Diaglott*, *Young’s Literal Translation* and the *Rotherham Emphasized Bible* have correctly rendered *parousia* as “presence” in Matthew chapter 24. The *King James Version* has incorrectly, we believe, translated *parousia* as “coming.”

The following quote is taken from the Appendix of the *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*: “In this edition the word *parousia* is uniformly rendered ‘presence’ (‘coming,’ as a representative of this word, being set aside). The original term [*parousia*] occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament. ... The sense of ‘presence’ is so plainly shewn by the contrast with ‘absence’ (implied in II Cor. 10:10 and expressed in Phil. 2:12) that the question naturally arises,—Why not always so render it?”

We therefore understand that the disciples were not asking Jesus what would be the sign that he would be “coming,” or “on his way,” prior to actually having returned. Rather, the disciples were inquiring as to what would be the sign to indicate that he was “present” following his return.

### **AN INVISIBLE, DIVINE, SPIRIT BEING**

When Jesus was resurrected, he was no longer a human being, but rather a powerful divine, spirit being in “the image of the invisible God.” (Col. 1:15; II Cor. 5:16; Heb. 1:3) Therefore Jesus is invisible to the human eye, just as God is invisible. It is for this reason that the disciples asked Jesus what sign would indicate his “presence,” rather than how or where they should look for his visible “coming” or arrival.

Jesus willingly gave his perfect human life as “a ransom for all.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) He stated, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” (John 6:51; Heb. 10:5-10) Following his crucifixion, Jesus was raised as a spirit being. (John 20:19,26; Luke 24:31) If God had raised him from the dead as the human being Jesus, it would



have meant that the ransom had been taken back, and the world of mankind was not redeemed.

The Apostle Peter confirms that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit being and not a human being, writing, “Christ also, once for all, concerning sins, died,—Just in behalf of unjust,—in order that he might introduce us unto God; being put to death, indeed, in flesh, but made alive in spirit.”—I Pet. 3:18, *Rotherham*

The Apostle Paul also confirms that our Lord Jesus is now a spirit being, stating, “The first man, Adam, became, a living soul, the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.” (I Cor. 15:45, *Rotherham*) The resurrected Jesus has become the “last Adam” because he took the place of the first man Adam and became the exalted life-giver to the human race, having purchased and redeemed it by giving his own human life. The perfect man Jesus died as a ransom, an exact corresponding price, given for the redemption of the perfect man Adam, who had disobeyed. Seeing these distinctions, therefore, we understand it is not possible that Jesus could be resurrected as a man.

## **WORDS OF WARNING AND CAUTION**

Before answering the disciples’ question as to what would be the sign of his “presence,” Jesus first gave a warning. He said, “Be taking heed, lest anyone, deceive you.” (Matt. 24:4, *Rotherham*) The Master then proceeded in verses 5-14 to list some of the many events which would occur throughout the ensuing centuries, prior to his second presence. This is followed by verses 15-22 which, we believe, have a double application. First, they were fulfilled literally in the devastating events which came upon

the Jewish nation soon after the time when Jesus spoke these words. Secondly, they also were prophetic of the rise of a symbolic “Babylon” system and the development of abominable false doctrines and practices which would be imposed during the period of the Dark Ages.

In verses 23-25 Jesus gave additional words of caution to guard against certain errors that would be proposed concerning his return and second presence which could lead his followers astray. He further warned in verse 26, “If they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.” Thus did our Lord put us on guard against believing that he would come in the flesh—perhaps in some remote location on Earth, or in a secret room of a building.

### **“JUST AS THE LIGHTNING”**

In Matthew 24:27, Jesus begins his answer to the disciples, stating, “For, just as the lightning goeth forth from the east, and shineth unto the west, so, shall be the presence of the Son of Man.” (*Rotherham*) Here the word “lightning” is a translation of the Greek word *astrape*, which means “a bright shining.” The same Greek word is translated “bright shining” in Luke 11:36, which reads in part: “... as when the bright shining [*astrape*] of a candle doth give thee light.” Literal lightning, although a bright light, rarely flashes from east to west. However, there is a bright light which always “goeth forth from the east,” and “shineth unto,” or sets in “the west.” That is the sun! Sunlight becomes present as soon as it begins to rise above the horizon,

yet it is noiseless, and is at first only discerned by those who are awake in the dawning hours of the morning.

Incorrect ideas of our Lord's return in the minds of some Bible translators led them to the error of translating the Greek word *astrape* by the word "lightning." They supposed that our Lord would be revealed suddenly, like a flash of lightning, rather than gradually like the dawning sunlight. How beautiful, though, is the figure of sunrise, to illustrate the manner of Christ's second presence. It is gradually discerned and has a continuing measured effect, just like the sun rising on a new day. Eventually the full, clear brightness of Christ's presence shall thoroughly remove the darkness of evil, ignorance, superstition and sin. Therefore, just as the dawning light of the sun grows little by little, so also the presence of the Son of Man will be gradually manifested and understood.

The expression "Son of Man" refers to Jesus. It is a title of high honor, serving as a reminder of his obedience as a man, even unto death on the cross, by which he secured the honor, dignity, and power of the divine nature, which his Father in heaven granted to him when he raised him from the dead. Additionally, the title "Son of Man" is recognized among the Jews as applying to the Messiah. (Dan. 7:13,14) Numerous times during his earthly ministry, Jesus referred to himself as the "Son of Man."—Matt. 12:40; 16:13; 17:9,22; 26:2

## **LIKE THE DAYS OF NOAH**

Jesus adds in response to his disciples, "For, just as the days of Noah, so, will be the presence of the

Son of Man; ... And they observed not, until the flood came and took away all together, so, will be, the presence of the Son of Man.” (Matt. 24:37,39, *Rotherham*) The comparison in these verses is between the time of the presence of Noah among the people before the flood came, and the time of the invisible presence of Christ in the world, prior to the final, extreme trouble of the Day of the Lord with which this present age ends.

In Noah’s day all the people, except for his family, were ignorant of the coming flood and did not believe his testimony. Consequently, they “observed not, until the flood came.” Similarly, during Christ’s second presence none, except for those of the family of God, will believe it. Others will not discern it until the “flood” of trouble now impending actually comes with full force and overflows the political, social, religious and economic systems of society.

This is illustrated by Jesus’ words, “They were in those days that were before the flood, feeding and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage,—until the day Noah entered into the ark.” (vs. 38, *Rotherham*) During Christ’s second presence the world continues on with its eating, drinking, planting, building and marrying. This indicates the ignorance of mankind regarding Christ’s presence and of the final trouble that will soon come upon the earth. Thus, Jesus is stating that the world in general would not know of his presence and the coming dispensational changes.

Although there shall never be another literal flood such as occurred in the days of Noah, it is written that the whole earth shall be devoured with the fire of God’s jealousy. (Gen. 9:11; Zeph. 3:8) With great

emphasis, we note that in both cases—the flood in Noah’s day and the trouble which will end this present age—the physical earth is not destroyed, but only the existing, sinful, human social order.

## **BE WATCHFUL AND ALERT**

The remaining verses in Matthew chapter 24 are significant. Jesus states, “Be watching, therefore, for ye know not, on what manner of day, your Lord is coming [Greek: *erchomai*, “arrive”]. ... If the householder, had known, in what watch, the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert, and not have suffered his house to be dug through. Wherefore, ye also, be getting ready, because, in what hour ye are, not thinking, The Son of Man doth come.”—vss. 42-44, *Rotherham*

We suggest the following paraphrase of the foregoing words of Jesus. “If someone is expecting a thief to come during the night, but they do not know the definite time of his arrival, this person would stay awake so as not to be taken by surprise: so you should be always awake, ready and watching for the first evidence of my presence. In my answer to your question, when shall these things be? I merely tell you to watch and be ready, and when I arrive, and am subsequently present, I will communicate this by means of the fulfillment of various prophetic statements, but only those who are alert and watching will discern and understand. All others will be in darkness, unaware of my presence and the portentous events which will follow.”

## **HOW TO WATCH**

It is by faith that watchers discern the presence of our Lord. They “walk by faith, not by sight.”

(II Cor. 5:7) Watchers continually examine themselves, knowing that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” (Rom. 8:9) Watchers are alert, and strive to walk as close as possible in the footsteps of the Master. They do not “sleep, as do others,” but instead strive to “watch and be sober.”—I Thess. 5:1-6, *Rotherham*

Watchers discern the approach of the great climax of human trouble in which all present world institutions will be shaken. (Heb. 12:26-28) Watchers do not lose sight of God and his providences. They remember that he is at the helm. (Ps. 75:6-10; 76:9,10) In addition, watchers do not look merely at the outward signs of Christ’s second presence, but they also study the Bible prophecies to “discern the signs of the times,” with the aid of the Holy Spirit.—Matt. 16:3; John 16:13

The details which Jesus gave regarding the manner and the attending circumstances of his return and second presence were not given to alarm the world in general, nor to satisfy idle curiosity. Instead, they were given for those who are awake, faithful, and earnest students of our Heavenly Father’s plan, so that they might be aware of the significance of transpiring events, and not be in darkness regarding the “times and seasons.”—I Thess. 5:1-6

## **SCOFFING FORETOLD**

Peter describes how some will scoff during the second presence of the Lord, even as they scoffed in the days of Noah. (II Pet. 3:3,4,10-12) “Scoffers” include those who cherish false ideas, such as expecting literal fire, trumpets, voices, and expecting to physically see the Lord descending through the air

in a shining body of flesh. Peter states that in the last days of this present evil world, scoffers will say, “Where is the promise of his presence? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things, thus remain, from the beginning of creation.”—II Pet. 3:3,4, *Rotherham*

Peter continues, stating, “They, willfully, forget” the great change which occurred in the days of Noah. Then, using the symbol of fire, he describes the overwhelming flood of trouble which shall shortly overtake the whole world—“the heavens and the earth which are now”—utterly overthrowing all religious and civil powers, and melting the entire social fabric, resulting in the dissolution of the present world order. This is not the final outcome, however, for Peter adds, “But, new heavens, and a new earth, according to his promise, are we expecting, wherein, righteousness, is to dwell.” That is, the kingdom of God shall establish a just civil and societal order on the earth, organized on a new and better basis of love, equality and righteousness.—vss. 5-13, *Rotherham*

### **“WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS” WE SHOULD BE**

Peter assures us that “the day of the Lord will be here, as a thief.” That is, it will generally be unobserved—the Lord’s presence being invisible—while at the same time some are scoffing. The apostle then exhorts the Lord’s followers, stating, “Seeing that all these things are thus to be dissolved, what manner of persons, ought ye all the while to be, in holy ways of behaviour and acts of godliness.” (II Pet. 3:10,11, *Rotherham*) “All these things” which are to be dissolved include the world’s present civil, religious, social and financial systems, not the people nor the planet Earth.

In reflecting on Peter's words as to "what manner of persons" we should be, let us remember that we are to remain separate from the spirit, attitudes, and delusions of the present world. We must not allow ourselves to be swallowed up by political division, societal conflicts, or by the pursuit of wealth or other worldly endeavors. Instead, we should set our affections on holy things. In addition, he writes that we should be "expecting and hastening the presence of the day of God," that is to say, watching for the evidences and signs which indicate that we are living during the time of Christ's invisible presence and of the climactic events of the "day of God."—vs. 12, *Rotherham*

Through the Apostle Paul, God assures us that none of the children of the light will be left in darkness, that the presence of the "Son of Man" should come upon them unawares. He writes: "The day of the Lord, as a thief in the night, so, cometh; As soon as they begin to say—Peace! and safety! then, suddenly, upon them, cometh destruction,—just as the birth-throe unto her that is with child. ... But, ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that, the day, upon you, as upon thieves, should lay hold; For, all ye, are, sons of light, and sons of day,—we are not of night, nor of darkness: Hence, then, let us not be sleeping, as the rest, but let us watch and be sober: ... Being of the day, let us be sober, putting on a breastplate of faith and love, and, for helmet, the hope of salvation."—I Thess. 5:2-8, *Rotherham*

## **SYMBOLS AND FIGURES**

Although we believe that we are now living in the time of Christ's presence and are witnessing



various features of the foretold “time of trouble,” we are told elsewhere, in symbol, that the great storm of trouble is held back until all of the faithful servants of God are “sealed in their foreheads.” This symbolic sealing is the mark, or evidence, which each member of the body of Christ must receive, showing divine acceptance of them as faithful “sons of God.” Thus, we understand that the final whirlwind of trouble upon the earth is yet future, and will not take place until the “sealing” work is complete.—Rev. 7:1-4; I John 3:1,2; Rom. 8:19

Using symbols of “trumpets,” “voices,” “fire,” and other prophetic language, God hid various Truths which were not meant for the whole world of mankind to know at the present time, but only for a “little flock” of his consecrated people. These wonderful gems include such things as the understanding of “the harvest” of the present Gospel Age; the manner and purpose of Christ’s return and second presence; the heavenly call, which remains open even now; the hope of the “first resurrection;” the general resurrection of all mankind; and other precious treasures found in the Scriptures. Long ago God arranged these symbols, figures, and prophetic testimony so that, in due time, they would be understood by those for whom he intended the information. During Jesus’ first “presence” on Earth as a human being, he said to his disciples, “To you, the sacred secret hath been given of the kingdom of God, whereas, to them who are outside, in parables are all things coming to pass.” (Mark 4:11, *Rotherham*) Now, too, during Christ’s second presence, only a few earnestly faithful ones, a “little flock,” are permitted to see and understand.—Luke 12:32

## EFFECTS UPON US

Believing that Christ is now invisibly present, what effects should this have on our Christian life? One effect is an increased appreciation of the Bible truths which have been revealed and explained to us during this Harvest period at the end of the Gospel Age. Such understanding is now readily available, foretold by our Lord as “meat in due season” to be provided by “a faithful and wise servant.” (Matt. 24:45) Much spiritual food has been bountifully dispensed during the Harvest, making it another compelling indicator of Christ’s second presence. Topical studies covering every important Bible subject; contextual Bible study helps that examine the scriptural record from Genesis to Revelation; numerous translations which clarify the meaning of many Bible passages; concordances and lexicons which reveal the definition and use of Greek and Hebrew words; and dictionaries which help to illustrate customs and life in Biblical times; have all made for a balanced and nourishing diet for the servants of God at this end of the age.

Another important sign of Christ’s presence is the regathering of the people of Israel from across the globe, and their return to the land which God promised them. (Ezek. 11:16-20; 36:22-36; Zeph. 3:14-20) The “fig” and “fig tree” are used in symbol in the Scriptures to represent the nation of Israel. (Jer. 24:1-7; Hos. 9:10) Jesus gave “a parable of the fig tree” as one of the signs associated with his second presence. When the fig tree “putteth forth leaves” symbolizes the regathering and reestablishment of the Jewish nation. (Matt. 24:32,33) Such an extraordinary event did not happen by chance, nor

by the will of man, but by the will of God, in harmony with the foretold times and seasons testified to by both the prophets and by Jesus himself. This should have the effect of making us fully confident in all God's holy promises regarding his coming kingdom.

An understanding of the second presence of Christ should also have the effect of increasing our appreciation as to why certain events are occurring at the present time. Unjust, illegal, and immoral actions by individual citizens, groups, countries, businesses, and leaders of this world have been going on throughout history but have generally been hidden from the general public. Today, however, such actions are being revealed more and more through instantaneous information and communication available in every corner of the earth. Is this happening by accident or chance? We think not. Rather, we believe it is a result of the times and seasons in which we now live, and the presence of the Lord who promised to "bring to light the hidden things of darkness."—I Cor. 4:5

The revealing of such things has created, and continues to create, growing dissatisfaction with present human institutions and leaders. This growing unrest is permitted by God for the wise purpose that the hearts and minds of mankind will eventually realize that imperfect man cannot manage his affairs, nor solve the myriad problems and issues in the world. Such realization is a part of the preparation for God's kingdom on Earth. (Hag. 2:6,7; Mic.4:2; Heb. 12:26-28) However, as sympathetic as we may feel toward one side or the other of mankind's struggle, as followers of Christ we should not participate in, nor advocate, anarchy or

lawlessness of any kind. We are exhorted to “follow after the things which make for peace,” and to “lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God.” —Rom. 14:18,19; I Tim. 2:1-3

Knowing that we are living at the end of the age, we should also come to a greater appreciation of the shortness of time, that we may be ever more diligent in making our “calling and election sure.” (II Pet. 1:10) Daily we should be reminded of our responsibility to “cast off the works of darkness” and “put on the armour of light,” striving to be not merely outwardly obedient, but especially to be obedient from the heart to the spirit and intent of God’s laws and principles.—Rom. 13:12

In summary, let us rejoice in our understanding of Christ’s presence, not visibly in the flesh, but rather as a divine spirit being, having been vested by God with “all power ... in heaven and in earth.” (Matt. 28:18; Heb.1:1-4) Like the Apostle John, we see in faith’s vision, Christ, the “son of man, having, upon his head, a crown of gold, and, in his hand, a sharp sickle.” (Rev. 14:14-16, *Rotherham*) His sickle of truth is separating and gathering “his elect” into oneness of heart and mind. (Matt. 24:31) Soon the elect “body of Christ” will be complete and, together with their Head, will rule and bless the world in righteousness.—Ps. 72:1,2; Isa. 32:1 ■

*"My flesh and my heart faileth:  
but God is the strength of my heart  
and my portion for ever."  
—Psalm 73:26*

# With Us in the Fire

***“Lo, I see four men  
loose, walking in  
the midst of the  
fire, and they have  
no hurt; and  
the form of the  
fourth is like the  
Son of God.”  
—Daniel 3:25***

**THROUGH FAITH THEY** “quenched the violence of fire,” wrote Paul, no doubt referring to the three Hebrew young men in the fiery furnace. (Heb. 11:34) Faith is “the evidence of things not seen,” and certainly Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, from

the natural standpoint, could “see” no way of escape from the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar in the event they should defy his command to worship the golden image he had set up. However, their faith in the divine power to care for them took the place of sight, so they were determined to obey God rather than man. One “like the Son of God” stood with them in the fire and delivered them from what otherwise would have been certain death.—Heb. 11:1; Dan. 3:1-25

Jesus taught his followers, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Matt. 22:21) The Apostle Paul wrote that we should be subject to the

powers that be. (Rom. 13:1; Tit. 3:1) However, with the servants of God in every age, there have been times when their allegiance to divine principles has prevented them from rendering unqualified obedience to earthly rulers. On such occasions they have had placed upon them the necessity of deciding what belongs to God and what can properly be rendered to Caesar.

This was the position in which the three Hebrews found themselves when confronted by Nebuchadnezzar's demand that they worship the golden image which he had caused to be erected. This was an especially severe test which had been thrust upon them, for it came soon after they had been given high positions of trust in the government at the personal request of their great friend and brother-in-exile, Daniel. (Dan. 2:48,49) From the standpoint of their own special interests and advantage, it would have seemed much better for them to have obeyed the king's edict to worship the image.

The Lord often tests his people by permitting circumstances to come into their lives which offer an easier path to serve him, and with plausible reasons why the way of fewer hardships would be better. It could easily have been so reasoned by the three Hebrews. Certainly their exaltation to stations of authority in the kingdom had been the result of divine overruling, and it seemed evident that God wanted them in these strategic positions for the purpose of rendering some special service to him and to his people. This being true, from the standpoint of human reasoning it would seem foolhardy to take a stand against the king which would destroy this advantage, and cost them their lives as well.

However, these ardent servants of Jehovah did not take this view of the situation, for a vitally important principle was at stake. The law of their God clearly stated that they were not to worship other gods, neither were they to bow down to images, and these facts overshadowed every other consideration in reaching their decision. (Exod. 20:1-5) To them, no matter what good might result, or what advantages might be gained by yielding to the king's demand, to do so would still be disobedience to divine law. Like the Apostle Paul, they did not believe that they should do evil that good might follow.—Rom. 3:8; 12:21

It can be very easy, as well as pleasing to the flesh, to fall in with the crowd, especially when, as it were, the band plays, and the conformists are hailed as heroes and receive blessings of the powers that be. This was the alluring opportunity offered to the three Hebrews, but they chose to be nonconformists, thus refusing the deliverance that was offered to them in return for obedience to Nebuchadnezzar. (Heb. 11:35) The issue was clearly stated when a herald for the king announced to the gathered representatives of the kingdom, "O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."—Dan. 3:4-6

It must have taken considerable time to erect the golden image which stood for Babylon's gods.

The three Hebrews, being highly placed in the government, would be aware that sooner or later they would have to face the issue of loyalty to their God as against bowing down to this graven image. It was not something which had been forced upon them suddenly when the instruments began to play. Undoubtedly they had made up their minds in advance just what they would do when the crisis came, and they could not be swayed from their position, either by the emotional appeal of the music or by the mass hysteria of heathen worshipers.

### **TRUST IN THE LORD**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted in Jehovah, the God of Israel. They knew that he was able to deliver them, and would, if he chose to do so. Yet, they did not know just how their God would intervene to save them. Faith does not need to know just how and when the Heavenly Father will make good his word on behalf of his people. It is enough to know that he is able, and that his infinite wisdom directs the time and manner in which his grace is made to abound toward those who put their trust in him.—Prov. 30:5

Neither Daniel nor the three young Hebrews were popular among the other rulers of the realm, who were always glad when they could find, or even create, an opportunity to discredit them in the eyes of the king. Here was just such an opportunity. Doubtless these young men were explicitly watched by the others to see if they would bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's image when the music began to sound. When they did not, their disobedience to the king was immediately reported.—Dan. 3:12



Nebuchadnezzar was understandably angry. He was a dictator over his empire, and was not accustomed to having his decrees ignored or flouted. Yet, he was in a peculiar position. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been especially honored by him at the request of Daniel. The king felt under some obligation to Daniel because of the wonderful service rendered in the recalling and interpretation of his dream in which he saw himself as the golden head of a great image. Perhaps it was because of this, and despite his rage, that he gave the disobedient Hebrews a second chance.

Seemingly, the king now spoke personally to the three, and asked them if it were true that they deliberately had not bowed down to his image. He did not doubt the report that had been given to him, but he wanted to know if the Hebrews had willfully refused to obey, or whether it had been merely a case of misunderstanding. To make sure of this he said, "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?"—Dan. 3:14,15

The issue was now clear-cut. Nebuchadnezzar had not only threatened the three Hebrews, but had defied their God. The faith and courage reflected in their reply to the king are shown in their immediate response: "We have no need to answer thee in this matter." (vs. 16, *Revised Version*) By this answer they clearly showed that they were much more

interested in being obedient to God than having the king's favor restored to them.

Then these courageous young men gave the reason for their boldness: "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." (vss. 17,18) The king had endeavored to frighten them with the assertion that their God would be powerless to interfere with what he proposed to do if they disobeyed, but this did not cause their faith to waver in the slightest.

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us." Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego knew this. What they were not sure of was whether it would be God's will to deliver them from the fiery furnace. However, even if it were not, they did not propose to accept deliverance on the condition offered by Nebuchadnezzar. While they did not understand God's great plan of salvation as his people are privileged to know it today, the three Hebrews evidently believed that they would be raised from the dead—that death was not the end of their eternal existence. Thus, while they were confident of Jehovah's ability to thwart Nebuchadnezzar's purpose to destroy them, yet if this were not his will, they would still be faithful to their God and thus prove worthy of deliverance in a "better resurrection."—Heb. 11:32-35

## **GOD'S DELIVERANCE**

When Nebuchadnezzar realized that the failure of the Hebrews to worship his image was by willful

design, and that they could not be frightened into changing their minds even when another opportunity was afforded, he was “full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed” against them. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual, and commanded that the “most mighty men” in his army be used to bind these disobedient ones and cast them into the furnace. The heat was so intense that even these “mighty men” were killed as they cast the three Hebrews into the flames.—Dan. 3:19-22

The king had made good his threat. (vs. 23) As dictator of the realm, there was no other course he could take. He had satisfied the demands of his fury, and perhaps was quite pleased with the thought that nothing could interfere with the supremacy of his rulership. Nebuchadnezzar had learned to know something of the ability of Israel’s God, who earlier had enabled Daniel to recall and interpret his dream when all the wise men of the kingdom had failed. In spite of the king’s momentary satisfaction, this was not a reassuring thought. Under ordinary circumstances a king of Babylon would not be especially concerned over the fate of criminals he had condemned to death. This was not an ordinary circumstance, however, and it seems that as soon as the heat of the furnace subsided sufficiently to permit inspection, Nebuchadnezzar went personally to peer into the flames.

We do not know the exact thought which went through the king’s mind as to why he troubled himself to look into the furnace. However, had he been completely sure of his position, he would have known that there would be little or nothing to see

in the furnace except the flames. Nebuchadnezzar was astonished by what he saw. Daniel's God—the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—had delivered them, not by removing them from the fire, but by preserving them alive in the flames!

The king called his rulers and inquired of them concerning the number who had been cast into the furnace. He was told it was three, but now as he said, he saw four unbound men walking in the midst of the fire, apparently unhurt; and the form of the fourth was like the "Son of God." What subsequently occurred is not surprising. The three Hebrews were asked to "come forth" out of the midst of the fiery furnace, and a proclamation was issued by the king forbidding anyone in the whole empire to speak against Israel's God. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were then promoted to even higher positions in the realm than they had formerly occupied.—vss. 24-30

## **GOD'S PRESENCE**

Many have wondered about Nebuchadnezzar's reference in Daniel 3:25 to "the Son of God." In the Hebrew text, however, there is no definite article to warrant the translation "the Son." The expression should more properly read "a son of the gods," and it is so rendered by a majority of Bible translations, including the *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*, the *Revised Version*, and the *English Standard Version*. In verse 28 the king identifies this fourth one in the furnace as an "angel," or messenger, whom the God of Israel had sent to deliver his servants. The expression properly translated "the Son of God" only appears in the New Testament, where it

is applied to Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Heavenly Father. (Mark 1:1; John 3:16; 5:17-25) In the Bible, angels, such as the king saw in the midst of the fiery furnace, are also referred to on a number of occasions as “sons of God.”—Gen. 6:2,4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7

However, the important consideration in this reassuring illustration is that God is able to deliver his people from the hands of their enemies. To Moses, God said, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” (Exod. 33:14) This means that he could be assured that the Lord would know of his needs, and would supply them, of whatever nature they might be. In a beautiful statement concerning God’s care over ancient Israel, we read, “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: ... and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”—Isa. 63:9

## **OUR TRIAL OF FAITH**

“Without faith it is impossible to please” God, wrote Paul. (Heb. 11:6) It was the faith of the three young Hebrews that was on trial—their faith in God’s ability to deliver them from the fiery furnace, and their confidence in the wisdom of God as to whether it would be best to deliver them from the flames, or to deliver them in the “better resurrection.” True faith in God implies more than a belief in his power to physically deliver. Rather, it includes confidence in the rightness of his decisions with respect to every detail of his plan for the whole world, and his will for us as individuals in every experience of life.

When we behold the marvelous works of creation, it is not too difficult to believe that the Creator of

it all is able to care for us, and to deliver us from evil. However, to have confidence in his way and time to deliver is more difficult. The three Hebrews' faith in God extended to the "if not" view of the matter. It is in this respect that all the Lord's people have their severest tests of faith.

The situation today is quite different for the followers of God than it was for the three Hebrews. We are not commanded to bow down to a golden image, although the deceitfulness of riches might tempt some to bow down to the "god" of wealth. We are not called upon to worship heathen gods, but we need constantly to guard against the danger of bowing down to gods of our own making—idols which our wayward hearts might set up in place of God.

There is the god of ease, the god of pleasure, the god of pride, and the god of self. We might conceivably worship our home or our family, and allow them to take the place in our hearts which belongs to our Heavenly Father. We might have special interpretations of the Bible to which we bow down. It is only by resolutely refusing to bow to any of these modern gods that we demonstrate our faith in the true God, our loving Heavenly Father.

Let us resolve to be loyal to our God, not for reward, but because it is right. If the Lord delivers us from trial, which we know he has the power to do, we will rejoice and endeavor to use the favorable experiences of life to his glory. If he allows us to suffer, regardless of what may feed the flames, we know that he is with us in the "fire," and that he has sent his angel to protect us from spiritual harm. Thus, when we reach the end of the way there will be no hurt to the New Creature. All that will have

happened is the burning of the fetters of flesh that we may be free, and be exalted to rulership in the kingdom with Christ.

The three Hebrews were exiles in Babylon and subject to the powers that be. They had little or no choice as to whether they would occupy honored positions in the government, be thrust into prison, or cast into a fiery furnace. The changing scenes of their lives were brought about through their unwavering loyalty to God. The great lesson to us in their example is that they were obedient and steadfast, regardless of the result.

So with us today, we are as exiles in this “present evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) Although we are in the world, we are not part of it, but are “strangers and pilgrims.” (I Pet. 2:11) Let us be true to our God and to his standards of righteousness. Only our faith will enable us to do this, and to gain the victory. Let us not become “weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”—Gal. 6:9 ■

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### ***My Redeemer Lives***

*I know that my Redeemer lives;  
What joy the blest assurance gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my everlasting Head!*

*He lives, and grants me daily strength;  
Through him I soon shall conquer death;  
Then all his glories I'll declare,  
That all the world his life may share.*

—Hymns of Dawn

# SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

## **T. N. Alexander**

Albuquerque, NM April 15-17

## **O. B. Elbert**

Online Broadcast of Convention  
Detroit, MI April 2,3

## **R. Goodman**

Online Broadcast of Convention  
Detroit, MI April 2,3

## **S. Jeuck**

Online Broadcast of Convention  
Highland Park, NY April 2

## **M. Nemesh**

Online Broadcast of Convention  
Detroit, MI April 2,3

## **T. Ruggirello**

Albuquerque, NM April 15-17

## **B. Sweeney**

Online Broadcast of Convention  
Detroit, MI April 2,3

# WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**APRIL 7**—"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:19 (Z. '96-163 Hymn 261)

**APRIL 14**—"He hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors."—Isaiah 53:12 (Z. '99-125 Hymn 168)

**APRIL 21**—"We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Hebrews 4:15,16 (Z. '98-23 Hymn 274)

**APRIL 28**—"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."—Romans 5:3-5 (Z. '03-348 Hymn 165)



# CONVENTIONS

*These conventions are listed by request of classes who sponsor them. So your convention can be placed in these columns in time, make your request in writing three months before the date of the convention to Dawn Magazine, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167*

**HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact S. Koterba.

Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

**DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 2,3—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—

Contact P. Nemesh. Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

**ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 15-17—**

Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel. 2910 Yale Boulevard SE. Albuquerque, NM. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

**AGWA MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 16—**

Contact V. Ekeh. Email: abiblestudecc@yahoo.com

**METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 7,8—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact B. Johnson. Email: beckystevej@aol.com

**AUSTRALIAN CONVENTION, May 13-15—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact R. Charlton. Email: randscharlton@gmail.com

**HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 15—**

West Hartford Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

**CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 28,29—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact C. Martire. Email: christina.martire@gmail.com

**DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 5—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact R. Griehs. Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

**ABA/IGBERE CONVENTION, June 12**—Contact P. Ekeh. Email: peterudochieke@gmail.com

**PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 17-19—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY**—Contact J. Wojcik. Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com

*“We are meant to hold firmly to the truth  
in love, and to grow up in every way  
into Christ, the head.”  
—Eph. 4:15, Phillips*

## OBITUARIES

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

Brother Jerry Taylor, Greenfield, OH—February 18. Age, 71

Brother Michael Andrew, Bangalore, India—February 18. Age, 62

Sister Zofia Drożdziel, Kędzierzyn, Poland—February 28. Age, 89

Sister Kempalakshamma, Bangalore, India—March 1. Age, 60

Brother Kenneth Rawson, New Brunswick, NJ—March 6. Age, 95

Brother Charles Tarras, Hudson, FL—March 10. Age, 94

Brother Robert Gray, New Brunswick, NJ—March 11. Age, 79

Sister Uma, Bangalore, India—March 19. Age, 43

Sister Martha Wolfenberger Cope, Weatherford, TX—March 20. Age, 84

Brother Douglas Rawson, San Francisco Bay Area, CA—March 21. Age, 74

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## ***To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .***

### **THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD**

—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people”, and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

### **THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING**

of consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

### **THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD**

lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

### **THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH**

is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet.1:4

### **THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

### **THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD**

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 55

