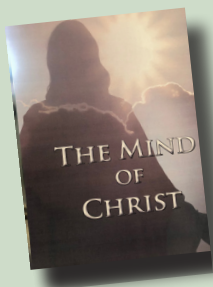




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Hell Gives Up Its Dead

*"I am he that
liveth, and was
dead; and, behold,
I am alive for
evermore, Amen;
and have the keys
of hell and
of death."*

—*Revelation 1:18*

IN THE LAND OF ISRAEL,

nearly two thousand years ago, there occurred the most dramatic news event of all time, but it was then hardly known except by a few followers of Jesus of Nazareth. Their Lord and Master, crucified by his enemies less

than three days before, had been raised from the dead by divine power. Now, once again, we have reached the time of year when this greatest of all miracles will be commemorated. For a short time, at least, many will give thought to this manifestation of the mighty power of God.

Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus was a miracle, upon which one of the great cornerstones of Christian faith and hope rests! The mighty power of the Creator of the universe was exercised to restore life to the one who had voluntarily died for the sins of the people, in order that they might have an opportunity to live. The fact that Jesus was raised

from the dead gives us confidence that every promise of God will be fulfilled. It assures us that we can study his Word and plan in faith, believing that nothing he has promised is too difficult for divine power to accomplish.

The world today is filled with chaos and suffering, and the people fear that tomorrow will be even worse. The main reason for this is the inability of human wisdom and power to cope with the problems which have been created by sin and selfishness. Many countries of the world are fearful of the aggressive designs of other countries, and the only means of protection known to man is the bulwark of armament. However, the success of God's plan for saving mankind from the results of its own sin is guaranteed by divine power. It is the same power which the Creator demonstrated by raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

In the Apostle Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill he declares that God has given assurance unto all men of a future righteous day by raising Jesus from the dead. (Acts 17:31) His resurrection proved that God was well pleased with Jesus' sacrificial ministry, and it also attested that divine power is abundantly able to bestow the blessings of life provided for by the Master's death. This miracle further demonstrated that, supported by divine power, the resurrected Christ is fully capable of establishing control in the affairs of men, and that the promises of his kingdom are certain of fulfillment. This means that we can confidently believe that in God's due time there will be peace on Earth, that nations will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." These are among the many blessings

which have been promised, and we know that the “zeal of the LORD of hosts” will accomplish all his good purposes.—Mic. 4:1-4; Isa. 9:7

INFALLIBLE PROOFS

Luke informs us that Jesus “shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.” (Acts 1:3) The miracle of the resurrection is therefore well authenticated. Even after the resurrected Jesus ascended up into glory, and appeared no more to his disciples, he spoke to the Apostle John in vision on the Isle of Patmos, thus furnishing another proof that he was alive. Indeed, he emphasized this when, in the words of our opening text, he declared, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”—Rev. 1:9-18

In various ways, millions associate their own hope of life with the miracle of Jesus’ resurrection. “Because he lives, we also shall live,” is a common sentiment among professing Christians, and it is very true. However, just how those redeemed by Jesus shall live, where, and when, are questions which usually go unanswered. Certainly, not many are accustomed to associating the words of our text with their own hope of life through Christ, yet it is one of the most meaningful statements of the Bible bearing on the subject.

Jesus not only announced to John that he was now “alive for evermore,” but also that he has the keys of hell and of death. Until Jesus was raised from the dead, no one had these keys. The world continued to suffer and to die, and there was nothing that any human power could do about it. “Sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” (Rom. 5:12) It

was a just penalty, and could not be set aside, for the unalterable law of God is that “the wages of sin is death.”—Rom. 6:23

Thus, there was no solution to the problem of suffering and death. However, after Jesus was raised from the dead it was different, for then he had the keys which would, in due time, unlock the great prison house of death and hell and set its captives free. (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18) Paul gives us a similar thought to this in Romans 14:9, which reads: “For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” To “be Lord” implies having control or power, which is essentially the same thought Jesus symbolized by saying he had the “keys” of hell and death.

JESUS' SOUL IN HELL

Jesus associates his death and resurrection with the fact that he now has the keys of hell and of death, as though it were by his own death that he secured these keys. This is true. During the time Jesus was dead he was, in reality, in the Bible hell. This is brought to our attention in Psalm 16:10. This is a prophetic prayer which represents Jesus as expressing his confidence that he would be raised from the dead, saying, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” The Apostle Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, quoted from this prophecy and confirmed that it was applicable to Christ Jesus, who had indeed been raised from the dead.—Acts 2:25-32

To appreciate the full depth of meaning contained in this beautiful expression of faith on the part of the Master, it is essential to take into consideration

his use of the word hell, both in his prayer and in our text, where Jesus tells us that he now has the keys of hell. In the Old Testament, hell is a translation of the Hebrew word *sheol*, and in our text it is translated from the Greek word *hades*, which has the same meaning.

This Hebrew word *sheol* is the only one in the Old Testament which is translated hell, but the same word is also translated grave and pit. The word *sheol* appears, in all, sixty-five times. Thirty-one times it is translated grave, thirty-one times hell, and three times pit. Since this was the only "hell" of the Old Testament, it was therefore the only hell the ancient servants of God knew about over a period of some four thousand years.

In reality, the Bible hell is simply the condition of death, or the state of the dead. Its meaning is defined in Ecclesiastes 9:10, which reads, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [*sheol*], whither thou goest." This shows clearly that *sheol* is a condition of complete unconsciousness, which is one reason both the Old and the New Testaments often refer to those who have died as being asleep.—Deut. 31:16; Ps. 13:3; John 11:11-14

In most instances the translators of our *King James Version*, because of their own misunderstanding, have translated *sheol* by the word "grave" when the reference is to a righteous person. However, they translate the same Hebrew word as "hell" when the text in which it appears is concerned with a wicked person. To surface readers of the Bible, this tends to give the impression that the

righteous and the wicked go to different places or conditions when they die. The traditional view holds that the wicked go to hell, which—though not scripturally—is believed to be a place of torment, while the righteous go into the grave.

However, even this is not wholly in keeping with the traditional viewpoint, which is that the righteous go to heaven. Probably the translators hoped that the student, when reading a text which revealed a righteous person as going into the grave, would think of it merely as the body finding its resting place in death, whereas it is the soul which goes to heaven.

However, in Psalm 16:10, Jesus' prophetic expression of confidence that he would be raised from the dead, the translators used the word hell to translate *sheol*, even though they must have known that the text applied to Jesus, God's only begotten Son. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," and therefore not worthy of being punished in a hell, as they supposed, of torment. (Heb. 7:26) Why did the translators do this? Why did they not follow their usual custom and use the word grave, when the reference was so clearly to a righteous person?

The answer, we believe, is quite obvious. In the text, Jesus declares that his soul would not be left in hell. Those who translated our *King James Version* did not believe that Jesus' soul went into the grave. They did not, in fact, believe that human souls, whether righteous or sinful, go into the grave, or death condition, so they could not very well translate the text in a manner which would reveal the views of all Christendom to be in error.

Thus they used the word hell, even though they must have known that it would cause some to wonder why Jesus went to hell when he died. They were caught in a dilemma, and chose the best solution they could. After all, traditionally—but not scripturally—those in hell are alive, not dead, so to put Jesus' soul in hell by their translation would mean that at least it was still alive.

We do not particularly object to the word hell as a translation of *sheol*, for after all, the original meaning of this English word hell is simply a "hidden" or "covered" condition. It was only when the word was given a false meaning by those who did not understand the teaching of the Bible relative to death, that suggestions of fire and torment became associated with it. The word grave, if we think of it as an actual place of burial, is likewise not a good translation of *sheol*, which denotes the "condition" of death—not a place of burial.

Jesus' soul went into the condition of death. The Prophet Isaiah declares that "he hath poured out his soul unto death," and also that his soul would be made an "offering for sin." (Isa. 53:12,10) The word soul, as used in the Bible, means the living being. The thought of Jesus pouring out his soul unto death is simply that he laid down his life. He did this, Isaiah explains, as an offering for sin.

It was through one man's disobedience that "sin entered into the world," Paul explains, "and death by sin." (Rom. 5:12) Thus the entire human race has, in reality, been going into the Bible hell, the great prison house of death. They are not suffering torture there, but are dead. The Bible represents them as being asleep; first, because they are unconscious, and

also because in God's due time they are to be restored to life by divine, miracle-working power. The reason for this is that Jesus, by pouring out his own soul unto death, redeemed Adam and his race from death. He took the sinner's place in death, in *sheol*, *hades*, the Bible hell.—vss. 17-19; I Cor. 15:20-22

In our text, Jesus confirms this viewpoint, declaring, "I am he that liveth, and was dead." Jesus was indeed dead, from the time he cried on the cross, "It is finished," until God raised him from the dead. (John 19:30; Matt. 28:5-7) He died, voluntarily, giving up in death his perfect manhood as a ransom, or corresponding price, for the sin-cursed race, and thereby acquired the keys—the right or authority—to open the locks of hell and of death.—Matt. 20:28; I Tim. 2:3-6

In a very wonderful promise to the Apostle Peter, Jesus referred to hell—*hades*—as having gates. Jesus spoke about building his church, and said that the "gates of hell" would not prevail against it. (Matt. 16:18) Paul later explains that the church, faithful Christians of the present age, comprise the "body" of Christ, and that the Christ is not "one member, but many." (Eph. 1:22,23; I Cor. 12:12,14) The word Christ of the New Testament corresponds with the word Messiah of the Old Testament. What Jesus and Paul meant, therefore, is that the Messianic promises of the Old Testament must await fulfillment until the entire church class is complete. Then, as the Master told Peter, the "gates of hell" shall not prevail against the fulfillment of these divine promises.

God's promises were that, through the Messiah, which as we have seen, is to include the church, the

world is to receive life. The church, therefore, will share with Jesus in the promised work of blessing all the families of the earth, as originally promised to father Abraham. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18) Peter explains that this blessing includes the resurrection of the dead. He describes it as restitution, which means restoration, and asserts that there are to be “times of restitution of all things,” and that this great future time of blessing was promised by the “mouth of all his [God’s] holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20,21

This promised blessing is sure to come. While each generation of the sin-cursed race has gone down into the great prison house of death—the Bible hell—the gates of hell will not prevail to keep them there. Jesus has the keys to those gates. He will throw them wide open, and will call forth the prisoners to freedom. (Isa. 49:7-9) The members of his body, the church, are the first ones to return from death through those gates. Theirs is referred to as the “first resurrection,” and the explanation is given that they “shall reign with Christ a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:4,6

The church, raised from death and exalted to glory and power with Jesus, will be associated with him in the thousand-year work of awakening the remainder of the dead, keeping the gates of hell open until all the prisoners of death are set at liberty. We are assured of this in Revelation 20:13, where we read, “The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.”

Most assuredly, hell will give up its dead! The Creator, who gave life, has promised to restore life,

and Jesus ratified these promises by giving himself in death as a ransom for Adam and his condemned and dying offspring. Through the substitutionary death of the perfect man Jesus, all mankind became the ransomed of the Lord, and one of the reassuring promises of God is that “the ransomed of the LORD shall return [from death], and come to Zion [the Messianic kingdom] with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:10

THREE GREAT MIRACLES

Thus seen, that greatest of all events in human history, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, was in reality the first of three outstanding miracles in God’s plan to redeem mankind from the penalty of death and to restore the people to life. The second of these miracles is the resurrection of the footstep followers of Christ and their exaltation to the divine nature to live and reign with him during the thousand years of his kingdom. The third great miracle will be the awakening from death of all who are in their graves, that they also may have an opportunity to participate in the blessings purchased by Jesus’ death on Calvary’s cross.—John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 21:3-5

Herein, then, is a sure foundation for faith and hope, even though the world today is more afflicted with suffering and death than ever before. In a prophecy concerning our day, Daniel spoke of a “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1) There is every reason to

believe that this prophecy is being fulfilled in the present worldwide fear and distress of the people. The outlook would be dark and gloomy but for the fact that associated with this prophecy is assurance of deliverance, not only from the trouble, but also from death.

“At that time,” Daniel continues, “thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” (Dan. 12:1,2) The expression, “thy people,” is a reference to Daniel’s people, who in reality are God’s people, faithful Christians of the present age—spiritual Israelites. They are the first to be delivered, and this takes place in the first resurrection. Then will follow the awakening of those who “sleep in the dust of the earth.” When awakened from death, these will have an opportunity to accept the provisions of divine grace through Christ. If they do this, and obey the laws of the kingdom then in force, they will receive everlasting life upon the earth.—Matt. 6:10

It is a glorious prospect, both for the followers of Jesus, and for mankind in general. The fact that the world is presently going through a great time of trouble and distress means that these promised blessings of life are very close at hand. Realizing this, our commemoration of Jesus’ resurrection this year should be more than ever meaningful and hope-inspiring. Though we may be presently surrounded with sorrow and death, the divine promises of joy and life are near at hand. The guarantee of this is that nearly two thousand years ago, God raised Jesus from the dead! ■

*“Oh that You would hide me in Sheol,
 That You would conceal me until Your wrath
 returns to You,
 That You would set a limit for me and remember me!
 If a man dies, will he live again?
 All the days of my struggle I will wait
 Until my change comes.
 You will call, and I will answer You;
 You will long for the work of Your hands.”*
 —Job 14:13-15, New American Standard Bible

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 Rick Sconyers, Orlando, FL—February 20.
 Age, 63

Sister Czeslawa Mistarz, Melbourne, Australia—
 February 26. Age, 85

Sister Danuta Lemańskiej, Knurów, Poland—March
 4. Age, 79

Sister Joy Campbell, Boise, ID—March 11. Age, 90

Brother George Shuck, New Haven, CT—March 11.
 Age, 89

Brother Pawel Kawala, Czarnkowie, Poland—March
 15. Age, 64

Brother John Clarke, Evesham, UK—March 18.
 Age, 88

Brother John Coccia, Enfield, CT—March 18. Age,
 89

Brother Romain Mlotkiewicz, Lamorlaye, France—
 March 20. Age, 93

Sister Ruth Kotilingam, Rajahmundry, India—
 March 22. Age, 88

The Empty Tomb

Key Verses: *“As they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.”*
—Luke 24:5,6

Selected Scripture:
Luke 24:1-12

THE APPEARANCE OF angels to humans is recorded many times in the Bible. (Gen. 22:11-18; Luke 1:11-13; 2:9-11) In today's lesson we find another appearance of angels, this time to the women who had come to anoint the body of Jesus. In Matthew's account of our Key Verse, most Bible translations use the words “Do not be afraid,” a more calming phrase than “fear not,” to describe the angel's response to the frightened women. (Matt. 28:5) Matthew also describes the angelic appearance as being accompanied

by a great earthquake and the rolling back of the stone at the tomb. The Roman guards were so afraid at the sight that “they fell into a dead faint.”—vss. 2-4, *New Living Translation*

The fact that the empty tomb was first found by devoted women is significant as it highlights the fear of the male disciples who had gathered in a locked home. (John 20:19, *NLT*) In ancient times the testimony of a woman counted less than that of a man. If the story had been fabricated, men would have certainly been the ones noted as discovering the empty tomb.

The empty tomb was factual evidence that supports

the apostolic teaching that Jesus had risen from the dead. Opponents could have easily ended the early accounts of these events by simply stating that his body had been found, but God prevented this from happening. A fabricated account was even devised by the Jewish chief priests that the body had been stolen away by his disciples. (Matt. 28:11-15) However, it would be difficult to believe eleven men lacking military training would have been able to overpower Roman guards at the tomb.

The location of the tomb was also an important feature in supporting the claim that Jesus was risen from the dead. Mark 15:43 says, “Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.” Verse 47 adds, “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.” Joseph was an honorable man, and the women observed exactly where he laid Jesus’ body. There was no deceit nor trickery involved, either by Joseph or by the women. The same women who witnessed Jesus’ placement in the tomb saw it empty on the third day.

About twenty years after the resurrection of Jesus took place, the Apostle Paul wrote about those events. (I Cor. 15:3-8) He reported at least five different post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, including one in which more than “five hundred brethren at once” had seen the Lord and that most of them were still living. Paul himself had seen a glimpse of the glorified Jesus on the road to Damascus at the time of his conversion.—Acts 9:1-6

Legal cases require evidence from reputable and multiple sources. In the case of the empty tomb, both requirements are fulfilled. In our lesson, the evidence all points to the authenticity of the Biblical writings that the tomb was empty because “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”—I Cor. 15:20, *New International Version* ■

On the Road to Emmaus

Key Verses: *“Their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”*
—**Luke 24:31,32**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 24:13-32

THE THIRD DAY AFTER

Jesus’ death, early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene was the first to see the risen Lord. (Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18) Shortly thereafter Jesus appeared to the other two women who had come to anoint his body, Mary the mother of James and Salome. (Mark 16:1; Matt. 28:1,9,10) Little is known of Jesus’ third appearance other than it was alone to Simon Peter. (Luke 24:34) None of the other writers of the New Testament mention this appearance with the exception of Paul, who in I Corinthians 15:5 said only, “He was seen by

Cephas,” Peter’s Aramaic surname. It is likely that Jesus wanted to personally encourage Peter after the guilt he must have felt from denying the Master three times. (Luke 22:55-62) Three things that attract Jesus to those seeking after him are love, penitence, and a study of his teachings. We see love and penitence expressed by the women and Peter in his appearances to them.

The narrative now turns to two of Jesus’ disciples who,

later the same day, were traveling by foot toward the village of Emmaus, some seven miles away from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:13) It is likely these two believed that walking and discussing the crucifixion and the empty tomb might bring some relief from the puzzling events of recent days. Perhaps the lack of understanding that troubled them stimulated the risen Jesus to come join them in their journey. He saw that they especially needed him, for their faith was sorely wounded.—vss. 14-24

Jesus expressed a gentle rebuke to the two walking toward Emmaus, telling them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:25,26, *New International Version*) He then spoke to them the truth about himself as revealed in the Scriptures: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”—vs. 27, *NIV*

The main point of Jesus’ words was that all that had happened was already predicted and written down by Moses and the prophets; and these things were now being fulfilled. Jesus wanted them to fully understand God’s plan and to know that although things sometimes look hopeless and doubts may come, they have to look no further than the Scriptures to understand what and why certain events have transpired. In this case, first Christ must suffer; then he is glorified. What a sermon!

Jesus did not reveal himself while on the road with these two disciples, but waited until the more relaxed time of enjoying a meal together. This might parallel our discernment of the Truth. Sometimes when we cannot understand a matter we gather information through Bible studies. Only after it has settled in our hearts, and we have fully digested what we have learned does a greater appreciation come to us. Our Key Verse points out the glorious enlightenment that came to these two disciples as a result of Jesus’ visit with them on the road to Emmaus. ■

Jesus Appears on the Shore

Key Verse: “*Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*”
—**John 21:12**

Selected Scripture:
John 21:1-14

Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Eight days later Jesus appeared again in their midst, with Thomas present. The Lord said to him, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.” Thomas was then convinced that Jesus was indeed alive.—vss. 25-28

On the night of his arrest Jesus had told the eleven, “Tonight all of you will desert me. For the Scriptures say, God will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I have been raised from the dead, I will go ahead of you to Galilee and meet you there.” (Matt. 26:31,32, *New Living Translation*) As weeks passed the excitement of seeing Jesus alive began to fade. Jesus’

THE SETTING FOR TODAY’S

lesson is the third appearance of Jesus to his disciples as a group after his resurrection. (John 21:14) Thomas had not been present when Jesus first appeared to the eleven on Sunday evening of his resurrection. (John 20:19-24) The other disciples told Thomas when he returned, “We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them,

words became a reality, and his disciples began to be scattered. Because of his years and natural leadership, Peter was the first to suggest a return to their former life. “I’m going out to fish, Simon Peter told them, and they said, We’ll go with you.”—John 21:3, *New International Version*

We can imagine the disciples’ recollection of Jesus’ call to them, when he said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19) For more than three years they had followed the one they believed to be the Messiah, but now they were grieved and perplexed as they reentered the fishing business. Their first night’s experience was calculated to be a disappointment. They fished through the night and caught nothing. As morning dawned and they approached the shore, they heard a voice asking “Children, have ye any meat?” (John 21:5) Since the answer was “no,” the stranger said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”—vs. 6

It was the loving John who first realized this was a miracle and said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” Being a man of action and doubtless still suffering at heart from his denial of the Lord, Peter immediately plunged into the sea and swam to shore. The other disciples followed in a little ship dragging the net of fish. There they noticed a fire of coals with fish and bread laid on it.—vss. 7-9

Today’s Key Verse points out that all the disciples then realized this was Jesus, though he had appeared in yet another form than his earlier manifestations. He thus proved he was alive as a spirit being, and he exhorted his disciples to return to the business of being fishers of men. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”—Matt. 28:19,20, *English Standard Version* ■

Jesus and Peter

Key Verse: “*So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*”
—John 21:15

Selected Scripture:
John 21:15-19

Jesus showed not only that he was alive, but that he was now a powerful spirit being who could come and go at will.

As noted, one of his appearances was alone to Simon Peter. We are told of this appearance by the two from Emmaus after Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. When they returned to Jerusalem, they told those gathered there, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” (Luke 24:30-34) Paul makes the only other mention in the New Testament of this appearance in I Corinthians 15:5, saying simply, “He was seen of Cephas [Simon Peter], then of the twelve.”

We can only surmise that Jesus knew Peter needed to

MUCH HAD HAPPENED

since resurrection Sunday. As mentioned in our previous lessons, Jesus had appeared that day to Mary Magdalene, the women who were with her, alone to Peter, two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus, and finally to the eleven that evening, excepting Thomas. The risen Lord was not always recognized by his former human likeness, but by his voice and his manner of breaking bread. To his disciples he appeared miraculously in a closed room with none seeing him enter. Through these appearances

be encouraged for future Gospel work. The shame and discouragement from the three denials of his Master would have been a great burden. What tenderness was probably expressed on that occasion as Jesus gently, and in private conversation, lifted the guilt from Peter's mind. What a lesson there is for us to know that the Lord is ready to give us the same encouragement in our hours of distress, trial or perplexity. Jesus knows we are imperfect humans and reminds us that we are not defined by our moments of fleshly weakness, but by our heart's desire to serve him.

Now, perhaps a few weeks later, dining on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asks Peter "lovest thou me more than these?" Peter's prompt affirmative answer was, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." What did the Master mean by questioning Peter's love for him? More than three years earlier, we recall that Jesus, "walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."—Matt. 4:18-20

However, after three and a half years by Jesus' side, Peter had decided to return to fishing. This was in spite of the fact that the risen Lord had previously appeared privately to Peter, as noted earlier from Luke 24:34. Jesus undoubtedly was now asking Peter if his fishing business had overtaken his love for the Master. Was Peter willing to leave his fishing once again in the face of public prejudice and reproach of the cross? Was he willing to give up his business and social advantage to instead preach the kingdom of God, and as Jesus said in our Key Verse, to "feed my lambs?" Indeed, Peter left his fishing business once and for all and faithfully carried out his apostolic ministry. We are similarly asked, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—Matt. 16:24 ■

Promise of the Holy Spirit

Key Verse: *“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*

—Acts 1:8

Selected Scripture:
Acts 1:1-11

apostles to continue laboring in the Gospel and preaching the kingdom which will bless all the families of the earth in due time.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25

The apostles had been witnesses to miracles which only the Messiah could perform, yet much of his preaching remained a mystery. He had appeared to them repeatedly over a period of forty days after his resurrection talking with them about things pertaining to the kingdom of God, but they were not yet fully prepared for their mission. Today's Key Verse explains that the gift of the Holy Spirit would open their understanding to the many teachings

THE ACTS OF THE APOS-

tles, written by Luke, begins with a reference to the Gospel that bears his name. “In my first book I gave you some account of all that Jesus began to do and teach until the time of his ascension. Before he ascended he gave his instructions, through the Holy Spirit, to the special messengers of his choice.” (Acts 1:1,2, *J. B. Phillips New Testament*) This statement conveys the thought that the personal ministry of Jesus was only the beginning of his work. He had chosen twelve

of Jesus. Prior to his death, Jesus had similarly promised, “The Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name, shall teach you all things, and remind you of all things which I said to you.”—John 14:26, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

The giving of the Holy Spirit to our Lord’s chosen apostles would signal the opening of the “high calling” of the Gospel Age. (Phil. 3:14) On the Day of Pentecost, the remaining original eleven were the first to receive the begetting of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4) Gathered there was also a large crowd of faithful Jews who had come to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Weeks in accordance with the instructions of Jehovah. (Deut. 16:16) Now begotten with the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke to the assembly, citing a prophecy of Joel: “It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; ... And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:17,21, *Phillips*) Peter invoked the words of the Old Testament prophets to show that much of their writings pointed to Jesus Christ, of whom the apostles could now personally attest that he had been resurrected from the dead.

Peter finished his sermon with the invitation, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”—Acts 2:38,39, *English Standard Version*

Peter was obeying the command of Jesus, who during his ministry had instructed them, “Proclaim as you go, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 10:7, *ESV*) Paul verified this call, later opened to both Jews and Gentiles, saying, “He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.”—Gal. 3:14, *New International Version* ■

Cheerfulness as an Aid to Overcoming

***“A merry heart
doeth good like a
medicine: but a
broken spirit
drieth the bones.”
—Proverbs 17:22***

ROGET’S THESAURUS

describes cheerfulness as “a condition of supreme well-being and good spirits, beatitude, blessedness, bliss, cheer, felicity, gladness, happiness, joy and joyfulness.” Cheerfulness embodies an attitude of mind that should accompany a true Christian regardless of circumstances. The Scriptures even support a connection between cheerfulness and health: “A cheerful look brings joy to your heart. And good news gives health to your body.”—Prov. 15:30, *New International Reader’s Version*

There is broad consensus among the medical community that cheerfulness has a beneficial effect upon the physical and emotional well-being of the human species. One example of such reasoning relates to the heart, which supplies blood to all parts of the body. If the heart is not healthy, then

the body may suffer various maladies, aches and pains owing to an irregular supply of blood. Many people so afflicted attempt to regulate their diet and have an exercise regimen to improve their circulation. However, these alone are often not sufficient to make a significant impact upon the diseased condition. It has been suggested that a major cause of heart problems is stress and an accompanying overall lack of cheerfulness.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

When Norman Cousins, a noted former writer and editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature*, was diagnosed with heart disease, he reasoned that if stress exacerbated the disease, perhaps laughter would ease the pain he so often experienced. Although told he had only a short time to live, he decided to take his treatment into his own hands. He took massive doses of Vitamin C and watched old comedic films.

He later wrote: "I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep. When the pain-killing effect of the laughter wore off, we would switch on the motion picture projector again and not infrequently, it would lead to another pain-free interval." His book, *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient*, became a best seller. It also stimulated research on the link between laughter and healing within the medical community.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE

When someone laughs, an oxygenated blood supply flows through the body and improves the

strength and quality of the blood. Those who are suffering from an illness can often improve their condition by developing a cheerful attitude. Those not so afflicted may help to prevent disease by bringing external sources of cheer into their lives, if they are not cheerful by nature. The power of positive suggestion is also advocated as an aid to good health and effective parenting.

Consider these insightful comments from the pen of a noted Biblical author. "If, instead of sunshine, there is rain and a gloomy outlook, it will only make matters worse to think of the day gloomily and to suggest gloomy thoughts to others. Rainy days have their blessings for us as well as for others, and our minds should be quick to note these and to pass them along by suggestion to companions. The mother should anticipate the child's disappointment by calling its attention to the beautiful rain which God has provided for giving the flowers and trees and grass a drink and a bath to refresh them, that they may be bright and cheerful to us and yield their increase; and provided also for the cattle and for us to drink and bathe and be clean and happy, and praise him and love him and serve him."

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

From a higher standpoint, cheerfulness has a direct bearing upon the spiritual health of dedicated Christians. During his earthly sojourn Christ was the epitome of cheerfulness despite the extremely difficult experiences he endured as he carried out his consecration vows. The Master commenced his sacrificial course after presenting himself in baptism in fulfillment of prophecy: "Then said I, Lo, I

come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.”—Ps. 40:7,8

The secret of Jesus’ success in overcoming adversity was that he cheerfully accepted God’s will as the course to follow, and in every particular, he proved faithful. He ignored the scorn and dishonor heaped upon him by the scribes and Pharisees who opposed him. Cheerfulness does not exist in a vacuum. There needs to be a basis for it and, in Jesus’ case, as prophesied by the psalmist, it was because he had God’s law, plan, and purposes within his heart. These brought him joy as he did his part to fulfill them. He was enthusiastic about rendering service that would be pleasing to God, undoubtedly recalling his pre-human condition of which we are told he was daily his Father’s delight.—Prov. 8:30

Through perfect heart communion with God while in the flesh, Jesus knew his prayers were always heard. What an assurance that must have given him that all was well! What joy must have been his to realize the promised high exaltation to the divine nature as a reward for cheerfully and successfully carrying out his mission to redeem the human family. While still in the flesh, he said: “As the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.”—John 5:26

THE DIVINE PERSPECTIVE

The return of Christ, eradication of sin as well as suffering, and the establishment of his kingdom is God’s method for bringing about permanent peace and happiness throughout the world. The lengthy reign of sin and death is referred to in Psalm 30:5

as a period of darkness, with the explanation that “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Enlightened, consecrated Christians appreciate that the purpose of the Lord’s return is to establish Messiah’s kingdom. Yet, the kingdom awaits God’s due time, and this becomes a genuine test of their cheerful endurance as they look to the Lord to help them during the present season of distress and chaos. Furthermore, this test of maintaining a cheerful attitude seemingly becomes very personal. The follower of the Master, in order to demonstrate obedience under adversity, is subjected to more than the ordinary hardships common to those not in covenant relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Many such saints are confined to beds of sickness and pain throughout periods of several years. It is a great test of their endurance to patiently wait on the Lord as they go through such difficult experiences. It is always true, of course, that God gives strength for every time of need, but this does not mean that such individuals are necessarily released from suffering. It simply means that he helps them to bear it. (I Cor. 10:13, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) In proportion to their faith, they can and do bear it, while they look ahead to the establishment of the kingdom. Then their own hope of glory, honor, and immortality will be realized, and eventually throughout the whole earth there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more death, when these former things are passed away.—Rom. 2:7; Rev. 21:3-5

There are also those who are called upon to care for the sick and the afflicted. This, too, is a severe

test of cheerful endurance. However, many of the Lord's people have endured these tests, and successfully, because the grace of the Lord was with them. It is a hard test, although not so difficult as is the case with the ailing ones. As a rule, those who care for the ill do not undergo the same degree of physical suffering. Yet there is often much emotional and mental stress upon those who have the responsibility of caring for another person. God is not unrighteous to forget the many labors of love of these dear ones, in that they faithfully minister to his saints, gladly laying down their lives in this way, as he has indicated to be his will.—Heb. 6:10

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES OF THE CONSECRATED

Believers receive so many favors from God that a failure to maintain an attitude of cheerfulness even during severe trials would be evidence of living below our privileges. Such a condition would prove detrimental to our spiritual health. A few of these special favors include justification, spirit begetting, a knowledge of God's plan, discipleship, a transformed mind, prayer access to God, forgiveness, service opportunities, fellowship, and guardian angels. These evidences of the Father's grace and love should promote cheerfulness and sustain our spiritual health. Let us examine briefly each of these special blessings from our Heavenly Father.

- Justification enables us to have a standing with God as sons at this time in advance of the world of mankind because we have been covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness. (Isa. 61:10) "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that

condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” (Rom 8:33,34) How precious is the exhilaration stemming from the knowledge that we have been accepted in the Beloved.—Eph. 1:6

- Spirit begetteth is an earnest or down payment that, if faithful unto death, we will receive the divine nature and ultimately be in the presence of God beyond the veil. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (I Cor. 2:12,14) Through the Holy Spirit’s influence, we can appreciate the realities that are hidden from the human family at large. Surely that is cause for rejoicing.—Rom. 8:14-17

- A knowledge of God’s plan assures us that we are able to see and comprehend what marvelous things are in reservation not only for the church but for all mankind. “And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. ... Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Matt. 13:10,11,16,17) When

we contrast this understanding with the sense of despair that engulfs those who are blinded by the adversary, how grateful we should be.—John 8:32

- The privilege of discipleship to follow in the Master's footsteps and ultimately live and reign with him as priests and kings was not offered prior to the present Gospel Age. This offer will soon cease forever. How ecstatic we should be for the high calling and the opportunity to be a part of the little flock.—Matt. 16:24; Luke 12:32; II Tim. 1:9

- A transformed mind changes us from serving sin and self to comprehending and doing the will of God in our lives. (Rom. 12:2) With an increasing appetite for the Scriptures and the application of their principles, we produce fruitage, the character of our Lord Jesus. We also observe it in our brethren, thereby enriching our Christian sojourn and crystallizing our characters. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."—Gal. 5:22,23

- Prayer, or communion with God, is a source of comfort that is indescribable. We experience trials and sorrows, but these are eased as we are strengthened through God's Spirit and his providential overruling, resulting in an inner sense of calm. (John 15:7) In prayer, we appropriately may ask for strength to overcome the propensities of the flesh. In this regard, the Apostle Paul reminds us: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations,

and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor. 10:3-5) Satan is an ever watchful, wily opponent who uses our flesh to war against the New Creature. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Eph. 6:12

- The assurance of God’s forgiveness extended towards us removes the discouragement that would otherwise make us downcast, because we know that we fail repeatedly. “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.” (Prov. 24:16) The blessing of forgiveness is an occasion for continued gratitude for the Father’s mercy, which enhances our sense of spiritual well-being.—I John 1:9

- Service opportunities in the Lord’s vineyard provide us with a sense of fulfillment. The measure of our love for God can be gauged by our joy in helping to assist, bless, and comfort others in various ways. The pleasure we attain helping our brethren along with the Father’s approval of our actions is yet another evidence of our spiritual health. Not all of the Lord’s people have the same abilities to serve, but each should be faithful in the use of whatever talents and privileges may be his. Some who seek to be public servants of the Master may fail to recognize the great joy which is experienced by those who serve faithfully in obscurity, known only by our Heavenly Father. Paul wrote, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another,” and also,

“By love serve one another.” (Rom. 12:10; Gal. 5:13) The service of the Lord is oftentimes difficult. Nevertheless, we are to be patient in tribulation, submitting cheerfully to all the adversities which the Lord, in his love, may permit to come upon us.—I John 3:16; 4:12

- Fellowship implies our close association with the Father, his Son Christ Jesus, and other members of the brotherhood. As we meditate upon the word of God and converse upon holy things, we can sense the divine presence in our lives and realize that we are never alone in our Christian sojourn. This reality is a source of perpetual encouragement and joy.—I John 1:3,7; Acts 2:42,46,47

- Guardian angels are the unseen agents that protect us from the evil that surrounds us. This provision, rightly appreciated, minimizes the spirit of fear that might otherwise overcome us as we walk by faith, seeking to do God’s will. How can we not worship and extol our Heavenly Father, who is concerned for our every interest?—Ps. 34:7; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:13,14

MANIFESTING CHEERFULNESS IN PHILIPPI

Undoubtedly, all of the foregoing privileges were enjoyed by Paul and Silas as they traveled together in the ministry of the Gospel. The strength derived from their divine relationship helped them be cheerful in Philippi, even though they had been beaten and imprisoned. This occurred after Paul commanded an evil spirit to depart from a young woman who pretended to forecast the future. As a result, her masters were no longer able to profit from her supposed ability.

The account reads, “When they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” (Acts 16:23-25). Surely their cheerful demeanor under such hardship spoke volumes concerning the high degree of their spiritual health and thus fulfilled the spirit of the admonition, “Rejoice in the Lord always.”—Phil.4:4

ADDITIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM JAMES

James wrote: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” (James 1:2-4) We can understand why this quality of cheerfulness is so essential to develop as we prepare now for our role in the Messianic kingdom to help reconcile mankind back to God. When fallen humanity is awakened from the tomb, each will return with the same state of mind that they possessed prior to their death. The assurance to the faithful members of the church, however, is that they will be fully equipped to assist mankind up the highway of holiness and back to perfection. (Isa. 35:8-10) This will be a great source of joy for us beyond the veil as we share with Christ in carrying out the work of fulfilling God’s eternal purpose for his earthly children.

During the period of judgment in the Messianic kingdom, the human family will gradually return

from the tomb. There will be a great work of education needed to assist them up the highway of holiness in preparation for their test of loyalty to righteousness during the “little season” at the end of the kingdom. (Rev. 20:3) This judgment day period will feature an unyielding rule of righteousness, but it will also be a time when justice is tempered with mercy to assist whosoever is willing, to drink of the “water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17

FAITH AND CHEERFULNESS

The Scriptures lay a great deal of stress upon the subject of faith. Hebrews 11:6 states, “Without faith it is impossible to please [God].” Peter tells us that by adding certain qualities of character to our faith we shall have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and that we shall never fall. (II Pet. 1:5-11) How could one develop meekness, which means cheerful submission to the divine will, without a strong faith? During Old Testament times, for example, God asked Abraham to offer Isaac in sacrifice, which he obediently prepared to do, thus attesting to his faith and confidence in God. The Heavenly Father did not permit Abraham to actually slay Isaac. Instead, God substituted a male lamb to take his place on the altar. (Gen. 22:1-13) It is in keeping with this that Jesus is later identified in the Bible as “the Lamb of God.” He gave his life, that Adam and his progeny—all mankind—might be released from “the sin of the world,” and have an opportunity to believe and live forever.—John 1:29

The true followers of Jesus who, with him, comprise the faith seed of Abraham, likewise lay down

their lives in sacrifice. (Gal. 3:16,26-29) This is the condition upon which they are counted worthy to share with Jesus in the future work of blessing “all the kindreds of the earth.” (Rev. 14:1,4; Acts 3:25,26) In living a life of sacrifice, how could patience and cheerful endurance be cultivated under such circumstances without a strong mental conviction that these are qualities that the Lord is looking for in us? How true it is then that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”—Heb. 11:1

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Maintaining cheerfulness is an aid to good spiritual health. It is an important aspect of our Christian sojourn if we are to remain faithful to our calling. As we attempt to overcome any tendency towards discouragement, let us be vigilant with regard to our prayer life, maintain faithfulness in assembling together with our brethren, and fulfill our vows of consecration. Let us also claim for ourselves and repeat to all who have a hearing ear the many wonderful promises of God found in the Scriptures. This will not only help us maintain cheerfulness now, but if we are faithful in doing all these things, we will have the joy of participating in the work of helping to restore mankind to the perfection lost in Eden.

May we be encouraged by the words of the Master who assured us that we can be more than conquerors: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”—John 16:33 ■

The Memorial Emblems

*“As often as ye eat
this bread, and
drink this cup, ye
do shew the Lord’s
death till he come.”*

*—I Corinthians
11:26*

GOD’S TRULY CONSE-
crated people throughout the
world will join together this
year on April 4th after sunset
to partake of the Memorial
supper that Jesus instituted
nearly two thousand years

ago. With great joy we echo the words that the Apostle Paul wrote: “I received from the Lord what also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (I Cor. 11:23-25, *English Standard Version*) The apostle then spoke the words of our opening text, saying that this annual observance is for the purpose of remembering our Lord’s death.

As we participate in this Memorial feast, we will be partaking of two symbolic emblems: the unleavened

bread and the cup, or fruit of the vine. In order to appreciate the meaning of this Memorial observance, we must know the symbolic significance of these two emblems. We will examine them each from two standpoints: first, the meaning of the emblems themselves; and second, the meaning attached to our partaking of them.

THE BREAD—JESUS' BODY

When Jesus instituted the symbol of the bread, he told his disciples three things. First, he said that the bread represented his body; second, he invited them to eat of it; and third, he asked that they do this in remembrance of him. What did he mean when he said that the bread represented his body? Jesus' body was representative of his perfect human life—a corresponding price—which was to be laid down in sacrifice to redeem Adam and his posterity. As Israel's Passover in Egypt involved the slaying of an unblemished lamb, so Jesus is also spoken of as a "lamb without blemish and without spot." (Exod. 12:3-6; I Pet. 1:19) He is the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) John the Revelator says that Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."—Rev. 13:8

We symbolically partake of Jesus' body by accepting him as our Redeemer. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2) It is only because of the death of his human body that we have a relationship with God. A living Jesus in the

flesh, even though perfect, could accomplish nothing as far as our redemption is concerned. He had to die as a human being. His body had to go into death. —I Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:5

The psalmist stated prophetically concerning Jesus, “He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.” (Ps. 34:20) This, the Gospel of John corroborates, stating, “That the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.” (John 19:31-36) Indeed, no literal bone of Jesus’ body was broken, although “his visage was so marred more than any man” as his body, or human life, died upon Calvary’s cross. (Isa. 52:14) His life was voluntarily cut off, in order to fully take Adam’s place in death as the ransom price. It is in this sense, then, that Jesus’ body went into sacrificial death, not as a result of any disease, weakness, or imperfection—or literal broken bones—that had come upon him. None of these fleshly causes of death applied in the case of Jesus. As he said, “I lay down my life.”—John 10:17

Not only did Jesus’ body literally go into death on the cross, but it was offered in sacrifice and service during the three and a half years of his earthly ministry, as he continuously poured out his life for our benefit through his words, actions, preaching, conduct, example and character. These things have become life-sustaining food for us and the keys to our growth and development as Christians. This is why Jesus used the symbol of bread to describe his body. Those things which emanated from his body continuously throughout his earthly ministry were, as Jesus described them, the “living bread.”

In John, chapter 6, Jesus explained this aspect of eating his body. We read, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."—vss. 51-55

Jesus was not speaking here of eating his actual flesh or literally drinking his blood. These were merely symbols. Just as one would expect to receive life-giving nourishment from eating bread, so one would benefit from all the examples provided from the life of Jesus. We are to "eat" of him by speaking as he spoke, acting as he acted, thinking as he thought. This is what Jesus meant when he said, as recorded in John 6:56,57, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Notice Jesus says that it is those who "dwelleth in me" and "live by me" who partake of him as the bread from heaven. Jesus again emphasizes the symbolic nature of what he is saying in verse 63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

In I Corinthians 5:7,8, the Apostle Paul relates this symbol of the bread to the development of the Christian character as exemplified in Jesus, saying, “Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Leaven is used here and elsewhere in the Bible to represent sin. (Matt. 16:11,12; Luke 12:1) Unleavened bread, on the other hand, signifies that which sanctifies us and separates us from the fallen tendencies of the flesh and the world. Thus, when we partake of the bread at the Memorial observance, in addition to remembering Jesus’ body going into death, we also are renewing our commitment to the great work of sanctification within our being, appropriating to ourselves the benefits of that which was accomplished during our Lord’s earthly ministry.

THE CUP—JESUS’ SHED BLOOD

As with the bread, Jesus told his disciples, and us, what the cup symbolized when he instituted this Memorial supper. He said, as recorded in Matthew 26:27,28, that the cup represented blood—his blood. As the bread represented his body laid down in sacrifice for three and a half years, culminating on the cross, so the cup represented the value, or merit, of that life represented in the blood. Peter says, in I Peter 1:18,19, that we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” John the Revelator similarly wrote that Jesus Christ “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”—Rev. 1:5

It is important to note the necessity of both parts of the transaction. Jesus' human life—the corresponding price—had to be given up, put to death, for the ransom to be provided. This by itself, though, was not sufficient. A dead Messiah could not restore the dead and dying race back to life. However, the value of his life as represented in the blood, if applied as payment into the hands of divine justice, could bring about the release of man from condemnation and provide the hope for his restoration to God.

We see that this is exactly what happened. Jesus, by his death, provided the ransom price. Upon his resurrection—accomplished by the mighty power of God—he held the value of that ransom in his possession, symbolically represented by his shed blood. Hence, he was able to initiate the process by which that value would be applied in the hands of God's justice, first on behalf of the church, and later on behalf of the remainder of mankind.—Rom. 3:23-26; 4:24,25; 5:18,19

In Luke 22:20, Jesus additionally said this cup represented “the new testament [Greek: covenant] in my blood.” Notice that only the cup, not the bread, is mentioned in this way. Jesus' body, which went into death, could do nothing relative to the New Covenant, but his blood could. Having value, Jesus' shed blood served as a seal—a surety or guarantee—of the New Covenant. Putting it another way, the shedding of his blood gave assurance that the New Covenant would be instituted in due time—that is, in his Messianic kingdom.

The Apostle Paul, in the book of Hebrews, comments on the sealing, by blood, of both the old Law

Covenant as well as the New Covenant. He says, "When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament [covenant] which God hath enjoined unto you." "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament [covenant]."—Heb. 9:19,20; 7:22

Thus, the Apostle Paul could truly say, as recorded in Hebrews 9:22, that without the "shedding of blood," there could be no "remission" of sins. How our minds should ever appreciate the full meaning of this—that we could have absolutely no standing before God if not for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

Let us also examine the more personal part of this cup. How is it appropriated to us? How is it personally affecting us? From one standpoint, we appropriated this cup to ourselves at consecration as we, firstly, accepted Jesus through faith, thus receiving the merits of his sacrifice, and, secondly, gave our all to the Heavenly Father. (Rom. 12:1) At that time, the value of Jesus' shed blood was imputed to us. We became justified in God's sight. (Rom. 4:7,8,24,25) We took the "cup of salvation." —Ps. 116:13

From another standpoint, our appropriation of the cup at consecration was only the beginning. Just as the Israelites in Egypt had to remain under the blood during the entire Passover night, we, too, must daily remain under Jesus' blood, wearing the "robe of righteousness" through all the experiences of the Christian walk during this present nighttime

of sin in the world. (Exod. 12:12,13,22; Isa. 61:10) We may liken this to our cup of experience. Jesus referred to this cup both with reference to himself as well as to his church.

Concerning himself, Jesus said, as recorded in John 18:11, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" To us, he asks, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" (Matt 20:22) How do we answer these questions? Have we been willing to drink of the "cup" poured for us? Do we delight in any and all of the experiences God permits to come into our lives? We must be able to answer, as Jesus did, unequivocally and zealously—yes! Only with this mindset and attitude can we have our Lord's cup fully appropriated to us.

LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

As we look back over the year past, it is likely that we have had both some successes, as well as shortcomings, in appropriating the benefits symbolized in the body and blood of our Lord, and as represented by the emblems of the bread and the cup of which we will soon partake. Therefore, it is of great importance that we do as the Apostle Paul admonished in I Corinthians 11:28, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Let us remember also that our worthiness to partake of these emblems, and our faithfulness in doing so, will not be measured merely by what we do the night of the Memorial, but by our thoughts, words, and actions each day of the ensuing year and all the remaining days of our Christian walk.

As we look forward to another year in the school of Christ, let us each remember even more keenly

the tremendous work that Jesus has accomplished and what it means to us. Finally, just as Jesus gave thanks before serving the bread and the cup to his disciples, may we also be continually thankful for all that has been done on our behalf, and which soon will be done on behalf of the entire world of mankind. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—II Cor. 9:15 ■

Remember Me

*According to thy gracious word, in meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord, I will remember thee.*

*Thy body, broken for my sake,
my bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take and thus remember thee.*

*When to the cross I turn mine eyes
and rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice, I must remember thee.
Remember thee and all thy pains and all thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
I will remember thee.*

*Then of thy grace I'll know the sum,
and in thy likeness be,
When thou hast in thy kingdom come
and dost remember me.*

—Hymns of Dawn

2023 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Tuesday, April 4, 2023.

Memorial Services in MP3 format are available for listening or download at: **dawnbible.com/memorial**

The Spirit of Truth

“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, that one shall bear witness of me.”

*—John 15:26,
Revised Version
Improved and
Corrected*

THE HOLY SPIRIT MAY BE

defined as the power and influence of God exerted along any line that he may choose. God used his mighty power to create the universe, to prepare the earth for the habitation of man, and finally to create man and give him life. On the ensuing pages, we wish to examine the Bible’s testimony concerning another manner in which God has

been using his power in the accomplishment of his purposes—namely, through the influence of his thoughts over the lives of those whom he calls into his service, particularly during this present Gospel Age.

We recognize the power of thought. The life of each one of us is controlled by thoughts, either our own, or those of others, which we allow to influence us. One of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, or

power of God, is the expression of his thoughts, which are powerful in the lives of those who are devoted to the divine cause. It is this aspect of divine power that Jesus refers to in our text as the “Spirit of truth.” How does God bring his thoughts, his mind, to bear upon the lives of his people? He has, in fact, dictated his thoughts to many, and they have been recorded for the benefit of all who desire to know and do his will. The Bible calls them “holy men of God,” whom Peter describes as those who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”—II Pet. 1:21

The operation of God’s Holy Spirit upon the minds of his servants who wrote the Old Testament was miraculous. They recorded the thoughts thus dictated to them, but only dimly understood their meaning. Peter explains that it was revealed to these writers “that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” (I Pet. 1:12) We cannot know exactly how these Old Testament servants were caused to record God’s thoughts. The Bible simply explains that it was by the Holy Spirit.

We can properly say, therefore, that the Old Testament scriptures are a product, or work, of the Holy Spirit. The thoughts of God are written in the Old Testament books to be read and pondered at will by his people. However, no one could understand the real import of these recorded thoughts of God until his due time arrived, and then the meaning had to be miraculously revealed, which

brings to our attention another accomplishment of the "Spirit of truth."

The miraculous revealing of the meaning of the Old Testament messages began with Jesus. Doubtless throughout Jesus' childhood Mary had many times told him the circumstances in connection with his birth: that Joseph was not his father, that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. This would impress upon Jesus the fact that he was on the earth for a special purpose, and therefore was anxious to learn what his mission was. Thus, at the early age of twelve we find him in the Temple discussing matters with the doctors of the Jewish Law, and asking them questions. He probably learned from them that under the Law it would not be proper for him to enter upon any priestly service for God until he was thirty years old. (Luke 2:41-49; Num. 4:23) Consequently, he returned to Nazareth and was subject to his mother and foster father until that time came.

Promptly when Jesus was thirty years of age he went to John the Baptist, at the river Jordan, and offered himself for baptism. Then a wonderful miracle occurred. The Holy Spirit came upon him. The record says, "The Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-23) The Holy Spirit, or power of God, is not a person, although the translators of the Bible have endeavored to give this impression by using personal pronouns in passages which refer to the holy power of God. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is not literally in the shape of a dove. The bodily form of a dove was

merely an outward demonstration, principally for the benefit of John the Baptist to enable him to bear testimony to what had taken place.—John 1:32-34

In Matthew 3:16, we are informed that when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus the “heavens were opened unto him.” Here was a functioning of the Spirit, or power, of God different from what had ever before occurred. The Holy Spirit had been operative in the creation of the universe and had given life to all living things. The Spirit had enabled the prophets to pen their messages of God for the benefit of his people in a later age. Now, the same Spirit had miraculously revealed to Jesus the meaning of those things, which previously even the angels could not understand.

In this we see the further working of God’s power, in communicating his thoughts to the finite minds of those whom he desired should, in his due time, come under their influence. However, God does not impose his thoughts upon anyone. He did not do this with his Son. Jesus’ attitude is described in a prophecy concerning him. In it Jesus is represented as saying, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Ps. 40:7,8) The “volume of the book”—the Old Testament scriptures—contained a full expression of God’s will for his beloved Son Jesus, who delighted to do his Father’s will. He wanted his Father to reveal his will to him, and thus the “heavens were opened.” The Spirit of truth revealed to him the meaning of what had previously been written.

Even before this, the perfect mind of Jesus had probably become well acquainted with the Old

Testament scriptures. Perhaps he had even committed to memory much of what had been written. Now the Holy Spirit was revealing to him its true meaning concerning his own mission on Earth, and also the plan of God as a whole. The record states that Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he remained for forty days. (Mark 1:12,13) The miraculous revelation of truth which the Holy Spirit was unfolding to him was seemingly so overwhelming that he felt the necessity of isolating himself from others for a time. Only by this might he have an undisturbed opportunity to adjust himself to the flood of revealed truth from the Old Testament scriptures which had entered his mind. Hence he would be prepared to fulfill his agreement to do his Father's will.

JESUS' MINISTRY

Throughout the entire course of Jesus' ministry, he was unfolding the various aspects of truth that had been revealed to him. While he did not himself write his teachings, later, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, his wonderful words of life were recorded by others, and thus made available for the instruction of all the Lord's people throughout the entire age. How clearly Jesus emphasized that his teachings were not his own! (John 7:16; 14:24) John the Baptist also, referring to Jesus, said, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure."—John 3:34

The giving of the Spirit of truth to Jesus as a power to reveal the thoughts of God was not in limited measure. It came with such full and complete clarifying brilliance that Jesus understood the

thoughts and the very intents of God's heart. This means that we can accept every word that Jesus spoke as reflecting the mind of God. Along this line, Jesus testified, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."—John 12:49

Toward the close of Jesus' ministry, Philip said to him, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus' reply was, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."—John 14:8-10

Jesus did not mean by these words that he and the Heavenly Father were one and the same person. If he had meant this he would not have confused the fact by his further statement concerning the Father dwelling in him, for how can one dwell in himself? The meaning of his words is obvious. He was so fully controlled by the thoughts and will of God that everything he said and did reflected exactly what the Father would say and do were he to appear personally and minister to the people.

What this means to us is that in the words and works of Jesus we have revealed the meaning of the Spirit-inspired writings of the Old Testament, bringing the holy thoughts of God closer to us, that they might exert their intended influence in our lives. When we read the teachings of Jesus, we may know that they reveal the will of God. When Jesus

said, "Ye are the light of the world," we know that it is the Heavenly Father who expects us to be the "light of the world." When he said that we should love our enemies it means that God wants us to love our enemies. (Matt. 5:14,44) When the Master commanded that we should "lay down" our lives for one another, we should realize that it is his Father who issued that command. (John 15:13) Thus it is with respect to all the "gracious words" which fell from the Master's lips.—Luke 4:22

MUCH TRUTH HELD BACK

During the three and a half years of his earthly ministry, Jesus did not give expression to all the wonderful truths that were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. He said to his disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when that one, the spirit of truth, is come, it will guide you into all the truth." (John 16:12,13, *RVIC*) The minds of the disciples were not then prepared to grasp all the marvelous truths that had been revealed to Jesus. Indeed, much of what he did tell them was only vaguely understood by them; and many of his lessons they failed to remember.

In John 14:26, Jesus gives us another promise, that in his name the Father would send the Holy Spirit to his disciples, and that it would be to them as a wonderful "Comforter." The Spirit, he said, "shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." What a wonderful promise! Jesus indicated to his disciples that there were many truths of the Father's plan that he had not told them, but later

these would be revealed. They would be taught “all things.” Nothing that they needed to know in order to complete the divine revelation through their oral and written ministry would be omitted.

Even the great truths that Jesus did relate to his disciples—but which they failed to understand at the time, and in many instances did not remember—were to be unfolded to them by the aid of the Holy Spirit. It will “bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,” is the assurance Jesus gave to his disciples. It was at Pentecost that his promise of the “Comforter,” the “Spirit of truth” mentioned in our opening text, came upon the disciples as they waited and prayed in the “upper room” in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of the Master’s promise.—Acts 1:13,14

The disciples knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead. He had appeared to them on several occasions. It was at the last of these visits in their midst that he instructed the disciples that they “should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father”—the promise of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:1-5) Jesus explained that the fulfillment of this promise would equip them to be his special witnesses “unto the uttermost part of the earth.”—vs. 8

When first promising the Holy Spirit and explaining that it would testify of him, Jesus added, “Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:27) Here again we see the overruling providence of God, and the working of his Holy Spirit in the revelation of his plans and purposes for the guidance of his people. Jesus’ disciples, particularly his specially chosen

apostles, had been with him “from the beginning.” They had heard his wonderful words of life, and had witnessed his marvelous miracles. They lived in the refined atmosphere of peace, love, kindness, and loyalty to God that radiated from him. They noted his boldness in refuting the misleading teachings of his enemies. They knew him because they lived with him, and knowing him was a great step toward knowing the Father, when later the Holy Spirit came upon them as it had come upon him.

THE HOLY SPIRIT “SHED FORTH”

At Pentecost, the promise to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples was fulfilled. There was a mighty demonstration of power on that memorable day. Explaining it, Peter said that Jesus “having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” (Acts 2:33) The Holy Spirit was “shed forth.” There was no way the translators could distort this statement to make it seem as though the Holy Spirit was a third person in a trinity of gods. A person cannot be shed forth, but a power can; and it was the power, the Spirit of truth, which came upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost.

While all the disciples who waited at Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit were richly blessed when it was shed forth, only his chosen apostles received from it a miraculous illumination of their minds. They were specially designated by the fact that the Spirit rested upon them, being visibly manifested by “cloven tongues like as of fire.” (Acts 2:3) The apostles in turn, through their oral

teachings and their written epistles, have made the “vision” of God’s plan plain for the remainder of his people throughout the ensuing age.—Hab. 2:2

With what clarity the great truths of the Old Testament, enlarged upon and some of them made clear by Jesus, were now fully revealed to the apostles. The things which Jesus said he had withheld from them, and the truths he had taught them and they had forgotten, all now took form in their minds. They were ready at once to embark upon their ministry of witnessing for Jesus, and explaining his part, and their own, in the divine plan of human redemption and salvation.

We note a case in point. The Apostle Peter had tried, in different ways, to prevent the death of Jesus. When the Master told his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem where he expected to be arrested and put to death, Peter endeavored to dissuade him from thus voluntarily surrendering to his enemies. (Matt. 16:21,22) Later, as the mob came out from Jerusalem to arrest Jesus, Peter drew his sword in an attempt to prevent the arrest. (John 18:10,11) Although Peter was later assured that Jesus had been raised from the dead, he still did not understand the meaning of his death. Indeed, he had nearly given up his hope in Jesus, and suggested to the others that they go back into the fishing business.—John 21:1-3

However, when the Holy Spirit was shed forth upon the apostles at Pentecost the mystery was made plain. We immediately find Peter, in his Pentecostal sermon, quoting prophecies from the Old Testament to show that God had foreknown and foretold the Redeemer’s death. (Acts 2:25-32)

The prophecies of Jesus' death and resurrection had been in the Old Testament all along, but Peter did not comprehend their meaning. Now he did, for the Spirit of truth had been shed forth to illuminate his mind, and the minds of the other apostles, that they might be inspired witnesses of the great truths of God's plan as they are centered in Christ Jesus.

Jesus, in promising the Holy Spirit, said that it would be a "Comforter" to his disciples. How true this proved to be! When he was taken from them and crucified, they were made sad of heart. It was much more than the loss in death of a beloved friend. They had accepted Jesus as the foretold Messiah. The disciples understood the surface truths of the Old Testament. They knew that the God of Israel had promised to send a Messiah through the line of David, and that this great leader was to establish a kingdom, or government, which eventually would exert worldwide influence and control. They believed Jesus was this King, and they believed that in associating themselves with him they would have a share in his kingdom.

With Jesus' death this hope was shattered, but only until the Holy Spirit was shed forth. Then they realized that the Messianic kingdom was to be more effective and more glorious than they had even imagined it could be. They also now knew why it had been necessary for Jesus to die; that it was to redeem the world. (John 1:29; I Tim. 2:3-6; I John 2:2) They now understood that in his resurrection by divine power, Jesus had been exalted to a height of glory beyond the comprehension of their finite minds. They also began to appreciate that if they became conformed to his character

likeness and faithfully laid down their lives as his witnesses, they would, in God's due time, share the glory of his kingdom and of his exalted position on the throne of God. How wonderful it is to be thus comforted by the Holy Spirit!

Jesus had said that when the Spirit of truth came it would show them "things to come," and it did. (John 16:13) Shortly after Pentecost we find Peter preaching another wonderful sermon. It was prompted by a miracle which he had performed—the healing of a man who had been lame from birth. (Acts 3:1-16) Peter explained that this miracle was accomplished through the power of the resurrected Jesus. He further stated that Jesus was to come again, and that when he did return there would be "times of restitution [restoration] of all things." Then he added that this glorious feature of God's plan for saving a lost world from sin, sickness, and death had been spoken "by the mouth of all his [God's] holy prophets since the world began." (vss. 20,21) Not until the Holy Spirit of truth was shed forth at Pentecost, however, did Peter understand this great doctrine of restitution for a lost world, nor realize that it was the theme of all God's holy prophets.

The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit of truth completed the miraculous revelation which was first given to Jesus at Jordan. Thus through his teachings, and that of the apostles, the full revealing of the divine will was accomplished, and is now contained in the written Word. No further miraculous revelation is needed. Paul emphasized this when he wrote to Timothy, saying, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be fully qualified, and fully furnished unto every good work.”—II Tim. 3:16,17, *RVIC*

“Every scripture inspired of God” is what we speak of as the Old and New Testaments. In these two parts of the Bible, God has recorded and revealed his thoughts, plans and purposes. These, all of which he has designed, exert divine power and influence in the lives of those who, during the present time, are fully dedicated to him. In this wonderful arrangement, miraculously provided, is manifested the manner in which the power of God, the Holy Spirit of truth, operates in the minds and hearts of those who surrender to its influence. Thus, it accomplishes the Creator’s grand designs and his divine will in the hearts and lives of his people. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 6—“If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”—I Peter 4:16 (Z. ’96-166 Hymn 106)

APRIL 13—“Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”—John 6:53 (Z. ’99-51 Hymn 325)

APRIL 20—“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”—Luke 16:10 (Z. ’03-407 Hymn 277)

APRIL 27—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Philippians 2:5 (Z. ’02-265 Hymn 150)

God Our Helper

“With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.”

—II Chronicles 32:8

DURING HEZEKIAH’S reign, “Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.” When he realized Sennacherib’s intentions, the account states that Hezekiah “took counsel with his princes and his mighty

men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without.”—II Chron. 32:1-5

Knowing that the God of Israel was on their side, Hezekiah told the people, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him.” (vs. 7) The king then

spoke the words of our opening text, in which he assured the people that the Lord would fight for them. The Israelites thus “rested” [Hebrew: leaned or took hold] upon the words of their righteous leader.

Sennacherib subsequently attempted to strike fear in the hearts of the Israelites. He said, for example, “Hath not ... Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it? Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand? Who was there among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?”—II Chron. 32:12-14

While Hezekiah did what he could to defend the people against Sennacherib, he realized that they would be in the same unhappy position as all the other nations of the area unless the Lord, the God of Israel, came to their rescue. Thus he and the Prophet Isaiah “prayed and cried to heaven. And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword. Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other, and guided them on every side.”—vss. 20-22

THE CHRISTIAN'S BATTLE

Paul says of the Christian's battle that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." (II Cor. 10:4) Our battle is largely against the deceptions of Satan in his efforts to destroy us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. As spiritual Israelites, however, we can be just as certain as Hezekiah was that "with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles." To assist us in our warfare, we have been provided with the "armour of God," also called the "armour of light." (Eph. 8:10-18; Rom. 13:12) Indeed, the light of truth found in God's Word is, in this evil day, more important than ever before.

King Hezekiah expressed a vitally important fact to the people under his leadership when he said concerning Sennacherib and his army that "with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles." It is only by the Lord's strength that we can be victorious. If we depend upon our own strength, the arm of flesh will fail us. Only with the Lord's help, and because he is greater than all that be against us, can we hope to gain the victory.

Let us, then, remember the importance in every time of crisis to be reminded of Hezekiah's statement that it is God who always is there to help and fight for us in every time of need. May we, like God's ancient people, lean upon these words, trusting in them as one of the reassuring promises of the Word of God, that if we put our trust in him, he will bring us forth conquerors, yea, more than conquerors, through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory!"—I Cor. 15:57 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

L. Griehs

Albuquerque, NM April 7-9

A. Kopczyk

Kampala, Uganda April 1,2

H. Montague

Kampala, Uganda April 1,2

D. Rice

Albuquerque, NM April 7-9

J. Wesol

Albuquerque, NM April 7-9

The Secret of His Presence

Psalms 27:5; 91:1

*In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide:
O how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus' side,
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low,
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.*

*When my soul is faint and thirsty 'neath the shadow of His wing
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring.
And my Saviour rests beside me and we hold communion sweet:
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet.*

*Only this I know I tell Him all my doubts and griefs and fears:
Oh, how patiently He listens, and my drooping soul He cheers.
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false friend He would be
If He never, never told me of the faults which He must see.*

*Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow, this shall then be your reward.
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place,
You will bear the shining image of the Master in your face.*

—Selected from: *The Call of the Bride*

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

KAMPALA, UGANDA CONVENTION, April 1,2—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Jjuuko. Email: eliezer1874@yahoo.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 7-9—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 6,7—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Milford Senior Center, 1050 Atlantic Street, Milford, MI 48381. Contact B. Johnson. Email: beckystevej@aol.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 7—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—West Hartford Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT 06117. Contact J. Slivinsky. Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 7—IN PERSON ONLY—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact L. Mlinek. Email: lisa.mlinek@aol.com

BOAZ, ALABAMA STUDY CONVENTION, May 19-21—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Contact K. Getchel. Phone: (256) 744-9966 or Email: biblestudents@gmail.com

NIGERIA MISSION SERVANTS CONVENTION, May 19-21—Contact C. Egbu. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 27,28—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—

Doubletree by Hilton, 3003 Corporate West Drive, Lisle, IL 60532. Phone: (630) 505-0900. Contact T. Blackwell. Phone: (630) 750-1823 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 3—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact R. Griehs.

Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

PRATO, ITALY CONVENTION, June 3,4—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Hotel Delta

Florence. Contact V. Prepelita. Email: prepelita.violeta@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 10,11—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Aldergrove Kins-

men Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC Canada. Contact B. A. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, JUNE 17,18—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Bible Students

Retirement Center, 1801 NE 201st Avenue, Fairview, OR 97024. Contact J. Wojcik. Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 15-20—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—

University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

*“I have been crucified with Christ.
It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.
And the life I now live in the flesh
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.”
—Galatians 2:20, English Standard Version*

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35

