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A Herald of Christ's Presence

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Wells Without Water 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Increased Faith 14

Grateful Faith 16

Humble Faith 18

Childlike Faith 20

Joyous Faith 22

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Sonship 24

God's Commission to Moses
and to Us 41

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 52

TALKING THINGS OVER

General Convention Bulletin 53

General Convention Program 56

OBITUARIES 62

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

Wells Without Water

*“My people have
committed two
evils; they have
forsaken me the
fountain of living
waters, and hewed
them out cisterns,
broken cisterns,
that can hold
no water.”*

—*Jeremiah 2:13*

IT HAS BEEN SATAN'S

purpose since his fall to thwart God's design for the reconciliation of mankind. Before the Flood, he was successful in contaminating the human race with all forms of wickedness and evil, except for a few faithful individuals such as Enoch and, finally,

Noah and his family—the eight souls that God saved from the Flood. (Gen. 5:22-24; I Pet. 3:20) Since the Flood, God has continued to permit Satan to operate in the earth, apart from the fact that he has been restrained when the ultimate divine purpose might be threatened. (Ps. 76:10) God has allowed this in order to demonstrate to his human and spiritual creation the awful results of sin.—Rom. 7:13

When God began dealing with the nation of Israel, he gave them his law with the promise that he would bless them in “basket and . . . store” if they would simply be humble and make an honest effort to be

obedient. (Deut. 28:1-14) Moreover, he said that if any individual was able to keep his law perfectly he would gain life. (Lev. 18:4,5) As a nation, if faithful, Israel was promised, "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: . . . And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exod. 19:5,6) These were precious promises and should have been a strong motivation for obedience. However, the history of the Jews under the Law is a long, sad story of disobedience and subsequent chastisement.

By the time God began dealing with Israel as a nation, Satan was well established in the governments and peoples who were their neighbors. These nations were idol worshipers and practiced every kind of immorality. The Israelites had been exposed to this kind of life while they were slaves in Egypt. Later, after being established as a nation in their own land, they found the excesses of their neighbors to be a great temptation to turn back to the former things they had witnessed in Egypt. They evidently felt that the restrictions imposed on them by the Law were oppressive and therefore began to circumvent or ignore them. They seemed to forget or hold in low esteem the promises of blessing and favor offered by God if they would strive to keep his commandments to the best of their ability.

ISRAEL'S FALSE PROPHETS

One of the most effective tools Satan used to seduce Israel was false prophets. By flattering and deceitful words, they obtained a harmful ascendancy over the minds of the people and the rulers of Israel. In Jeremiah 23:1-40 is an account of the Lord's

displeasure with these false prophets and his lament over the children of Israel who had been led astray by them. The text in part reads, “Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; . . . For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house I have found their wickedness, saith the LORD. . . . I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.” (vss. 9-11,14) In another place God, through the prophet, states, “A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so.”—Jer. 5:30,31

The Prophet Jeremiah was sorrowful concerning the disobedience of Israel because the whole land was filled with adulterers, and profane and wicked persons. However, the people still proceeded in their evil course, and did wrong with violence and with all their power, loving “to have it so.” In this unrighteousness, their false prophets and evil priests were ringleaders—even choosing the Temple as the scene of their crimes against the Lord.

FORESHADOWING THE FUTURE

The Apostle Peter tells us that what happened to Israel with their false prophets was a foreshadowing of what was to occur to the true church down

through the Gospel Age. The apostle states, “Israel had false prophets as well as true; and you likewise will have false teachers among you. They will impart disastrous heresies, disowning the very Master who bought them. . . . They will gain many adherents to their dissolute practices, through whom the true way will be brought into disrepute. In their greed for money they will trade on your credulity with sheer fabrications.”—II Pet. 2:1-3, *New English Bible*

Among the leading sects that troubled the Early Church were the Gnostics. These enthusiastic and self-sufficient philosophers boasted of being able to restore mankind to the knowledge of the true and supreme being, which they felt had been lost in the world. Several of these false prophets are mentioned by the apostles, as they attempted to forge changes in the true doctrines and worship of God and his Son Christ Jesus, and set up a new religion drawn from their own imaginations. The Apostle Paul, in his counsel to Timothy, stated, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”—I Tim. 1:18-20

A FALSE CHURCH SYSTEM

One of the errors that began creeping into the church in the apostles' day was the teaching that Christ had come the second time and that it was therefore time for the gathering of the church to

the Lord. The Apostle Paul warned the church, saying, “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day”—the day of Christ’s Second Advent—“shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” (II Thess. 2:3) Then the apostle proceeds to describe that this “man of sin” will exalt himself above God, and establish himself in God’s temple. Paul warns that this “mystery of iniquity” was already working—the seeds of that great error having already been sown. He continues, saying that in due time “shall that Wicked [one] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming [Greek: *parousia*—presence].”—vss. 4-8

We know from history the seeds sown at that early date did bring forth a great false church system. It is the greatest of false prophets, because Satan has propounded it as a counterfeit of the true Christ and the true kingdom. From *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 272, we quote: “This Man of Sin is a system, and not a single individual, as many seem to infer; that as the Christ consists of the true Lord and the true Church, so Antichrist is a counterfeit system consisting of a false lord and an apostate church, which for a time is permitted to misrepresent the truth, to practice deceit and to counterfeit the authority and future reign of the true Lord and his Church, and to intoxicate the nations with false claims and assumptions.”

From this great system there were later born many “daughters,” each proclaiming its own message that perverted or diluted “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) The Apostle

Peter said of all these systems: “These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”—II Pet. 2:17-19

FALSE SYSTEMS TO BE EXPOSED

The Apostle Paul stated that at the proper time these evil systems and their errors would be exposed by the truth of God’s Word, and finally be destroyed as part of the events associated with the Lord’s Second Advent, or presence. (II Thess. 2:8) Then the apostle identifies the one who is the real enemy and supporter of these systems. He says they are “the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned [*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*: judged] who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”—vss. 9-12

The prophecy states that this entire evil system is the work of Satan, and he will manifest great power, signs, and miracles through it. As we review in our minds the history of these systems, we see how by deep subtlety and the power of Satan, with all kinds of signs and wonders, they claim to have

copied the miracles of Christ and his apostles, just as the Egyptian magicians “Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses.” (II Tim. 3:8; Exod. 7:11,22) Such artful deceivers as these down through the ages have made great displays, accompanied with all kinds of forgery and fraud, with which people of all nations have had their senses and understanding deluded. Thus it has been with the false church system during the Gospel Age. Much of the world has been deceived into an admiration, a blind reverence, and an implicit submission to the arrogant claims and multiplied errors and sins of this “strong delusion.”

We will not here consider in detail the period of the Reformation, beginning around A.D. 1400, or the time of Napoleon’s success in thwarting some of the power of the “man of sin” system at the end of the 18th century. In spite of the loss of substantial civil power, this great false system still retained much of its influence over the minds of the people, and there was little or no evidence of its disintegration. However, with the Second Advent of our Lord, which signaled the beginning of the Harvest of the Gospel Age, would come the time that “lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west.” (Matt. 24:27) The thought is that the light of truth, brought about by the Lord’s presence, was to now penetrate every subject, revealing truth and exposing error. This would result, according to the prophecy, in a great struggle in which the “powers of the heavens” would be shaken. (vs. 29) This shaking would then encompass all other aspects of society and develop into a great “time of trouble,” expressed in other places as the day of God’s wrath. (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Zeph. 1:18) It is to be at

the close of this “time of trouble” that all systems of this “present evil world” are to be destroyed and Satan bound. (Gal. 1:4; Rev. 20:1,2) One of these is the apostate church system—one of the chief instruments of Satan.

EXPLOSION OF KNOWLEDGE

The “brightness” mentioned by Paul in II Thesalonians 2:8, and “lightning” Jesus prophesied of in Matthew 24:27, are both symbolic of increased knowledge, as also foretold by Daniel when speaking of the “time of the end.” (Dan. 12:4) Beginning in the late 1800’s, we began to see a great explosion of knowledge along all lines—both religious as well as in all other fields of endeavor. Note the list below, which is only a sampling of inventions resulting from this increase in knowledge.

1876	Telephone, four-stroke engine
1877	Phonograph
1879	Electric light bulb
1886	Dry-cell battery, gasoline-powered automobile
1893	Diesel engine
1900	Radio transmission
1903	Airplane
1907	Synthetic plastic
1909	Television transmission
1928	Penicillin
1931	Electron microscope
1938	Programmable computer, nuclear fission
1947	Transistor
1951	Nuclear power to produce electricity
1960	Laser
1970	Pocket calculator

1971	Microprocessor, electronic mail
1984	Cell phone
1990	World-wide web
1995	Optical disc storage [DVD]

We may be prone to forget that the increase of knowledge in today's world is something that has developed suddenly, in comparison with the thousands of years of the past during which there was relatively little increase in knowledge. Both with respect to the general education of the people and in the matter of scientific achievement, accumulated knowledge has advanced at an exponential rate in the last century and a half when compared to the previous six thousand years. Here in 2016, it is estimated that accumulated knowledge is doubling every twelve months—an astounding rate of increase indeed.

JESUS' FOOTSTEP FOLLOWERS SERVED

The first, however, to be blessed by the bright-shining of our Lord's presence are his own people, his footstep followers. The knowledge of the Truth pertaining to God's plan for man's salvation is symbolized as meat. Jesus said that when he returned he would "gird himself," and have his servants who were faithfully watching "sit down to meat," and he would "come forth and serve them." (Luke 12:37) This promise has been, and still is, being wonderfully fulfilled.

The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus, at his First Advent, came to die for Adam and his entire race, that they might have an opportunity to be restored to life on the earth, and if faithful to the laws of the kingdom, gain everlasting life. The Apostle Paul

stated the matter this way, “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:22) The period in which man will be restored to life on the earth is described by the Apostle Peter as “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21) This great hope for the world is now seen by the faithful watchers in Zion, being one of the rays of bright-shining light, and a satisfying portion of “meat” which they have been served. This knowledge has gladdened the hearts of those who have seen, by the eye of faith, the brightness of the Master’s presence.

GOD’S WRATH—THEN HIS KINGDOM

The blessings of the knowledge of truth served during this Harvest period have only been appreciated by a relatively small number—those who have been “watching” for the unfolding of God’s plan. However, through increases in general education as well as communication, general enlightenment has reached the masses of mankind, including the underprivileged peoples of earth. This has resulted in a loud cry for justice and equality, and a clamoring for rights, both real and imagined. This struggle has led mankind into two world wars and innumerable smaller wars, conflicts, and battles—both on the field as well as clashes of words and ideologies. To this there appears to be no end in sight, from the human vantage point.

The matters considered in the foregoing paragraphs, as well as many other evidences, point to our day as the time of Christ’s invisible presence and the day of God’s wrath. Acting as the “arm” of God’s power, our returned Lord is destroying the

present evil systems of earth, including, in due time, Satan, the “god” of this present evil world. (II Cor. 4:4) The Lord is doing this, as previously noted, “with the spirit of his mouth.” (II Thess. 2:8) The spirit of the Lord’s mouth is the Word of God, and it was the development of the rapid means of printing which flooded the world with Bibles in preparation for the Harvest of the Gospel Age, and the bright shining of our Lord’s presence, which has resulted.

We know from the prophecy in Matthew 24:22 that “the elect”—the completed church with Christ as its head—will have the privilege of bringing to a close Satan’s rule on earth. The details of the struggle that will spell Satan’s demise are prophesied using symbolic language in Revelation 19:11-21. The Old Testament also speaks of this time: “Let the saints be joyful in glory: . . . Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints.” (Ps. 149:5-9) In Revelation 20:1-3, we read the result of this climactic phase of the Time of Trouble: “I saw an angel [the Christ] come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more.”

When Satan and his multitude of false prophets are no longer permitted to “deceive the nations,”

the kingdom of God, under the rulership of Christ, will be established in the earth. There are many wonderful prophecies telling of this time. One of these is in Isaiah 25:6-9, which reads in part: "He will destroy in this mountain [kingdom] the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations." The present "covering" over all people and "vail" over all nations are the shrouds of ignorance, superstition, and doubt that Satan has generated and fostered as a means of deceiving mankind. However, the prophet states that the Lord is going to remove these coverings of deceit and error.

God, speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, explains how mankind will be educated in his kingdom: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD."—Jer. 31:33,34

Truly, in that great and glorious day there will be one well of water. It will be a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst . . . of it, and on either side of the river," will be the "tree of life, . . . and the leaves of the tree" will be for the "healing of the nations." All of mankind will be invited to drink of this pure water: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."—Rev. 22:1,2,17

Increased Faith

Key Verse: *“The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.”*
—Luke 17:5

Selected Scripture:
Luke 17:1-10

today’s lesson, Jesus said to his disciples, “It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!” (Luke 17:1) “Offences,” or ensnarements, exist at the present time because Satan is the prince of this present world. The majority of mankind is more or less under his influence—blinded by error, superstition, and disposed to sin.—Eph. 2:2; II Cor. 4:4

Jesus warned that some, under the influence of Satan, might attempt to deliberately ensnare his followers. He said concerning such a one that it would be better that a “millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea.” (Luke 17:2) To be drowned in the sea would mean the loss of present life, but not the opportunity for future life in Christ’s kingdom. However, those who now intentionally persecute the Lord’s followers and seek to turn them aside from following righteousness, pervert their own conscience and so degrade themselves, that it will be much more difficult for them to come into accord with the conditions of the kingdom, when they are raised from the grave.

In verse 3 of our lesson, Jesus shows the importance of repentance and mercy. “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke [admonish] him; and if he repent [think differently, or reform], forgive him.” We all need God’s

mercy, because we are imperfect. However, we must “reform” our thoughts, words, and actions, and bring them into obedience to God’s principles and standards to the greatest extent possible.

The disciples realized how difficult it would be to apply these lessons in their personal life. As stated in our Key Verse, they requested of Jesus, “Increase our faith.” His reply to this request has been greatly misunderstood by many. He said, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” (vs. 6) Certainly Jesus did not want his followers to literally command trees to miraculously be uprooted and thrown into the sea. Rather, the lesson is that we are to have absolute confidence in the instructions and promises given to us in the Word of God. Thus, we should go forward with “tree-moving” faith, accepting all the promises of which God has assured us in his Word.

The work of God’s grace in our life is a favor toward us, and our obedience to his commands is primarily for our growth and development. Any service we might render for the Lord is a privilege. When we have done all he has commanded us, we cannot boast. At best, Jesus says, “we are unprofitable servants,” because we have only done that which we are morally obligated to do. (vs. 10) God could perhaps more easily do his work by some other method. He could use someone else, or the angels, or other providences of his vast realm. None of us is indispensable to God’s work.

Thus, the opportunity for entering into the Lord’s vineyard and laboring therein is chiefly for our own advantage. Such service provides joys and blessings which we could not otherwise have. Additionally, it brings us certain experiences necessary to our spiritual development. May the Lord help each of us as we strive to increase our faith in him and in all his promises. ■

Grateful Faith

***Key Verse: “One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.”
—Luke 17:15***

***Selected Scripture:
Luke 17:11-19***

the Jewish Law, lepers had to remain in isolation. (Lev. 13:46) They had no means of earning a living and were dependent upon their family, or the charity of friends or strangers.

In our lesson, as Jesus was approaching Jerusalem by way of Samaria and Galilee, there were ten lepers along the roadside. When they heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, immediately they called to him as loudly as they could. Ordinarily, the appeal of a leper was for money, but in this case it was “Master, have mercy on us.”—Luke 17:11-13

In answer to their cry, Jesus said to the ten lepers, “Go shew yourselves unto the priests.” (vs. 14) According to God’s arrangement with the Jews under their Law Covenant, the priests were to pass judgment upon cases of leprosy, determining whether or not the disease was indeed leprosy, or if a person was clean. (see Leviticus chapters 13 and 14) Jesus’ instruction implied a possibility of healing, suggesting that when they would

IN BIBLE TIMES, LEPERS

were treated as outcasts. Leprosy was, at that time, an incurable disease, and considered very infectious. Caused by a slow-growing type of bacteria, it resulted in severe, disfiguring skin sores and nerve damage. It also produced deformity, crippling, and even blindness. Under

reach the priests, they would be pronounced clean.

The ten lepers exercised faith, and instead of crying out for instantaneous healing, they simply followed Jesus' command. As they walked to the priests, they found themselves cured. What urgency they must have now had! If, when they presented themselves to the priests they were declared clean, they would finally be allowed to return to their families and friends.

After being pronounced clean, one of the former lepers returned to Jesus, falling at his feet, and glorifying God, as stated in our Key Verse. He was a Samaritan, a group with whom the Israelites usually did not associate. (John 4:9) Jesus called attention to the fact that only one of the ten returned to thank him. However, to that one he said, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."—Luke 17:17-19

In the Bible, leprosy is symbolic of sin. The ten lepers are in many ways similar to the fallen race of mankind, many of whom have realized they are unclean and have cried out to the Lord for cleansing, acknowledging his greatness and power as the Son of God. (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14) Many have declared to the Lord their desire for forgiveness of sins, but as time passes they forget their privileges resulting from such a blessing. Few indeed have remembered their prayers to the Lord for mercy, and therefore neglect to glorify God in their daily activities of life.

The Samaritan in our lesson well represents a small class of grateful followers of the Lord who, with thankfulness and faith, seek to give him glory in their words, thoughts and doings. The heavenly call during the present Gospel Age has been to find and develop those few who will constitute the Bride class, the associates of Jesus in his kingdom. May each of us continue to develop, with thankfulness, faith in our Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, applying more and more the Lord's instructions and principles in our daily walk. ■

Humble Faith

Key Verse: *“The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”*

—**Luke 18:13**

Selected Scripture:

Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-12, James Moffatt Translation

As stated in our Key Verse, the taxgatherer—or “publican”—felt differently. He did not see himself as even worthy to look up to heaven, but simply pleaded for God’s mercy. Jesus concluded the parable by saying that this man “went home accepted by God rather than the other man; for everyone who uplifts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be uplifted.”—vs. 14, *Moffatt*

From God’s standpoint, both men in the parable were sinners and needed forgiveness. The Pharisee trusted in his own imperfect works and asked no forgiveness, while the publican realized his condition and prayed for mercy. In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees were a prominent religious group which revered the Law and taught it to the people. However, through various parables, Jesus pointed out that with many of them religion was merely

JESUS SPOKE A PARABLE

to admonish those who felt they were righteous, and who looked down upon everybody else. He said, “Two men went up to pray in the temple; one was a Pharisee and the other was a taxgatherer. The Pharisee stood up and said his prayer as follows; I thank thee, O God, I am not like the rest of men, thieves, rogues, and immoral, or even like yon taxgatherer. Twice a week I fast; on all my income I pay tithes.”—

a visible show, and the keeping of the Law only outward obedience, which did not come from the heart.

Many Pharisees looked down upon the publicans, refusing their company. They criticized Jesus for eating with them as well as with confessed sinners. (Luke 5:30) Jesus did not look upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart. He did not love the publicans because they were sinners, nor disapprove of the Pharisees because they outwardly kept the Law. We are not to get the impression that God is more pleased with people who live in sin than with those who strive to live to the best of their ability in harmony with his Law. Rather, the lesson we should continually keep in mind is that we all come short of perfection and need God's mercy. The sinner who recognizes this is more pleasing to God, and nearer to forgiveness, than the more moral person who fails to see his own sins and shortcomings.

Jesus referred to this error of the Pharisees, saying, "They that are whole need not a physician; . . . I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (vss. 31,32) Jesus sought to call attention to the fact that although the Pharisees claimed to be righteous, they were not. They were imperfect and sinful, and in need of a Savior. However, they were not in a condition of heart to appreciate their need and to come to the Lord for forgiveness.

Both classes are represented among Christians today. Some trust in church membership and attendance, charitable works, or general morality for their salvation, while ignoring the fact that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Other believers, perhaps not so noticeable, more readily discern their own weaknesses and confess them, accepting forgiveness of sins and the promise of everlasting life as unmerited gifts of God, based upon the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. (Eph. 1:6,7) Let us, therefore, not trust in our own righteousness, nor despise others, but continue to develop our faith, with humility of heart. ■

Childlike Faith

Key Verse: “*Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.*”
—**Luke 18:17**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 18:15-17

THE APOSTLES HEARD

Jesus’ teachings about the kingdom, and naturally started to think about the great hopes which were set before them. Jesus would soon be Israel’s king, and they would be in honored positions as his associates. They had even debated as to the stations they would occupy, and who among them would be the greatest. (Luke 9:46) Jesus desired to instruct his disciples that it was not their own greatness that was to be considered, but God’s favor toward them. They were to have the spirit of appreciation of God’s work of grace in one another, considering each other as representatives of Jesus and of his Father in heaven.

When children were brought to Jesus in order to receive his blessing, the disciples, feeling that the Lord’s time was too valuable to be thus used, rebuked the parents. (Luke 18:15) Jesus, however, directed that the children should be allowed to come to him. “Suffer [permit] little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”—vs. 16

Jesus then spoke the words of our Key Verse. With this statement, he took an opportunity of teaching his disciples another important lesson. Some of them had begun to feel too certain that they would be members of

the ruling kingdom class. They had not yet learned that crucial tests would be given to those who desired to be accounted worthy to sit with the Redeemer in his Messianic throne of glory, and to participate with him in blessing all the families of the earth.

The Scriptures testify: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."—Rev. 3:21; I Pet. 1:7

The lesson Jesus desired to impress upon his followers is that they would not enter into the kingdom unless they are childlike, teachable, and trustful. Children who have been well instructed are obedient and fully trust in their parent's wisdom and care for them. Likewise, all who become children of God must reach this same condition of heart. On another occasion, the disciples asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" The Master called a little child to them, and said, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 18:1-4

As followers of Jesus, we are not to be children in the sense of understanding or character development. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Be not children in understanding: . . . but in understanding be men." (I Cor. 14:20) That is, we must receive the message of the kingdom with humility and simplicity, as children, but then grow in obedience to maturity in Christ.

Those now being called to sit with Christ in his throne in due time must be "subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." (I Pet. 5:5) "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."—Prov. 3:5,6 ■

Joyous Faith

Key Verse: *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

—**Luke 19:10**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus, . . . chief among the publicans [tax collectors], and he was rich.”—**Luke 19:2**

Zacchaeus was a Jew, and a tax collector for the Roman government. In those days, tax collectors were also assessors, deciding how much each person would be charged and have to pay. Most tax collectors took advantage of their position and power, and either overcharged or received bribes, thus increasing their personal wealth. As a result, they were despised and viewed as a disreputable group of people. Zacchaeus was “chief among the publicans,” which probably meant he employed several collectors under him to assist in this work.

Zacchaeus “sought to see Jesus,” and to know who he was, but was unable to do so because of the large crowd present, and “because he was little of stature.” He ran ahead and “climbed up into a sycamore tree” to see Jesus as he passed by. “When Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.” This was an honor Zacchaeus had not at all anticipated. “He made haste, and came down,” receiving

Jesus joyfully. (vss. 3-6) Zacchaeus was no doubt surprised when Jesus called him by name. Perhaps Jesus had heard the crowd jeering and laughing at this short, rich publican, in his unusual perch up in a tree.

When the crowd saw what had happened, “they all murmured,” accusing Jesus of going to be a guest “with a man that is a sinner.” Zacchaeus then said to Jesus, “Half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” (vss. 7,8) Jesus knew Zacchaeus was much nearer to the right attitude of heart than those self-righteous ones who denounced him.

Jesus then said, “This day is salvation come to this house; forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” Zacchaeus’ heart had begun to turn away from sin and selfishness, and was now directed toward God and righteousness. Similarly, salvation has come during this Gospel Age to all those of the spiritual seed of Abraham—those who have repented of their sins and come into harmony with the Lord, and seek to walk according to his ways. “As these great promises are ours, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates either flesh or spirit; let us be fully consecrated by reverence for God.”—II Cor. 7:1, *James Moffatt Translation*

Our Key Verse points out an important truth. As a result of Adam’s disobedience, human perfection and eternal life was “lost” for Adam and all his progeny. Jesus came “to seek and to save” what was lost by giving his life “a ransom for all.” In “due time,” every member of Adam’s race, after being raised from the dead, will be brought to a “knowledge of the truth” and given a full opportunity of returning to God. (I Tim. 2:3-6) The phrase “Son of man” in our Key Verse is a title which directs our attention to the great exhibition of humility on the part of God’s only begotten Son, who came to earth to be man’s Redeemer. What joyous faith should be ours! ■

Sonship

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: . . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”
—*I John 3:1,2*

AN APPRECIATION OF THE privilege of sonship is an essential aid to our faithfulness. In addition to our opening text, we note these statements from the Scriptures. “They that feared [reverenced] the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them. . . . They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” (Mal. 3:16,17) “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:26) “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, . . . in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” (Phil. 2:15) “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that

we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” (Rom. 8:14,16,17) “For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.”—Rom. 8:19, *New American Standard Bible*

It is a great privilege to be a child of God, because, according to his Word, we all once were “children of disobedience, . . . by nature the children of wrath.” (Eph. 2:2,3) If it were not for the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, we would still be under the condemnation of death. We, along with the entire fallen race of mankind, could not be counted as part of God’s family as long as we were the “children” of sin and death inherited from our first parents.

ADAM LOST SONSHIP

Adam was created a son of God—an earthly, human son, in the “image” and “likeness” of God, although a “little lower than the angels.” (Gen. 1:26,27; Ps. 8:4,5) Adam lost his sonship through disobedience. With it he also lost communion with God. His progeny did not have the blessing of being sons of God, nor did they have the fellowship of communion with him. However, quoting in more detail the words of the Apostle Paul, we read, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”—Eph. 2:1-3

The apostle here tells us that we were born children of Adam’s disobedience, and of the wrath associated with God’s condemnation of him in Eden. In this condition, we were “dead in trespasses and sins”—that is, dead in Adam’s trespass. However, we find a ray of hope in the words: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth [Greek: remains] on him.” (John 3:36) Indeed, there was no hope of sonship for any of mankind until Jesus, God’s “only begotten Son,” came into the world. (vs. 16) Then, however, that hope began to be rekindled.

Abraham was a great man, and devoted to righteousness, but he was not a son of God. The record is that he was “the Friend of God.” (James 2:23) Moses, likewise, was a noble individual, and a faithful servant, but he was not a son of God. Paul said, “Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, . . . But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we.” (Heb. 3:5,6) Here we are introduced to the possibility of sonship, but how do we become members of this household of sons? How do we change from being children of disobedience, under divine condemnation, to become children of God?

HOW WE BECOME SONS

If we are to appreciate this relationship, we must know how it is made possible. The “ransom for all” provided by “the man Christ Jesus” is the basis of

it all. (I Tim. 2:5,6) Jesus further elaborated, saying, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24) The apostle expresses the same thought with the following words: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, . . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”—Rom. 8:1,2

The way in which we become sons of God is by coming to him in full belief and faith “in Christ Jesus,” his only begotten Son, and by making an unreserved consecration to do his will. It is through the imputation of the merit of the ransom, if we thus consecrate, that we are covered by Christ’s “robe of righteousness,” and presented to the Father. Clothed with this “robe,” we are “accepted in the beloved,” for the Father sees us as righteous—justified in his sight. (Isa. 61:10; Eph. 1:6; I Cor. 6:11) Thus we are released from Adamic condemnation, and “begotten” to a new “lively,” or living, hope. (I Pet. 1:3) No longer children of Adam’s disobedience, we are now described as “obedient children,” and are considered sons of God. (vs. 14) To omit any part of this process is to stop short of sonship.

The Jewish followers of the Master were the first of the human race since perfect Adam to become sons of God. This took place on the Day of Pentecost. In John’s Gospel account, he states that Jesus came to his Jewish brethren, but most “received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them

that believe on his name.” (John 1:11,12) Later, beginning with Cornelius, the Gentile centurion, this privilege of sonship was extended to all, without restriction as to nationality or otherwise. (Acts 10:1-45) Hence, it is God’s will that people of all nations, kindreds, and tongues constitute those who make up his house of sons.

“ABBA, FATHER”

Paul wrote, “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” (Rom. 8:14,15) The phrase, “Abba, Father,” is a beautiful expression. Another usage of it is found in these words: “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.” (Gal. 4:6,7) Here we note that this cry proceeds from our hearts through the influence of the Holy Spirit.

In these verses, “Abba” is the Chaldean word for Father, left untranslated, and the Greek word *pater* is translated “Father.” Thus, each is a reference to God as “Father.” Jesus used both words. “Abba” was the word he was brought up with. His natural language as a boy was Chaldean Aramaic. He, doubtless, loved to utter his Heavenly Father’s name in the way he was originally taught. Think of the simplicity and warmth of our Lord’s words in his prayer recorded in Mark 14:36: “Abba, Father all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

ADOPTION—A LEGAL PROCESS

In one of the verses just considered—Romans 8:15—another word is introduced. It is the word “adoption,” which appears several times in the New Testament. In today’s usage, to “adopt” means to take a person—usually a child—into one’s own family by a legal process which, when complete, results in the “adopted” one being treated as though he or she was a natural child of the family, with all the rights and privileges attached thereto. The same is true of our sonship. The Greek word from which “adoption” is translated, according to *Strong’s Concordance*, means “placing as a son.” The use of this word emphasizes the legal process through which we are made acceptable to God and thus become sons, begotten of him through his Spirit.

In harmony with this thought, certain legalities had to be accomplished in the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus before we could become God’s sons. Paul had recounted these things in the early chapters of Romans. The ransom price had to be provided, and its payment to God’s justice was also necessary, “that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Rom. 3:26) These requirements having been met, the way to sonship was lawfully made available. If, then we have followed the steps previously discussed—faith in the blood of Jesus and unreserved consecration—we are “placed as sons” by the legal means of redemption and the begetting of the Holy Spirit provided by God.

A DIFFERENT WORD

In numerous passages of the New Testament, Peter, John, and Paul use a word for “sons” which

conveys the thought of one who shares a special closeness with the Father. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* comments on this word, saying that it denotes "all who are led by the Spirit of God and thus closely related to God." It is this word that is used in I Peter 1:14: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." John uses it in John 1:11,12, quoted earlier in our lesson, and again in our opening text, where he speaks of the love of the Father, by which we are "called the sons of God," and promised that "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—I John 3:1,2

Paul also uses the same word in describing our position as sons. He says, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. 2:15) Here the apostle reminds us that he has not forgotten the requirements that must be satisfied in order that we should be considered "blameless," "harmless," and "without rebuke" before God. However, when those legal demands have been satisfied, as they were by Christ Jesus, then the relationship of true sonship with God became our privilege.

Let us, therefore, not be confused. Our "adoption" speaks only of the process by which we have been legally "placed as sons." Man legally lost full sonship, which Adam had as a perfect human being. Christ had to die in order that mankind could lawfully be released from condemnation. By his death and resurrection, the means whereby we could be "placed as sons" was accomplished. As a result, it has become possible for us to be real sons of God—Christ having legally opened the way.

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Later in the New Testament, we read, “It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10) The great truth that “many sons” would be brought to glory was unfolded by the forceful teachings of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. His message is summarized well in words he wrote concerning “the mystery of Christ . . . Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”—Eph. 3:4-6

As children of God, whether we be Jew or Gentile, we must learn many things. We must learn to be led by his Spirit. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14) Up until the time we consecrated, through the drawings of God, the Holy Spirit was the power that led us toward the most important decision of our lives. Now, however, having made that decision, and having become sons of God, the Holy Spirit is our daily guide, and we must follow its leadings. Our all-wise Heavenly Father, through the Holy Spirit, directs our providences, and we must accept them. The Holy Spirit overrules the experiences of our life, and we must learn the lessons. It also reveals God’s will for us, and we must do it to the best of our ability. We must forget our own will, and follow the leadings of divine grace as they are manifest to us by God’s Spirit. We

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) are guided “into all truth” by the Holy Spirit. (John 16:13) Therefore, we must be willing to accept and follow truth as it is revealed to us.

We also must learn obedience as a child of God. That is a difficult lesson, especially to the extent that we are, by nature, self-willed and self-centered. It was not a difficult lesson for Jesus, but he still had to learn obedience. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Heb. 5:8,9) Indeed, Christ’s example of obedience is the standard which we must follow as sons of God. “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. 10:4,5

THE CHRISTIAN’S FIGHT

We do not fight with carnal weapons of the fleshly mind, with its ambitions and its prejudices and personal aspirations, but with the Word of God, and with his Spirit. Thus the strongholds of error, tradition, speculation, and self-will, go down. The imaginations of human reasoning and philosophies fall. Every high thing, every haughty attitude, every manifestation of pride, every exaltation of self, and everything that keeps us from the fullness of his blessing, must be conquered by the power of God’s truth as revealed by the Holy Spirit. Victory in war brings prisoners to the victor’s army. Our victory

over pride and self-will also brings prisoners. It brings into captivity every thought of our hearts and minds to the “obedience of Christ.”

The important matter of obedience can perhaps be summed up in these words: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are; . . . whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” (Rom. 6:16,17) Let us be obedient, “from the heart,” even unto death.

DISCIPLINE NECESSARY

As sons of God, we must endure discipline. We read: “You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by him; For those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the

peaceful fruit of righteousness.”—Heb. 12:5-11, *NASB*

The word “discipline” as used in this passage comes from a Greek word meaning “education or training.” Hence, we understand that discipline need not mean disapproval on the part of our Father, nor does it necessarily mean sin on the part of the son. Our Father knows we need instruction. The experiences of life which come to us as discipline actually show our Father’s love in that he provides them as part of our schooling, as educational instruction for our spiritual profit. It is true that some disciplines do come as a result of our own mistakes—whether in word or action. The natural consequences that flow from these mistakes are not at first joyous, but grievous. We all have these experiences at times, along with the mental sorrow that comes as a result.

Many of the heartaches we endure have been caused by our own mistakes. Our Father could save us from them, but he does not do so, because he knows we can learn lessons from these experiences. They teach us our weaknesses, and our dependence on him. They are what the Bible terms “correction,” and “instruction in righteousness.” (II Tim. 3:16) Through these experiences, the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are truly sons of God. May we always understand this relationship, and be willing to accept his instructions.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

As sons of God we must also realize that we are children of light, and this carries with it responsibility. “Ye are all the children of light, and the children

of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.” “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth).” “Ye are the light of the world.” (I Thess. 5:5; Eph. 5:8,9; Matt. 5:14) These verses remind us that not only are we to be children of light, but we also are to walk in the light, have the fruitage of that light, and be a light in the world. Let us examine ourselves to see whether we are “children” of God in these ways.

One of the marks of a true Christian is that he will continually seek to abide in the light of truth by searching the Scriptures. Only thus will he quench his thirst for truth, and obtain the understanding of the fruitage necessary to properly reflect the light of truth to others. As all the “children of light” make such efforts, a mutual brotherhood, based on love, is developed. In the natural family arrangement, “sibling rivalry” is often manifested by one member toward another. Such is not to be the case, however, among the spiritual children of God. Rather, mutual love, care, fellowship, assistance, and support, should always be the guiding principles of our relationship one with another.

The day will soon come when all the faithful spiritual sons of God will have finished their earthly sojourn. They will be glorified as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8:17) This will be another wonderful privilege of sonship. With such a prospect before us, we can join with Paul, when he said, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”—vs. 18

MANKIND WAITING

Today, the vast majority of mankind “groans and suffers” under divine condemnation. The human race “waits eagerly” for a better day, though not knowing how or when it will come about. We understand, however, that all who will ever be recognized by God as his sons, whether in heaven or on earth, must first be freed from the bondage of sin and death through the blood of Jesus Christ. We know also that ultimately the only ones who will be privileged to have life will be those who become sons of God, either on the human or spiritual plane of existence. The whole creation is indeed waiting “for the revealing of the sons of God”—waiting for the Christ, God’s spiritual family, to come into power and great glory. The “revealing” of these sons of God will result in the blessing of the remainder of mankind with the benefits of salvation, and “set free from its slavery to corruption.”—Rom. 8:19-22, *NASB*

Let us be faithful, so that we can share in the manifestation of the sons of God, and have a part in dispensing blessings to all the families of the earth. Reiterating again the words of our opening Scripture, “Now are we the sons of God.” The world does not know us as God’s children, just as the Jewish nation did not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. However, we are promised: “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:1,2 ■

God's Commission to Moses and to Us

"The LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand?

And he said, A rod."

—Exodus 4:2

IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS,

chapter three, we are provided the record of how God spoke to Moses and commissioned him to perform a very important task, which was the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. Like all truly great men of God, Moses realized his own weakness and insufficiency for the task at hand. He foresaw the difficulties which would be encountered in his endeavor to convince the Egyptian authorities that through him the God of heaven demanded the release of his brethren. Moses expressed to God his doubts about being chosen for what he felt would be a nearly impossible task for him to accomplish. Thus, although humble, he failed to exhibit sufficient faith to realize that with the power of God on his side, all the obstacles he feared could be overcome.

The Lord gave Moses a very important object lesson to strengthen his faith by performing a miracle in connection with the simple shepherd's

rod which he possessed. By this miracle, we see illustrated an important aspect of God's dealings with those whom he is using in his service today—namely, that he overrules, blesses, and authorizes them to use in his service whatever talents of time, strength, or means which they currently possess. Very seldom is it necessary for servants of God to wait until he puts something new into their hands to use before they can serve him. As recorded in the words of our opening text, the Lord asked Moses, "What is that in thine hand?" Let us note well this lesson—that it is mostly what we already possess which can be used best in our work for him.

God's dealings with Moses on this occasion also remind us of how he speaks to his people. First he spoke to Moses by an angel—his messenger—out of the burning bush. When Moses turned aside to investigate, then God spoke to him. (Exod. 3:2-4) God speaks to his consecrated people today through the Truth found in his Word. He has likewise used a messenger to bring these truths to our attention. When we investigate, and prove these things by the Scriptures, we discover that the messenger has called our attention to God's glorious plan. We then recognize that it is God who has spoken to us through the truths provided through his messenger.

THE TRUE GOD

Writing of conditions in his day, Paul said that there were "gods many, and lords many." (I Cor. 8:5) This is still true today, and it was also the case in Moses' day. In speaking to Moses, however, the true God identified himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (Exod. 3:6)

The God of Abraham is still the only true God, and the message that was preached to Abraham is the only true Gospel. (Acts 3:13; Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) Those who have not heard this message have not heard the voice of the true and living God. They may have heard the voice of the torment god, or the trinity god, or one or another of the many other gods of religious belief, but they have not heard the voice of the true God.

Identification of the voice of the true God is not difficult. To Abraham he expressed his intended purpose to bless all the families of the earth through a "seed." (Gen. 22:16-18; 26:1-5; 28:10-14; Acts 3:22-26) We have heard this message. It is the great theme song of the Gospel which has reached us. Thus, it means that the true God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has spoken to us, for he does not change. (Mal. 3:6) His promise to Abraham to bless all the families of the earth is still his purpose.

"MOSES, MOSES"

We should not underestimate the directness with which God deals with us as individuals. We may think that the Truth came to us by accident, and that the Lord had nothing special to do with it. Jesus said, however, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John 6:44) God draws his people by the Truth, and while his servants sow the seeds of truth beside all waters, yet it is certain that the Heavenly Father, in his own way, overrules in connection with the individuals who are attracted to it. He is still able to provide the "burning bush" and the

“angel” to engage the attention of those to whom he wishes to speak.

If through the Truth our eyes have been enlightened to behold the glory of the Lord, it means that the God of Abraham has spoken to us. It means also, as in the case of Moses, that God has spoken to us for a purpose. Hence, it is critical that we listen. Moses’ reply was, “Here am I.” (Exod. 3:4) If we are to profit from his example, we too will continue to answer, “Here am I.”

Having thus responded to the voice of God, Moses next learned the sacredness of the position he now occupied. “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet,” the Lord said to him, “for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” (vs. 5) How true this is concerning God’s people today. The position into which the Truth has brought us is holy and sacred. If we have responded to it in the spirit of full consecration, it means that our entire life is now completely devoted to the holy things of God. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new,” Paul wrote, adding that these “new” things “are of God.”—II Cor. 5:17,18

A WORK TO DO

God spoke to Moses because he had a work for him to do. This is true of those to whom the Lord is speaking at the present time. Herein is illustrated one of the differences between Christianity in general and those fully consecrated to God. In most of professed Christendom, it is usually only the clergy who are looked upon as having been called to a special work in connection with their Christian life. To most others, being a Christian is merely a matter

of subscribing to certain religious creeds, being a monetary supporter of a church, and attending its services often enough to remain on the membership rolls. Doing so, most feel assured of a happy condition after death.

However, there is no clergy and laity division in the ranks of the true followers of the Master. All are called to do a work for God—the amount of work they do being limited merely by circumstances and individual capacities. It is also a distinctive characteristic of our God that he “calls,” but never forces. He wants those who worship and serve him to do so willingly, gladly, intelligently—“in spirit and in truth.”—John 4:23,24

GIDEON AND OTHERS

Gideon was called to serve God, as was Jeremiah. God put his hand upon Ezekiel because he had a work for him to do. (Judg. 6:14; Jer. 1:4,5; Ezek. 1:3) Isaiah was given a vision, and was shown that God wanted him to be a special messenger to Israel. (Isa. 6:8,9) Invariably, these called ones felt inadequate for the work which they were asked to do. Yet, when fully convinced of the source of the call, and assured that God would be with them, they each responded in the spirit of full dedication to the God of Abraham.

When Isaiah saw that wondrous vision of God, he said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” When Moses realized the import of God’s words to him, he felt his weakness. He was not a man of eloquent speech, yet this seemed to be a necessary qualification for one who was to appear before Pharaoh and plead for the deliverance

of the Israelites. God's hand was not short. He cleansed Isaiah's lips, and provided a mouthpiece for Moses. (Isa. 6:5-7; Exod. 4:10-16) Likewise, we can be sure that he continues today to provide all the needs of those whom he calls into his service.

In the case of Moses, God used what Moses possessed in the way of talents, and then gave him a coworker to do what he could not do himself. It is the same with the Lord's people today. As individuals, we are called to perform only those parts of the Heavenly Father's work for which, in his providence, we are qualified. God has "set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." (I Cor. 12:18) By this arrangement of divine wisdom, the great cause of God goes successfully forward.

DELIVERANCE

Moses was called of God to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage. This illustrated the deliverance of the whole world of mankind from the bondage of sin and death, and the blessing of all the families of the earth, as promised to Abraham. We today are called to participate in another phase of this great plan of God. We have been invited to share in the work of representing Christ in the earth as, under God's direction, the preparation of the future kings and priests of earth is taking place.

We are also called to share in the future aspect of God's plan—the kingdom work of blessing all the families of the earth. If we prove worthy of having a part in that work, our privileges of service will be much more glorious and extensive than they are now. However, let us not suppose that the opportunity

of service in the kingdom will be granted to us if we are not faithfully responding to the divine call for service at the present time by the sacrifice of all that we have, and are, and hope to be.

HAVE WE HEARD?

Like Moses, we have difficulty in grasping the immense fact that God has spoken to us through his Word, and that he actually wants us to go to work for him. Moses asked, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?” (Exod. 3:11) We also are inclined to wonder why we should be called to such a High Calling—why we should be invited to work with God in the reconciliation of a lost race. It is important, however, that our faith grasp this important truth.

The Scriptures clearly inform us, and our faith must take hold of, the fact that God is calling a group of people in this Gospel Age, and that he will use them in the Messianic kingdom to deliver all who will then become his people. If we have responded to this call and agreed to meet its terms, we must feel the deep sense of responsibility that its acceptance impresses upon us. In so doing, it is also essential that we grasp the blessedness of the divine promises of “grace to help in time of need,” as we seek to do the work that God has given us to do.—Heb. 4:16

Moses’ recognition of his own unworthiness for the work at hand was a good thing, in that it caused him to lean more fully on God. It is only in the strength of the Lord that any of his people are able to serve him acceptably. (Ps. 28:7,8; 121:2) God said to Moses, “Certainly I will be with thee,” and

this promise applies equally to us. (Exod. 3:12) Another promise is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Heb. 13:5) These are but samples of the many precious promises by which the Heavenly Father assures us of success in the great undertaking to which he has called us.

A HEART-SEARCHING QUESTION

Moses wanted to be sure of his chosen position before starting out on such an important mission as delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage. His uncertainty was evident to the Lord, who asked him what it was that he held in his hand. When Moses replied that it was a rod, God then demonstrated to him how he would use this rod in a miraculous manner to prove that its owner had indeed been sent by the great “God of Abraham.”—Exod. 4:2-5

The question to Moses, “What is that in thine hand?” seems beautifully to suggest the thought that God expects us to use whatever we possess of time, or talents, or means in carrying out the commission he has given us. It behooves each of us to ask ourselves this same question—What do we have in our hands that could be put to work in the Lord’s service? It may be surprising to realize how many talents or opportunities we are permitting to lie dormant. Sometimes little privileges of service are overlooked while we are waiting for the Lord to put something more important into our hands to use for him.

Time, strength, means, and ability are some of the things we may have in our hand to use in service to the Lord and his people. Time is a very important talent with which to serve, especially if

coupled with a measure of strength. Yet, some may say that they have both time and strength, but have no ability—hence are not able to serve the Lord. However, this is not a valid excuse in the day in which we live. Indeed, the Gospel is available for distribution in both printed and electronic form, and is supplied freely to all who will use their time and strength to share it.

Others may say that they have time, but not sufficient strength to work for the Lord. However, there are many who are confined to their homes by illness or age, yet use their time in addressing messages of truth, or writing words of encouragement, to others. The Lord richly blesses such efforts. Moses wanted God to send someone else to deliver the Israelites. Frequently, we may likewise feel like shifting the responsibility of service to the Truth to the shoulders of others, but the fact that God has given us his Word of truth means that he expects us to use it.

BY THE SPIRIT

Our commission to serve is clearly stated in Acts 1:8: “Ye shall receive power [ability], 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.” There is no scriptural authority to show that this divine commission is to be withdrawn while a single member of the church remains this side of the veil. While the results may seem meager, we are still blessed with the opportunity to preach the “gospel of the kingdom . . . in all the world for a witness.”—Matt. 24:14

There are many evidences of the Spirit by which we may know of its indwelling in our lives. A very important one is mentioned by Paul: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; . . . if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:16,17) The Holy Spirit, through the prophets, had foretold the sufferings of the Christ. Hence, those who have the privilege of partaking of this suffering have the testimony of the Spirit that they are a part of the anointed company who are authorized to lay down their lives in the Lord's service. They have the assurance that the sacrifice of their lives in this way will be "holy, acceptable unto God," their "reasonable service."—Rom.12:1

We must, then, see our privilege of sacrifice. The Christian life is not merely a matter of high moral standards, and a certain satisfying of an emotional commitment. If we are to be loyal to the Truth, we must be willing to sacrifice all that we have in its interests. It is not enough to say that we believe the Truth. We must also serve its eternal cause to the best of our ability. God spoke to Moses, and thenceforth his life was lived for God. Thus it has been with all the truly faithful servants of God to whom he has spoken. Saul of Tarsus inquired, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) This is the true desire of all to whom God speaks.

The sacrifice of the church, made in response to the vision of truth, is for the purpose of preparing her to share in the deliverance of the world from sin and death as part of the great Melchisedec priesthood of the next age. (Rev. 20:4,6) When the acceptable time for these present sacrifices has

ended, no longer will there be an opportunity to suffer and die for the Truth. However, while the way of sacrifice is still open, it is our privilege not only to receive and believe the truth of God's plan as it is centered in Jesus, the Redeemer, but to die for it. Paul said, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."—Phil. 1:29

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

If we have heard the voice of God and have entered into his service, we have an individual responsibility to him to be faithful. We cannot all do the same things in so far as the details of our service are concerned. There are "many members" in the "one body" of Christ, and we do not all occupy the same place in that body. (I Cor. 12:12) Let us endeavor to find out what there is that we can do—what the Lord has placed in our hands.

Let us be watchful for the privileges of meeting with and serving others of like precious faith. This includes being on the alert for opportunities to serve the brotherhood as a whole, as well as individual brethren. Not all can be elders, but even so there are plenty of ways of serving the general interests of the body of Christ. Let us not take the position that someone else will look after the spiritual affairs of the ecclesia, and that all we need to do is attend the meetings.

As individuals and as ecclesias let us also be watchful to do all we can to spread the Truth—the "gospel of the kingdom"—through our own local efforts as well as by cooperation with the general work of the present Harvest period of the Gospel

Age. There is much work which can be done, and for each of us individually, most of it can begin by simply looking to see what is in our hands.

What a great privilege it is to serve the Most High God—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! Let us not be downcast because the way before us is one of sacrifice. As the sacrificial death of the saints is “precious in the sight of the LORD,” so we should esteem the privilege of dying with Christ a blessed one. (Ps. 116:15) Indeed, we presently “glory in tribulations,” knowing that by the grace of God we will be part of the victorious Christ, head and body, tomorrow. (Rom. 5:3) It will be the church victorious that will do that great work for God of leading forth the world from the bondage of sin and death, thus being the instruments in God’s hands of fulfilling that wondrous Abrahamic Covenant to bless all the families of the earth. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 5—“If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”—Romans 8:13 (Z. ’03-172 Hymn 44)

MAY 12—“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—II Corinthians 7:1 (Z. ’03-408 Hymn 247A)

MAY 19—“We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”—Romans 15:1 (Z. ’97-75 Hymn 154)

MAY 26—“Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.”—I Corinthians 8:1 (Z. ’97-277 Hymn 238)

General Convention Bulletin

July 16-21, 2016

THE 2016 GENERAL CONVENTION will begin in less than three months. If you have not yet made plans to attend, now is the time to do so. We encourage as many as are able to join in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. The convention will be held on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities are available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in their own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied.

The convention program appears in this issue of *The Dawn*, on the pages following the General Convention registration form. In addition to the special program services mentioned in previous announcements, there will be a panel discussion on the subject, "That which every joint supplieth." (Eph. 4:16) We believe consideration of this subject will provide a fruitful discussion of the vital role in which every member of the body of Christ participates.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the cost of those from ages 13 through 17

will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid for at the door.

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 15. There will also be shuttle bus service leaving the college in the morning hours for the Pittsburgh airport on Friday, July 22. There will be a \$10 charge per person each way for this service. ■

Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast	\$8.00	\$7.00
Lunch	10.00	9.00
Dinner	14.00	13.00
Total, three meals	\$32.00	\$29.00
Lodging (per night)		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$40.00	\$35.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$35.00	\$33.00
**single occ (LLC)	\$72.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$40.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$395*	\$360*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$260*	\$225*
**single occ (LLC)	\$586*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$304*	n/a

*If no breakfasts, deduct—\$35

**Air conditioned

***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group.

NOTE: Beginning in 2016, a flat charge of \$5.00 per person, regardless of age or length of stay, and irrespective of lodging and meal arrangements selected, will be added to your invoice to help offset charges for university facilities which are incurred by the convention.

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 15, 2016				
Saturday, 16th				
Sunday, 17th				
Monday, 18th				
Tuesday, 19th				
Wednesday, 20th				
Thursday, 21st				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals ☐
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts) ☐

Check: ☐ private bath **or** ☐ shared bath
☐ double occupancy ☐ single occupancy
☐ interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

Saturday, July 16

Chairman: Michael Balko, *Orlando FL*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Orientation by College

10:00 **Welcome Address**

Peter Mora, *Los Angeles CA*

10:45 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Robert Gorecki
New York NY

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Ken Fernets
The Dawn

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

John Trzeciak
Grand Rapids MI

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Rick Suraci
New Haven CT

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **I Peter 1:22,23**

Unfeigned “Phileo” Love of the Brethren

Jonathan Benson, *New London CT*

“Agape” Love One Another Fervently

Chris Kuenzli, *Milwaukee WI*

Made Possible by Spirit Begettall

Jerry Wesol, *Orlando FL*

8:15 Songs in the Night

Sunday, July 17

Chairman: Doug Rawson, *San Francisco CA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse

George Tabac
Chicago IL

10:30 Intermission

11:15 **Theme Discourse—Haggai 2:7**

“The desire of all nations shall come.”

David Stein
Allentown PA

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony

Tom Ruggirello
Chicago IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse

Homer Montague
Highland Park NY

4:00 Intermission

4:30 **The Authenticity of the Old Testament**

O. B. Elbert, *Delaware Valley PA*
Brad Sweeney, *Yorkton SK*

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“The God of all comfort”**
—II Corinthians 1:3,4

Aaron Kuehmichel, *Chicago IL*

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Monday, July 18

Chairman: Peter Karavas, *Chicago IL*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Discourse

Erwin Kalinski
Chicago IL

10:30 Intermission

11:15 Discourse

Len Griebhs
Delaware Valley PA

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Richard Doctor
Chicago IL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Brian Montague
Highland Park NY

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Mark Nemesh
Detroit MI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Personal Responsibility and
Accountability**

Stephen Jeuck, *Orlando FL*
Robert Goodman, *Orlando FL*
Tim Thomassen, *Albuquerque NM*

8:00 Songs in the Night

8:15 Elders' Meeting

Tuesday, July 19

Chairman: Robert Gray, *New Brunswick NJ*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 **Baptismal Discourse**

George Balko
West Newton PA

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Immersion Service**

Nathan Austin, *Portland OR*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Praise and Testimony Kent Humphreys
Phoenix AZ

2:45 Intermission

3:15 **“Lest ye be wearied and faint in your
minds”—Hebrews 12:3**

Todd Alexander, *Columbus OH*
Tom Gilbert, *Southern Wisconsin*

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Mark Davis
Los Angeles CA

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

Wednesday, July 20

Chairman: Randy Shahan, *New York NY*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Convention Business Meeting

11:00 Short Recess

11:15 Convention Business Continues

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse

Tim Krupa
Cannon Beach OR

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Praise and Testimony

Jim Parkinson
Los Angeles CA

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse

Rafal Niemczyk
Vancouver BC

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **“The Glory of God”**

Leo Post
(1918-2004)

7:45 Vesper Service

8:15 Songs in the Night

Thursday, July 21

Chairman: Jonathon Freer, *Sacramento CA*

9:30 Morning Devotions

9:45 Praise and Testimony Ernie Kuenzli
Orlando FL

10:30 Intermission

11:00 **Panel Discussion: “That which every
joint supplieth”—Ephesians 4:16**

Dan Wesol, *Albuquerque NM*
Nicholas Charcharos, *England*
Ray Charlton, *Australia*

12:00 Close of Morning Session

2:00 Discourse Edmund Blicharz
Orlando FL

2:45 Intermission

3:15 Discourse David Rice
San Diego CA

4:00 Intermission

4:30 Discourse Bill Dutka
Detroit MI

5:15 Close of Afternoon Session

7:00 **Closing Discourse** David Christiansen
Seattle WA

7:45 Melodies of Praise

8:30 Love Feast

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

M. Balko

Germany:

Frankfurt	May 11
Cologne	12,13
Korbach	14-16

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

O. B. Elbert

Los Angeles, CA May 28,29

R. Goodman

Atlanta, GA May 22

L. Griehs

Detroit, MI April 30-May 1

B. Keith

Los Angeles, CA May 28,29

T. Krupa

Detroit, MI April 30-May 1

E. Kuenzli

Chicago, IL May 28-30

H. Montague

Hartford, CT May 1

Chicago, IL 28-30

T. Ruggirello

Detroit, MI April 30-May 1

OBITUARIES

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

**Sister Edna Holliday, West Wickham, England—
April 4. Age, 84**

CONVENTIONS

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

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, April 30-May 1—Brighton Community Center, 555 Brighton Street, Brighton, MI 48114. Contact J. Kienast. Phone: (248) 496-5611 or Email: jenkienast@gmail.com

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 1—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073, (904) 562-7400. Contact C. Hughes. Phone: (904) 781-0506 or Email: clanky3@att.net

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 28-30—Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Avenue, Aurora, IL 60506. Contact L. Larson, 5445 W. 149 Street, Oak Forest, IL 60452. Phone: (708) 535-2066, (708) 341-2067 or Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 28,29—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. For room reservations (subsidized rate of \$55/night ending April 20), contact N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248 or Email: npnekora@aol.com. Other information, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 438-1086 or Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com. Please place LABible in the subject line of the email.

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 11,12—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Center, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada V4W 3B8. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or Email: bas@telus.net

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 12—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 17-19—June 17 at BSRC. Remaining days at Shilo Inn Portland Airport, 11707 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. Contact N. Austin. Phone: (360) 907-4243 or Email: ntaustin@gmail.com

PRINCE ALBERT AND SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 1-3—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK Canada S6V5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or Email: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

VERNON CONVENTION, July 8-10—Schubert Centre, 3505 30th Avenue, Vernon, BC, Canada. Contact T. Fernets. Phone: (250) 558-3055 or Email: afernets@telus.net

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 16-21—See pages 53-61 of this issue. University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 2-7—Orle Gniazdo Conference Center, Szczyrk, Poland. Contact L. Griehs. Phone: (267) 688-8617 or Email: griehs@comcast.net

RED DEER CONVENTION, August 12-14—Pioneer Lodge, 4324 47th Avenue, Red Deer, AB, Canada. Contact J. Neumeier. Phone: (403) 746-5052 or Email: jbneumeier@live.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 3,4—DoubleTree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

SEATTLE LABOR DAY CONVENTION, September 3-5—Seabeck Conference Center, 13395 Lagoon Drive NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us