

## Homeless No Longer

***“I will make the  
place of my feet  
glorious.”  
—Isaiah 60:13***

**ONE OF THE GREAT** blights in modern Western society is the presence of homeless people in their great metropolitan centers. Various solutions have been tried to solve or eliminate the problem, but none seem to work.

In New York, strict measures are taken with these unfortunate people periodically. Last November 26, the “*New York Daily News*” ran an article on the Mayor’s crackdown on the homeless, entitled, “Rudy’s Latest Crackdown—Another War on Homeless.” The article said, “The chill of winter has arrived and so, too, has Mayor Giuliani’s annual rite of arresting the homeless. As he looks to draw renewed attention to his ‘quality of life’ crackdown, he would like nothing better than for this debate to be split along the lines of civil liberties.

“Specific to the homeless issue, the question at hand is not whether people have the right to bed down on city streets. In polarizing the dialogue in this fashion, Giuliani conveniently detracts attention from the root causes of the increase in the street-bound population—a shelter system that is difficult to access and his massive disinvestments in affordable housing with appropriate services.

“If you find yourself homeless this evening, your options are bleak. Men are either bused 90 miles north of the city to Camp LaGuardia, or, worse, to the notoriously dangerous Atlantic Armory city-run shelter in Bed-Stuy. Women have the equally appalling option of the chaotic and filthy Brooklyn Shelter.

“Further, under Giuliani’s watch, the number of homeless men, women, and children has increased dramatically. This past summer, for the first time in five years, the number of people sleeping in public shelters each night exceeded 24,000—including more than 10,000 children. Perhaps most disturbing, a quarter of the families in the shelters have a parent who works, yet have no place to live because they don’t earn enough to afford an apartment.

“Rather than rise to the bait of again arguing where the homeless may sleep, let’s talk about where New Yorkers can live. Giuliani must tackle a true quality-of-life problem that cries out for mayoral leadership: affordable housing. In the 1990’s, the city lost more than 500,000 apartments renting for less than \$500 a month, representing the loss of more than half of low-rent units. And during this period of unprecedented prosperity, Giuliani has cut city investment in housing development a staggering 44%.

“What New Yorkers, especially the homeless, now need is not another public scolding from the mayor, but the vision to launch a comprehensive housing plan. Specifically, he must:

1. Over the next 10 years, finance the development of affordable housing by increasing the city’s annual capital commitment to \$750 million.
2. Expand New York City’s Rental Assistance program to provide temporary rent subsidies and support services to 2,000 homeless families and 1,500 homeless individuals.
3. Negotiate with the state to dedicate surplus revenues from the Battery Park City Authority to support affordable housing development.
4. In conjunction with the state, commit to providing the remaining 8,500 units of supportive housing needed for mentally ill homeless people in New York City.

With one year left remaining in his term, Giuliani has time to lay the foundation for a legacy that would truly improve the lives of New Yorkers.”

## A VOLUNTEER’S TESTIMONY

Affordable housing would go a long way toward alleviating the homeless problem in New York City. The problem, however, is more deep-seated. We get some insight into it by reading the testimony of a volunteer worker which was published in the winter, 2001, edition of a periodical called “*The Safety Net*,” a publication of an organization called, Coalition for the Homeless. This testimony read as follows:

“‘I wonder,’ asks the poet John Keats, ‘how people exist with all their worries.’ I wonder the same.

“On Wednesday evenings I drive a Coalition for the Homeless van through the dark streets of Manhattan. With other volunteers, I serve soup, milk, fruit, and bread to 375 people who gather at designated stops: 34th Street by the East River; outside the courts at Centre Street; City Hall; the Battery.

“Everyone we serve in the Grand Central Food Program is poor. Most are homeless men. They are hungry, and in the winter, cold, with none of the protections from life’s hardships that we take for granted—such as a room of our own, warmth, a supply of food, a modicum of financial security, and human companionship.

“To wake up in the morning on the street, or in a shelter, and start a new day is itself an act of courage. The resiliency of human beings never ceases to amaze me. On Wednesday evenings I think of Herman Melville’s, ‘Bartleby, the Scrivener.’ I think of the homeless Bartleby because in this short story written in 1856, Melville depicts the same human loneliness I see with my own eyes a century-and-a-half later on the city’s streets. ‘His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible!’

“To combat isolation, if only for a moment, when handing out food we strive for a human exchange. This is done with a smile. A friendly pat on the shoulder. A handshake. Small talk. ‘Good evening.’ ‘Chicken soup tonight.’ On parting, a heartfelt, ‘Take care.’

“Except on bitterly cold nights, my aim is not the rapid distribution of food. Efficiency is not a priority. Conversational exchanges slow the process, but humanize as well as dignify it.

“A camaraderie exists among some of the homeless men. They chat among themselves and with us, and help each other out by taking food to those who cannot come. But others are withdrawn, distant, resistant to human contact. ‘Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!’

“As I write these lines I am sitting at a table in my apartment. The radiator is clanking ‘the hiccups of central heating,’ as Proust puts it. How I welcome the heat. What a fortunate person I am, protected from the cold, spared daily humiliations on the street and the dangers of the night. The men I see in line have come to homelessness by different

paths. Deep poverty, injustice in our society, bad luck, addictions, and mental illness.

“Injustices need to be righted; the homeless, housed; those with bad luck assisted; and those with addictions and mental illness, treated. In our city, there is too much suffering among the homeless and the poor.

“On Wednesday evenings, when I return home, I think of these lines from Charles Dickens’ *“David Copperfield”*: ‘I remember,’ recalls David, who himself has been homeless, ‘how I thought of all the solitary places under the night sky where I had slept, and how I prayed that I never might be houseless any more, and never might forget the houseless.’”

## OTHER ASPECTS OF HOMELESSNESS

As brought out in this testimony, there are many aspects to the homeless situation. It is not only the hunger and the cold, but especially the loneliness that needs attention. The people that find themselves in this situation are victims of other ills in our society, and the lack of capability to deal with basic causes. The poor need to be assisted. The addicted and mentally ill need to be treated, and hopefully, cured. Bible students acquainted with God’s plan as revealed in the Scriptures know that we have been living in this “present evil world.”—Gal. 1:4

Furthermore, we must not think that the Western world is the only place where such problems exist. On the contrary, such problems in the Western world are more visible against a background of prosperity and normal living conditions. Recent statistics published concerning the entire world reveal that 80% of the people live in substandard housing, 70% are unable to read, and 50% suffer from malnutrition. The report ends by saying “If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep you are richer than 75% of this world.”

## GOD’S ACTIONS

This ‘present evil world’ must be displaced by God’s kingdom before we can expect these ills in our society to be eliminated. The first step taken by the Heavenly Father in this direction occurred about 2,000 years ago, when he sent his Son into the world to become man’s Redeemer. As described by the Apostle Paul, “that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (II Cor.

8:9) Jesus was willing to be made flesh not only to become the corresponding price for Father Adam, but also to experience all the problems associated with the fallen state of mankind.

We have in him a fully sympathetic high priest. As Paul wrote of him, “He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”—Heb. 2:16-18

Jesus said, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” (Matt. 8:20) Did Jesus mean by this that he was homeless? Not in the sense that we usually think of this condition. First, he was indicating to a scribe who wanted to follow him that it would be a rugged life. We see there is more depth to our Lord’s words than may first appear. It is true that man needs air to breathe, water to drink, and food to survive. He also needs shelter from the elements and many people today lack this essential. One of the important aspects of a home is companionship. A poet once wrote,

Our house may be humble with thatching,  
Or noble with turret and dome,  
But only the loving hearts in it  
Can turn a house into a home.

This was our Lord’s situation. He had left his heavenly home and his Father in heaven to come to earth. As noble as his disciples were, none could supply the companionship or fellowship that he previously enjoyed with his Father. There were many who entertained Jesus and his disciples as they traveled through Israel. He did not lack shelter. The closest he came to calling any one of these places his home on earth was the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary in Bethany. He especially found in Mary a kindred response to his words and teachings that he did not find in any other. It is this same element of companionship and fellowship that is especially lacking for the homeless of today. There must not only be food for the body, but also for the spirit, because man was created in the image of God.

All of this is known too well by our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus, who plan not only to restore man's Edenic home, but also plan a society that cares about its members. No home can be complete without love and the graces of the Spirit in abundance.

Insecurity accompanies homelessness. In God's kingdom, it is plainly stated, "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." (Isa. 65:21) Unlike our present society where they build and another inhabits the house, in God's kingdom "they shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat." (vs. 22) Everyone will be given the means and skills to build a shelter and provide for his welfare. "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble." (vs. 23) Security will be assured absolutely because God's promise concludes with the words, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom], saith the Lord."—vs. 25

## THE BINDING OF SATAN

The main obstacle to any attempt for such peaceful proceedings today is the activity of the Adversary, the Devil, who as a roaring lion "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (I Pet. 5:8) Satan is to be bound so that his influence will no longer be felt. (Rev. 20:2,3) The Prophet Isaiah describes how all obstacles are to be removed by the construction of the highway called, "The way of holiness." (Isa. 35:8) He says of God's kingdom, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—Isa. 35:9,10

The removal of Satan's influence will lead to the removal of selfishness, which characteristic of our society has no place in God's kingdom. As God is always giving, so 'the ransomed of the Lord' shall learn to be godlike and to share their blessings with one another. How easy it is for people today to be concerned for their own welfare and not to be concerned about the needs and welfare of others. The change of nature in people's character will be remarkable. Again, without Satan's influence the change will become permanent. If not, the testing that will come as illustrated in the parable of the sheep and goats, will lead to a separation of those who do not change and continue selfish. As Jesus said

in giving the parable, “The Son of man shall come in his glory, ... before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another.” (Matt. 25:31,32) He will say to the sheep, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (vs. 34) Those who do not change, but continue to be selfish will perish in second death, as will Satan and his angels.

## HEALTH RESTORED

Likewise, all illness will be removed. Isaiah’s prophecy says, “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.” (Isa. 35:5,6) These miraculous cures of afflictions will go beyond the ones mentioned in this specific prophecy. In an earlier recorded prophecy of kingdom blessings, Isaiah also says, “The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.” (Isa. 33:24) One of the principal causes for homelessness is that patients with mental illness and addiction are released and left to fend for themselves, while still needing attention. What great blessings lie in wait for mankind in that wonderful kingdom of Christ!

The earth is described as God’s ‘footstool.’ “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.” (Isa. 66:1) It is God’s plan to make the earth a glorious place to live. In Isaiah the sixtieth chapter, God tells how the time shall come for accomplishing all he has promised to glorify the church selected during the Gospel Age. Included in that promise is their part in blessing mankind on earth, “I will make the place of my feet glorious.” (Isa. 60:13) The glorious earth as a new home for mankind will be a glorious place in many ways. Not alone will it be environmentally beautiful, and a blessed place in which to live, but it will be surrounded by love, peace, joy, harmony, and mercy. Truly, the place of God’s feet will be glorious!

## Choose Wisely

***Key Verse: “They spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.”  
—I Kings 12:7***

***Selected Scriptures:  
I Kings 12:3, 4,  
6-11, 13, 16***

**AFTER SOLOMON DIED**, Rehoboam, from the tribe of Judah in the south, succeeded his father as king. Because of the frail relationship between the northern and southern tribes, Rehoboam could not rule over the entire nation without receiving the northern tribes approval. At the same time, Jeroboam, who had been Solomon’s rival, had returned from Egypt where he had fled for his life.

Solomon’s accomplishments were great, but he achieved many of them through harsh treatment of his subjects who were no longer willing to be treated in this manner. Jeroboam, of a more gentle character, “spake unto Rehoboam, saying, Thy father made our yoke

grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee.” (I Kings 12:3,4) Rehoboam told him to come back after he had considered the matter for three days.

First, Rehoboam consulted the older men who had served as his father’s advisers and who recommended, “If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.” (vs. 7) Next, he sought the counsel of his young contemporaries with whom he had grown up. They advised that he discipline the people with scorpions (whips with metal tips) to make things harder rather than lighter. After three days of considering the matter, Rehoboam decided not to take the suggestion of his elders; instead, he followed the advice of his young friends, and rebuffed the people saying, “My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.”—vs. 11



Because of the harshness of Rehoboam's decision, the northern ten tribes, known as Israel, rebelled against him and made Jeroboam their king. In response, Rehoboam, ruler over Judah together with Benjamin, raised a large army to wrest control of the ten tribes from Jeroboam. The Lord, however, interfered with this plan and said, "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel."—vs. 24

Jeroboam feared his people might go to Jerusalem to worship at the house of the Lord and, should their hearts turn to Rehoboam, they would kill him. To forestall such an action, Jeroboam established idol worship, setting up two golden calves, "made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi," and ordained a festival for offering sacrifices unto the calves.

The older, more mature, advisors gave sound advice to Rehoboam about taking the better view. They recognized that treating people fairly, not treating them harshly, brings the kind of loyalty that encourages people to give their wholehearted alliance. That truth has been verified invariably in all kinds of human relationships.

Both nations suffered loss because of Rehoboam's failure to heed the advice of his older advisors. Judah was now a smaller nation. Jeroboam's fear that Jerusalem would attract his subjects for worship caused the ten tribe kingdom of Israel to be more idolatrous than Judah.

## Follow Instructions

**Key Verse:** *“The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.”*  
—*I Kings 17:16*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*I Kings 17:1-5, 3-16*

**ELIJAH THE PROPHET** from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, as surely as the Lord God of Israel lives, there shall not be any dew or rain for several years until I say so! Then the Lord said to Elijah, “Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. And it shall be that you shall drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.” (vss. 3,4, *New American Standard*) Exercising a great test of his faith, Elijah did as the Lord had told him and camped beside the brook.

The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. But after awhile the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.

The Lord tested Elijah’s faith once again when he commanded that he “Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.” (vss. 8,9, *New International Version*) Strong in the faith of God’s word, he went to Zarephath, and came to the town gate where a widow was gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “‘Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?’ As she was going to get it, he called, ‘And bring me, please, a piece of bread.’ ‘As surely as the Lord your God lives,’ she replied, ‘I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.’ Elijah said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and

the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.”—vss. 8-14, *NIV*

Because Elijah obediently followed God’s command and the widow faithfully followed Elijah’s instructions they were both kept alive during the famine. As the Lord had promised through Elijah, the bowl did not run out of flour nor did the jar run out of oil. We, too, can rest assured God’s word will not return to him void but will accomplish that which he pleases and prosper in that whereto he sends it. (Isa. 55:11) Solomon, the wise man, also gave us a powerful lesson in faith when he said, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”—Prov. 11:24,25, *NIV*

Elijah represents the church in the flesh and the widow those who assist. God’s people are assured that neither the bread of Truth (pictured by the flour) nor the Holy Spirit (pictured by the oil) will be lacking. As Elijah and the widow were both miraculously sustained during the drought, so also the Elijah class was sustained during the Dark Ages.

Jesus mentions this incident in Luke 4:24-26 forecasting that not enough faithful Israelites would compose the body of Christ, so that God would go to the Gentiles for this purpose.—Acts. 15:14

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## Remain Committed

***Key Verse: “Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”  
—I Kings 18:21***

***Selected Scripture:  
I Kings 18:21, 30-39***

**CONTINUING OUR PREVIOUS** lesson, now in the third year of the drought, the Lord told Elijah, “Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.” (I Kings 18:1) Elijah proceeded to obey, and when he met with King Ahab he proposed a dramatic test to demonstrate to the people that Jehovah is the true and living God. He called upon Ahab to summon all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel together with four-hundred-fifty prophets of Baal, supported by Jezebel, to prepare a sacrifice to their God. ‘Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow

him. And the people answered him not a word.’—vs. 21

Both Elijah and the prophets of Baal were to select a bullock and dress it, placing it on the altar with no fire under it. The prophets were to call upon the name of their god while Elijah would call upon Jehovah. “The God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”—I Kings 18:24

The prophets of Baal were to proceed first. They took the bullock and dressed it, placed it on the altar with no fire under it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice,” even when they leaped upon the altar. (vs. 26) “It came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice,” nor any answer.—vss. 27-29

“Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me.” (vs. 30) All the people came near unto him and he carefully repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down, using twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel. “He put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrells with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.” (vs. 33) This was done two more times until the water ran round about the altar, filling the trench also with water.

At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah came near, and said, “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, ... that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, ... that this people may know that thou art the Lord God. ... Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the dust, and licked up the water in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.” (vss. 36-39) The Lord’s anointed people, like Elijah, must also today remain loyally committed to follow the true and living God.

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## Speak Truth

**Key Verse:** “*Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.*”  
—*I Kings 22:14*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*I Kings 22:14-23, 26-*

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**WHEN KING JEHOShAPHAT** of Judah visited King Ahab of Israel, Ahab asked, Why haven’t we done anything to get back Ramoth of Gilead from the king of Syria? Ahab said it belongs to us. He proposed to Jehoshaphat that they should jointly go up to battle against Ramoth. Jehoshaphat suggested that they should inquire first for the “word of the Lord,” to be sure of what he wants us to do.—*I Kings 22:5*

Ahab gathered about four hundred prophets together at the city gate and he asked them whether he should attack or not. They gave a unanimous response, “Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.” (vs. 6) Among them was Zedekiah who had made “horns of iron” as a symbol (vs. 11), and announced that with those horns Ahab would push the Assyrians until he consumed them. Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with that answer and asked if there wasn’t another prophet there through whom they could consult the Lord. Ahab replied that there was still one—Micaiah, son of Imlah, “but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.”—vs. 8

Micaiah was sent for, however, and urged to agree with the other prophets. First he expressed an ironical agreement; then he openly foretold the defeat of Ahab’s army and the death of Ahab himself. He said, “I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?”—vss. 17,18

Micaiah said, “Now therefore, behold, the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you.” (vs. 23, *New American Standard*) Ahab ordered the prophet be arrested and thrown in jail until he returned from

battle. Micaiah, however, had a different view. He said to the king, “If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you.”—vs. 28

Before the two kings went into battle, Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself [in armor], and went into the battle.” (vs. 30) When the enemy saw King Jehoshaphat in his royal robes they thought surely it was the king of Israel and they attacked him. He cried out and they realized he was not the king of Israel so they turned back from pursuing him.

Someone shot an arrow at random, however, and it struck Ahab between the joints of his armor. Badly wounded, toward evening, he died. They washed his chariot and “the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the Lord which he spake.”—vs. 38

Elijah had prophesied (I Kings 21:19) that the dogs would lick Ahab’s blood. Although Ahab and Jezebel threatened Elijah, they were idle threats. Elijah’s prophecy concerning the death of both was fulfilled. Likewise the Lord’s people have prophesied concerning events to come.

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## Heroes of Faith

**THE HEBREW BRETHREN** to whom this epistle was originally written were, seemingly, inclined to be somewhat unstable in their faith and zeal. One of the practical purposes of the epistle was to stimulate them to give “more earnest heed” to the things which they had heard, lest at any time they should let them slip. (Heb. 2:1) They had apparently been zealous for a time, but had become lax, so that now they needed to be taught again the first principles of the Truth. (Heb. 5:12) It is in keeping with his effort to revive their faith and zeal that in the tenth chapter Paul asks these brethren to recall the “former days,” and reminds them of their willingness at that time to suffer for the cause of Christ, adding that then they endured “joyfully” the spoiling of their goods.—Heb. 10:32,34

Maintaining this objective of the epistle, Paul presents the wonderful lesson of faith, which we find in the eleventh chapter. Beginning with verse 32 of chapter 10, the apostle builds up to, and introduces, his discussion of faith, showing the Hebrew brethren how essential faith was to them, lest they should “draw back unto perdition.” (Heb. 10:39) In order to establish the fact that genuine faith in God and in his promises is a mighty keeping power in the lives of those who serve God, Paul cites, in this eleventh chapter, many examples of the past, beginning with Abel, and notes how faith gave them strength to accomplish and endure.

A study of the chapter gives one a deeper appreciation of the power of faith in the life of a devoted servant of God, showing how it enabled him to endure, fortified him to resist discouragement, and to continue in a way of life in which it is known that danger and hardship would almost constantly be encountered. Truly, the Ancient Worthies present a glittering testimony of their faithfulness in enduring inhuman persecution. What a powerful incentive to greater faithfulness this testimony must have been to the Hebrew brethren when it was so eloquently presented to them by Paul!



## CHAPTER 11

**VERSE 1** “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

The Greek word here translated ‘substance’ could be more properly rendered ‘foundation,’ or ‘basis.’ Faith, therefore, is the basis for our hope, and the evidence (Greek, ‘proof,’ or ‘conviction’) that it will find fruition in the glorious realities of the things promised. The ‘things hoped for’ and the ‘things not seen’ are the same. In Romans 8:24,25 Paul writes, “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

We could have no hope apart from faith. The other essential element of hope is desire. It would be improper to say that we hoped for something which we did not desire. Nor could we say that we hope for some desirable thing if we had no assurance of ever receiving it. The natural eye has not seen the glorious spiritual inheritance which God has promised to the church, but, as Paul explains, they have been revealed to us by the Spirit, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I Cor. 2:10

This does not mean that we can actually understand what a Divine being is really like; but the Spirit of God, through the Word, has revealed sufficiently to create within us a desire for heavenly things, and the assurance is given us by the promises that we will be able to attain such a reward. It is our faith which grasps these promises and thus gives us a reason for hoping for the things which we have been led to desire.

**VERSE 2** “By it the elders obtained a good report.”

The ‘elders’ referred to here are undoubtedly the Ancient Worthies, the ‘fathers’ of Israel, for it is these whom the apostle discusses throughout the chapter. The expression, ‘obtained a good report,’ seems to indicate that these faithful ones of the past received from the Lord some assurance that they were pleasing to him—something, probably, akin to what is described in Christian experience as the witness of “the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:16) It is also true, of course, that this ‘report’ has reached us, bringing the individual faithfulness of each of the elders in a wonderful panorama of inspiration (or as Paul puts it, “a cloud of witnesses”) for our encouragement.—Heb. 12:1

**VERSE 3** “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

True faith is not blind, for it enables one to see, to ‘understand,’ as Paul states it in this text. As we view nature today we discern that everything which develops, or grows, starts with something which is largely visible—a seed becomes a plant, a grub becomes a moth. Reason tells us that this could not have been true in the original Creation. Faith builds upon our reasoning, and comes to the understanding that through the mighty power of God, the visible things of creation were ‘framed,’ not from things which appear, but from invisible elements beyond our powers to comprehend. In Romans 1:20 the apostle writes, “The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen [by the eye of faith], being understood by the things that are made.”

We understand by faith, Paul states, that the worlds were framed by the ‘word’ of God. The Greek word here used is not *logos*, but one which means a command, or directive. Paul’s reasoning here is evidently based upon his knowledge of the Genesis account of Creation, where such expressions are found as “Let there be light”; “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters”; “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together.” Thus did the Creator command, and the worlds were framed.—Gen. 1:3,6,9

The Greek word translated ‘worlds’ in this text is *aion*, meaning ‘age,’ or in the plural, ages. Paul’s reference, therefore, may be understood to include God’s Divine plan of the ages pertaining to man’s place in his great creative scheme. The language of the texts seems to preclude the possibility of limiting the reference merely to the ages in the Divine plan, but these might well be included since they have to do with man’s eternal existence, as the crowning feature of God’s earthly creation.

**VERSE 4** “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” Paul tells us. (Rom. 10:17) This would indicate that Abel received information from God concerning the kind of sacrifice he should offer. If it had simply been a case of each of the brothers offering to the Lord what they had on

hand to give, Abel's faith would not have entered into the offering any more than Cain's. Seldom does the Bible give all the details of any occurrence and, although no mention is made of it, we think it is quite possible that Abel was informed by the Lord that he wished a flesh and blood offering. His obedience demonstrated his faith, proving that he was righteous.

The text says that Abel was 'righteous.' The same Greek word is used here as when Paul wrote, "There is none righteous, no, not one." (Rom. 3:10) In this latter statement, however, absolute righteousness, or perfection, is referred to, whereas the righteousness of Abel was merely his heart condition which was demonstrated by his faith and obedience. It is essentially the same thought as that contained in the reference to Abraham's justification by faith.

A close analysis reveals the great importance God attaches to faith in him and in his arrangements and promises. Had Adam possessed true faith and confidence in God he would not have transgressed his law. While Adam's descendants have lost perfection and life because of his sin, those such as Abel, Abraham, and others who, despite their imperfections, did believe God, proved their worthiness of his favor and friendship. Such faith-righteousness is properly and scripturally described as justification.

During the Gospel Age those who possess such a faith, and demonstrate it by full consecration to the Lord, are justified to life through the merit of the shed blood of Christ. This is in order that they might present their bodies living and acceptable sacrifices to God and thus share in the sacrificial work of this age. However, during the preceding ages there was no opportunity to share in the "better sacrifices." (Heb. 9:23) The imputation of the blood of Christ was not needed to give a standing of life to God's servants; but their faith was no less vital because of this, nor were they less pleasing to God. It is simply that he dealt with them differently than he does with those in this age who possess a justifying faith.

While it is true that God's testimony concerning Abel's righteousness has come down through the ages to us, the text also indicates that Abel himself was encouraged by this 'witness.' His life of faithfulness was brief, and probably he received little in the way of reward except this

assurance of the Creator's favor and love. We doubt if any greater blessing could be experienced by anyone than to know that he is a friend of God. It is even a blessing to us now to know that by faith Abel proved worthy of this high honor, for his example stimulates us to be faithful. In the margin, the expression, 'yet speaketh,' is translated, 'is yet spoken of.' Not many of all the millions who have died throughout the ages have been remembered long by their own generation, but these heroes of faith of the Old Testament are still spoken of, and their lives cited as examples, thousands of years after they died.

In passing, it is well to give thought as to why God was pleased with the flesh and blood sacrifice offered by Abel. It was evidently because it pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) When condemning our first parents to death, God made the statement that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. (Gen. 3:15) This was a veiled promise of future deliverance from the result of original sin. But for this to be possible there would need to be remission of sin, so God began to illustrate that this was to be accomplished by the shedding of blood. As his plan of redemption unfolds, it comes to light that it was to be through the shed blood of his own beloved Son.

**VERSE 5** "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

In Genesis 5:24 we are informed that Enoch "walked with God." This was a walk of faith. Not much is said in the Scriptures about Enoch, but Jude informs us that he prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord with myriads of his saints to execute judgment. (Jude 14) This would indicate that in his walk with God, Enoch had been informed concerning at least some of the Divine plan, and that he believed what the Lord told him and acted upon it. So in this again is shown God's pleasure with those who believe his promises. Even in the human sphere of association it would be impossible to enjoy friendly relationships with those who did not believe what we said. How much truer this is in our relationship to God!

Enoch was 'translated,' Paul tells us, 'that he should not see death.' This is one of the texts in the Bible which is used by many of our

Christian friends to prove that the righteous do not sleep in death, but are taken immediately to heaven. But does the Greek word here rendered ‘translated,’ necessarily imply this? Two other examples of the Biblical use of this word may help us to reach a conclusion. One is found in Jude 4, in which the word ‘turning’ is a translation of the same Greek word, and the text reads, “There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.” The other example is in Galatians 1:6, in which the word ‘removed’ is a translation of the Greek word Paul used in Hebrews 11:5 to describe what happened to Enoch. This text reads, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.” Obviously the word translated, with the meaning ordinarily attached to it, would be quite out of place in both of these texts; for in both instances the writers are simply describing a changed position, or attitude, of certain believers. They had allowed themselves to be removed, or turned, from one position to another. “*Strong’s Concordance*” gives the literal meaning of the word as ‘transfer.’

The question remaining, then, is in what sense was Enoch removed, or transferred—from what, to what? The Scriptures divide the dead and dying world of mankind into two general groups, the “quick,” and the “dead.” (Acts 10:42; II Tim. 4:1) The ‘quick’ are evidently those who, while under condemnation to death, are still alive, not having fallen asleep in death; while the ‘dead’ are those who have actually gone down into the tomb. To be transferred from one of these classes into the other could well be what Paul tells us God did for Enoch in order that he ‘should not see death’—that is, should not experience the painful process of dying, or what is sometimes referred to as ‘death agonies.’ Most people, in thinking of the time they will die, express the wish that they might go suddenly, in their sleep, if possible; and for Enoch to be taken in this way, without his being conscious of what was occurring, could well be construed as a great favor from the Lord.

The Old Testament record seems to bear out this conclusion. It does not use the word ‘translated,’ as the seemingly faulty translation of the Greek in Hebrews 11:5 suggests, but simply states that “Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” (Gen. 5:24) The expression “were not,” is used in Jeremiah 31:15 to describe the death condition of

Rahel's children. And the Scriptures tell us concerning certain wicked cities of Abraham's day that God "took" them away as he saw good. (Ezek. 16:50) So, the fact that Enoch 'was not,' and that God 'took' him, does not imply that he has remained alive somewhere, but rather the opposite.

In any event, we know that Enoch was not taken to heaven, for Jesus declared definitely in his day that no man had ascended to heaven. (John 3:13) To us the weight of testimony seems to be to the effect that in Enoch's case God intervened to end his life without the necessity of suffering the horrors of dying, while with others of his faithful servants he did not—with the possible exception of Moses, although Moses at least knew that he was about to die. Finally, in Paul's summation of the lives of the first mentioned of these Ancient Worthies, he says, "These all died in faith."—vs. 13

**VERSE 6** "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

The faith referred to is that which begins with one's original confidence of God's existence, and that the Creator is a just and loving God, one who rewards those who diligently seek him. It is faith that causes one to "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him," as the apostle declares. (Acts 17:27) But "all men have not faith," Paul explains. (II Thess. 3:2) Those who do not have faith do not enjoy God's favor at the present time, for nothing inspires them to search after him. How thankful we can be, however, to realize that in the next age, the glory of God will be demonstrated to the faithless ones, giving them an opportunity to approach him upon the basis of 'sight.' When, in this way, they learn to know God, they too will have faith in him; and, if they demonstrate their faith by their obedience to the laws of the new kingdom then operative throughout the earth, they will be rewarded with life everlasting on the earth. That will be the day of their 'visitation.'

In the present age the Lord is dealing with, and blessing, only those who have faith strong enough to be convinced that he is able and willing to fulfill all his gracious promises. And faith should grow stronger as we become better acquainted with the Lord, and experience the manifold blessings which he continually showers upon those who 'diligently seek

him.’ The evidence of a growing faith will be found in the increasing zeal in seeking to know and do the Heavenly Father’s will.

Every follower of the Master needs a strong faith in order to meet the various tests which Divine wisdom permits to come upon him. But faith gives the victory now, even as it did for those heroes of faith throughout Old Testament times. Just as faith enabled them to suffer and to die in their loyalty to God, and in their obedience to his cause which he had entrusted to them, so it will be with us. It is only through the exercise of such an increasing faith that we can hope to have the witness of his favor, and be assured of receiving the reward which he has so many times promised.

The quality of the faith described by Paul is also worthy of note. It is a belief, not only in the existence of God, but has in it a measure of comprehension of his wonderful character—that he is ‘a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.’ Millions have had a negative sort of faith that there is a God, but it has not been the kind of faith described by Paul. It has been more akin to fear. They have been afraid that a demonlike god existed, and that he was ready to plunge them into an abyss of torture if they failed to please him. For this reason they have tried, in some measure, to please him, but their efforts have not been based upon a true faith.

**VERSE 7** “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

In this text we are again reminded that faith is the evidence of things unseen, for Noah believed what God told him concerning the coming flood before there was any visible evidence of rain. And this was a greater test of faith than it might seem to us now, since those of the antediluvian world had never seen rain at all, for the record is that a mist went up from the earth to water it.—Gen. 2:6

In so many cases the translators of our common version Bible take occasion to introduce the idea of ‘fear’ into the text, evidently because of the gross misapprehension they had of the character of God. Here we have another example of this. They have used the word ‘warned,’ when the Greek expression which they translate simply means ‘to utter an

oracle.’ And the word fear, in the expression that Noah was ‘moved with fear,’ simply means to be circumspect, or having due reverence for God and the desire to conduct himself in keeping with the information which he had received from him concerning the coming Deluge and the need they would have for an ark.

It was Noah’s faith that led to this attitude, and acting in harmony therewith he built the ark—another demonstration of the fact that only through works of obedience is faith manifested. And Noah actually did demonstrate his faith and thereby ‘condemned the world’—that is, “the world that then was.” (II Pet. 3:6) The record is that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, although none of his sermons is recorded in the Bible. On the principle that actions speak louder than words, may it not be that part of his ‘preaching’ was done by the fact that, exercising faith in what God told him concerning the coming Flood, he proceeded to build the ark?

The world did not believe this testimony nor any other which Noah might have given to them, so they were brought under condemnation and perished in the Flood. It was his faith in God and in the information God had given to him, leading to obedience in building the ark, which highlighted the faithlessness of the world at that time; for, through him, and as a result of his faith, the people had an opportunity to believe, but failed to accept it. Thus they were condemned.

At the same time, Noah’s obedience resulted in his becoming an heir to the righteousness which is by faith. In other words, he was brought into the same friendly relationship with God as were the other heroes of faith of that ancient time. And what a favored position that was for all of them!



## “The Light of the World”

***“Ye are the light of the world. ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”***

***—Matthew 5:14, 16***

**IN OLD TESTAMENT** times, God’s ancient prophets and faithful servants acknowledged that the Lord was their light. They had personal experiences that revealed to them his mighty power employed on their behalf. Thus they could testify that the darkness in the world could be displaced by God’s wonderful light.

### WITNESSES OF JESUS

During the Gospel Age the light of God’s glory has been manifested in quite a different manner. When in our text Jesus said, ‘Ye are the light of the world,’ he was speaking to his disciples. The era during which God miraculously manifested his hand in the protection and blessing of his chosen people, and in the punishment of their enemies, was rapidly drawing to a close. In a few short years God’s typical people were to hear those fateful words, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:38) Then the light of God was to shine out through other channels, and by different means.

In this new arrangement Jesus was the Leader, the Captain, the Forerunner. He declared of himself, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12) But Jesus knew that he would not personally remain in the world, and that the work of God entrusted to him would be continued by his representatives, his ambassadors. In Revelation 20:4 they are referred to as those who are “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.”

This language describes martyrdom, or the giving up of life in the service of Jesus and the Word of God. During the Gospel Age faithfulness leads to death; and we are encouraged by the promise, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

## EARLY CHURCH MIRACLES

In the beginning of the age, and continuing through the lifetime of the apostles, miracles were employed which demonstrated the glory of God. Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead. The apostles did the same, but they themselves died, and the onlooker was given no evidence of Divine overruling or care in their lives. Jesus was raised from the dead, but few aside from the disciples believed it. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the waiting disciples at Pentecost, but their enemies refused to accept what they saw and heard as evidence of God's hand in their affairs. Instead they charged that the disciples were intoxicated.—Acts 2:15

Soon after the apostles fell asleep in death, all miraculous demonstrations of Divine protection and love ceased, and the Lord's people throughout the age since have been called upon to walk entirely by faith. They have been witnesses of Jesus, not because Divine favor has been manifested toward them, but because they have been faithful in proclaiming the "gospel of Christ," which, as Paul asserts, is "the power of God unto salvation."—Rom. 1:16

The commission given to these by Jesus was that they should be his witnesses in all the world by preaching the Gospel. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8) In the ages past when the Lord's people were called his witnesses it was because God revealed his glory by the miraculous manner in which he dealt with them. In the Gospel Age those who witness for Jesus do so by proclaiming the marvelous plan for human salvation which Jesus was sent into the world to execute. In proclaiming this Gospel they tell not only of the mighty miracle of Jesus' resurrection, but also of the miracle of the resurrection of those who will live and reign with him.

Furthermore, the full Gospel message calls for a declaration of that great future miracle which will be necessary for the awakening of all the dead, and the restoration of the willing and obedient to full perfection of life as human beings on the earth. In proclaiming the facts concerning these miracles the witnesses of Jesus are strengthened by their knowledge of what occurred in the past. They know that the God who delivered Israel from Egypt, who escorted them safely through the Red Sea and across Jordan to victory in Canaan, is abundantly able to fulfill all his good promises pertaining to the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death.

Only a handful of these witnesses for Jesus ever actually saw him, but they believed the testimony of those who affirm the fact that he was raised from the dead. They also believe and proclaim the testimony of Paul that when Jesus was raised from the dead he was highly exalted above angels, principalities, and powers, and above every name that is named, to the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Eph. 1:18-23) They also accept and preach the further testimony of Paul which declares that ultimately “every knee should bow, ... and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11

These witnesses of Jesus are glad to occupy this place, as his ambassadors, in the arrangements of God. They delight to obey the Divine command to honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Indeed, they realize that they cannot honor the Father at all, except as they do so through the Son. (John 5:23) They know that to honor and worship the resurrected and glorified Jesus, and to serve as his witnesses, does not detract from the glory of God. They realize that it was the Father’s power that exalted his Son to this high position, at his own right hand.

As witnesses ‘of Jesus, and for the Word of God,’ these go forth with a song of praise upon their lips, praise to God for his love in sending Jesus to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. They also have praise for Divine wisdom which designed such a loving plan of salvation. They praise Divine justice which, while it could not clear the guilty, made provision to wash away their sins by the blood of the Redeemer. They extol the power of God by which every feature of his glorious purpose is implemented and made sure.

These do not go about shouting, “Praise the Lord!” But they do praise and honor God by making known his loving plan as it is centered in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer. They rejoice that the Spirit of God has authorized them to be witnesses thus of Jesus, and that they are authorized to explain the plan of God as it relates to those who are invited to be joint-heirs with Jesus in the spiritual phase of his kingdom. These proclaim the glorious hope of ‘restitution’ for all mankind during the thousand years of Christ’s reign.

## THE WORLD NOT CONVERTED

This glorious testimony which has been given throughout the age by the witnesses of Jesus has not converted the world, nor will it now convert the world. It was not God's plan that it should. His will is that the chief accomplishment of this witness work would be the reaching and development of those who would join the witness class and prove worthy to live and reign with Christ.

Others have heard, and to some extent have been blessed. Thus have they been in a measure prepared for the blessings of the kingdom which will reach the world during the millennium. Many have heard the message, but have paid no attention to it, yet it has been a witness even to these. Jesus said that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end [of the Gospel Age] come."—Matt. 24:14

Jesus likened his individual witnesses to candles shining in the dark. We know that a candle does not project its light any great distance into the darkness. It is of benefit only to those who are close to it. So the light of the Gospel shining through Jesus' witnesses is a guide and great blessing to those who, by belief and devotion, draw near to it and to the Lord whom it represents, but the outside world see only an indistinct glimmer.

Someone has said that the light of the Gospel as it shines through the witnesses of Jesus is like a lighthouse in the ocean. It is not put there to light up the ocean, but to guide the mariner. So the Truth has not enlightened the world during the Gospel Age, although it has been the only light in the world. This light, however, has been a guide to the Lord's own people, enabling them to find and to walk in the narrow way which leads to glory, honor, and immortality.

### "AS THE SUN"

Through Jesus' witnesses, the Gospel is preached until the 'end' comes—the end of the present age. Jesus' parable of the Wheat and the Tares also brings us down to the end of the age. The witnesses of Jesus are in this parable called "children of the kingdom." When the work of harvest is fully consummated these 'children of the kingdom' are said to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—Matt. 13:38,43

This shining ‘forth as the sun’ will be in association with Jesus, the foretold “Sun of righteousness” who is to arise with “healing in his wings” to enlighten and bless the whole world of mankind. (Mal. 4:2) The witnesses of Jesus will, together, as the church triumphant, become a part of that ‘Sun of righteousness,’ and together with Jesus will cause the knowledge of the glory of God to fill the whole earth, “as the waters cover the sea.”—Isa. 11:9; 40:5

Thus we see that when Jesus said to that handful of disciples to whom he preached his sermon on the mount, “Ye are the light of the world,” he meant that ultimately they would be more than merely a light ‘in’ the world. It is in the latter, limited manner that they have thus far let their light shine. This has not been due to lack of zeal or enthusiasm on their part, but because of human limitations.

Jesus explained, the darkness of this world hateth the light, and therefore those who dwell in darkness usually turn away from the light even when they see it. Satan is largely responsible for this, for, as the “god of this world,” he has blinded the minds of those who believe not, “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

When the Sun of Righteousness arises, and the children of the kingdom shine forth with him, Satan will be bound, that he may “deceive the nations no more.” (Rev. 20:1-3) With the ‘prince of darkness’ thus prevented from interfering with the shining forth of light from that glorious ‘Sun,’ all the world will have a full opportunity to become acquainted with Jehovah, the true God, and with his beloved Son who died for them that they might live. Then will be testified to all that great truth that Jesus gave himself a ransom for all.—I Tim. 2:4-6

The work of enlightening all mankind will require a thousand years of Christ’s kingdom. First, the living generation will have turned to them the “pure language” mentioned by the Prophet Zephaniah. (Zeph. 3:8,9) This will be immediately after the “fire of my [God’s] jealousy” has destroyed the symbolic earth in the great “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1

Many who go through that ‘fire’ will be quite ignorant of the true God, hence the necessity of having the pure message of Truth given to them. Thus they have an opportunity to know and serve God properly, “with

one consent.” (Zeph. 3:9) But that will be only the beginning. There will then come the awakening of the billions who have died. Each generation of these hear the voice of the Lord calling them forth from the tomb and they will need to be enlightened. Although the Sun will be shining throughout the millennium, it will not be until near the close that the darkness of the long night of sin and death will have been fully banished.

The Prophet Zechariah gives us a beautiful illustration of this. He speaks of the thousand years of Christ’s reign, during which the Sun of Righteousness will be shining. He says, “It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.”—Zech. 14:7

“And it shall be in that day,” the prophet continues, “that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.” (vs. 8) Also, “The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.” (vs. 9) Because God loves natural Israel for the “fathers’ sakes,” (Rom. 11:28) those regathered in the promised land will be the first to have the life-giving waters of the kingdom offered to them, but the river of life will quickly flow out to all nations.

This “river” is shown in Revelation 22:1,2 to flow from the “throne of God and of the Lamb.” On either side of the river are the trees of life, bearing all needed life-giving fruit, and the leaves of the trees are “for the healing of the nations.” It will be then that the “Spirit and the bride say, Come. ... take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17

Thus in this beautiful combination of symbols the future work of the present witnesses of Jesus is portrayed. Now our message to all who fully believe is to take up their cross and follow Jesus into death. Then, as through them the light concerning God’s plan is revealed to all mankind, the invitation will be, ‘Come. ... take the water of life freely.’

The saints of God today are honored to be light-bearers and witnesses of Jesus. They look forward with joy to the still greater honor of shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. They will cause the knowledge of the Lord to fill the earth completely and no one will need to say to his neighbor, “Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”—Jer. 31:31-34

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## ***Dawn Bible Students Association***

## The Organization of the Church

***“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”***

**—Titus 1:5**

**THE BIBLE MAKES IT** clear that the word church is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning ‘a calling out.’ The present Gospel Age is the time when this selection of a people for God’s name (Acts 15:14), or the church class, takes place. Most people think of a church as a structure where God is worshiped. In the early church they had no special structure that they would call a church. Being Jews, they went to the Temple to witness to other Jews. In order to learn how the church was

to be organized we have to go back in time to the Early Church.

The Scriptures do not indicate that the various local groups of ‘called out’ ones in those early years of Christianity had any elaborate organizational arrangements, nor does the Bible teach that this was God’s design for the church as a whole. However, the disciples at that time were not without some organization. Their meetings were not without order, and various privileges of service were assigned to different ones according to their several abilities.

In the Early Church organization Jesus was universally recognized as the Head. This was in keeping with Jesus’ own instructions to his disciples when he said, “One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” (Matt. 23:8) Paul wrote, “Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” (Eph. 5:23) In I Corinthians 11:3 he presents the same thought, saying that “the head of every man is Christ; ... and the head of Christ is God.”

Jesus is not only the head of his church, he is also its foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay,” wrote Paul, “than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 3:11) In Ephesians 2:19,20 the church is referred to as “the household of God,” and is declared to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.”



The Apostle Peter wrote, “It is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.” (I Pet. 2:6) Peter’s affirmation that Jesus is the ‘chief corner stone’ in Zion, the church, is especially noteworthy in view of the misunderstanding which has been attached to Jesus’ statement, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”—Matt. 16:18

This assertion has been misconstrued to mean that Peter was to be the ‘rock’ upon which the church of Christ would be built. But this interpretation is at once seen to be in error when we discover that Jesus used two different Greek words in making the statement. When he said, ‘Thou art Peter,’ the Greek word translated Peter is *petros*, meaning a ‘piece of rock.’ But when he said, ‘Upon this rock I will build my church,’ he used the Greek word *petra*, meaning a ‘mass of rock,’ a boulder.

Peter had just said to Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matt. 16:16) Jesus was pleased with this confession. We might paraphrase his reply to Peter in order to get its meaning a little clearer, “Peter, your name means that you are a small piece of rock, a pebble. But by comparison with the meaning of your name, the great fact of my Messiahship, and that I am the Son of God, is as a great mass of rock, a great boulder, and the church will be built upon me as its foundation.”

## TWELVE APOSTLES

In the Divine arrangement the entire church, from Pentecost to the end of the age, was to be served by twelve apostles specially appointed by God. It was in keeping with this that Jesus chose just twelve men to be associated with him during his ministry in order that they might receive personal training from him. These were Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon, and Judas.—Matt. 10:2-4

Judas proved unfaithful and the Scriptures indicate that Paul was chosen by the Lord to take Judas’ place. They decided upon Matthias. However, this action was taken before they received the Holy Spirit, and there is no evidence that the Lord honored their choice. Matthias’ name does not appear after this.

The word apostle means ‘one who is sent,’ or a delegate, an ambassador of the Gospel. From this broad standpoint every Christian is

an apostle, for we are all ambassadors of Christ. In fact, the word is used in the Bible with reference to others than the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This does not mean that they occupied the same high position of authority in the church as that given by Divine appointment to those specially chosen by the Lord.

In John 17:12 Jesus refers to these Divine appointees as those whom his Heavenly Father had given him. These special apostles did not select each other for the position, so they had no authority to select Matthias to take the place of Judas. Just as the Lord had selected the others, so in his own time and way he selected Paul and gave him authority as one of the twelve.

The twelve apostles were more than mere preachers of the Gospel. They were miraculously inspired by the Holy Spirit, which enabled them to speak and write the truths of the Gospel with authority and accuracy. Their word was, and is, law to every Christian. It is because of this authoritative position which they occupy in the organization of the church that the completed church—likened to a “city”—is shown to have twelve foundation stones and in these stones are written the names of “the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”—Rev. 21:14

## OTHER SERVANTS

In Ephesians 4:11 the Apostle Paul informs us that the Lord provided for other servants in the church; that, in addition to apostles, he arranged for prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Peter speaks of the Old Testament writers as God’s “holy prophets.” (II Pet. 3:2) These wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. The Christian takes their word, even as that of the apostles, as authoritative. (II Pet. 1:21) When Paul speaks of ‘prophets’ as servants in the church he uses the term in a much broader sense, applying it to public expounders of the Gospel.

These prophets and teachers are all essential servants in the church, but not inspired as were the twelve apostles. Nor are they appointed in the same miraculous way, as were the apostles. Paul instructed Titus to “ordain” elders in every city. —Titus 1:5

The expression in the New Testament, “laying on of the hands” is, according to the Greek text, more properly the stretching forth of the hand, as in voting. (I Tim. 4:14) The clear implication is that by apostolic

authority the lesser servants of the church were to be appointed, or elected, by the congregation, which they were to serve.

## ELDERS IN THE CHURCH

Thus while Jesus is the head over the whole church, from Pentecost throughout the entire age, and the apostles also its inspired servants for the entire age, all the other servants were to be chosen by the brethren themselves, as they were needed, and as there were opportunities to serve.

The scriptural term ‘elder’ applies generally to all who serve the church along spiritual lines. A pastor, a teacher, an evangelist, or a prophet would come under the general designation of elder. The Greek word *presbuteros*, from which it is translated, signifies one who is mature. In the church it would describe one who is recognized as being sound in the faith and spiritually mature in experience.

The word ‘bishop’ is also used in the New Testament, and applied to servants elected by the church. The Greek word *episkopos*, from which it is translated, means ‘superintendent’ or ‘overseer.’ All elders are properly, according to opportunity and ability, overseers in the church; for it is their duty to watch over the flock of God and care for their needs, particularly along spiritual lines.

The word ‘deacon’ appears a few times in connection with the arrangements of the Early Church. It is a translation of a Greek word *diakonos*, which means to ‘run errands,’ or give assistance. The indications are that deacons were appointed to help with the material arrangements of the church. The first of these to be appointed were in the church at Jerusalem. See Acts 6:2-4.

The scriptural qualifications for those who can properly be elected by a congregation to serve as elders, or “bishops,” and “deacons,” are set forth by Paul in I Timothy 3:1-13. In these qualifications the expression “apt to teach” implies a proper understanding of the truth of the Divine plan as taught in the Bible. Any group of consecrated brethren, large or small, which has brethren who meet these qualifications, are authorized by the Scriptures to elect them to these services. When this is done, these appointments are recognized by the Lord.

The Scriptures make it clear that no group of Christians needs to look to a parent church for authority to elect servants, hold meetings, and carry on the work of the Lord in its community.

Nor do congregations need to be large in order to exercise their liberty along these lines. The Biblical record is that many of the churches or groups of Christians in apostolic times were organized in the homes of believers, and held their regular meetings in these homes.

The same thing is being done today. As in the past, the Lord is richly blessing those who find others with whom they can cooperate as a group—or within the scriptural meaning, a church. These can elect their own servants by the simple method of stretching forth the hand. No membership roll is needed, nor is such authorized by the Scriptures.

There is not much in the Scriptures to indicate the nature of the meetings held by the various groups in the Early Church. Certainly the apostles, and others, on occasion, gave discourses. But profitable meetings can be held even though there may be no one qualified to preach a sermon.

Meetings for Bible study in which all present have an opportunity to express their thoughts, are very helpful. An elder, if one has been elected, should serve to keep the study orderly. Prayer and testimony meetings are also spiritually profitable to those who are seriously endeavoring to know and do God's will. Wherever possible an elder should preside. There is definitely no need for any hierarchy.

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## An Elijah Work

***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD : And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”***  
**—Malachi 4:5,6**

**THE EXPRESSION OF** these verses is peculiar. The thought seems to be that Elijah’s work was to be one of reconciliation, or conversion, likened to turning parents to a humble, childlike condition, and after thus making them teachable as little children, to turn their hearts from error, sin, and unfaithfulness, and lead them back into harmony with their ‘fathers’—a term given by Hebrews to their faithful patriarchs and prophets.

### THE LAST MESSAGE

Malachi’s prophecy was the last message sent by Jehovah to the people of Israel, and it seems to have deeply impressed them—especially the last two chapters. These particularly refer to

Messiah’s coming, and to the special trials which the day of the Lord’s Presence would bring upon the nation. Gathering from this that their testings would be of a special character, they took courage from these last two verses of the prophecy, which promised that Elijah the prophet—who had once converted the entire nation from the worship of Baal back to the worship of Jehovah—would come again to prepare them for the special experiences associated with the coming of their Messiah.

This prophecy was only partially fulfilled at the First Advent of our Lord. It evidently had special reference to the time of his Second Advent. True, John the Baptist and his disciples engaged in a reformation work in an attempt to convert Israel and thus prepare them to receive their Messiah. Concerning this, Jesus said to his disciples that to those who could receive it, John was the promised Elijah. That is, John was the Elijah of promise to those in whose hearts and lives the foretold work of reformation had been accomplished.—Matt. 11:14

## JOHN THE BAPTIST TYPE

John was merely a type of the real Elijah, the true church in the flesh. The Lord's faithful people throughout the age have been performing a similar work, and on a worldwide scale; a work which should have prepared the people to receive the Lord of glory at his Second Advent. But like the work of John the Baptist, this wider effort has also failed.

John the Immerser—in the spirit and power of Elijah—failed to reform Israel. As a consequence, the nation rejected Jesus in the flesh, and this resulted in a great 'day of vengeance' which destroyed the nation in A.D. 70-73. Thus the alternative fulfillment of the prophecy came upon this backsliding people, that is, the foretold 'curse.'

Likewise, on a much larger scale, the work of the greater Elijah—the true church—has failed to prepare the world to receive the King of glory; and now, as a consequence, the beginning of the great day of wrath is upon all nations. The purpose of this is to melt and mellow, humble and prepare all to cry out from the heart: "Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"—Mark 11:9

## THE CHURCH'S ROLE

The true church in the flesh (the body of Christ) is the Elijah, or forerunner, of the church in glory. Their mission is to reprove error and sin, and to point to the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and to the kingdom of glory. The work in which the church is now engaged is merely preliminary to its future work so far as the reforming of the world is concerned. In its kingly office the church shall accomplish what it failed to do as the Elijah teacher in the flesh. And it will do much more. The dead billions of earth will be awakened, and the earthly phase of the kingdom will be victoriously established.

Let us not be misunderstood in this matter. God's plan has not extended to the converting of the world during the Gospel Age. He designed the selection and trial of the church now, and the blessing of the world through the glorified Christ, in the next age. There is no contradiction to this when it is stated the 'Elijah work' has been an effort to convert mankind, even as John the Baptist tried to reform Israel.

God knew that this Elijah work of the church in the flesh would largely fail, yet he commissioned his people to let their light shine in the world; to hold forth the Word of life, and to proclaim the true Gospel, for he

knew that this effort would react favorably upon them in their preparation to reign with Christ in glory.

With this proper viewpoint in mind, we are able to rejoice even while viewing what many have regarded as the failure of the church to convert the world during the past twenty centuries. We realize that the labors of the true ‘Elijah’ class have not been in vain, but have served the Divine purpose in developing the true church, and that even the world will, in due time, be benefited by the witness now given.

## CONVERSION OF THE WORLD

While the work of John the Baptist as a prototype of the promised Elijah was largely a failure—and this has likewise been true of the church’s work in the flesh—this does not mean that the world will never be converted. Pointing out John’s failure to fulfill the prophecy concerning the Elijah work, Jesus said, “Elijah indeed comes, and will restore all things.” (Matt. 17:11, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Evidently Jesus had in mind his own thousand-year reign in which his glorified body members would be associated with him. He was thus looking beyond the veil to the Millennial Age, and to the glorious work of reformation and restitution then to be accomplished.

As far as the present age is concerned, it is the alternate part of Malachi’s prophecy which is actually being fulfilled—‘Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.’ But even in this, let us not draw before our minds too dark a picture, but rather, let us think upon the glory to follow the present great ‘day of wrath,’ and upon the joys of the incoming Millennial Day.

It is essential, however, that we be aware of the significance of present world events, and of the impending complete collapse of “this present evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) Otherwise we might become disheartened and alarmed. To know the meaning of the time in which we live is also an additional incentive to continue working diligently in the Master’s vineyard, “while it is day: [for] the night cometh, when no man can work.”—John 9:4

Concerning the true Gospel, the world is indeed in darkness, and the darkness of the night is becoming even more dense. At present, however, there is a little season before the darkness of trouble becomes too great when the Lord’s people have a favorable time to continue the Elijah

work. It is also a favorable time for personal growth in grace and knowledge.

### OUR CURRENT DUTY

During John the Baptist's closing experiences his influence diminished, even as he had testified that it would, saying of Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30) So it is with the true church in the flesh in these last days, it will continue to decrease until the last member has been faithful unto death and has received the crown of life beyond the veil in the heavenly phase of the kingdom. This does not mean that as the 'remnant' of the saints this side the veil 'find' one another, and associate in fellowship in groups, that new classes may not be formed, and some of the old ones become temporarily larger. This could be true while, at the same time, the total number of the saints this side of the veil would be diminishing.

In these closing days of the church's earthly pilgrimage we should be so prepared, so armed, and so thoroughly furnished with the invincible Truth, that opposition and persecution would move us only to greater zeal and increased determination to hold high the standard of Truth. Let us continue faithfully to witness to the true Gospel, seeing that God has very graciously granted us this privilege as his servants and ambassadors.

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## “On Things Above”

***“Set your affections  
on things above, not  
on things on the  
earth.”***

***—Colossians 3:2***

**THE FOLLOWERS OF** Jesus are invited to sacrifice all earthly interests and prospects in order to attain a heavenly reward. They are to set their affections on things above, “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” (Col. 3:1) Jesus told the rich young ruler that if he gave

up all that he had and became a true, cross-bearing disciple, he would have treasure in heaven.—Mark 10:21

Not understanding that these spiritual promises of the Bible are made only to those who sacrifice their lives in the Divine service during the Gospel Age, many have erroneously supposed that God wants the entire race to become interested in going to heaven. Actually, however, it is only a “little flock” to whom this invitation is extended. (Luke 12:32) Happy are we if through the Word of Truth we have heard the call to set our affections on things above.

Throughout the entire Old Testament period God’s promises to his people held out to them the hope of future earthly blessings. Upon these they set their affections, and properly so. To Abraham he said, “All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”—Gen. 13:15

In keeping with these Old Testament promises the apostle, in writing to the followers of Jesus, tells them not to set their affections upon things of the earth. While the great objective of the Divine plan of salvation is the restoration of man to live everlastingly on the earth, the church of this Gospel Age is to participate with Christ in accomplishing this work of “restitution,” as it is described by Peter.—Acts 3:19-21

The worthy ones of ancient times will serve in the kingdom as human representatives of the Divine Christ—“princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) John the Baptist was the last of these ‘Ancient Worthies,’ so Jesus said of him that the least in the kingdom of heaven would be greater than he, for they will be spirit beings, while John will be human. (Matt. 11:11)

It is a “high calling” (Phil. 3:14) indeed which is held out to the church, and those who attain to it will need to be faithful even “unto death.”—Rev. 2:10

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## The Bridal Robe

***“His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”***

***—Revelation 19:7, 8***

**WHAT A BEAUTIFUL AND** wonderful picture is brought to our vision! The church, during the time of her espousal, is said to be clothed in the garment of Christ’s imputed righteousness. Our text reveals that the Lamb’s bride has made herself ready.

She has been permitted to ‘array herself’ in fine linen. She is no longer reckoned as righteous, but she is *actually* righteous. Since the days of her consecration, her espousal, she has

been working into that robe that her Bridegroom gave to her, imputed righteousness, those beautiful stitches of gold (Ps. 45:13), and now her work is done. The wrought gold represents the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit. (Gal. 5:22,23) How wonderfully the work she has been doing is described. With patience she has been working into her life, that which is described as a “raiment of needlework.”—Ps. 45:14

### HIS WIFE MADE HERSELF READY

Let us briefly review the words of our text. The Lamb’s wife has made herself ready. She has been permitted to array herself in fine linen. All the time of her Christian journey she was clothed only in the garment provided by our Lord, his righteousness, and this she was to keep clean, spotless. But now she is allowed to array herself in the splendor of royalty, for God has now rewarded her for faithfulness. (I Cor.15:38) She has been laying up for herself treasures in heaven, and now is in possession of them, being arrayed, like her Lord, in glory and beauty. (Matt. 6:20) How can this be? All her righteousness before was but filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6) How can they become garments of beauty? The change has been effected by our Lord. This is a work of grace made understandable by the Apostle Paul.

We know that she could not be accepted by God in her former condition, for there is no one who is righteous, but we who believe on Jesus and follow in his steps, have his righteousness imputed to us. (Rom. 3:10,23) As Paul explains, “We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have ... received the reconciliation.” (Rom. 5:11, *Marginal Translation*) Let us stress the importance of the *imputed* righteousness of Christ our Lord, for we will require it so long as we are in the flesh. But when we are changed into his glorious likeness beyond the veil, we will not be clothed in imputed righteousness when we wear the bridal robe, but we shall be clothed in the “righteous actions of God’s people.” (Rev. 19:8, *Weymouth*) In other words it will be a righteousness of our very own. We shall then be able to deal righteously, perfectly, with the poor, groaning creation in the age to come.

It is well that we note the difference between the righteousness *in* Christ and the righteousness *of* Christ when the Head and body are complete in the glory beyond. Also, it might be said that faith *in* Christ justifies us, but the faith *of* Christ sanctifies us. The former is borne out by Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4; 2:5; and the latter by Romans 3:22; Galatians 2:16-20. This is very easily understood when we consider that by faith *in* the precious blood of Jesus all our sins are freely forgiven, and if we have the faith *of* Jesus, the same kind of faith that he exercised, we shall walk as he walked.

## FAITH NECESSARY

These two degrees of faith are well illustrated in Romans 5:1,2. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” We must have faith *in* Christ before we can exercise the faith *of* Christ. Remember that while we, according to the flesh, are imperfect, God, in his mercy imputes Christ’s righteousness unto us. “Mentally, I am a slave to God’s law, but physically to the law of sin.” (Rom. 7:25, *Goodspeed*) Imputed righteousness is what God has granted us in order that he might deal with us, but the righteousness with which we shall be invested is what we shall have gained by faithfulness.

The apostle enjoins, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Phil. 2:12) The matter of ‘working out’ our salvation through the exercise of faith is further emphasized by the statement, “By faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.”—Gal. 5:5,6, *New International Version*

Let us retrace our steps and see the remarkable grace of God. We know that we were sinners without God and without hope, but have seen the grace which God effected through Christ. As Paul relates, “What the law could never do, because our lower nature robbed it of all potency, God has done: by sending his own Son in a form like that of our own sinful nature, and as a sacrifice for sin, he has passed judgement against sin within that very nature, so that the commandment of the law may find fulfilment in us, whose conduct, no longer under the control of our lower nature, is directed by the Spirit.”—Rom. 8:3,4, *New English Bible*

We get by faith that which Israel was unable to get by the Law. Why? Because we Christians exercise the faith of Christ. How does the faith of Christ operate? By doing as Jesus did. He said, “I do always those things that please him.” (John 8:29) Thus exercising the same faith as Christ we will eventually become like him, transformed into his image. As Jesus exemplified complete confidence in, and loyalty to, his Heavenly Father by the course he pursued and the works he did, just so should it be with us, his followers. The Apostle James makes this apparent when he writes, “You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.” (James 2:24, *NIV*) And those things he does are to be in accordance with, and by virtue of, our faith.—James 2:17,18,22,26; Rom. 9:30-32

Summing up briefly, then, we are embroidering our bridal robe-to-be, by doing the things he did. Our glorious garment will be prepared for us when we reach that blissful shore. How inspiring, then, the words “She was permitted to array herself in fine linen, ... the fine linen, ... being the righteous actions of God’s people.”—Rev. 19:8, *Weymouth*