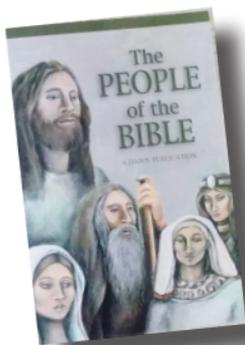


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Today and Tomorrow in Prophecy

“No prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet’s own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.”
—II Peter 1:20,21,
New Living Translation

ONE OF AMERICA’S LEAD-ing businessmen once said: “Unfortunately, there is no such thing as future certainty.” If it has to do with the future of business, the economy, politics, and the social fabric of our society, that statement is certainly true. Generally speaking, every aspect of the present world in which we live seems to be uncertain. However, for the sincere student of the Bible,

this does not hold true, because the Word of God gives us definite assurance as to what the future holds for us, our children, and all mankind.

God sent his faithful servants to tell us what we could expect regarding the future of the human race, and their predictions were inspired by him. In

II Peter 1:19, the apostle makes this statement: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” He then, in our opening text, confirms for us the fact that prophecy does not come from the prophet himself, but it comes directly from God, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The foregoing Scripture says that prophecy is like a light shining in a dark place, and how true that is. Darkness, confusion, and perplexity cover the earth today. Many people, perhaps the majority, do not know or believe that the great God of the universe has a plan for his creation, and for the future of the human race. However, just as a lantern aids to show the way in the dark, so prophecy, and its many related promises, are as a light shining in a dark place.

HISTORY IN ADVANCE

Prophecy is history written in advance, and only God can do this; but when he does so, it is sure. Thus, the Apostle Peter says that we have something upon which we can depend—a sure Word of prophecy—that to which we do well to “take heed.” Very few do this today. Many have rejected the Bible. Some say that God is dead, or that he does not exist. Some claim to be wise in themselves, and this often becomes a snare to them, when such wisdom fails to bring about its desired results. Such being the case, the wisdom of this world often turns into blindness, and because of this mankind is in perplexity and fear as to what the future holds for them and their children.

Many have believed that they could bring in the Golden Age of peace on earth and good will toward men without there having been born “in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:11) We believe that to have such a view surely leads to sad disappointment. The Bible says that “the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.” (Isa. 29:14) Think of the efforts that have been made by sincere and conscientious people to bring about an ideal society in this world and ask yourself whether or not the wisdom of their “wise men” has perished, and the knowledge of their “prudent men” has been hidden.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES

Let us first look at some Bible prophecies that have already been fulfilled, and from them judge whether their words concerning the future are accurate and dependable. Thinking back to the Garden of Eden, recall that upon his betrayal of our first parents, Satan was addressed by God, who said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15) This is the first prophecy recorded in the Bible, and it has to do with the hope of a “seed,” that is, a Redeemer or Savior, who would help fallen humanity. Though in veiled language, it was a prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ.

We recall that later on, though still hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophets of God said he would be born of a woman. Isaiah 7:14 says, “The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a

virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” That prophecy was fulfilled; Jesus, the seed of the woman, came in fulfilment of that prophecy.

It did not stop there. In Micah 5:2 we read another prophecy: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of this seed who would be born of a virgin. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born God’s prophets spoke of these details. Do we think that Mary, the virgin mother, or other individuals, could have shaped the accomplishment and circumstances of Jesus’ birth short of the divine fulfilment of these prophecies? Certainly not.

There are many more events in the life of Jesus that were prophesied. The death that he should die was one; the drink that he was given while upon the cross was another. The sepulcher of the rich man in which he was entombed was also foretold. (Isa. 53:3,4,9; Ps. 69:21) Could man have shaped the outcome of these prophecies? The length of time Jesus was to be in the tomb was foretold; his resurrection from the dead was prophesied, and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—all these things were predicted and fulfilled, and all were beyond human collusion.—Jonah 1:17; Matt. 12:40; Isa. 53:10-12; Ps. 16:10; Joel 2:28,29

That all of these prophecies were fulfilled in the life of one perfect man is sufficient reason, we believe, to accept as fact that Jesus was the seed of the woman, the Son of God. Therefore, he was able to

give himself as a ransom, a corresponding price, for the perfect man Adam, and the human race in his loins. (I Tim. 2:5,6) Thus we see that God's sure word of prophecy has proven accurate time after time in the past.

PROPHECIES OF THE PRESENT

Let us now look at some of the prophecies pertaining to our day. One of them is the return of the Jewish people to the land of Palestine. This fact alone is sufficient to prove that prophecy is being fulfilled in our day. Jeremiah 16:14,15 reads, "It shall be no more said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them; and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

We have seen that prophecy fulfilled in our day. In the next verse of Jeremiah's prophecy, God says that he would send "fishers" to fish them, and "hunters" to hunt them, in order to bring them back to their land. Fishermen drop a hook and wait for the fish to come to the bait. Hunters pursue their quarry to drive it out of hiding. The "fishing" of the Zionist movement and the "hunting" associated with the Holocaust were historical events of the first half of the last century which drove many Jews back to their homeland. The climax of this is Israel's reestablishment as an independent nation in 1948, after more than twenty-five centuries of servitude under Gentile empires and governments. It is thrilling and faith-strengthening to know

that these events of the past century concerning Israel were foretold by the “sure word of prophecy” so long ago.

Another prophecy of our day is found in Daniel 12:1-4. It speaks of the time when “Michael” would “stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people:” and there would be “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation,” and that “many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” Furthermore, “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

KNOWLEDGE INCREASING

Our day surely fits the words, “knowledge shall be increased,” more than at any time in mankind’s history. In all the years prior to 1900, it is generally held that accumulated knowledge doubled approximately every century. Then, something dramatically changed. By 1950, knowledge was doubling about every twenty-five years, and by the early part of the 21st century it was estimated to be doubling every year. Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove with certainty, some experts have suggested that now, some twenty years later, knowledge is doubling every twelve hours—a nearly incomprehensible rate to the finite human mind. Regardless of the total accuracy of these numbers, it is clear that, since the beginning of the last century, accumulated knowledge has been increasing at unprecedented rates, with no end in sight. Indeed, how we can see that this aspect of Daniel’s prophetic words have been fulfilled in our own lifetimes.

A knowledge of God’s Word is part of the increase of knowledge in this time in which we live. In

centuries past, the creeds, authored by man, were what most people knew and worshiped. Illiteracy was rife and Bibles were rare, and few had access to the written Word of God. Now, however, the Bible is available worldwide, and in nearly every language. For those who have diligently searched and studied its pages, many have come to understand that our Heavenly Father is not a God of torment or vengeance, but of wisdom, justice, power, and his crowning attribute—love. (I John 4:7-10) God’s great love is shown in the oft-repeated promise of the Scriptures, that it is his plan to bless all the nations and families of the earth.—Gen.12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8

Running “to and fro,” as Daniel also prophesied, has been a natural outgrowth of the increase of knowledge. We quote just one source to illustrate this point. In a study done less than two years ago, the United Nations World Tourism Organization estimated that internationally there were just 25 million tourist arrivals in 1950. Sixty-eight years later, in 2018, this number had increased to 1.4 billion international arrivals per year, or a 56-fold increase. Here again, we surely must conclude that Daniel’s words concerning mankind running to and fro have come to fruition. This, we believe, has all been by the outworking of God’s plan, not by mere human collaboration.

TIME OF TROUBLE

Daniel also foretold of a great “time of trouble” to come upon the world during the same period as when knowledge would be greatly increased and the people would “run to and fro.” Throughout history

there have always been troubles of various kinds in the world. However, when we think of the history of the world from 1914 until the present time, we see two distinct characteristics of the trouble that had never existed before. First, troubles have become worldwide in many cases, and not restricted to small areas of the earth. Second, man now has the ability to destroy earth's entire population, a condition that was not possible less than a century ago.

Jesus quoted this portion of Daniel's prophecy when he said, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time." Then he added, "no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24:21) When this trouble is over, and when his righteous kingdom is established, Jesus' words will be fulfilled accurately and fully. This, indeed, will be the last great time of trouble that the world will ever know. We thank God for that! We are still in this time of trouble, and it will no doubt seem to get worse for a time. Nevertheless, when it is over, a new order of society will begin "on earth," one for which millions have prayed for the past 2,000 years: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10

A GLORIOUS TOMORROW PROPHESED

Daniel's prophecy also contains language concerning events which yet lie future. He states, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." (Dan. 12:2) Just as surely as God, through Daniel, prophesied the increase of knowledge, the running to and fro, and the time of trouble, he also prophesied that those who sleep in the dust of the ground shall awake—that is, the resurrection of the

dead will come to pass. Is our faith strong enough to believe this?

If we are unsure, let us look at other prophecies which foretell of this glorious future time. The first of these is a general one. It is found in Psalm 30:5: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Here we are assured of the morning of a new day. That is what this prophecy means. It says that following this symbolic "night" of trouble and "weeping," there is to be a new day marked with the joy of divine blessing.

Isaiah the prophet spoke similarly, saying, "Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night." (Isa. 21:11,12) We are still in the nighttime of trouble, and according to this prophecy, it is not yet over. However, just as surely also, according to this prophecy, "the morning cometh," and a new day will begin. The morning will come when the "Sun of righteousness" will arise with "healing in his wings," words from yet another prophecy. (Mal. 4:2) The Apostle Paul, likewise, saw this time when he said, "The night, is far spent and, the day, hath drawn near." (Rom. 13:12, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Therefore, let us rejoice in the knowledge that a glorious new day is soon to break!

BLIND EYES OPENED

The time is coming when "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 are the words of God, through his faithful prophet, not merely a wishful thought on the part of Isaiah.

Other prophecies speak of this time as being when wars will be no more. “They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.” (Isa. 2:4; Ps. 46:9) That is not all. “Thus saith the LORD, 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.”—Jer. 31:33

During the present Gospel Age, the Lord has been taking out of the world his church, a “little flock,” “a people for his name.” (Luke 12:32; Acts 15:14) Then, after that little flock is chosen and glorified, this present age will come to an end, and the new day that so many have prayed for, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” will become a reality. (Matt. 6:10) All of these prophecies, and many more, which refer to the conditions of life and peace on the earth, will then be fulfilled.

“They shall build houses, and inhabit them,” and every man shall sit “under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.” (Isa. 65:21; Mic. 4:4) These words do not sound like heaven, do they? They speak of an earthly kingdom—“thy will be done in earth.” When we take these Scriptures and put them in their proper time setting, we can understand the development of God’s great plan of the ages. The church, the little flock, receives the spiritual or heavenly reward. Then all the remainder of mankind will have the opportunity to be blessed with life on the earth.

TWO PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

The Scriptures thus testify that God's coming kingdom is of two parts—a heavenly phase and an earthly phase. We know that present conditions on the earth are not in harmony with God's standards of righteousness, but the Bible says the day will come when they will. All the willing and obedient will recognize the power of God in the affairs of earth. In that day, the Bible promises, mankind will come "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—Isa. 35:10

The prophecies concerning Jesus during his First Advent were accurately and definitely fulfilled. The prophecies of our day are similarly coming to pass. The Bible says that "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Those who respond to the heavenly call during the present Gospel Age, and are faithful unto death, are described as those "that have done good." These receive the heavenly nature, "the resurrection of life." (John 5:28,29) The remainder of mankind—those who either did not hear or respond to the heavenly call, or who lived prior to the Gospel Age, are described as "they that have done ill," and will receive the "resurrection of judgment." (vs. 29, *Revised Version*) They will be raised to life on earth, after the heavenly resurrection has been completed, and all will be given an opportunity to "learn righteousness."—Isa. 26:9

Then will begin the fulfillment of the prophecy of Revelation 21:3-5, in which John said: "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall

be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

Before that new day ends, God’s will shall be done as fully in earth as it is in heaven. Let us, therefore, look forward to the future with definite assurance. Let us also realize that our God is worthy of our worship and adoration, because he has arranged for the fulfilment of the promises that he made to Abraham when he said he would bless all the families of the earth. ■

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 Wanda Sroczynska, Plesna, Poland—March 19. Age, 84

Brother Zdzislaw Kwasnik, Gdansk, Poland—March 23. Age, 94

Brother Julian Probierz, Wloclawek, Poland—March 25. Age, 79

Brother Jan Zub, Bilgoraj, Poland—March 29. Age, 95

Sister Ann Barzyk, Livonia, MI—April 9. Age, 92

Brother Mikolaj Zyly, Bilgoraj, Poland—April 10. Age, 78

A Prophecy Against Ahab

Key Verse: “Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.”
—I Kings 22:23

Selected Scripture:
I Kings 22:1-40

DURING THE CLOSING

years of Israel’s wicked King Ahab, God used and blessed the Prophet Micaiah because of his fidelity to tell the truth, irrespective of how he might be affected. Although Micaiah was placed in trying circumstances, he was determined to relate God’s message as he received it, regardless of how much it might displease the king.

Ahab solicited the help of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, in capturing Gilead from the Syrians. Jehoshaphat indicated his willingness to cooperate but suggested they first consult the Lord in the matter by inquiring of his prophets whether or not they could expect divine guidance and help. King Ahab had surrounded himself with “prophets” who were quite willing to speak pleasant things to make him happy. Four hundred of them were summoned, and they all assured Ahab he would be victorious in capturing Gilead.—I Kings 22:1-6

Jehoshaphat was not convinced and asked if there was another prophet of Jehovah of whom they might inquire. Ahab told him about Micaiah, but said he did not favor him because, “He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.” This statement reveals the perverse attitude of

Ahab. He was determined to have his own way, even if he had to silence God's prophets who were bold enough to tell him the truth. He desired to listen only to those who were willing to compromise their message in order to please him. Jehoshaphat, however, insisted that Micaiah be consulted. Since Ahab greatly needed his help he yielded, and this lone prophet of the Lord was summoned.—vss. 7-9

The messenger sent to bring Micaiah before Ahab and Jehoshaphat was evidently a devout associate of King Ahab. He warned the prophet that it would be in his best interest to prophesy good rather than evil. However, Micaiah was not dissuaded by this from telling the truth.—vss. 13,14

The prophet's account of the vision by which the Lord gave him this information is most interesting, although it should not be understood literally. Using the form of a story, Micaiah tells Ahab that the Lord had declared disaster for him, but God had put a "lying spirit" in the mouth of all the king's prophets to entice him to the battle. His lesson is that God will often permit those to be deceived whose hearts are already perverse and wicked. (vss. 15-23) The apostle Paul tells us about a similar class during the Gospel Age to whom the Lord would send a "strong delusion" that they might believe a lie.—II Thess. 2:11

Here is a heart-searching lesson for every follower of the Master concerning the great importance of keeping our hearts pure and sincere before God. If we love the Heavenly Father's will more than we love ourselves, or our family and friends, his providence will direct us. No matter how hard Satan may try to deceive us, he will not be able to accomplish his evil purposes. However, if we are looking for a way other than that of truth and righteousness, the Lord may permit the great Deceiver to lead us astray. Just as the Prophet Micaiah was eventually vindicated, so also it will be with all those who remain faithful to the truth which the Lord gives to them. ■

Hope for the Future

Key Verse: *“They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.”*
—Isaiah 29:24

Selected Scripture:
Isaiah 29:13-24

ALTHOUGH THE LESSONS contained in our selected verses were directed toward Israel during the days of the Prophet Isaiah, the principles contained in them equally apply to mankind in general. Isaiah 29:9 says that Israel was “drunken” and “they stagger,” yet it was not the result of wine or strong drink. They had become intoxicated with the false teachings of the heathen nations around them. Israel had forgotten the principles of righteousness contained in their Law, delivered by God through the hands of Moses. Because of this, God gave them “the spirit of deep sleep,” closing their eyes for a time and sealing his word from further understanding. —vss. 10,11

In general, mankind has also forgotten God’s laws of righteousness and has instead substituted in their place the laws of selfishness, greed, pride, and other principles which have their origin in Satan, the “god of this world.” (II Cor. 4:4) Here too, God has turned away his face from fallen man during this present period of sin and iniquity on the earth. Paul wrote concerning Israel, and by extension the world of mankind, “God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”—Rom. 11:32

Israel’s unfaithfulness was due to their heart condition.

They had an outward show of obedience to God, but had “removed their heart far from” him, and their fear of God was “taught by the precept” of fallen men. (Isa. 29:13) As a result, the nation fell into a slavish fear of bondage to outward ceremonies and manmade traditions, rather than a reverential fear based on faith and trust in the great God who had provided for their every need. Despite the unfaithfulness of natural Israel, as well as mankind’s general lack of faith and obedience toward God, our Creator has made a wonderful provision through the salvation given by his only begotten Son, Christ Jesus.

All of Israel and mankind will have the opportunity of coming back into heart harmony with God in Christ’s coming kingdom. Isaiah writes, “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, ... a marvellous work and a wonder.”—vs. 14

Verse 17 speaks of a time when the wilderness shall become “a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest.” It is to be a time when the knowledge of God will fill the earth, and his ways will be made plain to all mankind. Then, the prophet writes, “The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”—vs. 19

“Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.” (vss. 22,23) Soon will be the time when all people shall come to a true understanding of the Heavenly Father. As our Key Verse states, they will “learn doctrine”—the just and righteous teachings of God’s will for men, and no one will be permitted to deceive them any longer. ■

Jeremiah Warns Zedekiah

Key Verse: *“Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?”*
—*Jeremiah 38:15*

Selected Scripture:
Jeremiah 38:14-23

JEREMIAH WAS CHOSEN

by God as a prophet of Israel from before his birth. (Jer. 1:5) During his life he witnessed many crises in the nation of Israel. For forty years he went forth with untiring zeal and bold confidence to warn the people of their wicked ways and proclaim the impending disaster that would surely come upon them if they failed to heed God’s instructions.

The prophet’s strong warnings were mostly ignored by the Israelites, who were then forced to endure many hardships which were allowed to come upon them because of their disobedience. Zedekiah, the last reigning king of Judah, wanted to hear Jeremiah’s guidance. However, he chose a course contrary to the Lord’s will. Towards the end of his reign, a rebellion by the Israelites took place which brought a quick response from the Chaldeans, who placed the city of Jerusalem under siege.

Jeremiah’s prophesying was very unpopular amongst the Israelites. He was accused of weakening the hands of the soldiers, as well as of the people. He was even singled out as one who deserved a traitor’s death. At one point,

he was cast into a cistern and left to die, but the king released him when an Ethiopian eunuch interceded on his behalf.—Jer. 38:4-13

“Then said Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, Thus saith ... the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon’s princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, ... But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon’s princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.”—vss. 17,18

Jeremiah’s warning to Zedekiah indicated that if he would exercise faith in God and let him take care of the Babylonian king and his princes in his own due time and way, the nation could avoid the great disaster which would otherwise come upon them. Jerusalem would remain intact and the Israelites could continue to worship at their own temple.

Zedekiah, however, resolved to continue the hopeless struggle against the overwhelming power of the Babylonians. He was sorely defeated. Jerusalem was destroyed and nearly all its citizens were carried away as exiles into Babylon. Thus Jeremiah’s prophecies came to pass, proving that they were inspired by God.

In Jeremiah chapter 30 is another prophecy pertaining to a further climactic experience which God brings upon the regathered nation of Israel at the end of the present Gospel Age, identified as “Jacob’s trouble.” As a consequence of this severe trial, they will have no other alternative than to turn to God and trust him to save them. Afterwards, they will learn righteousness and their nation will be exalted.

While this account pertains to the Jewish nation in Jeremiah’s day, there is a lesson applicable to spiritual Israel in our time. It is the necessity of looking for God’s will in a particular matter and, once it is understood, to exercise faith and trust by leaving it in his hands. ■

The Righteous Shall Live

Key Verse: *“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”*
—Ezekiel 18:4

Selected Scripture:
Ezekiel 18:1-9,30-32

me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.”—Ezek. 18:1-3

The people of Israel had often blamed their sins on the failure of their ancestors. The Heavenly Father refuted this logic. Through Ezekiel he indicated that individuals are held responsible for their own sins. Continuing the account, several examples are given concerning the justice of God, illustrated by the wicked son of a righteous man, the righteous son of a wicked father, a wicked man who repents, and a righteous man who forsakes his righteousness and commits iniquity. (vss. 5-24) In any of these situations, God desires repentance from the one who sins, and

UNLIKE JEREMIAH, WHO prophesied in Judah and foretold its destruction before he was taken captive, the Prophet Ezekiel received his commission from God while in Babylon. (Ezek. 1:1-3) Ezekiel warned the house of Israel concerning the consequences of their unfaithfulness to God. In the verses preceding our Key Verse, he prophesied:

“The word of the LORD came unto

has no “pleasure” in the death of any individual.—vs. 32

As a result of Adam’s disobedience, “there is none righteous.” If Jesus had not given his perfect humanity as ransom to purchase all mankind, no one would be able to meet the Heavenly Father’s requirements to attain everlasting life.—Rom. 3:10; Ps. 49:7

During the present Gospel Age, those who have repented from sin, and who fully consecrate themselves to do the Heavenly Father’s will, and who additionally are diligently striving to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, are counted by God as having been justified. (Rom. 8:1,28-30) If faithful in carrying out their vows of consecration, they will receive a heavenly reward and assist the Master during the coming kingdom in restoring mankind back to the state of perfection that Adam and Eve enjoyed before they were disobedient.

A future application of the principle that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die,” will also occur when Satan is bound. Then mankind will have the opportunity to attain perfection through obedience and live forever. At that time, all will be accountable for their own deeds because they will be fully enlightened as to the Heavenly Father’s standards.—Jer. 31:30-34

God does not purposely desire the destruction of individuals. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3:16,17) Our Heavenly Father is a God of love and compassion who has made provision for the salvation of all who desire to come into harmony with his righteous will.

When all mankind will be raised from the tomb, each will be given an opportunity to come into full harmony with God. Those who heartily obey his righteous precepts “shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:1-10; Rev. 21:1-4 ■

Jonah Preaches to Nineveh

Key Verse: *“God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.”*
—Jonah 3:10

Selected Scripture:
Jonah chapter 3

“Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.” (vss. 5-8) As stated in our Key Verse, the Lord hearkened to their repentance and permitted their national existence to continue.

An important lesson from this account is the great compassion of our loving Heavenly Father. (Ps. 103:8-14) God was pleased to have the Ninevites turn from their sins to hearty repentance. As a result, he rejoiced in granting them an extension of earthly life, and “repented” of

GOD INSTRUCTED HIS prophet Jonah, saying: “Arise, go unto Nineveh, ... and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.” Jonah obeyed and proclaimed the Lord’s message, which was that in forty days the city of Nineveh would be overthrown.—Jonah 3:1-4

The people of Nineveh believed the message God had sent to them, repented of their sinful course, and sought forgiveness. Nineveh’s king proclaimed,

the destruction he had pronounced to them through Jonah.

How can God repent and change his mind if he knows “the end from the beginning?” The word “repented” in our Key Verse has a wider meaning than is generally appreciated. Mankind uses it most often only in respect to a change of purpose. However, the word repent can mean either a change of action or a change of purpose, or in some cases both. God’s purposes do not change. (Isa. 14:24) He does, however, when appropriate, change his actions.

By way of example, the nation of Israel, God’s favored people for centuries, was cut off and his actions towards them changed as a result of their disobedience. However, God’s eternal purposes never changed toward Israel. He foreknew and foretold their rejection of Jesus and his rejection of them, and how later they would be regathered to their own land, would repent and be forgiven, and ultimately would be blessed by Messiah.

In recognition of another aspect of God’s purposes, Jesus declared that the Gospel was to be preached not just to Jews only, but to “all nations.” This preaching was not intended to convert all, but rather to be “for a witness.” A few individuals, from all nations, have responded to the heavenly call during the present age.—Matt. 24:14; Luke 24:46,47; I Cor. 1:26-30

God’s loving demonstration of forgiveness, even to a pagan people like the Ninevites, is a powerful lesson for the follower of Christ, as to how God views sincere repentance from any of our indiscretions. As imperfect human beings, even spirit-begotten believers realize it is possible to be overtaken by sin, whether unintentional, partially willful, or fully willful with the potential for serious consequences. When acts of sin occur, they need to be quickly acknowledged and repented of if we want to be restored to God’s favor. Prayer and filling our minds with holy thoughts are two effective ways for preventing or reducing the incidence of sin in our lives.—II Pet. 3:9; Ps. 19:12-14 ■

Our Comforter

*“I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you
another Comforter,
that he may abide
with you for ever; Even
the Spirit of truth;
whom the world
cannot receive, because
it seeth him not,
neither knoweth him:
but ye know him; for
he dwelleth with you,
and shall be in you. I
will not leave you
comfortless: I will
come to you.”
—John 14:16-18*

IN LIGHT OF THE MOST unusual and stressful conditions which we have seen and faced during the past year, how thankful we should be that God has called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light,” and that he has given us the ability to understand “the deep things of God.” (I Pet. 2:9; I Cor. 2:9-11) In response to this, our thoughts should first go to the love of God, who is the source

of the comfort spoken of in our title.

The Scriptures tell us, “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. ... We love him, because he first loved us.” “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” (I John 4:16,19; John 3:16) God’s great love for us should result in a like response in our heart, and a manifestation of our love for him, his Son Christ Jesus, the Word of Truth, our brethren and our fellow man. Such love is identified as the

crowning feature of the Christian character. “Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”—I Cor. 13:13, *New International Version*; Gal. 5:22,23; II Pet. 1:5-7

SOURCES OF COMFORT

The word “Comforter” in our opening text is a translation of the Greek word *parakletos*, and can be variously defined as a consoler, intercessor, guide and helper to the Lord’s people along the Christian way. The Apostle Paul wrote, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” (II Cor. 1:3,4) The apostle continues, “For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, ... because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.” (vss. 5-7, *NIV*) “Comfort” is referred to ten times in these words of Paul, showing both our great need to receive it from God, and also the privilege of sharing it with one another.

Jesus is also a comforter and helper to his followers. Shortly after his baptism, he traveled back to his hometown of Nazareth to begin his ministry. Reading in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, Jesus quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to

the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” (Luke 4:18; Isa. 61:1) Surely we see in these words the spirit of comfort and care which our Master would show forth to all his footstep followers.

The Bible, too, is a great source of comfort to God’s people. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 15:4,5) God’s Word, as the foundation of truth, is not only to be a source of comfort to us, but to also engender within us the desire to “be likeminded one toward another.” Thus we see both the privilege of receiving comfort and of giving it forth to others.

“ANOTHER COMFORTER”

In our opening text, Jesus identifies the “Spirit of truth” as “another Comforter” of great importance to the Christian. Later in this same chapter, Jesus says, “The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, ... shall teach you all things.” (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit, which is the invisible power and influence of God, is a comforter to those seeking to know and do the Father’s will, by revealing through the Scriptures his plans and purposes, promises and admonitions. Thus peace, joy and contentment are found in the instruction of God’s Word amid distress, tribulation and even persecution. The Apostle Peter states that God’s “divine power” has enabled us to know and claim for ourselves “exceeding great and precious promises,” by which

we might become “partakers of the divine nature.”
—II Pet. 1:3,4

Later in his discourse to the disciples, Jesus again uses the phrase, “the Spirit of truth.” He states that it “shall testify of me.” Furthermore, he continues by saying that when this Spirit of truth, God’s holy influence, came to his followers, it would guide them “into all truth,” and show them “things to come.” (John 15:26; 16:13) In other words, the Holy Spirit would bring comfort to Jesus’ followers by opening up their minds and hearts to the many facets of truth contained in the Word of God.

ENLIGHTENED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

After Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples did not have long to wait for the fulfillment of this promise. Fifty days later, on the “day of Pentecost,” the Holy Spirit came, and its power was made manifest just as Jesus had promised. Certain outward signs were evident, such as the miraculous ability of the apostles to speak and be understood in other languages. More importantly, however, the influence of God’s Holy Spirit opened the minds of the apostles to an understanding of certain portions of prophecy which prior to that time were a mystery to them.—Acts 2:1-11

One of these was Joel 2:28-32. Peter, newly endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, came to a sudden awareness that this Scripture was now beginning to have a fulfillment. He realized that the recorded prophecies, visions and dreams which God had visited aforetime upon his people of old, but shrouded in mystery for ages and generations, were now commencing to be understood. The purpose of this understanding was to give vision,

hope and instruction for the call of a new age then beginning. Peter said: "This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit."—Acts 2:16-18

After long centuries of obscurity, this portion of God's Word was being unveiled. The descendants, "sons" and "daughters" of natural Israel, as they were represented in the apostles and their associated Jewish disciples, were on that very day "prophesying," or giving public witness, of the call to come into Christ. The apostles were the "young" and "old" men selected by the Lord to interpret these visions, and to make clear the understanding of things long past received from God and written in veiled language. All of this was for the instruction of those called as "servants and handmaidens" of God, to be joined together as part of the "body of Christ."—I Cor. 12:27

This invitation was "to the Jew first," but eventually extended to those called "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." (Rom. 1:16; 2:10; Rev. 5:9) This new and broader aspect of God's dealings, to be accomplished by the pouring out of his Spirit, was included in Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. He said: "The promise [of the Holy Spirit] is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."—Acts 2:39

Other vital truths began to be unfolded to the apostles. They were able to understand that Psalm

16:10, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” was not written about David, but was a prophetic statement pointing to the death and resurrection of Jesus. (Acts 2:25-31) Peter’s oration on that day included another important quotation from the Psalms: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34,35) The apostle applied this Old Testament prophecy to mean that Jesus’ kingdom was future and would be a heavenly or spiritual government. This was a truth which was not previously understood. Yet, it confirmed what Jesus had stated before he died: “My kingdom is not of this world.”—John 18:36

Based on this new understanding, Peter, as spokesman for the apostles, appealed to his listeners to join with them in accepting a call to be joint-heirs with Jesus in his heavenly kingdom, the preparation of which was to be accomplished through the power, influence and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. “Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”—Acts 2:38

“DEEP THINGS OF GOD”

The close association of the Holy Spirit with the Word of Truth is expressed by Paul in his letter to the Corinthian brethren. He wrote, “We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (I Cor. 2:7,8,

Revised Standard Version) The Scriptures which hold the “secret and hidden wisdom of God” were written in ages past for the benefit and glory of Christ’s footstep followers of the present Gospel Age.

Prior to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, no one understood this ultimate purpose of God written within the lines of his Word. Quoting from the Old Testament, Paul said, “Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.” (Isa. 64:4; I Cor. 2:9) This observation, made some 700 years before Christ, ends Isaiah’s treatment of the matter. However, Paul, who was writing to those for whose special benefit the Scriptures were ordained, hastened to add: “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—vs. 10

The “deep things of God” are, in reality, the fundamental truths of the Bible which reveal to us the various features of his plan necessary for our development as “firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18) These truths are “deep,” or mysterious, because those not enlightened by God do not see them. Paul says that this special enlightenment comes through the influence of the Holy Spirit. “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.”—I Cor. 2:11-13

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF TRUTH

The Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of Ephesians, systematically outlines three essential elements of the “deep things of God,” which form a foundation of knowledge necessary to intelligently yield ourselves to the counsel of the Father’s will. He writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”—Eph. 1:3-6

Here the apostle beautifully expresses the first of these important truths so inseparably linked to the work of the Holy Spirit—the “high calling” of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:14) He tells us that before the world, or present order of things, came into existence, God preordained to use these conditions as a testing ground for the selection and preparation of a spiritual family—children to be associated with Jesus in his own divine household. The accomplishment of this supreme act of grace by the good pleasure of God’s will, required those called to be thoroughly tested and perfected in the heart qualities of faithfulness and holiness, being “without blame before him in love.”—Eph. 1:4

It was God’s purpose that this high calling would be accomplished by the selection from among mankind of those who would be willing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, heeding *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) his invitation to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him. (Matt. 16:24) To do this objectively, like Jesus, they too must be made aware of, and understand, the scope of the high calling, and what they must do to qualify to be part of God's divine family.

As the logic of the Apostle Paul subsequently unfolds in the first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, his sound reasoning asserts that a knowledge and appreciation of this great truth of the high calling is vitally essential. It is further necessary that the prospective children of God have the Holy Spirit effectively work in their lives toward the achievement of this grand hope. Peter expresses similar thoughts to those of Paul, saying that those who accept this call are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit. ... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, ... reserved in heaven for you."—I Pet. 1:2-4

Paul points out a second essential truth necessary for our understanding—redemption through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus—in Ephesians 1:7,8: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." The ministry of sacrifice carried out by Jesus as a perfect man at his First Advent provided the means preordained by God through which the high calling is made available to us. We have redemption, or deliverance, from the fallen condition of

inherited sin, through faith in Jesus' blood, which represents the value of the ransom he provided. Thus receiving forgiveness of sins, we accept the invitation of our Lord to take up our cross and follow him. If faithful in sharing with him in his suffering, we shall also be partakers of his glory.—Rom. 8:17

No other doctrine of truth is more essential as that of our redemption through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. His dedicated fulfillment of the sacrificial pictures and prophecies of the Old Testament, and the interpretations by the apostles in their writings concerning this outstanding feature of God's plan, have laid for us a proven foundation of faith and knowledge. Such faith reveals the path of attainment to the hope of our calling. By adding the character qualities of patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love, we will be "neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," through which by "giving all diligence," we can make our "calling and election sure."—II Pet. 1:5-10

In Ephesians 1:10, Paul mentions the third essential feature of truth pertaining to the object of our calling—the future work of restoring the entire race of mankind back to life and favor with God. This verse reads: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." This will be the glorious work of the "restitution of all things," and the blessing of all the "kindreds of the earth."—Acts 3:21,25

"ABLE MINISTERS"

It is noteworthy to observe how closely the Scriptures throughout the New Testament relate the

preparatory experiences of the church to their ultimate purpose for the world's salvation. We are being prepared to be sympathetic high priests. How well this point was expressed by Paul when he stated that God is now writing in the hearts of his people, not with ink, but with his Spirit, his purpose of making them "able ministers of the new testament," or covenant.—II Cor. 3:3-6

The New Covenant, to be mediated by the Christ class, will be the means through which all things in earth will be gathered and eventually brought back into harmony with God. Christ and his church, possessing a heart appreciation of God's law, will be able to convey its precepts to the resurrected people of Earth in such a way that they, too, will be effected by the spirit of righteousness. Taking God's law into their own hearts, they will learn to love its principles and desire to live by them. By coming to love God and his law of righteousness, all things "which are in heaven, and which are on earth" will thus be gathered together "in him," Christ Jesus.—Eph. 1:10

These three foundation truths of the Gospel—the high calling, the ransom, and restitution—so nicely sequenced in the first chapter of Ephesians, are compositely referred to in the thirteenth verse as "the gospel of your salvation." Paul says that this Gospel forms the basis upon which we are "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," not by hearing it only, but by believing. Believing implies understanding, in such a way as forms a firm foundation for faith.

The Holy Spirit of promise is the "pledge and foretaste of our inheritance, in anticipation of its full redemption." (vs. 14, *Weymouth New Testament*) Our

covenant of sacrifice with God, based on our acceptance of the high calling, faith in our redemption through Jesus, and our desire to suffer with him to share with him in the glory of the kingdom, is validated by God with his seal, which Paul says is the Holy Spirit. (vs. 13) As we see its influence working in our lives to help us toward the fulfillment of our covenant, it becomes to us a “pledge” from God, which assures us that, if faithful unto death, we shall be joint-heirs with Christ and coworkers in restoring mankind back to favor with their Creator.

How beautifully this is expressed in the words: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.”—Eph. 1:17-20

Great comfort has come to God’s people through the privilege of being called by him and adopted into his family. Indeed, the begetting of the Holy Spirit, its holy influence, comfort, and help, is a daily guide to our hearts, minds, words and actions. It opens to us the Scriptures, and causes our hearts to burn within us as we are brought to a greater appreciation of the “breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” of our Father’s glorious plan of salvation for ourselves and for all of the families of the earth.—Eph. 3:18

“A Faithful Saying”

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”

—II Timothy 2:11,12

PAUL’S SECOND LETTER to Timothy was written in prison at Rome. (II Tim. 1:16,17) He was nearing the end of the narrow way of sacrifice and suffering, and was quite “ready to be offered,” or to complete the offering which he began when it was pointed out to him by Ananias “how great things” he would be called upon to suffer for the “name’s sake” of his Lord. (II Tim. 4:6; Acts 9:16) Paul had admonished others to present their bodies a living sacrifice, and he had never held back from offering his own.—Rom. 12:1

From the beginning of his walk in the narrow way until the very end, which he had now reached, Paul had never wavered. As a Christian soldier, he had “fought a good fight,” and he had “kept the faith.” An important part of that faith was his confidence in the promises of God which, in their composite testimony, Paul refers to in our text as

“a faithful saying.” These promises assured him that if he suffered and died with Jesus he would be rewarded with the high honor of living and reigning with him. That is why he could write with such assurance that a “crown of righteousness” was laid up for him which the “Lord, the righteous judge,” would give to him at “that day,” and not to him only, but “unto all them also that love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:7,8

Paul had such implicit confidence in that “faithful saying” that he did not permit anything to swerve him from his course of self-sacrifice, no matter how much toil and suffering might be involved. We have an inspiring example of this on the occasion when, having returned to Caesarea following his third missionary tour, the brethren there endeavored to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem because the Holy Spirit had indicated that bonds and imprisonment awaited him there.—Acts 21:8-12

One less resolute in his determination to lay down his life in keeping with the terms of his consecration would gladly have taken the advice of his brethren and stayed away from Jerusalem. Paul, however, did not agree with his advisers. It is not clear from the record just why Paul was so convinced that it was the Lord’s will for him to visit Jerusalem on this occasion. We may be sure, though, that he was not acting presumptuously. As matters turned out, it was his experience in Jerusalem which resulted in his being taken to Rome under protective custody by the Gentiles.

The point to be emphasized is that Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem despite the fact that the Holy Spirit testified that bonds awaited him there.

Under the circumstances, the obvious conclusion to be reached by human reasoning would have been that the Lord did not want Paul to go to Jerusalem. However, this illustrates the possibility of interpreting the providences of God incorrectly, and to favor the inclinations of the flesh to avoid trouble.

Paul, though, was not guided by human reasoning. He was convinced that the Lord wanted him to visit Jerusalem at this time, so he interpreted the Holy Spirit's testimony as being a test of his fidelity and determination to fulfill the terms of his covenant of sacrifice. He said to his well-meaning but ill-informed advisers, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts 21:13

FAITHFULNESS LED TO DEATH

Paul was seized by a mob at Jerusalem, and but for the intervention of Roman soldiers he would have been killed by the Jews. He was arrested and became a prisoner. More than two years later, still as a prisoner, he had a long and much interrupted journey to Rome, during the course of which he suffered "perils in the sea" and of the land. (Acts 27:1-44; 28:1-16; II Cor. 11:25-27) Reaching Rome, he continued to be a prisoner for at least another two years, although he was granted the privilege of living in "his own hired house."—Acts 28:30,31

It is interesting and inspiring to read the account of Paul's experiences in being brought before kings, in traveling from place to place, in witnessing to prison guards, in being attacked by mobs, and in faithfully preaching the Gospel wherever he went.

All this he did without regard to how much it must often have been “out of season” for him to let his light shine. (II Tim. 4:2) How often when reading these accounts do we fully take into consideration the physical hardships involved, the inconveniences experienced, the heartaches and the loneliness entailed in the conduct of such a faithful ministry? How many of us today would be willing voluntarily to follow a similar course of privation and hardship?

There is always the danger of interpreting the Lord’s will in terms of which course in life will contribute most to our comfort, and result in the least difficulty and trial. God’s direction for any of us might well result in experiences which are pleasant to the flesh at times, even as his will on other occasions might lead to great sacrifice and suffering. The deciding factor, however, is not how we will be affected, but what the Lord wants us to do, and that decision must be reached through the guidance of his Word.

THE WAY OF SACRIFICE

We may be sure that Paul based his decisions upon the basic teachings of God’s Word concerning the privilege of the consecrated to suffer and to die with Jesus, inspired with the hope of living and reigning with him. The “faithful saying” he refers to in our text is in reality a teaching, or doctrine. Paul is not referring to any single statement or quotation, but to the general teaching of the Bible on this subject, testimony which is clearly set forth in both the Old and New Testaments.

These are “faithful” teachings, or as the Greek text puts it, “trustworthy.” We can put our trust in

these promises of God, for he is faithful, declares the apostle. (Heb. 10:23) To Paul the promises of God were so sure, and they set before him such a radiant joy, that he was given strength, even as Jesus was, to endure the cross and to despise the shame, which his course of faithfulness brought upon him. (Heb. 12:2) Having full confidence in the trustworthiness of God's promises, he counted his afflictions as "light" and of momentary duration when compared with the "eternal weight of glory" assured by the faithful saying of God's Word.—II Cor. 4:17,18

"LIKE ONE OF THE PRINCES"

The faithful saying, or teaching, concerning the rich reward which will be given to those who suffer and die with Jesus, is beautifully set forth in Psalm 82:6-8. In these verses the footstep followers of Jesus are prophetically referred to as "gods." Jesus quotes this passage and applies it to those "unto whom the word of God came."—John 10:34,35

In this reference, Jesus also reminds us that "the scripture cannot be broken." In other words, it is a faithful saying upon which we can depend. The Word of God was provided especially for the footstep followers of the Master during the present age. Jesus knew this, and in a later reference to his disciples he said, "I have given them thy word."—John 17:14

The words of the Psalm from which Jesus quoted represent God's prophetic declaration, and read as follows, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." It may seem strange that gods should "die like men, and fall like one of

the princes,” especially since they are the “children of the Most High.” However, the fact that they do go into death like “one of the princes,” namely Jesus, is one of the evidences that they are children of God. Perhaps Paul had this very passage in mind when he wrote, “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

It is important that we note the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words which are translated “gods” in Psalm 82:6 and in Jesus’ words found in John 10:34. The Hebrew word used by the psalmist is *Elohim*. Although it often has reference to God, the Almighty Creator, its meaning also denotes “rulers,” “judges,” “godlike ones,” and “special possessions of God.” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew Definitions*) In Jesus’ quote of this Psalm, the Greek word *theos* is translated “gods.” In similar fashion, though *theos* is often used in the New Testament with reference to the Heavenly Father, it is also translated “godly” several times—some examples being II Corinthians 1:12; 7:9-11; 11:2; and I Timothy 1:4. Thus, we are able to understand why both the psalmist and Jesus refer to “gods” as applying to those who are striving to have their lives conform to the godly principals embodied in the Heavenly Father and in his son, Christ Jesus.

Indeed, these “gods” die. As the world looks on, they see nothing in their life of sacrifice essentially different from the manner in which all mankind is dying. Any difference the world might see is not, as a rule, considered commendable, rather the reverse. These godly ones lay down their lives in the service

of their Creator, letting their light shine. The darkness hateth the light, however, and the sacrifices of these are often considered unnecessary and fanatical.

This is not the viewpoint of our Heavenly Father, for “precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” (Ps. 116:15) In I Peter 1:19 we read about the “precious blood of Christ,” by which we were redeemed. It is not difficult to understand that Jesus’ work of sacrifice, as illustrated by his shed blood, was precious in God’s sight, but it is almost staggering to our faith to read that our Heavenly Father looks upon our sacrifice in the same way.

Paul understood this viewpoint of the faithful saying, and that is why he wrote in Romans 6:10,11, that we should “reckon” ourselves to be dead “unto sin” in the same manner as Jesus “died unto sin.” Earlier, in verse 5 of this chapter, Paul explains that we are “planted together in the likeness” of Jesus’ death, and in verses 10 and 11 he is merely detailing what is involved in that likeness.

Certainly, however, we as fallen human beings have no life of our own which could be considered “precious” in God’s sight. It is only valuable because the life we “now live” is the one we receive through faith in the shed blood of the Redeemer. (Gal. 2:20) Since God authorizes us to reckon the matter thus, let us rejoice the more in the faithful saying, and endeavor daily to be loyal to our covenant of sacrifice.

TO REIGN WITH HIM

Jesus’ reference to the 82nd Psalm is in keeping with his statements as the risen Lord, when he instructed John the Revelator to write to the Christian churches: “Be thou faithful unto death, and

I will give thee a crown of life.” “He that overcometh, ... to him will I give power over the nations.” “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.” (Rev. 2:10,26; 3:21) Indeed, faithful Christians are promised to come forth in the “first resurrection,” to be “priests of God and of Christ,” and to “reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:6

Peter reminds us that the faithful saying, or teaching of the Lord concerning the sacrifices of this age, and the exaltation to which they lead, was testified by the Spirit through the prophets. He speaks of it as “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” (I Pet. 1:11) When Peter was with Jesus in the flesh it was very difficult for him to be reconciled to the viewpoint that one should suffer for doing good. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, however, he grasped the true significance of this phase of God’s plan, both as it related to Jesus and also the fact that his footstep followers have the privilege of suffering with him.

The “glory that should follow” faithfulness in suffering and dying with Jesus is what the “exceeding great and precious promises” meant to him, and should mean to us, whereby we will be “partakers of the divine nature,” if we remain steadfast unto the end. (II Pet. 1:4) Like Paul, Peter considered these promises to be faithful sayings upon which the followers of the Master can depend. They encouraged and inspired him to faithfulness, knowing that “even hereunto” he was called, “because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”—I Pet. 2:21

“THIS ONE THING I DO”

Paul was inspired and encouraged by the faithful sayings of God from the beginning to the end of his ministry. During his first imprisonment in Rome he wrote to the Philippian brethren about it, saying to them that he counted everything else in life as “loss” compared with the prospect of winning Christ and being a joint-heir in his kingdom. Furthermore, it was perfectly clear to him that the attainment of such high glory with his Lord was possible only through “fellowship” in his sufferings, and being made “conformable unto his death.”—Phil. 3:7-14

At this point in his Christian life, Paul did not feel as though he had fully “attained” that for which he had been “apprehended of Christ Jesus.” He did not know if he would soon reach the end of the way, or whether his trial period was nearly over. Earlier in his ministry Paul had admonished the Galatian brethren not to become “weary in well doing.” (Gal. 6:9) He had written to the brethren at Corinth that those who were too sure of their standing should “take heed” lest they fall. (I Cor. 10:12) He knew that he was a man of “like passions” as the brethren to whom he wrote. (Acts 14:15) Since Paul did not know if the time was near when his earthly walk would be ending, he was not in a position to express himself too confidently.

However, Paul did not intend to relax his effort. Whether the remaining time of his earthly ministry was long or short, he intended to apply himself wholly to this “one thing” of pressing toward “the mark of the prize for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13,14) In doing this, he would continue to bring his fleshly body “into subjection,”

lest after having preached to others he should himself be disapproved.—I Cor. 9:27

The Apostle Paul had served long and faithfully, and at the cost of much weariness, hardship, persecution and suffering. Now the most severe test of all was upon him. Many of the brethren with whom he served, and who could have been such a comfort to him in this hour of need, had turned against him. Some, perhaps, feared that identity with Paul would lead to their own imprisonment and death.—II Tim. 1:15; 4:10,16

We do not know all the details of the trial through which the apostle was passing, but it is evident that at the time he wrote this epistle he had already learned that he would soon be executed. He had said earlier in his Christian life that he was willing to die in Jerusalem for his Master. Then, however, he was not killed, for Roman soldiers were there and rescued him, so his affirmation of loyalty was not put fully to the test. Now it was different. The leaders of Rome were prepared to take his life, rather than save it, and the end was certain. Paul did not waver. “I am now ready to be offered,” he wrote, for “the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”—II Tim. 4:6,7

Had the apostle held back in the face of this final test, he could not have written so confidently. He had passed all the tests up to this point, and had not wavered. He was ready to gain complete victory, and therefore he wrote, “There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” (vs. 8) It was only by the strength of the Lord that Paul had received the news of his coming execution with courageous

valor befitting a “good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:3) With determination he had continued doing “this one thing,” and now he had “apprehended.” —Phil. 3:12,13

Even so, the great apostle knew that he needed the Lord to help him through these final hours just as he had leaned upon him throughout his entire pilgrim journey. He had learned to know his Lord: “I know whom I have believed,” he wrote, “and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” (II Tim. 1:12) That final day would be when Paul’s earthly life came to an end and he would fall asleep in death until the return of the Lord and the exaltation to glory of all those who “love his appearing.”—II Tim. 4:8

We can have no doubt that throughout Paul’s last hours he continued to be strengthened by that faithful saying which assured him, even as it also assures us, that “if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” (II Tim. 2:12) Paul did not deny the Lord even when doing so would have secured for him release from prison and from death. We know too that the Lord did not deny him, but stood by to strengthen and help him. Let us, therefore, keep and meditate upon the faithful sayings of the Word of God, that we, like Paul, might be faithful, “even unto death.” ■

*“I have set the LORD always before me:
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be
moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory
rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.”*

—Psalm 16:8,9

Joseph and His Brethren

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.”
—Genesis 37:3

THE PATRIARCH JACOB

had twelve sons, of whom Reuben was the eldest, and Benjamin the youngest. The others were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher and Joseph. When, toward the close of his life, Jacob

pronounced his parental blessing upon these twelve, God’s promise of a coming ruler, the one who would be the Messiah and channel of blessing to all the families of the earth, was narrowed down to the descendants of Judah.—Gen. 49:8-12

Of all these sons of Jacob, the Bible record deals more particularly with Joseph. He was the first-born of Rachel, the wife for whom Jacob served his father-in-law fourteen years. (Gen. 29:20,30) The account of Joseph’s experiences begins with the explanation found in our opening Scripture that Jacob, whose name had been changed to Israel, loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was

the son of his old age. The next verse says that when Joseph's brothers "saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."—Gen. 37:4

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave," the Scriptures declare. (Song of Sol. 8:6) This became clearly demonstrated in the attitude of Joseph's brothers toward him. Their jealousy and hate were increased when Joseph related a dream about which he said, "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf." Joseph's brethren saw in this dream a suggestion that Joseph expected one day to be ruler over them.—Gen. 37:5-8

Joseph "dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me." His brothers envied him even more after hearing this dream, and his father rebuked Joseph for relating it, asking, "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"—vss. 9,10

Although Jacob rebuked Joseph for relating these dreams, the record is that he "observed the saying." (vs. 11) We recall similar circumstances many centuries later, when it is said that Mary "pondered ... in her heart" the marvelous things which occurred when Jesus was born, and as he grew toward adulthood. (Luke 2:19,51) Jacob seemed to sense that God was dealing with Joseph in some special manner and that he was to be a man of destiny, even as later proved to be true.

Some time after Joseph had related his dreams, his brothers departed from home to go to Shechem to seek pasture for their flocks. Joseph, being quite young, remained at home with his father. Thus far, Joseph's brothers had given no outward evidence of a desire to injure him, despite their jealousy. Therefore, Jacob, wishing to know how his sons were getting along, asked his beloved Joseph to go to Shechem and bring back a report. Joseph was quite willing to render this service to his father, saying, "Here am I."—Gen. 37:12-14

Arriving in Shechem, Joseph learned that his brothers had moved on to Dothan, so he continued his journey and finally found them there. This afforded them the opportunity for which they had apparently been waiting, to manifest outwardly their hatred toward Joseph, and do so in the absence of their father. The account says that "when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh."—vss. 15-19

Their first plan was to murder Joseph, cast him into a pit, and then report to their father that his beloved boy had been slain by a wild beast. They said, "We shall see what will become of his dreams." However, Reuben, the oldest brother, while disliking Joseph, could not bring himself to participate in a plot to murder him. He suggested that, instead, they cast the lad into a pit and there leave him to die without actively shedding his blood. Reuben secretly planned, unknown to his brethren, to return to the pit, rescue Joseph and return him to his father.—vss. 20-22

The brothers agreed, and Joseph was cast into a pit. Before leaving the area, however, the brothers noticed a band of Ishmaelites who were passing nearby on their way to Egypt. Judah suggested that rather than abandoning Joseph in a pit, they instead sell him as a slave to the Ishmaelites. They reasoned that thus the object of their hate would be out of sight and out of their way, and yet they would not be guilty of murder. All agreed to this plan except Reuben, who was apparently not with the others when they sold Joseph. When he returned to the pit to rescue his brother and discovered that Joseph was not there, Reuben “rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?” —Gen. 37:23-30

JACOB’S DEEP SORROW

One crime often leads to another. Having disposed of their brother Joseph, it was necessary to offer some plausible explanation for his disappearance to their father, Jacob. They killed “a kid of the goats” and dipped Joseph’s coat in its blood to make it appear that he had been killed by a wild beast. Upon returning home, they presented this “evidence” to Jacob, who at once reached the conclusion that his beloved son was dead. He said, “It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.”—vss. 31-33

Jacob’s entire family endeavored to comfort him, “but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.” (vss. 34,35) It is interesting to note that the

Hebrew word here translated “grave” is *sheol*. It is the first time it appears in the Bible, and is the only Hebrew word which, throughout the Old Testament, is translated “hell.” The word *sheol* appears sixty-five times, and is translated “hell” thirty-one times, “grave” thirty-one times, and “pit” three times. Simply stated, it refers to the condition of death into which both the righteous and the unrighteous go when they die, there to await the resurrection. It is not a place of eternal torture or torment.

JOSEPH IN EGYPT

Ishmaelites and Midianites are both mentioned in connection with the selling of Joseph by his brethren, and his being taken into Egypt. The Ishmaelites were descendants of Abraham, through his bondmaid, Hagar. The Midianites were Abraham’s descendants through his wife, Keturah, whom the Scriptures mention following the death of Sarah. Evidently, therefore, the group to which Joseph was sold was mixed, hence the reference to them sometimes as Ishmaelites and sometimes as Midianites. Interestingly, then, all three groups—the Ishmaelites, Midianites, and Jacob and his family—were descendants of Abraham.

Arriving in Egypt, the Ishmaelites sold Joseph to Potiphar, “an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian. ... And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.” (Gen. 39:1,2) The statement, “the Lord was with Joseph,” is a brief summation of the marvelous series of events which would now take place in his life, and

the manner in which they would finally lead to his being reunited with his father and brethren.

Joseph knew that the Lord was with him, and his faith in this fact helped him to both endure trial, and to remain humble in prosperity. No matter how severely he was tested, his faith in the overruling providences of God remained firm. Regardless of how much honor was bestowed upon him, he gave all the credit to the Lord. Doubtless he often thought about the dreams which, when he related them to his brothers, caused them to hate him and to sell him as a slave. He probably wondered just how they were to be fulfilled, yet his faith that these had come from God was an assurance that all his experiences were being overruled by divine providence. Thus, regardless of surrounding circumstances, he made the best of them, ever looking to God for guidance and help.

The hand of God in Joseph's experiences was so apparent that even Potiphar, his Egyptian master, noticed it: "His master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand." (Gen. 39:3) This, together with Joseph's integrity and wisdom, gave his master confidence in him, "and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand." (vs. 4) Not only did the Lord bless Joseph personally, but for his sake he blessed Potiphar's household, concerning which he had been made overseer: "The LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field."—vs. 5

JOSEPH BETRAYED

Joseph's favorable position, however, did not continue long. Because he was a "goodly person, and well favoured," Potiphar's wife became enamored of him. When he refused her advances, she reported to her husband that his trusted servant Joseph had mocked her, and that when she lifted up her voice in a cry of alarm, he had fled, leaving his garment with her. Potiphar accepted this story and, without investigation, ordered that Joseph be put into prison.—vss. 6-20

"But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." (vs. 21) Though Joseph was permitted to be imprisoned, yet the statement is that the Lord was with him. God's people in that ancient time, even as now, found it necessary to walk by faith. It is not so difficult to believe that the Heavenly Father is with us when all the circumstances of life are to our liking. However, when things go wrong, when calamity strikes, when friends forsake us, or when we are persecuted for righteousness' sake, it requires a living faith in the wisdom and love of God to believe that he is still with us.

Such was the case with Joseph. The fact that he was misrepresented and put into prison did not mean that the Lord was not still with him. Joseph, though enduring hardness as a prisoner, did not despair, but maintained his faith in the God of his fathers. Few of the personalities of the Bible have this assurance recorded concerning them as frequently as we find it said of Joseph. Because the Lord was with him, even in prison, "the keeper of

the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."—Gen. 39:22,23

Thus we see that God was preparing for greater events in Joseph's life. Shortly after he had been given this trustworthy position in the prison, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, became offended by his chief butler and chief baker. They were put into prison and Joseph was assigned to attend to them. In due course, both of these men had dreams which disturbed them, and when Joseph came in to serve them in the morning, he noticed that "they were sad."—Gen. 40:1-6

He inquired concerning the cause of their sadness, and they told him of their dreams. Joseph, by God's help, correctly interpreted these dreams to mean that within three days the butler would be restored to his former position of honor in Pharaoh's house, and that at the close of three days the baker would be taken from prison and hanged.—vss. 7-23

When interpreting the butler's dream, Joseph asked that when he was reinstated as Pharaoh's chief butler, he speak a kind word for him, suggesting that he be released from prison. The butler's release from prison occurred on Pharaoh's birthday, and in the excitement of the occasion he forgot about Joseph and failed to mention his request to the king. As a result, Joseph languished in prison for two more years, which was a further test of his faith in and devotion to God.

At the end of two years God's providences again began to operate on behalf of Joseph. Pharaoh had two dreams. In these dreams "he stood by the river. And, behold there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine [cows] and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke."—Gen. 41:1-4

Then Pharaoh fell asleep and dreamed "the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream."—vss. 5-7

These dreams greatly disturbed Pharaoh, especially since none of the wise men of Egypt could interpret them for him. The chief butler, because of his close personal association with Pharaoh, would know of these circumstances, and by them he was reminded of Joseph. He was chagrined to realize that he had forgotten to speak to Pharaoh concerning Joseph, but even this the Lord had overruled, for now had come a most favorable opportunity to do so.

The chief butler remembered Joseph's ability to interpret dreams, and he told Pharaoh about him. The king of Egypt sent for Joseph at once. "They brought him hastily out of the dungeon," the record states, "and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh." Asked by

Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, Joseph, with humility said, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."—Gen. 41:9-16

Pharaoh then related his dreams to Joseph, to whom God gave the interpretation. Joseph explained that both dreams in reality represented the same thing: "The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one." He also explained that the seven ill-favored and lean kine, along with the seven empty ears "blasted with the east wind," were to be another seven years, and that these would constitute years of famine.—vss. 25-27

Joseph explained further that what God had revealed through Pharaoh's dreams was that there were to be seven years of plenty in Egypt, followed by seven years of drought and famine. That the Lord gave two dreams meaning the same thing, Joseph explained, was "because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Joseph then advised Pharaoh to select a wise administrator over the affairs of Egypt, that the best advantage might be taken of the seven years of plenty in preparation for the seven years of famine to follow.—vss. 28-36

JOSEPH EXALTED

Pharaoh was greatly impressed and also realized the wisdom of Joseph's recommendation. He said to Joseph, "Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou."—vss. 39,40

Surely the Lord was again with Joseph, not altogether for his own sake, but, as it later developed, for the salvation of his people, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and his father, Jacob. Joseph proved to be a wise food administrator, and although given extra dictatorial powers, he did not abuse them, nor did he use his high position to undermine the confidence of the Egyptians in their Pharaoh. One given such power and authority can be a great blessing if he is wise, unselfish, and humble, and Joseph possessed all these qualities.

Under his leadership, which began when he was thirty years of age, the Egyptians stored enormous quantities of food during the foretold seven years of plenty. Then began the seven years of famine, which was felt not only throughout Egypt but in neighboring countries as well, reaching even to Canaan, where Joseph's father, brothers, and their families resided. It is this that sets the stage for the climactic events which we will consider in Part 2 of this article, to appear in next month's issue of *The Dawn*. How blessed we are to know of these dramatic series of circumstances in the life of the young man who had been sold into slavery in Egypt. ■

*“All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight,
But the LORD weighs the motives.
Commit your works to the LORD
And your plans will be established.”*

*Proverbs 16:2,3
New American Standard Bible*

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

O. B. Elbert

Online Broadcast of Convention
Chicago, IL May 29,30

J. Parkinson

Online Broadcast of Convention
Chicago, IL May 29,30

R. Goodman

Online Broadcast of Convention
Detroit, MI May 1,2

D. Rice

Online Broadcast of Convention
Jacksonville, FL May 23

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MAY 6—"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Romans 8:14 (Z. '03-173 Hymn 196)

MAY 13—"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."—I Samuel 15:22 (Z. '03-218,219 Hymn 307)

MAY 20—"A peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus 2:14 (Z. '97-95 Hymn 322)

MAY 27—"In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."—Philippians 2:3 (Z. '97-296 Hymn 312A)

*Jesus, where'er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy seat:
Where'er they seek thee thou art found,
And every place is hallowed ground.*

*Great Shepherd, good, and wise, and true,
Thy former mercies here renew;
Here, to our hearts thy self reveal,
And let us each thy presence feel.*

—Hymns of Dawn

General Convention Bulletin

July 17-21, 2021—LIVE Zoom Convention

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its related uncertainties continue to affect many Bible Student activities. After much prayer and discussion, including the receipt of feedback from many brethren as well as from representatives of the convention venue in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, the General Convention Committee has decided that an in-person convention is not feasible for 2021. If it is the Lord's will, we look forward to the joys of returning to face to face fellowship, study and worship at the 2022 General Convention.

Although we are measurably disappointed not to be planning for an in-person gathering this year, the committee is pleased to announce that arrangements are being made for a live Zoom convention of five days in length, from Saturday, July 17, through Wednesday, July 21. The program will include live devotional services, discourses, discussions, testimony meetings and many opportunities for fellowship. Further details regarding the program schedule will be provided in coming months.

We rejoice in the efforts of our brethren around the world to continue staying connected and providing encouragement to one another during these uncertain times. May the Lord keep each of you, your families and those dear to you in his constant care. "Trust in him at all times."—Ps. 62:5-8 ■

CONVENTIONS

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

Numerous conventions continue to be held via online broadcast. Please contact the brethren shown in the listing to find out the status of a convention, and also how you can attend an online broadcast if one is planned.

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 1,2—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. Johnson. Email: beckystevej@aol.com

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 23—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact C. Johns. Phone: (904) 316-9587 or Email: johnsc11@aol.com

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 29,30—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact C. Martire. Email: christina.martire@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 6—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Elbert. Phone: (732) 710-8754 or Email: obe3@com-cast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 12,13—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 19,20—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact J. Wojcik. Email: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com

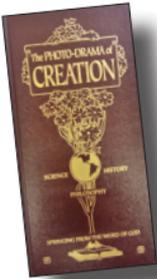
PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, July 3,4—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact B. Siwak. Phone: (306) 960-5526 or Email: bswk77@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 17-21—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

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

