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The Resurrection Victory

“If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”
—I Corinthians 15:13,14

THROUGHOUT THE EARTH there is turmoil, trouble, and ultimately, death. True to the prophecies of the Bible concerning the present time, chaos and distress prevail among all nations. We are, indeed, in the midst of “a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1) Only those who have complete confidence in the promises of God can enjoy peace of mind and heart amidst this confusion and contradiction in human experience.

The hope of a better day for mankind was made secure nearly two thousand years ago when Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of his Heavenly Father. Our faith pierces the dark clouds which hang so ominously over mankind, and beyond we can see the life-giving blessings of God’s tomorrow. We know that those now dying will be raised from the dead in that glorious day. We know this because

God has promised it, and he has demonstrated his ability to fulfill his promises by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Truly, we can say with Paul, “Now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”—I Cor. 15:20, *New American Standard Bible*

There was high hope among Jesus’ disciples when he was with them in the flesh, teaching and performing miracles. They believed that at long last God’s promises respecting the Messiah were about to be fulfilled. They were Jews, and Jesus was their Messiah, of whom great things had been promised. Daily he demonstrated that divine authority and power were operating through him for the ultimate accomplishment of all God’s good purposes concerning the children of men. He who healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, and raised the dead could surely deliver their nation from the Roman yoke, and establish the long-promised kingdom of God on earth.

HOPES DASHED

However, suddenly and unexpectedly, the Messiah was taken from his disciples and crucified. How their fond hopes and inspiring dreams must have been dashed to the ground! Their Master, Lord and Messiah was dead. What mixed emotions of bewilderment, disappointment and sorrow must have beset the hearts of those ardent disciples during the days of darkness between the time the “Prince of life” hung dead on the cross and the morning that the angel standing guard at his tomb announced, “He is not here: for he is risen.”—Acts 3:15; Matt. 28:6

Quickly that heart-gladdening news spread from one to another of the disciples. There was great joy and revival of hope on the part of most of them. However, Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared, and therefore did not believe their reports. Finally, though, he also was convinced that the power of God had intervened to restore their Master to them. (John 20:24-29) Later the Apostle Paul lists the evidences by which the fact of Jesus' resurrection had been established.

“He was seen of Cephas [Peter], then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.”—I Cor. 15:5-8

As Paul indicates, there were still many living in his day who had been personally acquainted with Jesus while in the flesh, and who had seen him after he had been raised from the dead. The testimony of these faithful witnesses was sufficient to convince new believers of the great miracle which God had wrought in raising the Master from the dead. Apparently, however, there were some in the Early Church who doubted that anyone could be resurrected, for Paul inquires, “How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?”—I Cor. 15:12

The Jewish sect of the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. (Matt. 22:23) Possibly some from among this group had come among the early Christians, partially accepting Jesus as the Messiah, but not willing to believe all that he taught, nor all

that the prophets had foretold concerning him. In combating this, Paul explains that taking the viewpoint that there is no resurrection destroys the whole foundation on which Christian faith and hope are based. If true, it would mean that even Jesus himself, their leader and Messiah, was still dead, not alive. This in turn would mean that all who had borne testimony of his resurrection would have been false witnesses.—I Cor. 15:13-16

If Christ has not risen, Paul further reminds us, then we are serving a lost cause, and our suffering as his followers is meaningless. The members of the Early Church risked their lives to be Christians, but “why stand we in jeopardy every hour,” if Jesus is still dead, and there is no resurrection hope for anyone? Why are we “baptized for the dead” world of mankind, if those for whose future benefit we are laying down our lives are to remain forever dead?—vss. 17-19,29-32

Paul insists that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then those who have “fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” (vs. 18) This would mean that God’s purpose in giving his Son to be man’s Redeemer has utterly failed. Jesus’ oft-repeated words would have no meaning, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) How clearly Paul discerned, and how unmistakably every Christian should recognize, that the hope of both the church and the world depends upon the exercise of divine power in raising the dead. Our assurance of God’s ability to do this is in the fact that Jesus himself was raised from the dead.

KINGDOM NOT IMMEDIATELY BEGUN

When Jesus was taken from his disciples and crucified, they were bewildered and discouraged because they did not understand the divine program that was being worked out through him. They believed that Jesus would establish a worldwide kingdom, and that they would share with him in the glory of that kingdom. They did not then understand that he must first suffer and die as man's Redeemer. This they learned later, and then they rejoiced in the cross of Christ, and what his shed blood meant to them, and what it would later mean to all mankind.

Shortly after the apostles fell asleep in death the church gradually developed the idea that the Messianic kingdom should be established here and now, without waiting for the return of Christ Jesus as earth's appointed king. This erroneous theory failed to take into account a very important phase of God's plan, namely, the calling out, suffering and death of the body members of the anointed Christ class. This work had to be completed before the glorious kingdom reign of Messiah could begin.

Most of the professed Christian church stumbled over the same truth concerning the followers of Jesus as did the early disciples with respect to the Master himself. The two disciples on their way to Emmaus did not understand why it was necessary for him to suffer and die. Jesus explained to them that this was first necessary, and then Messiah would enter into his glory. (Luke 24:13-32) With their eyes now opened, they grasped this thought and rejoiced in its implications. They learned later the additional truth that the sufferings of Christ

were not completed at Calvary, but would also include those of his “body” members. (I Cor. 12:12,27) Hence the glory of Messiah’s kingdom must still wait. This vital truth, however, was eventually lost sight of, and resulted in the efforts of church leaders to establish the kingdom ahead of time.

EFFORTS UNSUCCESSFUL

Kingdom efforts established by fallen man have not brought the promised blessings of universal and lasting peace to the nations of the earth. Now the full extent of these unsuccessful endeavors is plainly evident. For centuries, God kept silent, and restrained himself from interfering with man’s selfish course. (Isa. 42:14; Ps. 50:21) Even now, his almighty power has not been manifested to the masses of mankind. Hence, with the present distress, trouble, and perplexity so clearly visible in the affairs of the nations, and among society in general, the outlook is indeed dark for those who do not know the real plan of God. However, the Christian world in 2019, as they have for nearly two millennia, will commemorate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. All who participate will thereby implicitly acknowledge their belief in this greatest miracle of all time.

There was no evidence to the world of God’s protection for Jesus during the days of his suffering and crucifixion. There has likewise been no evidence to the world of divine shelter for the true followers of Jesus since. In the case of Jesus, God’s power was manifested, not in preventing his death, but in raising him from the dead. God’s power in the case of the faithful followers of Jesus will likewise be manifested in their resurrection from the dead, and

in their exaltation to reign with Christ. Most assuredly, the Heavenly Father provided strength of spirit which enabled Jesus to endure the contradiction of sinners. This is true also of his followers. However, this is a favor from God of which the world is not aware, and which is beyond the understanding of those not fully dedicated to the divine cause.

FIRSTFRUITS OF THOSE ASLEEP IN DEATH

The resurrection of Jesus was but the beginning of a program of miracles which, when complete, will have brought peace, health, happiness, and everlasting life to all mankind. The blessings of this kingdom will also come to those who are now dead, for when Jesus was raised from the dead he became "the firstfruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15:20) This is the heart-cheering assurance which the commemoration of Jesus' resurrection should give to every Christian this year despite the sorrows of the dying world with which he is surrounded.

Jesus died as the Redeemer of Adam and his race. Paul explains that all die "in Adam," but that all will be made alive "in Christ," that is, by coming into heart harmony with him. (I Cor. 15:22) The weak in faith may think of this as a reasonable theory, but one which has not worked out in reality. These may reason that if God could use his power to raise Jesus from the dead nearly two thousand years ago, why has there been no visible demonstration of that power since on behalf of those for whom Christ died, especially those who have faithfully followed in his footsteps.

The answer to this question is that God has a due time for the outworking of every feature of his

plan of salvation. After assuring us that the opportunity for the Adamic race to again have life is provided through Christ, the Apostle Paul adds: “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.” (vs. 23) When Paul explains that Christ in his resurrection became “the firstfruits of them that slept,” he evidently refers to Jesus alone. However, when he describes the order of the resurrection and uses the same expression, his reference clearly is not only to Jesus, but also to his faithful followers who, in the divine plan, are brought forth in the “first resurrection” to live and reign with Christ.—Rev. 20:4,6

AN OFFERING TO GOD

The “firstfruits” terminology is based upon God’s dealings with Israel during Old Testament times. It was a requirement of the Mosaic Law that the firstfruits of the harvest should be used as an offering to the Lord. In this arrangement there were not only the firstfruits in general, but also what was referred to as “the first of the firstfruits.” (Exod. 23:19) In harmony with this we might think of Jesus as being the “first” of the firstfruits, and all his faithful followers as the remaining firstfruits in God’s great “first resurrection” harvest.

Jesus offered himself in sacrifice to his Heavenly Father, and we are invited to follow in his sacrificial steps, offering ourselves to God. This is an important thought to keep in mind as we commemorate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. We should remember that if we desire to participate in the “first resurrection” to live and reign with Christ we must lay down our earthly lives in sacrifice,

faithfully even unto death.—Rom. 8:16,17; 12:1; II Tim. 2:10-12; Rev. 2:10

The offering to God of the firstfruits class has continued throughout all the centuries from Jesus' First Advent until now. Until that work of sacrifice is complete, and all the firstfruits raised from the dead and united with Christ Jesus in the spiritual rulership of the Messianic kingdom, the resurrection of the remainder of mankind cannot begin.

“AFTERWARD”—ANOTHER RESURRECTION WORK

“Afterward they that are Christ's at his coming,” Paul wrote—that is, after “Christ the firstfruits” are resurrected—then follows the resurrection of mankind in general. (I Cor. 15:23) The clarity of this thought is somewhat obscured by the translator's use of the word “coming” to translate the Greek word *parousia*. This Greek word means “presence” and should always be translated accordingly. Here the reference is not to the moment of Christ's second coming, but to the period of his presence in the affairs of earth following his return.

This thought is clearly shown in succeeding verses, which read, “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (vss. 25,26) Those who are Christ's during his presence as kingdom ruler are not the same as those previously mentioned as the firstfruits. Rather, they are those who, after the firstfruits class is complete, accept Jesus as their Redeemer and become obedient to the laws of his kingdom. These also will receive life through Christ.

This “afterward” resurrection will begin with an awakening from the sleep of death of those who

have not qualified through faith and obedience in this life to share in the rulership work of the Messianic kingdom. Upon their awakening from death, they will have revealed to them the knowledge of God's provision of everlasting life on earth through Christ. If they believe and progress to heart obedience of the laws of the millennial kingdom, they will be restored to perfection of human life, and live forever. This work will require the entire kingdom period, and only when it is complete will it be true that the great "last enemy," death, has been destroyed.

That there is to be an awakening of all the dead is shown by many of the promises and prophecies of the Bible. The Sodomites were destroyed because of their wickedness, but the prophet assures us that they will be restored to their "former estate"—an earthly one. (Ezek. 16:55) Jesus tells us that it will be "more tolerable" for Sodom in the day of judgment than for the Jews who rejected him at the time of his First Advent. (Mark 6:11) However, it will be "tolerable" for the Jews also, for after the work of the present age is complete, then "all Israel shall be saved," and this salvation is promised even to those unbelieving Jews who rejected Christ.—Rom. 11:26,31

NOT IN VAIN

The Apostle Paul closes his lesson on the resurrection of the dead, saying, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (I Cor. 15:57,58) Since

Jesus returned to heaven, and the apostles fell asleep in death, it has often looked as though there would be no genuine victory in the earth for the cause of Christ. It has also often seemed as though the Christian's labor in the Lord was in vain, but not so, Paul assures.

Throughout the age every faithful follower of the Master has experienced "victory" as he continued to lay down his life in sacrifice. When he was weak, God gave him strength. (II Cor. 12:9) He has realized that the mighty power which raised Jesus from the dead has been enlisted on his behalf. He has been encouraged and strengthened in all his efforts to know and to do the Heavenly Father's will. (Eph. 1:17-20) He has not been able to overcome the weaknesses of his flesh as he would like to have done. However, he has been assured that prayer at the "throne of grace" to acknowledge his sins and to seek forgiveness, through the merit of Christ's blood, has resulted in the covering of his fleshly weaknesses. (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 4:16; I John 1:7-10) At the same time, he has resolved more earnestly not to "continue in sin," but to be "dead to" and "not serve" sin, and to yield himself as a servant of God, having his "fruit unto holiness." (Rom. 6:1-22) Thus through Christ his victory has been made complete, and he has been able to rejoice in the Lord.

Every faithful Christian, moreover, knows that when his life of sacrifice has been finished, and he has been faithful unto death, his victory through Christ will be completed by the exercise of divine power to raise him from the dead, so that, as Paul wrote, this mortal will "put on immortality." (I Cor. 15:53) When all the faithful ones of this age have

finished their earthly course, and have been exalted in the “first resurrection,” together they will be united with Christ, becoming his “bride” in glory at the “marriage of the Lamb.”—Rev. 19:7; 21:9

Then will follow the fulfillment of the wonderful promise of Revelation 22:17, which assures us of the time when “the Spirit and the bride” will speak to all mankind as they are brought forth from the sleep of death, and say to them, “Come, ... take the water of life freely.” What a glorious and victorious consummation of the divine plan of salvation that will be!

STEADFAST AND UNMOVABLE

As again this year we contemplate all that is involved in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, what an incentive it should be to steadfastness in the Lord and in the truth of his Word. How it should strengthen our resolve to be faithful to the terms of our covenant of sacrifice, and to be loyal to one another as together we walk along in the narrow way which leads to life. May the resurrection doctrine of God’s plan, the ransom which makes the resurrection possible, and all the other fundamental teachings associated with it, impress us more than ever with the importance of these precious and glorious truths of the Bible.

To the extent that we are “steadfast” in the Lord and in the truth we will abound in the work of the Lord. Steadfast Christians cannot be otherwise than abounding Christians. We should abound in our love for the Lord and for our brethren. We should abound in laying down our lives for the brethren, and we should abound in proclaiming the glad tidings of

the kingdom far and wide as we have and can make opportunities. Remembering the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead should mean all of these things to us. We do not properly commemorate Jesus' resurrection by a display of fine clothes, but by a greater determination to follow his example of sacrifice resolutely even unto death.

Paul wrote, as already noted, that our "labour is not in vain in the Lord," but it would be in vain if Christ had not been raised from the dead. Then our faith also would be vain, and our testimony concerning Jesus and his kingdom would be false. On the other hand, our labor might well seem in vain because of the meager response we receive to our efforts in making known the glad tidings, but this is not really true. One of the greatest and most important results of all our labors in the Lord is the work of grace that it accomplishes in our own hearts.

Laboring in the Lord should strengthen our faith and increase our love. As we make known the glad tidings to others, this glorious truth should become more effective in transforming our lives into the likeness of Christ. If our hearts and motives are pure this will be one of the outstanding results of our ministry. In view of this we can truly affirm that our labor is not in vain.

As individuals we may not see any special results of our ministry. Yet, the work of the Lord's people as a whole is reaching and developing those whom the Lord is calling, one here and one there, to be joint-heirs with Christ, and this is a very important work indeed. It is thus that the "bride" is made ready for her union with Christ, and for joint heirship with him in his kingdom. Just as Paul could say in

his day that the labor of the Lord's people was not in vain, so we can now also be assured of this. The power of Christ's resurrection continues with the Lord's people today, and will soon extend to all the willing and obedient of mankind. "Thanks be to God," who has made provision for all to gain the "victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" ■

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."—Rev. 5:12,13, New American Standard Bible

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 4—"Let us walk honestly, as in the day."—Romans 13:13 (Z. '03-122 Hymn 315)

APRIL 11—"Let us walk, . . . not in rioting and drunkenness."—Romans 13:13 (Z. '03-123 Hymn 196)

APRIL 18—"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."—I Peter 4:12,13 (Z. '96-31 Hymn 149)

APRIL 25—"Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."—Hebrews 11:6 (Z. '00-139 Hymn 174)

Sending Out the Twelve

Key Verse: “When he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”

—Matthew 10:1

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 10:1-15

of people being ready, even anxious, for the establishment of God’s kingdom. However, the Bible record shows that while many were excited about the miracles, very few at that time became devoted followers of Jesus.

Jesus instructed the apostles not only to perform such miracles, but also to preach that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matt. 10:7) Mark’s gospel account records that the apostles were sent out in groups of two, and “they proclaimed that men should reform.”—Mark 6:7,12,13, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

God’s covenant and promises at that time were

AFTER GOING UP INTO A mountain and praying all night to God, when it became day Jesus called together those who had been following him, his disciples. Out of these he chose “twelve, whom also he named apostles.” (Luke 6:12,13) The word apostle means “one sent forth.”

Jesus gave the apostles power to cast out unclean spirits, as well as healing various sicknesses and diseases. These miraculous works attracted the attention of many Israelites. Such miracles should have resulted in a great number

restricted to the nation of Israel. Daniel's prophecy proclaimed that there would be "seventy weeks" of exclusive favor to "thy people," Israel. Interpreting the prophecy and its fulfillment, we understand that the last "week" of this period of favor included the period of Jesus' earthly ministry and crucifixion. (Dan. 9:24-27) Thus, at the time of Jesus' First Advent, it was the "harvest" or end of the Jewish Age of special favor only to Israel.—Matt. 9:35-38

We are now living in the harvest or end of the Gospel Age. Just as Jesus sent forth his apostles during his First Advent, his words to us today are similar: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2) The more we proclaim the Gospel message to others during this harvest time, and also seek to personally apply it in our life, the more we will grow in faith, knowledge, and appreciation of spiritual things. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."—Prov. 11:25

The methods of the Jewish Age and Gospel Age harvest work are somewhat different, but the desired results are the same. The blessings going forth during the present harvest time are not healings of physical diseases. Rather, they are the opening of the eyes and ears of mankind's understanding concerning God's character, plans and promises.

It is our privilege to go forth as laborers in the harvest work to spread the message of "the gospel of the kingdom." (Matt. 24:14) As we do so, let us remember Jesus' words, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matt. 10:20) We do not expect to have miraculous powers of speech granted us. Instead, we should strive to be filled with the Truth and its spirit. Then it will be true that it is not our own wisdom that we shall speak, nor our own plan that we shall declare, but the wisdom which cometh from above, and the plan of God. ■

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Key Verse: “*Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.*”
—*Matthew 26:13*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 26:1-13

very precious.” She unsealed the box and poured some of the perfume on Jesus’ head. (Mark 14:3) Mary then “anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”—John 12:3

Mary’s liberal use of this “very precious” perfume showed the deep respect and reverence she had for the Master. She must have realized that Jesus, who had raised her brother Lazarus from the dead, was the Messiah, God’s only begotten Son. Jesus, too, was surely refreshed by what Mary had done.

We believe these actions of Mary were in fulfillment of a prophecy which reads: “While the king sitteth at his

LESS THAN A WEEK

before his betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus and the apostles stopped in the town of Bethany. It was there, on a prior visit, that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:1-44) Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, arranged a supper for Jesus to honor him and to show their appreciation to him. (John 12:1-8) While Jesus was reclined at the table, Mary came into the room with “an alabaster box of

table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.” (Song of Sol. 1:12) Jesus would have been greatly encouraged that evening as he saw the fulfillment of this prophecy concerning him.

However, Judas Iscariot complained, saying, “Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief.” (John 12:4-6) “Pence” is a translation of the Greek word *denarius*, and is elsewhere rendered in the New Testament as “penny.” It was an average day’s wage given to common laborers. (Matt. 20:2) Since no money was earned on Sabbath or other holy days, three hundred pence was the equivalent of the average wage for an entire year!

Jesus responded to Judas’ harsh criticism of what Mary had done, saying: “Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.” (Matt. 26:10-12) He then spoke the words of our Key Verse, in which he said Mary’s loving actions would be told in the future as a “memorial of her.”

We believe Jesus spoke these words of praise not merely to honor Mary alone, but also to inspire and encourage all of God’s people in the spirit of loving sacrifice. Similarly, we should desire to develop such a character which delights in service on behalf of the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren, even if it be at great personal cost to us.

If Mary had waited another week before anointing Jesus with the perfume, it would have been too late. How much better it was that she did not delay in showing her appreciation to Jesus while he was still alive. Let us likewise not delay in opening our alabaster boxes of love, sympathy, kindness, gentleness, patience, assistance, and encouragement upon one another. At the end of our earthly life, may it be said of us as it was of Mary, “She hath done what she could.”—Mark 14:8 ■

He is Risen

Key Verse: “*Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*”
—**Matthew 28:10**

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 28:1-10

looked inside the tomb and did not see Jesus’ body, she ran to tell Peter and John. Later Mary returned to the sepulcher, and the resurrected Jesus appeared to her.—
John 20:1,2,11-18

As stated in our Selected Scripture passage, there were also other women who came to the tomb of Jesus. To these, an angel spoke, saying: “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, ... go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead.”—Matt. 28:5-7

After hearing this message from the angel, the group of women “departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run” to tell Jesus’ disciples. As they ran, “Jesus met them, saying, All hail.” This was a common greeting of that time and meant, “Rejoice!” Knowing it was the risen Lord, the women fell before his feet, and “worshipped him.”—vss. 8,9

ON THE MORNING OF Jesus’ resurrection, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive at the tomb where Jesus’ body had been placed. Jesus had miraculously cast out seven demons from her earlier in his ministry. (Luke 8:2) Arriving at the tomb, Mary found that the stone which had been used to block the entrance had been rolled away. When she

As stated in our Key Verse, Jesus, like the angel, told the group of women to not be afraid, but to tell his “brethren” to go to Galilee, where they would see him. Jesus wanted his brethren to know the good news that he had been resurrected from death. How beautiful it is that our relationship to our Master, Jesus, is that of “brethren.”—Luke 8:21; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10-13

After making several post-resurrection appearances in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Jesus ceased from further appearing to his followers until they returned to the area of Galilee. Most of Jesus’ earthly ministry had been spent in Galilee. Consequently, a majority of early Christians were Galileans. Many of these followers were given an opportunity of being witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. Paul, about twenty-five years later, wrote concerning one of these appearances, saying that Christ “was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep [in death].”—I Cor. 15:6

Herein is a lesson for us. After we have found the Lord and the Truth, we have the great privilege of sharing the Gospel message—that the perfect man Jesus willingly gave his life as the corresponding ransom price for the disobedience of the perfect man Adam. As Paul wrote, “I declare unto you the gospel, ... how that Christ died for our sins,” and “was buried,” and “rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”—I Cor. 15:1-4,20,21

In God’s kingdom, under the rulership of Christ, Adam and the entire human family will be raised from the grave. Under the righteous arrangements of the kingdom, all mankind will be given the opportunity to be restored to harmony with God, and to live as perfect human beings on the earth forever.—Hos. 13:14; Acts 3:20,21; I Cor. 15:22; Rev. 21:1-7

■

The Apostles’ Commission

Key Verses: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

—Matthew 28:19,20, *English Standard Version*

Selected Scriptures:
Matthew 28:16-20;
Acts 1:6-8

spirit.”—I Pet. 3:18, *Weymouth New Testament*

Jesus was resurrected to the highest of all planes of existence, being given by God the divine nature. Paul

IN LAST WEEK’S LESSON, the risen Lord Jesus gave this message to a group of women: “Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” (Matt. 28:10, *ESV*) In this week’s Selected Scripture passage we read, in response to the Lord’s instructions, “The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.”—vs. 16, *ESV*

There Jesus said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (vs. 18, *ESV*) Here is proof that the resurrected Jesus was no longer a man, but had been raised by God as a spirit being. Peter wrote, “Christ also once for all died for sins, the innocent One for the guilty many, in order to bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the

wrote, “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth [in the grave], and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—Phil. 2:9-11, *ESV*

One special aspect of the reward given to Jesus at his resurrection is immortality, which denotes the condition of being death-proof. (John 5:26; I Tim. 6:15,16) During the present Gospel Age our Heavenly Father has been inviting those who wish to follow in the footsteps of his Son, Christ Jesus. It is a “holy calling, not because of our works,” but because of God’s “purpose and grace,” based upon the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus.—II Tim. 1:9,10, *ESV*

All who accept this heavenly call by consecrating themselves to God, transforming their character, and remaining faithful unto death, are promised to be resurrected as a spirit being and receive immortality. Paul wrote, “To those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.”—Rom. 2:7, *ESV*

In our Key Verses, the Apostles, and all of Jesus’ followers, are commissioned by the risen Lord to preach the Gospel in “all nations,” and to teach all that he had commanded. An encouraging message applicable to all of Jesus’ followers throughout the Gospel Age, also contained in our Key Verses, is that he would watch over this work and guide all those who are truly his servants. Earlier, Jesus’ promised his followers, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”—Matt. 18:20

During his final post-resurrection appearance, Jesus’ instructed his disciples, saying, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8, *ESV*) This is not to convert the whole world now, but rather to be a witness “unto all nations,” and to gather out and instruct all those who desire to accept the heavenly call.—Matt. 24:14 ■

Immortality and the Human Soul

“The LORD God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”
—Genesis 2:7

TRADITION HOLDS THAT man possesses an immortal soul which can and does live apart from the human body, in which it resides until the body dies. According to this tradition, when the body dies, the soul continues to live. Being immortal, it is believed, the soul cannot die, so it exists eternally, either in a state of happiness or of suffering, depending on how well it managed the human body in which it once resided.

Strictly from a scientific viewpoint, no trace of this claimed separate entity has ever been discovered in the human body. With all the powerful technology and knowledge of our day, no such part of the human organism has ever been revealed. Some have gone so far as to record the weight of a human body just before and immediately after death, but with no evidence that a soul weighing even as little as one ounce had left the formerly living person.

To overcome the objection that a separate entity, living and vigorous, has never been found in a human body, a church leader once described the human soul as being “without interior or exterior, without body, shape, or parts, and so small that a million of them could be put into a nutshell, and yet there would be room for more.” As is often true with respect to traditions, some will go to extreme lengths in order to prove their validity. However, we are not particularly interested in traditions, whether they be that of the immortal soul, or others, except to discover the extent to which they may be in harmony with, or contrary to, the inspired Word of God. It is the testimony of the Scriptures alone which should guide the understanding of the sincere, truth-seeking worshiper of God.

It is generally supposed that the Bible teaches that man possesses an immortal soul. However, the Bible makes no mention at all of an immortal soul. The expression, “immortal soul,” or any equivalent thereof, does not appear anywhere in the Bible. The *King James Version* does not contain it, nor do any of the many modern translations which are available.

This, of course, is a negative approach to the subject. It is more important to discover what the Bible does teach concerning the human soul. In that regard, we believe that a good place to start is with the text which appears at the beginning of this article. This is a very important verse, for in it we are informed as to how God created the first human soul, and of exactly what it consists. While today’s technology has failed to detect the traditional “immortal soul,” the soul described by God’s Word is quite visible.

In our text we are told that man “became a living soul.” The body was formed from the elements of the earth, but it had no life—it was not a soul. God breathed into this body the breath of life, but the breath of life was not the soul either. The body was lifeless until animated by the breath of life. The brain could not think; the eyes could not see; the ears could not hear; the tongue could not speak or taste; the nose could not smell, nor could the skin feel. However, all the organs of that perfectly created body at once became alive when God breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life. Man “became” a living soul, our text says. From this explanation which the Bible furnishes, we learn that man does not “possess” a soul, but that he “is” a soul. Appropriately, the Hebrew word translated “soul” in our text is defined as “breathing creature,” or “living being.”

The “breath of life” which animates the human organism is no different than the breath of life given to the lower animals. Referring to the animals which perished in the Flood, we read, “All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.” (Gen. 7:21-23) We are further informed concerning man and beast that they “have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast.” —Eccles. 3:19,20

Since the word soul simply means living being, we find that the Bible quite properly refers to the lower animals as souls. Numbers 31:28 reads, “Levy a tribute unto the LORD of the men of war which went out to battle: one soul of five hundred, both of the persons, and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep.” From this we see that we could just as properly speak of “sheep souls” as of human souls,

because they are both living beings. Also, in Genesis 1:20, concerning the creation of the lower animals, we find the expression, “the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly.” The word “life” in this verse is translated from the same Hebrew word as “soul” in our opening text. Thus, the Bible shows that the lower creatures are souls, and that the words “life” and “soul” are synonymous.

A sheep soul, for example, is not inferior to a human soul because it is animated by a different breath of life, for as we have just considered, such is not the case. The difference is in the construction of the organism, particularly in the formation of the brain. In some respects the organisms of certain lower animals are superior to that of mankind. A dog, for example, has a much keener sense of smell and hearing. An eagle’s eyesight is far superior to man’s. Other animals possess specific senses which are stronger than that of humans.

God in his great wisdom, and by his unlimited power, “created man in his own image.” (Gen. 1:27) This was in the sense that he gave him the ability to reason, and to have a moral sense of right from wrong. Although his creation of all the lower animals was perfect and complete, no mention is made that they were created in God’s image. It is only as we understand man’s creation as having been in God’s “own image,” that we are able to know why the human brain can function on such a preeminently higher plane.

Since man can thus reason, he possesses what we call a conscience. That is, he has a consciousness, or mental awareness, of what is right and wrong. To the extent that this element of God’s

image has been retained in individual members of the fallen race, a person will feel more or less ill at ease when he does wrong, but have inner peace when he has endeavored to live up to that which he knows to be right. The Scriptures speak of the human conscience in this way, the Apostle Paul testifying that mankind's "consciences testify, and their thoughts will either accuse or excuse them."—Rom. 2:15, *International Standard Version*

SOULS DIE

When God said to Adam, "Thou shalt surely die," if he disobeyed, he meant that as a living soul Adam would cease to exist. (Gen. 2:17) The matter is even more clearly stated in Ezekiel 18:4, where God says, "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." Here we see a simple, but all-important, truth of the Bible. A person—living being, soul—who sins shall die.

As we look back upon man's history, and consider the Bible's testimony, we correctly discern that all are born in sin, and that as a result the entire human race is dying. (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:23; 5:12) In his great love, however, God has provided redemption from death for all sinful souls, or persons. This is through the gift of his beloved Son, Christ Jesus, who died that the dead world might have an opportunity to live. (Rom. 5:18-21) Concerning Jesus' sacrificial death on behalf of the sin-cursed and dying race, the Prophet Isaiah wrote that his "soul" was made an offering for sin, and also that he "poured out his soul unto death."—Isa. 53:10,12

It was the living soul Adam that was condemned to death, and all his descendants as living souls lost life through him, because all inherited sin and imperfection. Paul wrote, “By man came death,” and “in Adam all die.” Then he added, “by man came also the resurrection of the dead,” and stated that those who come into union with Christ “shall all be made alive. ... Every man in his own order.”—I Cor. 15:21-23

John 3:16 reads, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Adam and all past generations of his progeny have fallen asleep in death, but they have not “perished” eternally. Through the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, and by the exercise of divine power, they are to be awakened in the resurrection and given an opportunity to believe, and upon the basis of their belief and obedience, to live forever.

Some are given this opportunity in the present life. These are the ones who are called to discipleship. Accepting Jesus as their Redeemer and responding to the invitation to take up their cross and follow him, they gladly lay down their lives with him, being “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 6:3-6) These are referred to in Revelation 20:4 as the “souls” which are “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,” but which will be resurrected from death to live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

In connection with those who die “in Christ,” and emphasizing the importance of the resurrection, Paul wrote, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which

are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” (I Cor. 15:17,18) Because there is to be a resurrection of the dead, Paul speaks of the faithful followers of Christ who die as merely being asleep. If there were to be no resurrection of the dead, then even those who faithfully lay down their lives in serving the Lord would perish, never to be awakened from the sleep of death.

Jesus emphasizes this same important truth in an admonition to his disciples to meet courageously any and all opposition that might be pitted against them, even though they might be persecuted unto death. He said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Greek: *Gehenna*, meaning everlasting destruction].” —Matt. 10:28

This does not imply that the soul can live apart from the body, for actually the body, combined with the breath of life, is the soul. Rather, Jesus is speaking from the standpoint of God’s plan to awaken the dead in the resurrection. It was from this standpoint that Paul could say that faithful Christians who fell asleep in death had not perished. If an enemy puts a Christian to death, he has not forever perished as a soul. Although the body goes back to the dust from which it was created, ceasing to exist, the “soul,” that which was the identity of the living person from God’s viewpoint, merely “sleeps” in death until the resurrection, when, by divine power, it shall be raised with a new body. —I Cor. 15:38

Jesus explained this from another standpoint, as recorded in Luke 20:37,38. “Now that the dead are

raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.” Jesus did not say that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had gone to heaven to live with God. He simply explained that because there is to be a resurrection of the dead, and these faithful servants will be restored to life, God does not consider them as having eternally gone out of existence. They “live unto him” in the sense that God knows they will be raised from the dead.

So it is with all God’s faithful servants of the past. They may have been put to death by their enemies; they may have been thrown to the lions, or beheaded, or burned at the stake. However, to God they still “live” in his future plans and purposes. They have not perished, for he will use his unlimited power to restore them from the sleep of death.

The “souls” which are “beheaded,” previously mentioned in Revelation 20:4, are brought forth in the “first resurrection” to live and reign with Christ a thousand years. (vs. 6) The “souls” that died serving God during the ages preceding Jesus’ First Advent will come forth to a “better resurrection,” to serve as “princes in all the earth.”—Heb. 11:35; Ps. 45:16

THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY

As we have already noted, the expression “immortal soul” is not found anywhere in the Bible. The word “immortal” appears only once in Scripture, and in that one instance it is applied to God, and not to man. The text reads, “Now unto the King

eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.” (I Tim. 1:17) In this same letter to Timothy, Paul wrote concerning God, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.”—I Tim. 6:16

These two texts of Scripture prove beyond doubt that man does not possess immortality. They reveal that immortality is a quality of the divine nature. God, the Creator, alone possesses inherent immortality, “life in himself.” When Jesus was raised from the dead, God gave “to the Son to have life in himself.” (John 5:26) The Heavenly Father gave Jesus immortality as a reward for his faithfulness in laying down his humanity, his perfect human life, for the sins of the world.—John 1:29; I John 2:2

Now the hope of attaining immortality is held out in the Scriptures to all those who follow faithfully in the footsteps of Jesus, laying down their lives in sacrifice even as Jesus did. It is in this connection, and with reference to Jesus’ true disciples, that Paul wrote: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) We would not “seek for” immortality if we already possessed it.

The Christian’s hope of immortality will find fruition in the resurrection. Writing concerning this Paul said, “This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.” (I Cor. 15:53) We note here that immortality is a quality which, by divine power, must be “put on” in the resurrection. It is not an inherent quality of humans, or human souls.

The next verse reads, “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” (vs. 54) Notice how clearly the apostle states in both of the foregoing verses that Christians are now mortal, not immortal.

It is also interesting and revealing to notice Paul’s reasoning in connection with his use of the expressions “shall have put on” and “then shall be brought to pass” in verse 54. Taking his position after the true disciples of Christ have been raised from the dead and exalted to immortality, he explains that when this takes place, then the saying will be fulfilled, “Death is swallowed up in victory.”—vs. 54

The saying that “death is swallowed up in victory,” which Paul explains will come to pass after the disciples of Christ are brought forth in the resurrection and exalted to immortality, is found in Isaiah 25:6-9. This is a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ and the blessings it will bring to the people of all nations. In this kingdom, the followers of Jesus who previously were proven worthy of the “first resurrection,” will reign with Christ. In Isaiah’s prophecy, this future kingdom is symbolized by a “mountain,” in which the Lord will “make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.”

In this kingdom, the prophet continues, God will also destroy “the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the

rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

Here is a marvelous prophecy assuring us that through the administration of Christ’s kingdom, death, with all its attendant evils, will be destroyed. As Paul explains, this glorious work of the kingdom follows the resurrection and exaltation of the followers of Jesus to glory, honor, and immortality. It is in this exalted position that they will reign with Christ for the purpose of sharing with him in the dispensing of health and life on earth to the millions of mankind who have died, and are dying, as a result of Adam’s sin.

The Apostle Peter refers to this period in the plan of salvation when the work of restoring mankind to life is to be accomplished. He speaks of it as “the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:20,21) Just as the Apostle Peter declares, all the Old Testament prophets, speaking as the mouthpieces of God, foretold this coming time of blessing, when, through Christ, all will be given an opportunity to believe, to obey the laws of the kingdom, and live forever.

However, the apostle continues by pointing out that this will not mean universal salvation. All will be released from the original condemnation which came upon the race through Adam. After that, however, each individual will need to prove his worthiness of everlasting life. During this restitution period,

Peter speaks of Christ as a “prophet,” like unto Moses. “Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you, And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”—vss. 22,23

We note that Peter, in speaking of those who are enlightened by “that prophet,” refers to them as souls, and “every soul” that does not obey after being taught principles of righteousness “shall be destroyed.” This agrees with Ezekiel 18:4 which declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” In these texts, as throughout the entire Bible, the word “soul” applies to the entire being. It is not a separate entity which dwells within the human body, but somehow continues to live when the body dies.

Hence, as we have seen, the Bible speaks concerning the hope of immortality as a reward for faithfulness in Christian discipleship, but nowhere does it make mention of the traditional “immortal soul.” As to the origin of this tradition, some scholars have suggested that it started with the ancient Babylonians. Others feel it originated with the Greeks. Regardless of who among mankind began promoting this teaching, however, its real roots lie in the infamous lie that Satan spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden, “Ye shall not surely die.”—Gen. 3:4

Speaking through the serpent, Satan, while not using the term “immortal soul,” in reality told Eve that the penalty God said would come upon her and Adam if they disobeyed—that penalty being death—was not true. Satan said that if they ate of the forbidden fruit, rather than dying, their eyes would be opened, and they would be able to discern good and evil. (vs. 5) Indeed, when our first parents

disobeyed God, their eyes were opened—opened to discern the great sin which they had just committed. They also soon realized that Satan lied when he said “Ye shall not surely die,” and understood in no uncertain terms that neither they, nor their progeny, were immortal. They died, as did their children, and all of the billions of their offspring since.

We rejoice that all things out of harmony with God, including misleading human traditions, are to soon be done away with. This will be accomplished by the reign of Christ, at the conclusion of which, God’s will shall be done in earth even as it is in heaven. (Matt. 6:10) Satan, the author and proponent of these erroneous and confusing traditions will also be destroyed. Then the true knowledge of God will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.—Isa. 11:9 ■

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Arthur Parker, Sr., Benton, AR—February 12. Age, 92

Sister Eunice Diamond Madison, Hampton, NH—February 13. Age, 87

Brother Daniel William, Bangalore, India—February 14. Age, 21

Brother John Forsythe, St. Louis, MO—February 15. Age, 85

Sister Beverly Cole, Columbus, OH—March 12. Age, 85

Brother Edward Ekeh, Ibadan, Nigeria—March 13. Age, 56

Dwelling Under the Blood

“Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”

—I Corinthians 10:11, New American Standard Bible

ACCORDING TO THE APOSTLE Paul’s statement in our opening text, God’s dealings with Israel contain valuable lessons for spiritual Israelites of this present Gospel Age. One of the outstanding lessons for us is that contained in the sprinkling of the blood of the Passover lamb in connection with God’s deliverance of Israel from their enslavement in Egypt. God’s specially chosen people were still under Egyptian bondage, despite the nine plagues which had already been visited upon the land. All of these plagues were sent by God, but were not fully effective in bringing about the deliverance of the Israelites.

This does not mean, however, that God’s purpose in the first nine plagues was thwarted. Quite to the contrary, for he had various illustrations of future events in mind when these scenes were enacted. Hence, God was not dealing with Pharaoh nor with

the Israelites merely with the thought of what was being accomplished in connection with them. Regardless of the immediate result of many of Israel's experiences, a glorious divine purpose was accomplished because all that happened to them was "for an example," says the apostle, and they were "written for our instruction."

It is central to our present subject to understand that it was the tenth plague that brought relief to the Israelites, but this was only through the sprinkling of the lintels and doorposts of the houses of Israel with the blood of a Passover lamb. (Exod. 12:1-14,21-42) To us this seems to say that while all of God's providences are designed to bring us closer to deliverance from the bondage of this world, yet actual deliverance is accomplished only through coming under the blood of "Christ our passover," who has been sacrificed for us.—I Cor. 5:7

It is important to note the fact that the mere slaying of Israel's Passover lamb was not sufficient. As stated in Exodus 12:21-23, the Israelites had to bring themselves under the sprinkling of the blood in order to be assured of divine protection and deliverance. It is the same with spiritual Israelites of the present age. They must, through faith, bring themselves under the blood of the greater Passover lamb. Mere belief in the fact that Jesus died for the sins of the world is not sufficient. Faith in the fact that he died for us personally, and that through his blood we may have "our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience," is also required. (Heb. 10:22, *English Standard Version*) Only thus can we be assured of being made "free from the law of sin and death."—Rom. 8:2

This deliverance, however, is not in itself complete, although it does become the means to that end. The sprinkling of our hearts is not to be thought of as a one-time event, which can then be put aside as far as our walk of life is concerned. Rather, the result must be a daily dedication and heart obedience to the doing of God's will, and to the development of the many fruits and qualities of character which were so exemplified by Jesus, our Passover lamb.—Gal. 5:22-25; Col. 3:12-14

Faith in the blood of Jesus also inspires a glorious hope. The Apostle Paul speaks of this faith as the "basis of things hoped for." (Heb. 11:1, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) What is it that we hope for? It is for that full deliverance from this present world of sin, suffering and death that was illustrated by the complete release of Israel's firstborn from the slavery in Egypt. The apostle says concerning Jesus, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world."—Gal. 1:4

In the Book of Romans, Paul tells us about another deliverance to which all Christians should look forward. This is a deliverance from what he calls "this body of death." Concerning it the apostle says, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" "Thanks be to God," he then answers, that deliverance comes "through Jesus Christ our Lord! There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."—Rom. 7:24,25; 8:1, *ESV*

Even now we have a foretaste, as it were, of our deliverance from the body of death, that is, from the flesh. Paul describes it as a deliverance into the "glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom. 8:21)

This liberty allows us to be called “children of God,” and is only possible by the revealing power and influence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. The apostle further testifies, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

While it is true, as the apostle declares, that God has already revealed these things to us by his spirit, yet we are unable to appreciate them as fully and completely as when our deliverance into the glorious liberty of the sons of God will be complete. The Apostle John declares on this point that while we are now the sons of God, yet “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) Similarly, Israel could, by faith, already see the land of promise from afar, but to experience its goodness they had to await actual entry into it.

FAITH A MEANS TO AN END

Thus we see that it is Jesus’ blood that contains the merit, or value, for our release from Adamic condemnation. This merit becomes ours through faith in that which God has provided, the “free gift” of grace, Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:15) However, such faith does not bring to completion our salvation. Rather, it is the means to that end. It evidences itself in the glorious hope to which it gives rise, and this hope brings the impetus that drives us ever onward to the fullness of the glory that is promised. Concerning

this we read, “Everyone who has this hope in Christ keeps himself pure, just as Christ is pure.”—I John 3:3, *Good News Bible*

Our basis of faith is God-given, for without the blood of Jesus, which the Father himself supplied, there would have been nothing upon which faith could lay hold. This is what the Apostle Paul tells us: “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”—Eph. 2:8-10

As the foregoing text shows, while faith is the means whereby we bring ourselves under the blood, “good works” must result from our faith. We must build upon our faith structure, adding to it, the Apostle Peter says: noble character, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godliness, brotherly affection, and love. (II Pet. 1:4-8, *Weymouth New Testament*) It is only thus that one’s calling out of figurative Egypt, and his selection to be one with Christ in the glories of the kingdom, are made sure. Affirming this, the apostle adds, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—vs. 11

The blood of Christ does not provide to us the opportunity of deliverance and salvation unless we bring ourselves under it by obedient faith. With this accomplished, our journey toward the spiritual Canaan and entering into God’s rest is only begun. Many indeed will be the trials and experiences as we journey through the various wilderness testings until we enter fully into the heavenly land of promise.

The Scriptures tell us that Israel did not enter into rest because of disobedience and unbelief. (Heb. 3:10-19) This should indeed serve as a very timely and valuable admonition to us. The apostle assures us that there is a “rest” which yet remains for the spiritual Israelites of God of this age, but if we are to enter into that rest, we must labor to be faithful and obedient.—Heb. 4:1-11

The deliverance from Egypt and the prospect of an abundant entrance into Canaan were based entirely upon the blood of the Passover lamb. However, this meant deliverance into the land of promise only if they continued to exercise themselves in remembrance of the blood of sprinkling which brought to pass their original liberation from Egypt. They were ever to recognize that, having been delivered by divine power, they were not any more their own. They belonged to God and to the keeping of his laws and instructions to the best of their ability. We know that in this Israel failed, and with the exception of only a few, they all died—not in Egypt, nor yet in Canaan, but in the wilderness that lay between.—Num. 14:20-35

TAKE HEED LEST WE FALL

The fact that we once came under Christ’s blood and were delivered from the bondage of Adamic sin, is no guarantee that we shall finally enter the heavenly Canaan of promise. Concerning the Israelites, Paul said, “With many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (I Cor. 10:5) We, then, ought to take heed lest we, like them, should be overthrown in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience. It is not for

us to presume on God's mercy and to suppose that he will always strive with us and lead and protect us. Indeed, he knows the weakness of our frame, but we cannot suppose that he will forever overlook our lack of faith and obedience. Such presumption on our part is a failure to take God at his word, for continued unbelief and disobedience will debar us from receiving a "crown of life"—Heb. 2:1-3; 3:12; Rev. 2:10

God has promised us the victory, but we must make use of all his provisions whereby we may attain it. Israel failed because when they reached the portals of the promised land, their faith disappeared. They forgot God's continual, gracious provisions for them since they left Egypt, and they forgot his promise of help and overruling in every aspect of their journey. They sent spies into the land to determine whether they would be able to conquer it. Moreover, they believed the exaggerated and false reports of the spies who said that it would be impossible to go in and possess it. For this failure to fully believe God and obey him by following his providential direction, they were turned back, not into Egypt, but into the wilderness where finally they lost their lives.—Num. 13:1-33; 14:26-45; Deut. 1:19-26

Failure on our part, as spiritual Israelites, to take God at his word will, likewise, result in our not attaining to the "mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) To be rightly exercised by our experiences and recognize God's abounding grace, we must ever keep in mind the fact of our unworthiness. The loving-kindness of our Heavenly Father should cause us to seek his

aid in cleansing ourselves of any “secret faults” which might gradually develop into “presumptuous sins,” possibly making “shipwreck” of our faith.—Ps. 19:12,13; I Tim. 1:18,19

The Israelites felt sure of themselves, so confident that they had a permanent standing before God, that they became careless and indifferent and, finally, presumptuous. Thus they stumbled and fell. The blood could not serve to take them all the way into Canaan except as they would keep in mind the fact that it was only by means of the blood, and by divine power, that they were delivered from Egypt. Forgetting God’s grace, so greatly manifested in these ways, would lead to other deflections and finally to their fall. The lesson for us in this is very well stated by the apostle, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”—I Cor. 10:12

The completion of our salvation needs to be worked out with “fear and trembling,” remembering that God also works in us “to will and to do of his good pleasure.” When we cooperate with what he is doing, we become partners with him in this work, and “lay hold on” that for which he has “laid hold” upon us. (Phil. 2:12,13; 3:10-14, *Diaglott*) It is only as we remain under the blood that we can continue in this cooperative arrangement with God. These lessons, illustrated so impressively by the experiences of Israel, should be taken to heart by the people of God now. All should strive to remain under the influence and the effect of God’s grace, as it is represented in the blood of redemption and deliverance—the blood of Christ, the greater Passover lamb sacrificed for us.

With joy we recall that the whole nation of Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage in the morning following the Passover night. Yet, the slaying of the lamb, and that which was done with its blood, had particularly to do with the tenth plague, which affected the firstborns. They were the only ones in immediate danger of death. However, the blood which caused the firstborns to be saved was also that which brought about the release of all Israel in the morning. What a beautiful picture this portrays! In it, we see Jesus as the greater “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) First, the “church of the firstborn” is delivered through the blood. (Heb. 12:23) Then, as associates of Christ in his coming kingdom, they will share in the work of bringing deliverance to all mankind, made possible by the same blood of Christ.—Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:10,11; Col. 1:20

It is for this “manifestation of the sons of God” that the whole creation now awaits, continuing to groan and travail in pain together, but soon to be delivered from the “bondage of corruption.” (Rom. 8:19-22) This month, as Christians throughout the world join together to memorialize the death of our Lord Jesus, let us each renew our dedication and resolve to remain “under the blood.” By so doing, we will not only assure ourselves an “abundant entrance” into the heavenly kingdom, but also help to bring about the end of mankind’s bondage to sin, suffering and death, and an entrance into earthly Canaan, “a good land and a large, ... a land flowing with milk and honey.”—Exod. 3:8 ■

Oneness of the Brethren

*“With all lowliness
and meekness, with
longsuffering,
forbearing one
another in love;
Endeavouring to
keep the unity of
the Spirit in the
bond of peace.”*
—Ephesians 4:2,3

IN OUR TEXT PAUL MAKES

it clear that peace and harmony among the brethren of Christ is possible only where there first exists an attitude of lowliness and meekness. These qualities, the apostle continues, are to be mingled with longsuffering, forbearance and love, which enable us to bear with the imperfec-

tions of one another as fellow-members in the body of Christ. Paul refers to this blessed harmony among the brotherhood as the “unity of the Spirit.” Where lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance and love are lacking, there will be no unity of the Spirit. On the other hand, these essential elements of the Christian character will not, apart from other considerations, produce the unity of the Spirit of which the Apostle Paul speaks.

In addition to possessing these fundamentally important qualities of the Christ-like disposition,

they must be practiced upon the basis of, and in harmony with, our knowledge of certain scriptural principles, which Paul cites in subsequent verses. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (vss. 4-6) This indicates that true Christian oneness is based upon a unity of knowledge with regard to certain fundamental teachings of the Bible.

It is not difficult to realize why this is so. Any group of people whose aims and efforts in life are similar will find themselves drawn together in a common interest. In the circles of Christian endeavor, the same principle holds true. Brethren of “like precious faith” will quite naturally rejoice together in God’s plan for the salvation and restoration of mankind back to favor and sonship with God as perfect human beings.—II Pet. 1:1; Rev. 21:3-7

We should all heed Paul’s admonition to “keep the unity of the Spirit.” The church at Ephesus had special need for it, as the epistle shows. As was often true in the Early Church, some in the group at Ephesus had formerly been Jews, and others had come into Christ from among the Gentiles. This is clearly shown in chapters two and three. In these chapters Paul explains that “in Christ Jesus” these had been brought together. Gentiles, who had been “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,” were now “made nigh by the blood of Christ.” The apostle says that peace had been preached both to the Gentiles, “which were afar

off, and to them that were nigh," the Jews. He declares that because of this, both Jews and Gentiles now have "access by one Spirit unto the Father."—Eph. 2:11-18

GREAT FORBEARANCE NECESSARY

It can readily be seen why a congregation made up of converted Jews and Gentiles would find it necessary to forbear with one another in love. Their former viewpoints and experiences in life had been entirely different. The viewpoint of the Jews was that they were exclusively God's people. The Lord had said to them, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2) They were the chosen people of God and were in covenant relationship with him. The Gentiles were mere "dogs" in the eyes of most Jews.—Matt. 15:22-28

On the other hand, the Gentile converts would view matters quite differently. Accustomed to being treated with disdain by the Jews, it would now be difficult for them to feel kindly toward those who had so scornfully regarded them. While they had become followers of the Jewish Messiah, old prejudices would not easily be forgotten. Gentiles would naturally exercise a greater degree of liberty with respect to their food, and other living habits, than would the Jewish converts. They would not have in mind the restraining ordinances of the Mosaic Law. Hence, they would be inclined to do things which, to most Jewish converts, would seem very wrong. In other ways also these two groups of Christians would find obstacles that might impede the blending of their

viewpoints and activities into a wholehearted oneness in Christ.

Under these circumstances, only a unity produced by the Holy Spirit could create harmony in the church at Ephesus. Herein lies a critical point. As was true in the Early Church, so today, it is only by the influence of the Holy Spirit that the fleshly spirit of division can be overcome, wherever it may be found. Such a unity is much more than merely a kind feeling brethren may have toward one another. This is admirable, but it is largely based on friendship, which usually comes from a certain degree of similarity in temperament, background, education, habits, or station in life. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, produces oneness among the brethren irrespective of obstacles that might otherwise stand in the way.

The unity of the Spirit is that oneness among the Lord's people which is inculcated through the Scriptures. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is the means by which the written Word of God has been given to us. Speaking through the prophets, through Jesus, and through the apostles, as they were guided by the Holy Spirit, God had made it clear that believing Gentiles and Jews were to become "fellowheirs" in Christ. (Eph. 3:6) This was contrary to the experiences of the Jews throughout all the centuries of their national existence, but it was now God's will, made abundantly plain by the influence of his Spirit. In the conference at Jerusalem Peter explained that the Holy Spirit had come upon the Gentiles even as it had upon the Jews, and for this reason there was to be "no difference" between them.—Acts 15:8,9

ONE GOD AND ONE FAITH

Before becoming Christians, the Jewish and Gentile converts had different gods. The Gentiles usually had many gods, but now they all had but the one “God and Father of all.” They were all members of the one “body of Christ.” (I Cor. 12:12,27) There was not to be one body of Jews and another of Gentiles. There was also but the “one faith” for all—the faith which was “once delivered unto the saints,” our “most holy faith.” (Jude 1:3,20) Moreover, followers of the Master, whether Jews or Gentiles, were all called in the “one hope” of their calling. There was just “one baptism” for all who accepted God’s call. That was baptism into Christ, being “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Rom. 6:5) For a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile believers, in order to keep their lives in harmony with a program of this kind, required the indwelling of a large measure of the Holy Spirit.

For God’s Spirit to dwell in the heart and control the life requires the subjugation of the human will and its selfish desires. God’s Spirit is an enlightening influence in the lives of Christians, and its power to change one’s character is partly due to the fact that it reveals the need of change and outlines a new program to be followed. It was this phase of the Spirit’s influence in the lives of the Ephesian brethren that called for the “endeavoring” mentioned in our text.

This word, according to *Thayer’s Greek Definitions*, is translated from a Greek word meaning “to exert one’s self, give diligence,” also “to make haste.” Thus we see that to keep the unity of the Spirit

requires work on the part of each member of the body of Christ. Additionally, these efforts are not to be delayed, but entered into quickly as each set of circumstances arises in the course of Christian fellowship.

This new program, revealed to the brethren of the Early Church by the Holy Spirit through God's divinely appointed channels, was different from that which any of them had previously followed. This meant that all of them had to give up their former viewpoints and habits, and endeavor by God's grace to conform themselves to his plan as it had been revealed to them through his Spirit. The one God, one faith, and one baptism of their wills, was to take the place of their former many gods, many faiths, and many forms of devotion.

To be successful in such an undertaking they would need true meekness and lowliness of mind, a great deal of longsuffering and forbearance, and much Christian love. This has been true of all footstep followers of the Master throughout the age, even to this present hour. With true lowliness of mind one would not be disposed to exalt his own opinions and ways above the knowledge and wisdom of Christ as revealed by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 1:13,17) He would realize that Christ's wisdom is to be the order of his life, even as it should be the guide in the lives of all the brethren.

NEEDS TO BE PRACTICED

Humility needs to be practiced, not merely thought of and talked about. We might have a true appraisal of our own lack of wisdom and ability, yet not manifest it in our association with the

brethren. This could easily lead to resentment when others are used ahead of us in some particular service for the Lord. A lack of humility might also lead to unwarranted controversy over nonessential details of the Truth. If we are truly lowly of mind, we will not seek to incite trouble among the brethren by constantly promoting debate of such details, which often have varying interpretations. Paul warned Timothy about those who are disposed to “doting about questions and strifes of words,” which the apostle says produce “envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings.” (I Tim. 6:4) Rather than letting ourselves become a storm center, we should rather withdraw from, and discourage, such scenes that might result in unwarranted controversy among our fellowship.

Meekness is also a necessary qualification for those who are successfully endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Meekness has the thought of being gentle, mild-mannered, as well as teachable. If we are not willing to be taught by the God’s Holy Spirit, we can never be in harmony with others who are thus being taught. The “wisdom of this world” and of the fleshly mind is “foolishness with God.” (I Cor. 3:19) Both the Jews and the Gentiles in the church at Ephesus had many foolish ideas before they became followers of the Master. Most of us in the past have similarly had foolish ideas. There could have been no unity in the Early Church had the believers brought their former ideas along with them and insisted upon promoting them among the brethren. We also must give up our fleshly thinking, that we may all be taught the “one faith.”

NOT WEAKNESS

It has often been said, and rightly so, that meekness is not weakness. God wants us to be mild-mannered and teachable, so that we will accept the instructions of his Word without reservations or doubts. However, he does not want us to exhibit weakness by opening our minds to “every wind of doctrine” which may not come from his Word nor be in harmony with its spirit, the “spirit of truth.” (Eph. 4:14; I John 4:6) This applies not only to our own ideas, but we should also be very wary of “every wind” of thought we may hear from others. As we endeavor to bring our mind and heart into closer harmony with the Lord, through his Word, we will find ourselves in closer unity with all others who are doing the same thing. Thus, a willingness to be taught only of the Lord is very important if we are to be successful in doing our part to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

The spirit of longsuffering and forbearance is also necessary. One might be lowly of mind, and meek, yet be unable to bear patiently with the imperfections of others. There was great need for forbearance among the various groups of disciples in the Early Church, and there is still great need for it. We are all so very imperfect that forbearance with one another as we worship and serve together is most necessary if our viewpoints and activities are to be blended into that one harmonious program outlined for us by the Holy Spirit.

Love must be the motive behind this whole endeavor. Only an unselfish desire to glorify God and to serve others will make possible the exercise of true Christian forbearance in our association

with the brethren. To the extent that love of self and self-interest enters into our fellowship, true humility and forbearance will be lacking, because our love will not be directed to our brethren, but toward self. If this be the case, it might be possible for a time to get along with others by having only a veneer of humility and forbearance. We might be seeking position, or popularity, and deem it good policy to be courteous to the brethren, and even condescend to them. This is most assuredly not a proper basis for endeavoring to attain the unity of the Spirit.

THE DIVINE PROVISION

Unity of the Spirit, like all other Christian attainments, is possible only through the grace of God, his “grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) How much we, as brethren, need God’s grace to help us maintain the unity of the Spirit. This is especially true today in view of the severe trials through which all the Lord’s consecrated people are passing. How necessary that we all keep humble before the Lord and before each other, and that we bear patiently with the imperfections of our brethren in the spirit of unselfishness and helpfulness. Thus the Lord’s name, and not ours, will be glorified, and his cause, not our own ideas, will be advanced.

Only by God’s grace can this be done. How does God’s grace operate to promote unity of the Spirit? Paul answers this question in the succeeding portion of Ephesians chapter 4. “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” (vs. 7) Here the apostle says

that God's grace toward us is measured by the "gift of Christ." As we study the succeeding verses, we learn that the gift referred to comes as the result of God's grace. It is the gift of the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, all of whom the Lord has graciously provided for our benefit. The purpose of these gifts, Paul says, is for the "perfecting of the saints," and for the "edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—vss. 11-13

OF THE SPIRIT AND OF FAITH

It is apparent from the details of Paul's argument that he wants us to understand that "unity of the Spirit" and "unity of the faith" are closely connected, and not to be thought of as separate attainments. Since Paul says there is "one Spirit" and "one faith," it must be concluded these are in harmony with each other. Thus the apostle says that to help us achieve unity of both Spirit and faith, God has given us help by means of apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors. It has been through these various servants in the church throughout the Gospel Age that the "one Spirit" of God has given expression, and by a scrutiny of their teachings, we have been given knowledge concerning the "one faith" delineated in the Word of God. Hence unity of the Spirit and unity of the faith are both made possible at the present time, if properly sought after and worked toward, amongst the brotherhood.

Due to endless doctrinal controversies among denominational groups, many of their leaders have

adopted an interpretation of this chapter which makes the unity of the Spirit mean simply a kindly attitude which all Christians should be able to manifest toward one another. On the other hand, unity of the faith, although desirable, is not, in this view, fundamentally important. In these circles unity of the faith is usually looked upon as a noble ideal for Christians to keep before them, however one which will probably never be reached.

This slackening of the apostle's lesson is not in keeping with what he would have us understand. It seems clear that the "one Spirit" which is the means of Christian unity is not our spirit, or disposition, but the Spirit of God. It follows, therefore, that to the extent unity of the Spirit is attained, it means also a unity in the "one faith," as it also emanates from God. As noted earlier, the one faith is our "most holy faith," taught by all God's inspired spokesmen in presenting his divine plan. The teachings of these servants constitute the outline of the one faith which the followers of the Master are to worship and to serve.

The extent to which this unity of both Spirit and faith can be attained is in proportion to the degree of humility and determination with which the endeavor is made. We should not expect perfection this side of the veil, and so as long as imperfection exists, it will not be easy to attain, or maintain, unity of the Spirit and of the faith. This is not because the Spirit, through the inspired Word, has not made the basis of unity clear, nor because the faith "once delivered unto the saints" has somehow changed. Rather, the difficulty lies with our flesh and its fallen tendencies, which more or less

limits the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, albeit most often unintentionally.

If Paul's formula were followed without reservation, complete oneness of the Spirit and of faith would be attained with minimal difficulty. However, the fallen, imperfect tendencies of the flesh frequently assert themselves, thus hindering to some degree our attainment of complete unity. We might not be able to bear with the imperfections of others as we should. A little selfishness of one sort or another may prevent divine love from fully controlling our lives. Any slight degree of failure to control the selfish tendencies of our flesh will impair the unity for which we are striving.

Additionally, our vision of the one Lord, one faith, and one baptism may not be as clear as it should be. Perhaps we are permitting other "gods" to supplant in our affections to some small degree our wholehearted devotion to the one Lord who has been revealed to us by his Spirit. Indeed, there are many such idols which we may be prone to set up in our hearts, permitting them to compete, as it were, with the "one Lord," whose will should be the unifying power in each of the consecrated. To whatever extent we permit the idols of pleasure, pride, ambition, vainglory, wealth, or ease, to influence our habits of thought and action, it means that we will not be wholly at one with God, nor with those whose devotion to the "one Lord" is more complete.

It may be that the one faith is not the central focus of our hearts and minds, as it should be. Perhaps we find a measure of satisfaction in mixing the "most holy faith" with theories of our own.

These theories in themselves may not be harmful, but because they are ours we may attach too much importance to them and spend too much time in their consideration. Furthermore, if in addition we attempt to impose such theories upon our brethren, we may be lending our influence in the direction of disunity rather than unity.

Failure to enter wholeheartedly into the "one baptism," by which our wills are immersed into the divine will, would surely affect our oneness with the brethren. Attainment of the unity of the Spirit is only in proportion to the degree to which each of the Lord's consecrated people submits his will to the instructions and leadings of the Lord. To whatever extent our own spirit, or the spirit of others who may influence us contrary to the divine will, is permitted to govern what we think, say, and do, we will be standing in the way of attaining the full oneness among the brethren which could be our blessed portion.

CHURCH ORGANIZATION

In the Holy Spirit's outline of God's will for his people we also find the Scriptures teaching a certain decorum and organization for the church. This is manifest in the matter of local ecclesia arrangements in which elders and deacons are appointed by the brethren to represent them in service. We should be lowly enough in mind to recognize these arrangements and be subservient to them. This will call for longsuffering, and forbearing one another in love. However, if we permit our own interests, of whatever sort they may be, to supersede or nullify the influence of these

scripturally authorized arrangements, and if we decide that we can get along just as well by ourselves as we can with the brethren, it will mean a significant failure on our part to keep the unity of the Spirit.

We may attempt to justify our actions by claiming that we are standing for principle. Let us be on guard, however, lest we interpret our own fleshly approach as being a principle of righteousness. Unquestionably, there are valid principles for which every consecrated child of God should stand. When these are at stake, the way before us should be clear, and our course uncompromising. Nevertheless, let us be sure that we are standing for divinely authorized principle. We should also remember that our brethren may find it just as difficult to get along with us as we find it hard to get along with them. Thus let us all encourage each other to keep our hearts and minds fixed more fully upon the perfect pattern, Jesus, and to have our lives controlled to the greatest extent possible by the one Spirit and one faith which he embodied as our exemplar.

CHRIST THE HEAD

If to any extent we have wandered off into paths of disunity, whether of Spirit or of faith, let us come back to the Lord's pathway, the narrow way of full submission to the divine will, as it is revealed in God's plan. Thus may the Holy Spirit, through the Word, lead us ever nearer to the center of that glorious unity of faith, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men,

and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”—Eph. 4:14,15

While Paul makes special mention of certain servants in the church and shows the value of their aid in helping the brethren attain oneness in Spirit and in faith, he would not have us understand that these special servants are the only ones who help bring about this true oneness in Christ. The fact is that we all have an important part to play in helping to bring about this unity, and no matter what that part may be, we should be faithful in performing it. We should all be promoters of oneness, goodwill and love among the brethren.

The basis of our unity must always be God’s Word of truth. We cannot promote true Christian unity by departing from the Scriptures, nor by seeking other sources of spiritual understanding. On the other hand, we can promote unity by “speaking the truth in love,” by lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearance one with another. Such endeavors will be in harmony with the one Spirit and one faith, and we will have God’s blessing because we will be working in harmony with his will. Paul expresses the thought beautifully. Noting our head, Christ Jesus, he says, “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”—Eph. 4:16

■

Rest for the Weary

*Soon shall restitution glory
Bring to earth a blessed rest;
And the poor, and faint, and weary
Shall be lifted up and blest.*

*Just beyond the coming trouble
See the reigning Prince of peace!
Lo! God's kingdom now is coming,
And oppression soon must cease.*

*He's now gath'ring out his jewels,
Those who with him soon shall reign;
And earth's weeping and sad farewells
Soon shall change to joyous strain.*

*Sing! O Sing! ye heirs of glory,
Shout the tidings as you go!
Publish wide redemption's story
All, its healing balm should know.*

*Tell how Eden's bloom and beauty
Once again shall be restored,
Making all man's wide dominion
As the garden of the Lord.*

*O yes, sing ye heirs of glory,
Shout your triumph far and near,
Let the notes of praise and singing
Sweetly fall on sorrow's ear.*

*There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for all.*

—Hymns of Dawn

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. B. Alexander Albuquerque, NM April 19-21	R. Goodman Jacksonville, FL April 14
N. Austin Albuquerque, NM April 19-21	L. Griehs Highland Park, NY April 6 Albuquerque, NM 19-21
G. Balko Detroit, MI April 13,14	T. Krupa Richmond, KY April 27,28
D. Christiansen Detroit, MI April 13,14	E. Kuenzli Highland Park, NY April 6
J. Dolan Detroit, MI April 13,14	R. Shahan Detroit, MI April 13,14

*We must work the works of Him who sent Me
as long as it is day; night is coming
when no one can work.
—John 9:4, New American Standard Bible*

2019 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Thursday, April 18, 2019.

A complete Memorial Service is available for any who wish to have it. CD or DVD versions can be purchased for \$6.00. Please send your request to:

Dawn Recorded Lecture Service
199 Railroad Avenue
East Rutherford, NJ 07073

Please place your order by April 3, if possible.

CONVENTIONS

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

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 6—Double Tree by Hilton, 789 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Contact S. Koterba. Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 13,14—Quality Inn Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or Email: nemeshfp@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 19-21—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

AGWA, NIGERIA CONVENTION, April 20—Agwa Ecclesia place of fellowship. Contact V. Ekeh. Phone: +2348080205812 or Email: abiblestudecc@yahoo.com

METROPOLITAN DETROIT CONVENTION, May 4,5—American Spirit Center, 10590 E Grand River, Brighton, MI 48116. Contact N. Hummel. Phone: (248) 486-6357 or Email: psa343nj@yahoo.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 5—**New Location**—Mandell Jewish Community Center, 335 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 5—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073. For room reservations, contact the hotel. Phone: (904) 562-7407. Other information, contact C. Hughes. Phone: (904) 781-0506 or Email: clanky3@att.net

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 5—Sewickley Grange Hall, West Newton, PA. Contact L. Mlinek. Email: lmlinek@verizon.net

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 25,26—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504.

Accommodations and information, contact N. Nekora at npnedora@aol.com or T. Parkinson at ti77park@gmail.com. Cutoff date for securing rooms at the subsidized rate is April 15.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 2—Falls Township Senior Center, 282 Trenton Road, Fairless Hills, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 8,9—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 14-16—Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. For convention accommodations, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (503) 459-2720 or Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com. Other information, contact M. Colletti. Phone: (503) 820-8899 or Email: colletti291@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25—**New Location**—University of Idaho, 709 Deakin Avenue, Moscow, ID 83843. For information, go to the General Convention website: BibleStudentsGeneralConv.org. For reservations, contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

BENIN REPUBLIC CONVENTION, July 26-28—Semekpodji Porto Novo, route pk 16klm, Benin Republic. Contact E. Okorie. Phone: + 229 65505568, + 229 97059452 or Email: bbsecclesias@yahoo.com

RED DEER CONVENTION, August 9-11—Golden Circle Senior Centre, 4217 50 Avenue, Red Deer, AB, Canada. Rooms available at Super 8 Hotel, 4217 50 Avenue. Phone: (403) 358-7722. Mention Alberta Bible Students when booking. Other information, contact J. Neumeier. Email: jbneumeier@live.com

JACKSON CONVENTION, August 17,18—**New Location**—Jackson College, Bert Walker Hall, 2111 Emmons Road, Jackson, MI 49201. Contact L. Davis. Phone: (517) 414-5544 or Email: lydadav@gmail.com