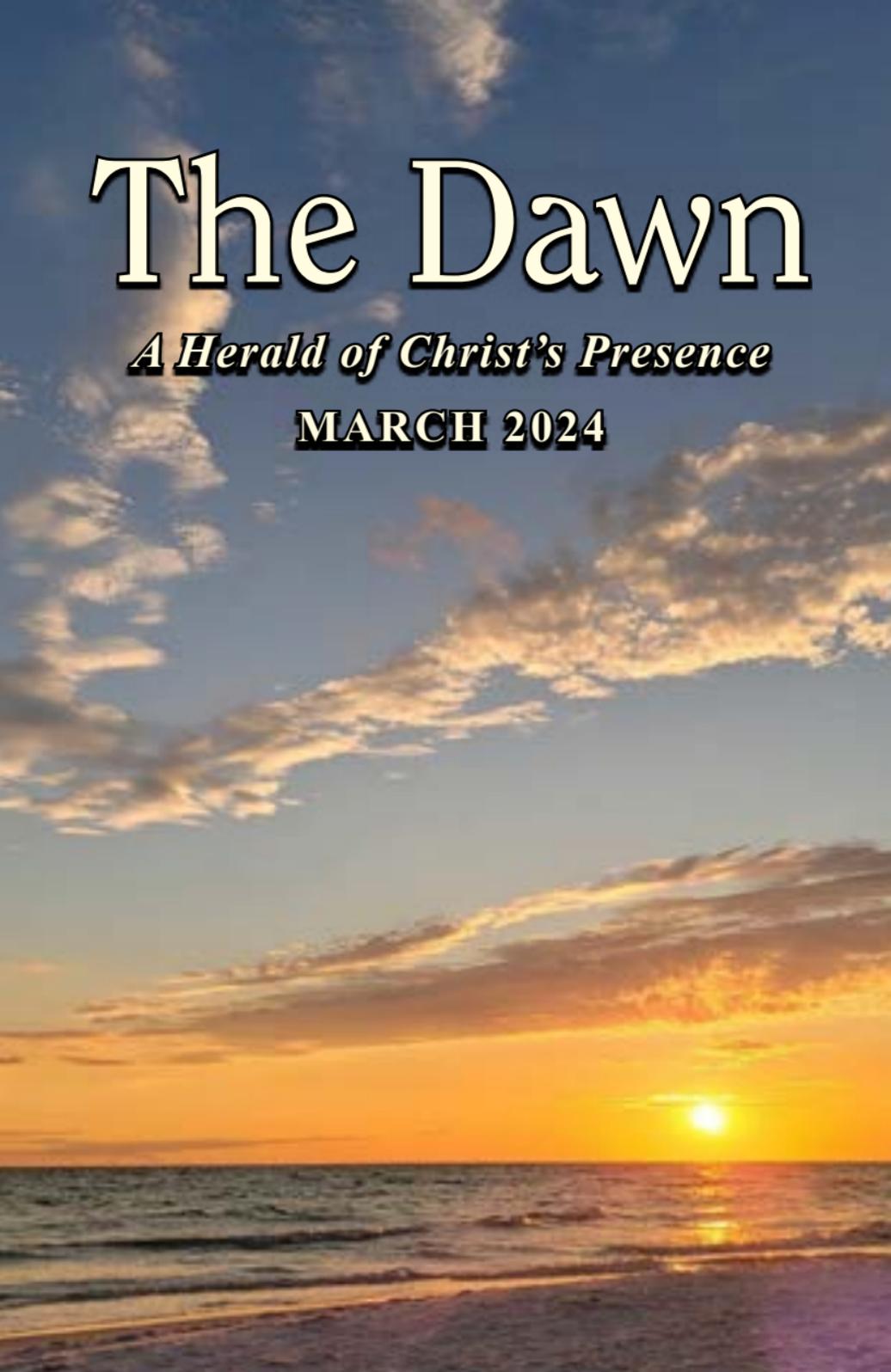
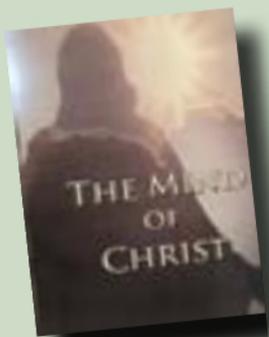


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Assurance for All People

“[God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—Acts 17:31

THE WORDING OF OUR

title would seem to imply a ray of hope for mankind in today's perplexing world. Certainly, some assurance of better times is needed now more than ever before, especially in light of wars, riots, increasing crime, political polarization, economic uncertainty, social upheaval, and a breaking down of the moral

standards of the people. Today's world does not present a pretty picture, and the outlook for the future is a dim one.

In vain we look for some sign in the events occurring around us to indicate that one day there will be a change, that the human race will awaken to its present calamitous course in time to save what is called civilization from a complete collapse. We must look elsewhere to receive this assurance. There is a source of information which reveals the

relationship of the past to the present and, as a beacon light, points the way through the darkness to a new day of promise—a time of blessings for all assured to us by the great Creator of the universe.

SIN AND DEATH

Today, our only source of real hope is the Bible. However, if this great book is to mean to us what it should, we must accept it for what it claims to be, which is the Word of God. This source of hope and assurance informs us that our first parents were created in the image of God. This means that they were perfect and endowed with the divine qualities of love, sympathy, and understanding. If the earth were filled with such people there would be no war, no crime, no oppression—none of the ugly evils which afflict mankind today.—Gen. 1:27,28

These perfect specimens of humanity were asked to obey divine law and were informed that disobedience would lead to death. (Gen. 2:17) They disobeyed, and the death sentence fell upon them. Soon trouble began. Cain murdered his brother Abel, and rampant murder still continues. The downward course of the human race has been constant. The record reveals that less than two thousand years after the fall of man “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”—Gen. 6:5

The Flood destroyed that evil social order, but shortly afterward sin and selfishness again began to increase, and every generation has experienced its terrible results. There have been wars and other distressing manifestations of the fact that the human race is indeed fallen and incapable of

stopping the downward drag of sin. The Bible attests to this, as do the pages of secular history.

RELIEF PROMISED

In every generation, however, there were a few who endeavored to maintain their belief in God, and who tried to stem the tide of human selfishness. Abraham was one of these, and God counted him as a “friend.” (James 2:23) God made a wonderful promise to Abraham, assuring him that through his “seed,” or progeny, all the families of the earth would be blessed. When Abraham demonstrated his complete faith in God by his willingness to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, God confirmed this promise by his oath.—Gen. 22:15-18; Heb. 6:13-18

This promise was passed on to Isaac and later to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. Later God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. (Gen. 32:28; 35:10) When Jacob died, it became the heritage of the nation of Israel as a whole. To the devout of Israel this promise to Abraham was the basis of their hope in a coming Messiah. (Ps. 105:6-45; Mic. 7:20) As they understood it, the Messiah would establish a powerful government in Israel—one which would reach out and bless all the families, or nations, of the earth.

The greatest event ever to take place in the earth up to that time was the birth of Jesus, who had been sent into the world to fulfill the Messianic promises. Yet, like many of the good things which occur in the world today, the birth of Jesus received little publicity at the time. No doubt the shepherds, to whom the announcement of Jesus’ birth was made by the angels, did what they could to spread the news. However, this was meager publication of

an event so important to mankind. The wise men who came later were greatly impressed, and they probably spread the news to some extent. Perhaps the greatest notice the birth of Jesus received was in connection with Herod's attempt to destroy the child by the slaughter of all the Hebrew children in that area. Thus, as is the case today, the good was temporarily overshadowed by the evil.

Regardless of how much or how little attention was given to the birth of Jesus at the time, one of the greatest events in history had occurred. It was as a shining beacon of hope in the nighttime of human experience, for the one whom the Creator had promised to be the deliverer of mankind from the devastating effects of sin and death was born. To be sure, he was born in a humble manger, but his birth was announced by the holy angels. His destiny was to be a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace.—Isa. 9:6,7

MESSIAH AND KING

Jesus was also born to be the great Messiah and King of promise. His disciples believed that this was his destiny. In fact, they expected him to set up his kingdom immediately and, through the authority given to him by God, to first deliver Israel from the Roman yoke of bondage, and then to take over the rulership of the world. However, while Jesus demonstrated by his miracles that he was capable of accomplishing the divine will, the disciples saw little or no evidence of a new government being formed under his leadership.

What they did see was increasing opposition to Jesus by the religious rulers. This opposition reached

a climax as a result of his awakening Lazarus from the sleep of death. (John 11:43,44,53) The disciples did not understand Jesus' attitude in the face of the rising tide of hostility. He told them he intended to go to Jerusalem and expected to be arrested and put to death. They could not harmonize this with their expectations concerning their Master. Peter advised Jesus not to go to Jerusalem, and later he tried to prevent his arrest by the use of the sword.—Matt. 16:21,22; John 18:10,11

This was all in vain. Jesus was determined to give himself up to his enemies, although he could have asked his Heavenly Father for the help of the holy angels had he believed it to be the divine will for him. (Matt. 26:53,54) Though their hearts were anguished, the disciples could do nothing to turn aside the tide of events. Their Messiah, their King, was arrested, brought before priests and rulers to be falsely tried, spat upon, beaten, to have a crown of thorns placed upon his head, and to be nailed to a cross, where he was allowed to die. His death was accompanied by a great earthquake, and the "veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom." (Matt. 27:51, *American Standard Version*) There also came a darkness over the land, symbolic of the darkness of sin and death which this one who had been sent of Jehovah came to earth to dispel.—Luke 23:44,45

THE REDEEMER

It was by the sacrifice of his life that Jesus provided redemption from sin and death for all mankind. In addition to being the future King of the world, he was now the Redeemer of the human race.

(Mark 10:45; John 3:16,17) At that time, however, the disciples did not understand this, and they were bewildered by the fact that their Master had allowed his enemies to put him to death. Their great joy over his birth and miraculous ministry had been eclipsed by a frustration and sadness occasioned by his death.

The faith of the disciples was so firmly established in the fact of his Messiahship that they paid little attention to certain of his statements indicating that he expected to die at the hands of his enemies. How could this happen to their Messiah? Nevertheless, when he was crucified they recalled vaguely his promise that he would be raised from death on “the third day,” and they clung to this as their last hope.

Early in the morning of that third day certain women went to the tomb to complete the embalming of Jesus’ body, and they found the tomb empty. An angel explained that their Master was not there, that he had risen. The women were instructed to go and tell his disciples that he was no longer dead. (Luke 24:1-10) Later the same day, Jesus appeared as a stranger to two of his disciples walking to Emmaus, and upon his asking them the cause of their sadness they explained what had happened and added, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.”—vss. 13-24

From the prophecies of the Old Testament, Jesus pointed out to these two disciples that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die, and that the promises of his glory as Messiah and King would be fulfilled later. After Jesus disappeared from their

sight these disciples said to each other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”—Luke 24:25-32

Doubtless the hearts of all the disciples burned within them when they became convinced that their Master had been raised from the dead. However, few aside from Jesus’ own dedicated followers believed that this great miracle had occurred. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was the most remarkable and wonderful event in world history. Yet relatively little attention was given to it; and the good news concerning it as proclaimed by his faithful followers fell upon deaf ears.

ITS COMMEMORATION NOW

On the last Sunday in March the resurrection of Jesus will be once again commemorated by hundreds of millions. There will be much rejoicing, expressed by inspirational music and colorful gatherings. Most churches will have their largest attendance of the year, and eloquent sermons will be preached. With this, however, the real meaning of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is still unknown by the majority of people. Indeed, many who preach on that day will themselves be unaware of the true significance of the resurrection of Jesus, as will their congregations.

There were three great events associated with the coming of Jesus into the world, and all of them give assurance and hope for this poor, groaning creation. The first, of course, was his birth; the second was his death; and the third was his

resurrection. Without the death of Jesus, mankind would continue to remain under condemnation to death, and therefore there could be no dawning of a new morning of joy for the human race. However, because Jesus did give his life a ransom for all and thus made provision for the setting aside of the Adamic death sentence, that heart-warming promise of Psalm 30:5 will yet come true: “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” The great fact of Jesus’ death as man’s Redeemer will yet be made known to all mankind.—I Tim. 2:3-6

ASSURANCE THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION

A dead Redeemer could not deliver mankind from death; neither could a dead King rule over and bless all the families of the earth, as God had promised Abraham. (Gen. 12:3) So the next great step in the outworking of the divine purpose for human salvation was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The Creator, the Heavenly Father, demonstrated his power to fulfill his promises by raising Jesus from the dead. (I Cor. 15:20; Phil. 2:9) This shows that nothing can successfully interfere with the accomplishment of his loving design for the uplift of the human race from the degradation caused by disobedience to his law.

Truly, then, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead was an assurance of a new day, a foregleam of hope for a distraught and dying world of mankind. In the present dark world of chaos and suffering the people in general are without a true knowledge of God. God knows this, and the Apostle Paul explains that he has “winked” at this

ignorance. When, however, the Lord's "judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isa. 26:9) That time of judgment is future. Concerning it, and quoting again our opening text, the Apostle Paul explains that God has "appointed a day," that is, a period of time, "in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."—Acts 17:30,31

There is no assurance of peace and security to be found anywhere in the world today. Certainly weapons of war give us no assurance or hope. Medical science is accomplishing great things, but human wisdom will never be able to destroy death. Education has become more general throughout the world, but little is being taught concerning the principles of God and his plan.

Only when we look to God's plan of salvation as represented to us in his Word, can we have real hope. In that plan Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the future judge of the people, and the "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John 1:9) In him we see the new and righteous King of earth and the great Messiah of promise. Thus we have the assurance that the whole plan of the Creator, centered in Jesus, will become a glorious triumph in the earth because the Father raised him from the dead. May the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus inspire us all with a greater desire than ever before to tell the whole world the blessed tidings of the kingdom centered in him! ■

Is It For Me?

*Is it for me, dear Savior, Thy glory and Thy Rest?
For me so poor and humble, Oh! shall I thus be blest?*

*Is it for me to see Thee In all Thy glorious grace,
And gaze in endless rapture On Thy beloved face?*

*Is it for me to listen To Thy beloved voice,
And hear its sweetest music Bid even me rejoice?*

*A thrill of solemn gladness Hath hushed my very heart
To think that I may really Behold Thee as Thou art;*

*Behold Thee in Thy beauty; Behold Thee face to face;
Behold Thee in Thy glory And rest in Thine embrace.*

—*Poems of Dawn*

2024 MEMORIAL SUPPER DATE

The proper time for the annual observance of the Memorial Supper will be after sunset on Sunday, April 21, 2024.

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Sustaining Our Faith

Key Verses: *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”*
—*Jude 1:20,21, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Jude 1:17-25

good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”
—II Tim. 3:1-5, *NKJV*

The power and providence of God will preserve his people in these times. Our lesson reminds us of three effective practices that sustain our spiritual vitality. First, “build yourselves up on your most holy faith.” This begins with daily reading the Scriptures, not in a cursory manner, but with thoughtful and reverent attention. Our Lord Jesus’ words are full of meaning in this sense, “The words that I speak to you are spirit,

OUR KEY VERSES OFFER timely encouragement for God’s people. Modern society is not only becoming increasingly secular, but actively opposing the Christian faith. Apostle Paul reminded us of this situation that would challenge Christian belief and practice. “Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of

and they are life.” (John 6:63, *NKJV*) His words are indeed the bread of life for Christian people. All of Scripture, from Genesis through Revelation, is life-giving. “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”—Matt. 4:4, *NKJV*

The second daily practice is to “pray in the Holy Spirit.” It is often said that prayer is the vital breath of the Christian. It was Jesus’ deep communication with his Father that strengthened and refreshed him. Luke relates, “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” (Luke 6:12, *NKJV*) We likewise are encouraged to rely on prayer. “Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.”—Col. 4:2, *NKJV*

The third practice is to keep ourselves in the love of God. His love for us is unending, “For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Heb. 13:5, *NKJV*) We are compelled to do our part in maintaining this holy relationship. Proverbs tells us how. “My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”—Prov. 4:20-23, *NKJV*

When others mock us, let them do so. If someone blind from birth told us that rainbows do not exist, would we believe them? Would we not rather believe what we have seen? They do not see what we see. Those who are deaf do not hear what we hear. Our eyes and ears are blessed for they do see and hear. (Matt. 13:16) Let us, then, as our Key Verses state, continue to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, which will lead us to eternal life. These scriptural admonitions are a vital aid in sustaining our faith! ■

Examining Ourselves

Key Verse: *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”*
—II Corinthians 13:5, *New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
II Corinthians 13:1-11

a failure of faith to judge ourselves too leniently. Such leniency may reflect the attitude that Paul rebuked, “Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”—Rom. 6:1,2, *NASB*

“If we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.” (I Cor. 11:31,32, *NASB*) The Lord, in his kindness, disciplines us when we make errors in judgment regarding Christian principles. His discipline is

SELF EXAMINATION, AS encouraged by our Key Verse, is an essential component of the Christian life. However, such examination of self must be tempered by this foundational truth of our faith: we are justified in God’s sight through our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. We echo Paul’s heartfelt desire, to be “found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own, ... but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.” (Phil. 3:9, *NASB*) It is a failure of faith to judge ourselves too harshly. It is also

corrective or therapeutic, not punitive. His interest in us is not to show us how fallen and weak we are, but to make us see what we can become through his grace. Apostle Paul eloquently expressed this concept in the Epistle to the Hebrews. He first quotes from the Old Testament: “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by him; for those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives.”—Heb. 12:5,6, *NASB*; Prov. 3:11,12

Paul then expounds on the meaning of this Scripture for us. “It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.” (Heb. 12:7-10, *NASB*) To become partakers of God’s holiness is a notable encouragement in our practice of self-examination.

In evaluating ourselves, it is not healthy to go to the other extreme and conclude that we are unworthy of God’s love and favor. We leave that judgment in the hands of the Lord who bought us. (John 5:22,23) “I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.” (I Cor. 4:3-5, *NASB*) Proper self-examination is done in the light of Christ’s abundant redemption. ■

Suffering for Righteousness

Key Verse: *“If you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled.”*

—*I Peter 3:14, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
I Peter 3:8-18

bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15,16, *NASB*) Paul did suffer much in labors for Christ, in beatings, stonings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, robbers, and betrayals by false brethren.—II Cor. 11:23-33

Although we may not suffer to the same degree as Paul and other martyrs of Christ, suffering for righteousness is our lot as well. “To you it has been granted for Christ’ sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” (Phil. 1:29, *NASB*) Christian suffering is not a burden but a blessing. The word “granted” in the

OUR KEY VERSE PRESENTS us with assuring comfort and a pragmatic challenge. The assurance is that we are blessed when suffering for righteousness’ sake. The challenge is in dealing with the fear associated with suffering. Suffering is integral to the Christian life. Its purpose is to help us grow up into Christ. Recall the Lord’s words to Ananias who would introduce Saul, soon to be Paul, to the Christian faith. “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to

foregoing scripture means in the original Greek “to grant as a favor, that is, gratuitously, in kindness.” In this sense Christ’s apostles, after being beaten by order of Israel’s religious leaders, “went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:41,42, *NASB*) As a point of emphasis, we note that their rejoicing was due to being considered worthy of the privilege to suffer for Jesus. This is a perspective that we, as Christians today, must hold to also.

What about the fear of suffering? No one wants to suffer pain, torture, distress or death. To desire such would be abnormal. How may we overcome this fear? The answer is love—a deep love for God, love for Christ, love of righteousness, love of our brethren and even love for our enemies. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.”—I John 4:18, *NASB*

Our lesson consoles and advises us, “Even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” (I Pet. 3:14,15, *NASB*) Sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts fortifies us to endure righteous suffering. With his spirit in us we may gently and reverently give account for our hope.

The treasured 23rd Psalm assures us that God “restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” (Ps. 23:3,4, *NASB*) This assurance fortifies us as we suffer for righteousness. ■

The Wisdom and Spirit of Stephen

Key Verses: *“Some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.”*
—Acts 6:9,10, *New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Acts 6:1-15

STEPHEN’S LIFE AND LEGACY

are prominent in Christian history. As the fledgling church was developing its structure and government, issues arose. Our Selected Scripture passage observes that brethren of Greek origin felt that their widows were being snubbed in favor of the Hebrew widows. We realize the volatility of such confrontations. The Apostles, realizing the time and energy required to resolve this problem, instructed the church to choose “from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.” This found approval with the congregation, and one of the seven they chose was Stephen, “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.”—Acts 6:3-5, *NASB*

The church, numbering several thousand by this point in time, chose only seven men. We may think of them as “the cream of the crop.” Indeed, they were to be of good reputation, filled with

the spirit, and notably wise. The fact that we hear no more about the disparity of food distribution among the widows implies that the issue was speedily resolved. It is telling also that the first to be identified among the seven was Stephen.

Stephen's abilities brought him into the limelight in the emerging conflict between Jews and Christians. The account states: "Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6:8, *NASB*) Our Key Verses then speak of those who rose up and argued with Stephen, but were unable to answer the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke. "Then they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council."—vss. 11,12, *NASB*

Often, when the great and irrefutable truths of Christian faith are presented, falsehood cannot cope with the wisdom and spirit contained in them. Stephen's challengers induced others to bear false witness against him. Jesus forewarned his disciples of such actions. "They will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute."—Luke 21:12-15, *NASB*

In fulfillment of our Lord's words, none could resist or refute Stephen's message. Because of his stand for Truth he became an early martyr for Christ. The Greek word from which we derive the English word martyr literally means "witness." This is fitting, as Stephen's example resonates with us today, encouraging trust in the Lord and reliance upon his spirit as we face our challenges. ■

He Is Risen

Key Verse: “*He said to them, Do not be amazed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He has risen; He is not here; behold, here is the place where they laid Him.*”

—*Mark 16:6, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Mark 16:1-8

had been removed. What was happening? Who rolled away the stone and why?—*Mark 16:3,4, NASB*

It is emblematic that the sun rose as these dear women approached the tomb. (vs. 2) Darkness, despair and fear accompanied the loss of the beloved Master. Now, as they came near, the sun began to shine. The light of the glory of the Gospel was beginning to appear again. The era of Christian faith and hope was hailed with the words, “He has risen.”

Upon entering the tomb, the women saw what appeared to be a young man sitting, wearing a white robe. He spoke to them the words of our Key Verse, following

IT WAS VERY EARLY IN the morning on the first day of the week after the Sabbath. Three women who were devoted to the Lord Jesus were on a mission to anoint his body. Precious spices had been purchased, and they carried them to his grave. Doubts did not dissuade them. “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?” they asked one another. Yet their love for the Lord compelled them to continue. We may imagine their amazement and perplexity when they looked up and saw the stone

which he said, “Go, tell His disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see Him, just as He told you. They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”—vss. 7,8, *NASB*

These women were chosen to be the first witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. Their devotion and faithfulness is memorialized in Scripture. They were followers from the days of his ministry in Galilee to the time of his crucifixion. Mark bears record, “There were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him.”—Mark 15:40,41, *NASB*

“He has risen.” Why are these words of enormous significance to Christians? The answer is eloquently presented in I Corinthians chapter 15. Much to our surprise, there were brethren in the church at Corinth who did not believe in the resurrection! Perhaps an element of the Sadducees had converted to Christianity. They brought their “baggage” with them, “For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection.”—Acts 23:8, *NASB*

Apostle Paul refutes this error with power and clarity. “Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; ... For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ... But now Christ has been raised from the dead.” (I Cor. 15:12-20, *NASB*) Let us therefore rejoice, for he is risen indeed! ■

Like One of the Princes

“But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”
—*Psalm 82:7*

ONE OF THE CHARGES

levelled against Jesus by his enemies was that he claimed to be the Son of God. This, they said, was blasphemy, and blasphemers should be put to death. On one occasion when being charged with this alleged offense against the Law, the Master cited the verse just preceding our opening text which declares, “Ye are gods,” and said that it had reference to those among mankind to whom the Word of God came.—Ps. 82:6; John 10:34-36

Prior to Christ’s coming, God’s people were merely servants; so this is evidently a prophecy relating to the Christian age when, according to John 1:11,12, Jesus introduced his followers into sonship with his Father. Throughout the New Testament, therefore, we find this blessed teaching concerning our being sons of God clearly set forth.—Heb. 3:6; I John 3:1,2

“Ye are gods,” the prophecy states—that is, “mighty ones.” This is indeed the reward to which

Christians are called. Jesus, after having proven his faithfulness unto death and willingly given his perfect human life as the ransom price for all mankind, was resurrected by the Father and given “all power” in heaven and in earth. By the Father’s authority, he has promised to bestow upon those found to be faithful overcomers and having kept his works unto the end, the power to then become “mighty ones” who will share his kingdom rulership with him. (Matt. 28:18; Rev. 2:26,27; 3:21) However, promises of such high exaltation in God’s plan are not unconditional. Those who become mighty ones with Jesus must first prove their worthiness for that position. “Ye shall die like men,” the prophecy states, “and fall like one of the princes.”

Here is set forth the Christian’s privilege of dying with Jesus, and the manner in which he is to die is stipulated—to “fall like one of the princes.” None of the princes among the angelic hosts of creation has ever been given the privilege of dying in God’s cause, so the princes here mentioned must be found among God’s human creatures. A prince is a ruler, and when Adam was created he was given dominion over the earth. The right to rule would have been shared by his posterity had sin and death not blighted the human race. The only other perfect human being to whom this right has ever belonged was Jesus. Here, then, are the two “princes” alluded to in the prophecy.

The prerequisite for becoming “gods” and exercising power over the nations on a partnership basis with Christ is that we die, or “fall” like one of these princes. Both of these princes fell in death,

but the manner of their falling was certainly not the same. The human race is so accustomed to death that most people consider it a necessary experience, failing to realize that it is a present necessity only because of Adamic sin. Prince Adam did not have to die. When placed in the Garden of Eden, he was on trial for life or death. Continued obedience would have resulted in everlasting life, and the retaining of his title as Prince over the earth forever.

However, Adam did not obey divine law. He yielded to the adverse influences which were brought to bear upon him, and went down in shame, dying as a sinner. Adam's posterity automatically shared in his condemnation because they have all been conceived and born in sin. (Ps. 51:5) None are able to keep God's perfect law. Hence, they all "fall" in death like Prince Adam, that is, as sinners under condemnation.

SACRIFICIAL DEATH

Prince Jesus, however, did not fall in death because he had sinned against God's law. There was no necessity on his own account that he die. As he explained, no one could take his life from him unless he permitted it. He had the right to lay it down voluntarily if he wished, and he had the right not to do so. (John 10:17,18) Jesus died as a voluntary and willing sacrifice. "My flesh ... I will give for the life of the world," he stated. (John 6:51) How vastly different, then, was the falling in death of Prince Jesus from that of Prince Adam! We can be "gods," mighty ones in the kingdom of Christ, only if we fall in death as he fell—that is, if we

voluntarily die with him, being “planted together in the likeness of his death.”—Rom. 6:5

The fact that members of a fallen and dying race can die other than as sinners who are condemned to death is made possible through the justifying value of the blood of Christ. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” wrote the Apostle Paul. (Rom. 5:1) Accepting by faith the provisions of God’s grace through Christ, we are no longer alienated from him because of sin, but have “peace with God.” We are reckoned by God as free from Adamic sin and its penalty, and are afforded “justification of life.”—vs. 18

This justification of life through the blood of Christ, however, is for one purpose only, which is that we present ourselves in sacrifice, following the example of Jesus. (Rom. 12:1) Consecrating our lives thus to the service of God, we are authorized to count ourselves as being sacrificed in the likeness of Jesus’ death, thus falling “like one of the princes.” (Ps. 82:7) By means of this arrangement the followers of the Master have an opportunity of proving their loyalty to God and to righteousness. Upon the basis of enduring the tests faithfully even unto death, they are considered worthy of living and reigning with Christ as “gods,” or mighty ones, in God’s kingdom.

CONSIDER JESUS

To know that it is possible for us to “fall like one of the princes” is important only if this knowledge inspires us to faithfully walk in the footsteps of the Master. The theory is beautiful, but to us as individuals that beauty fades if we fail to translate theory

into practice. If we are sincere in our professions, therefore, we will delight to consider Jesus—to study his life, his service, and his sacrifice—in order that we may be copies of him.

Every word and act of Jesus is worthy of emulation, but we will confine our present consideration more particularly to the manner in which he gave up his life and all the rights pertaining to it, which properly were his. In this respect his example becomes the most illuminating during those closing days of his ministry, when he knew that his hour of death was near, and he was faced with the reality of giving up his earthly existence forever. It is this particular phase of Jesus' sacrificial life that faithful Christians will be considering at this season of the year, as, in harmony with his request, they once more commemorate his death by partaking of the Memorial emblems.—I Cor. 11:23-25

It is well to first remember that Jesus voluntarily went to Jerusalem, contrary to the advice of Peter, when he knew that his enemies there were plotting to kill him. (Matt. 16:21,22) Previously he had avoided this danger, not that he was unwilling to die, but because his Father's due time had not yet come for him to complete his sacrifice as the world's Redeemer. Obedience to God was the first rule by which Jesus governed his life. If obedience meant life, he rejoiced; if it meant death, he continued to rejoice with an inward joy of knowing that he always did those things which pleased his Father.—John 7:6,8; 8:29

In Jerusalem we find Jesus with his disciples in that "upper room" where they prepared to celebrate the Passover. (Luke 22:7-13) The fact that it was the time for the Passover was significant to Jesus,

for by this he knew the exact day on which it was his Father's will for him to die. It was also the "midst of the week," the prophetic seventieth week during which the Messiah was to be "cut off, but not for himself"—that is, he did not die as the sinner Adam died.—Dan. 9:24-27

Jesus perceived the thoughts of his disciples. He knew of the plans Judas had made to betray him, but even then he addressed Judas as "friend" [Greek: comrade]. (John 6:64,70,71; Matt. 26:50) What a valuable lesson this is for us as we consider Jesus with the thought of dying as he died. Jesus had entered into a covenant with his Father which called for the sacrifice of his human life. He knew that he could not be faithful to that covenant short of actual death, so what did it matter just how his sacrifice was to be consummated, even to the point of betrayal?

We too have laid our lives on the altar of sacrifice. We have covenanted to die as Jesus died. Should we become embittered toward those who in any way may be instrumental in lighting the fires which consume the sacrifice, or who help to keep them burning? Judas was a traitor, to be sure, and Jesus might have delivered a long and bitter harangue against him, and justly so, but he did not. Judas had been richly blessed and honored by the Master. Jesus had a right to expect better things of him, but love "seeketh not her own." (I Cor. 13:5) Love was impelling the Master to give up his rights, to give up everything, even life itself. Are we like him?

SERVANT OF ALL

While in the upper room, Jesus gave his disciples another wonderful object lesson by washing their

feet. A controversy arose among them as to who would be the greatest. Indeed, they were destined in God's plan to be "gods"—mighty ones. However, it was quite out of place for them to be aspiring for power and authority over one another. Thus Jesus, who was their Lord and Master, washed their feet as an example of humble service, explaining that the best token of real greatness is willingness to serve even in the humblest, menial ways.—John 13:1-17

Here again we have a point for consideration which helps to reveal the manner in which Jesus died. Many in the world seem willing to die for a cause, if accompanying their martyrdom there is a blare of trumpets and popular fanfare. Are we willing, though, to lay down our lives in all the little and humble ways which opportunity presents to us? Are we willing and glad to do this even though unnoticed and unknown by others? To do so is to use our strength as Jesus did, to die as he died, to be like him and qualified to be mighty ones with him in the kingdom.

THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

With the Passover supper concluded, Jesus took some of the leftover unleavened bread and wine, the "fruit of the vine," and instituted a new ceremony. This was neither a new way to celebrate the Passover, nor a fulfillment of the Passover type, but it was a memorial of the fulfillment. That fulfillment was the death of Jesus. He died as the true Passover Lamb who "taketh away the sin of the world." "This do," the Master enjoined, "in remembrance of me."—John 1:29; Luke 22:17-20

The world is in the habit of commemorating the birth of its noble ones, but Jesus knew that the important aspect of his ministry was his death. Without his death all mankind would continue forever under the condemnation of death on account of sin. When he invited his disciples to partake of these emblems, Jesus explained that his fleshly body, soon to die, and his blood, soon to be shed, was being given for them. The broken bread and the cup of wine were both symbolic tokens of Jesus' sacrificed life—for his disciples and for all mankind.

Thus each year, on the anniversary of the Master's death, consecrated believers come together as little groups throughout the world to partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, in memory of the death of Jesus. He was as a Prince among humanity, not condemned to death. Yet he sacrificed his life, humbly and gladly giving it up that others might live. He fell, not a victim of sin, but a victor over it, and over the condemnation of death which results from it.

TO GETHSEMANE AND THE CROSS

Following the service in the upper room with all its precious lessons, they sang a hymn and went out. (Matt. 26:30; Mark 14:26) Prospectively, as the prophet had foretold, they were all "gods." One of them was a Prince, to whom rightfully belonged the dominion of earth. However, he was going out to Gethsemane and to the cross to die, to fall as a victim for the sins of others, but triumphant over selfishness because he was doing it voluntarily.

As they walked toward Gethsemane, Jesus told his disciples that they would all be offended because of him. However, not understanding what was involved,

they all disclaimed any intention of wavering in loyalty to their Master. Peter was especially outspoken in expressing his determination to stand by Jesus, and to die for him if need be. We know he meant it, for not long after that he went into action with a sword against a whole mob in order to rescue his Lord from their clutches.—Matt. 26:31-35,47,51; John 18:10

On into the garden they went. It was far into the night, and the disciples were weary. Even Peter, James, and John, whose love for Jesus seemed often to glow with a little more warmth than did that of the others, found it difficult to “watch” with their Lord. Then, alone with his Heavenly Father, this Prince prepared to gain the final victory. “Not my will, but thine, be done,” he prayed, and then he was ready. He was glad to die for the sins of the whole world, to fall in death as a Prince in order that atonement for the failure of Prince Adam might be made.—Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:42

As we watch the swift-moving scenes which culminated on the cross, we discover that every word and every act of the Master emphasizes that his life was not being taken from him against his will. He was, in fact, presenting his body voluntarily as a sacrifice so the necessary blood of atonement might be made available to make propitiation, first for the church’s sin, and later for the sins of the whole world.—John 10:17,18; I John 2:2

“Put up thy sword,” he said to Peter, who was trying to defend him. (John 18:11) Knowing that the religious leaders of Israel were seeking his death on the charge that he blasphemed by claiming to be the Son of God, Jesus did not offer any explanation when the high priest asked him if this was what he

really did claim. “Thou hast said,” was his reply. (Matt. 26:63,64) When to this was added the charge of treason against Caesar, Jesus again acknowledged that what he was accused of was essentially correct. “Art thou a king?” asked Pilate, and the Master replied, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.” (John 18:37) There was no defense, no dodging the issue, no holding back. This was Jesus, our perfect example.

“THEY WATCHED HIM THERE”

With very little ceremony Jesus was delivered to his accusers. He was flogged and crowned with thorns in derision. He was spat upon. They blindfolded his face and then smote him with their hands. Mocking, they said, “Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?” (John 19:1-3; Matt. 26:67,68; Mark 14:65) He was hung upon the cross and on the inscription above his head, written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, he was designated the “King of the Jews.” He was their King, but they killed him because of their unbelief. The account further states, “And sitting down they watched him there.” (Matt. 27:35-37; Luke 23:38; John 19:19-22) What a sight, and what a lesson for us as we too watch him with the desire to learn what he did, that we may likewise be “faithful unto death!”—Rev. 2:10

As they “watched him there,” the jeering, angry mob shouted, “Save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Not for an instant did Jesus display the faintest desire to prove to them that they were wrong, that he was indeed the Son of God. He just let them continue to mock and curse him.—Matt. 27:40-44 *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) Jesus, rather than saving himself, chose to save them. There was a higher motive guiding him, a nobler aspiration; and that was to do his Father's will. It was God's plan that Jesus die, and thus to be the greater Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. (John 1:29) Because this is what his Father wanted, Jesus desired it also, so he made no attempt to save himself.

Finally, Jesus cried, "It is finished," and committed his life into the hands of him who is the source of all life. (John 19:30; Luke 23:46) He was dead, dying as a man. He did not die as an imperfect, sinful man under condemnation to Adamic death, but as a perfect man who gave up his life in sacrifice. He fell as a Prince who had the right to live and be earth's ruler, but he did not exercise that right.

As we now turn away from that final scene of suffering and death, let us ponder more earnestly the meaning of those prophetic words of our text, "Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." As we meditate thus, let us more fully realize that we are among those who have covenanted to die like the man Christ Jesus, and to fall in sacrifice as did our great Prince and Savior. May our hearts leap up to God in a reaffirmation of our pledge to do his will, and pray, "O God, help us not to forget the example of Jesus' loving devotion; help us to remember the manner in which he died; and help us that we may measure up to our privileges of sacrifice with the consuming zeal that we have seen in him. Help us indeed to be faithful, as was our Lord and Master, even unto death. Amen." ■

A Sun and Shield

“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”
—*Psalm 84:11*

THE APOSTLE PETER tells us that those striving to follow in the footsteps of Jesus have been given “exceeding great and precious promises,” by which we may be made “partakers of the divine nature.” (II Pet. 1:4) Our Heavenly Father, in provid-

ing these promises, has used various illustrations to help us grasp their reality, and the intimacy of our relationship to him makes them even more valuable to us.

Take, for example, the illustration used at the beginning of our text: “The LORD God is a sun.” What thoughts of brightness and cheer this stirs up within us! How often the immediate circumstances of life are dark and foreboding. This is true in the experiences of all mankind. The reign of sin and death has had a blighting effect upon all. However, we who have been blessed to know the Lord find ourselves out of harmony with our surroundings in the world. The things that afford some joy to the world by and large mean little or nothing to us. Thus the darkness that covers the earth because

of Satan's rulership would be most depressing except for the fact that God is our "sun."

In our struggles against various adversaries—the world, the flesh, and the devil—the outlook often seems dark. Should it continue, we would become discouraged and would faint by the wayside. The Lord, however, is watching over us. When he sees we have learned a needed lesson, the dark clouds of despair with which we are surrounded part, and we see the sunshine of divine love. Almost instantly all is light around us. We walk with a firmer step, and our hearts rejoice, because we know that the Lord is with us and has shone upon us.

A "SHIELD"

The Lord is also a "shield" unto his people. To Abram God said, "Fear not, ... I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1) This was true of Abram, the father of the faithful, and it has been true of all God's people since. (Rom. 4:11-16) In this promise the Lord uses a shield to symbolize the thought of protection. To Abram much of the protection was along physical lines, but with us at the present time it is largely along spiritual lines.

God was also Abraham's "exceeding great reward." Although the patriarch had left his own country and gone into a strange land, God prospered him. Ultimately the promise of a seed was fulfilled to this "friend of God." (James 2:23) How richly the Lord rewards us as we journey on toward the heavenly Canaan, confident that since he is our shield no harm can come to us.

God's protection is over his people in various ways. In Psalm 91:4 we read that the Lord's Truth

will be our “shield and buckler.” We are being protected as New Creatures. The attacks against us are made on the mind. The enemy’s arrows are often “bitter words” and deceptive, lying words, designed to cast doubt and instill fear into our hearts and minds. (Ps. 64:3) To protect us against these poison darts of the Adversary, the Lord has given us his Word of Truth as a shield. Indeed, it constitutes a complete “armor,” with its shield of faith, breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation, sandals of peace, and garments girded together with truth.—Eph. 6:13-17

When we think of the shield alone as being the Truth that protects us against our enemies, we can consider it from a more intimate standpoint, as contained in God’s promise that he will never leave or forsake us. (Heb. 13:5) We rejoice in God’s great plan of salvation for all mankind, but how precious it is to hear him say to us, individually: “Be not afraid, I am thy shield. Continue to put your trust in me. Go often to the throne of grace, and you will find strength to help in every time of need. Your enemies may be hateful and strong, but greater is he who is for you than all who are against you. I am on your side and will not permit you to be harmed as my spiritual child.”—John 10:28-30; I John 4:4

The psalmist details the matter for us, saying: “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of

the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation.”—Ps. 91:5-9

God, by his promises, assures us of protection, and he implements those promises by constituting the angels as our guardians. “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. 34:7) The angels are powerful spirit beings, and they are equipped with needed knowledge of God’s will for each of his people. They know when to ease the burden and make the way smoother. They know when to part the clouds so that we may see the “sun,” in order that its enlightening, warming rays may dispel the darkness with which our hearts may be overwhelmed.

HIS FAVOR

“The LORD will give grace and glory,” our text declares. That is, God will show us his favor and kindness, which is the thought contained in the Hebrew word here translated “grace.” How many wonderful ways the Lord bestows his loving-kindness upon his people! David wrote: “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”—Ps. 36:7-9

God’s “house” during the present age is his people, and how “fat” indeed are the provisions he has made for them! (I Pet. 2:5; 4:17) In this end of the Gospel Age especially, he has provided “meat in

due season” for his household, the glorious truths of his glorious plan of salvation for both the church and the world. (Matt. 24:45) We have rich, nourishing, and stimulating teachings of his Word upon which to feed and thereby become strong in the Lord and grow up into our Head, Christ Jesus.

DRINKING OF GOD’S PLEASURES

The Lord has also made us to “drink of the river” of his pleasures. God’s pleasure is manifest in all his works: “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” (Rev. 4:11) We share this pleasure with our Heavenly Father, for we know his human creation will ultimately be reconciled to him and will praise and magnify his holy name throughout all eternity.

God takes special pleasure in his New Creation. To Jesus he said, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:22) What great pleasure we also take in Jesus! He is our beloved Elder Brother, our Exemplar, our Advocate, our Captain, our High Priest, and our Head. He is to us the “chiefest among ten thousand,” the one “altogether lovely”—a constant friend and companion.—Song of Sol. 5:10,16

Again we read, “The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear [reverence] him, in those that hope in his mercy.” (Ps. 147:11) A similar thought is expressed in Psalm 149:4: “The LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.” These describe more of God’s “rivers of [his] pleasure” of which he has given us the privilege of drinking.

Surely we also find pleasure in our association with the Lord’s people, the blessed people of God

who “know the joyful sound” of the Gospel message. (Ps. 89:15,16) Among these there are not many wise, not many rich, not many noble insofar as the world’s standards are concerned, but they are prized very highly by the Heavenly Father and should be by one another.—I Cor. 1:26-28

The fellowship of Christian brotherhood is very precious to each of the Lord’s consecrated people. There is nothing else like it in the world. To be a part of it and to experience the blessed “tie that binds” the hearts of all its members together in the bonds of Christian love is another of the rivers of pleasure that refresh and rejoice the hearts of all to whom the Lord is a sun and shield.

In Isaiah 53:10 reference is made to another of God’s pleasures. The prophecy of this verse concerns the purpose for which Jesus came to earth, that is, to carry out the loving plan of the Creator for the reconciliation and restoration of the fallen human race. The entire world of mankind restored to life as perfect human beings is spoken of in this text as the “seed,” or children, of Christ. Jesus was “cut off out of the land of the living” without children. (vs. 8) Yet, as Isaiah declares, he “shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

We are sure to make frequent reference to those things that give us pleasure. God, likewise, throughout his Word, speaks over and over again of his great pleasure and plan to restore the dead world to life. Peter refers to that plan for “restitution” and says it was “spoken by the mouth of all [God’s] holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:21

This “pleasure” of Jehovah was part of the “joy that was set before” Jesus, which enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame associated with laying down his life for the sins of the world. (Heb. 12:2) The knowledge of this glorious Truth of God’s plan satisfies our longings as nothing else could do. We love to talk about it and to do all we can to make it known to others. It is a story that never grows old, a veritable river of pleasure indeed.

God’s purpose in the “great salvation” of the present Gospel Age is another river of his pleasure. (Heb. 2:3) It is our privilege to cooperate with our Heavenly Father in attaining to this “high calling.” (Phil. 3:14) Paul admonishes us to “work out” our own salvation, and he adds, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Phil. 2:12,13

We can be assured that, regardless of how difficult the way may be or how many difficult experiences may tend to discourage us from our course of sacrifice, he who is our sun and shield will continue to work in us to accomplish his good pleasure. “Fear not,” Jesus said, “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

The Heavenly Father has foreordained the faithful church class “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” He has also made known to us “the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.”—Eph. 1:5,9,10

AND GLORY

Surely those to whom the Lord is a sun and shield are a favored people. We are blessed by his grace, his loving-kindness, as a rich present inheritance. Thus, “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” for a future spiritual inheritance. (II Cor. 4:17) In his prayer on behalf of his followers, Jesus said to his Father: “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”—John 17:22,23

The glory of the divine nature and the glory of the kingdom was given to Jesus by promise from the Heavenly Father. Jesus promised the same glory to his disciples. They were to “sit on thrones”; they were to have the “kingdom”; they were to do “greater works” than he had done while in the flesh; they were to have a “resurrection of life,” and they were to be with him in the “place” he went away to “prepare.”—Luke 22:29,30; John 5:28,29; 14:2,3,12

After the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost, the apostles understood the meaning of these wonderful promises of future glory. John wrote: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: ... and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:1,2

Peter wrote: “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 Pet. 4:12,13

Paul likens this promised glory to the bright shining countenance of Moses when he came down from the mountain bringing with him the tables of the Law. (II Cor. 3:3-12) In verse 18 of this chapter, Paul speaks of our beholding the “glory of the Lord” in a glass, or mirror, and says that we are “changed into the same image from glory to glory.”

James states: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation [Greek: a putting to the proof]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:12) Jude likewise exhorts: “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Closing his epistle, he commends us to him who is able to keep us from falling, the one who is our sun and shield and will present us “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”—Jude 1:21,24

NO GOOD THING WITHHELD

Our text concludes with the blessed assurance that no “good thing” will be withheld from those who walk uprightly. Indeed, “every good gift and every perfect gift” that comes down from the “Father of lights” will be ours to enjoy.—James 1:17

Let us take heed lest we permit these good gifts of God to become commonplace. First, there is that

“unspeakable gift” of his beloved Son. (II Cor. 9:15) How we should continue to treasure him! Through him we have the gift of “eternal life.” We are also richly blessed by the gift of the Holy Spirit—its enlightenment, its comfort, and its strength. By it we are also begotten again to a new hope of life, becoming New Creatures in Christ Jesus.—Rom. 6:23; Luke 11:13; II Cor. 5:17

Paul speaks of the gifts of apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists provided to us by God. (Eph. 4:11) All these gifts are shared in common by the Lord’s people and are a part of the means by which the Heavenly Father is to us a sun and shield. In addition to these gifts of God that are shared and enjoyed by all his people, he continually showers us individually with good things that are needful in order to make our calling and election sure. The guardian angels know exactly what each one of the Lord’s people needs.

There are many things we may properly think of as being “good,” such as the Truth, fellowship with the brethren, opportunities of service, and the overruling providences of God. If we remain humble before the Lord and pure of heart, we will enjoy these blessings in good measure.

However, for reasons known to him, God might, for example, not think it good for us to be too robust in health. He may know that a trial of ill health would be the very best thing for our spiritual welfare. We know that he is able to cause all things to work together for our good. (Rom. 8:28) We do not need to understand exactly why the Lord permits us to have the trial that is bearing down so heavily upon us today. All we know

and all we need to know is that he loves and cares, that he is our sun and shield, and that he gives his very best to those who leave the choice with him.

Our joy and our comfort, therefore, will continue to be in the fact that because the Lord is the light of our lives, we can walk in the dark with him and not lose our way. Although we have enemies within and foes without, nevertheless, because he is our refuge, our strength, our shield, and our rock, no harm can come to our eternal interests as a New Creature. Praise the Lord for the assurance that because he is our sun and shield all good things are ours to enjoy and that he is able to turn into good those experiences which, while unpleasant, he is causing to work out for us the promised “eternal weight of glory!” ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MARCH 7—“If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.”—I John 4:12 (Z. '03-56,57 Hymn 312A)

MARCH 14—“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”—Proverbs 16:32 (Z. '96-279 Hymn 95)

MARCH 21—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”—Matthew 5:44 (Z. '91-141 Hymn 145)

MARCH 28—“Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”—II Timothy 2:3 (Z. '03-84 Hymn 13)

Moses—Deliverer, Lawgiver, Mediator, and Prophet

“There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land.”

—Deuteronomy
34:10,11

in the land.—Exod. 1:7-22

Moses' mother, seeing that he was a "goodly child," hid him for three months. When he could no longer be hidden, his mother prepared a special basket which would float, and put the child in it

THE NAME "MOSES"

means "drawn out." It was given to this outstanding servant of God by Pharaoh's daughter because he had been drawn out of the water. (Exod. 2:10) Moses was born at the time when his people, the Hebrews, were slaves in Egypt. The Egyptian king had decreed that all Hebrew male babies should be destroyed at birth in order to halt their rapidly increasing population

and left it near the edge of one of the small canals by the side of the river. She hoped that the basket would be discovered by an Egyptian, and that the child's life would be saved. God overruled in the matter, and Moses was discovered by Pharaoh's daughter. She took the infant into the royal residence and adopted him as her son, engaging his real mother as a nurse. (Exod. 2:1-10) As he grew into manhood, Moses' mother undoubtedly told him much about the promises of God to their people. In addition to this, he became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."—Acts 7:22

Aside from this we know little of the experiences of Moses until he was forty years old, at which time, seeing one of his Hebrew kinsmen being abused by an Egyptian, he intervened and slew the oppressor. The next day he learned that his act had been discovered, so he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian, dwelling there until he was eighty years old.—Exod. 2:11-15; Acts 7:23-30

THE BURNING BUSH

In Midian Moses married one of the daughters of Reuel, also called Jethro, and for forty years attended the flocks of his father-in-law. (Exod. 2:18; 3:1) It was then that the Lord spoke to Moses at the burning bush, and assigned him the task of delivering the Hebrew people from their Egyptian bondage. (Exod. 3:2-10) In speaking to Moses, through an angel, Jehovah identified himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Through his mother, Moses would know of the promises of God to Abraham, and therefore this identification would mean much to him.

Moses' forty years as a shepherd, tending the flocks of his father-in-law, had removed much of the self-confidence which earlier had caused him to slay the Egyptian who was beating one of his countrymen. He probably felt that now he was capable only of performing the simple duties of a shepherd. To appear before the mighty Pharaoh and demand the release of the Hebrew people from bondage, Moses no doubt felt was quite beyond him.—Exod. 3:11

However, the Lord reassured Moses, saying, "Certainly I will be with thee." Then, as though he had agreed to accept the assignment, Moses began to ask the details of procedure. First he wanted to know what he should say to Pharaoh as to who had sent him to demand the release of the Hebrew slaves. In reply to this Moses was instructed to say that "I AM" had sent him.—vss. 12-14

The Hebrew expression translated "I AM" means "to exist," according to *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*. By extension the full thought of the word when used by the Creator as a name would be, "The Self-existing One." Moses evidently got this thought, for in his prayer recorded later in the Book of Psalms he spoke of the Creator as being "from everlasting to everlasting." (Ps. 90:1,2) It was especially appropriate that God should thus identify himself to Moses, for although the Hebrew people were slaves in Egypt, and Moses himself had been a shepherd-slave for forty years, their God, and the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, still existed as the true and ever-living Creator who would fulfill all his promises.

TEN PLAGUES

God promised Moses that he would use him to deliver the Hebrew people from Egypt, even though the king would refuse to let them go. (Exod. 3:17-22) The lesson which God impressed upon Moses was that miracle-working power would be needed to bring about the deliverance of the Hebrew people and that such power would be used. Indeed, nine plagues were visited upon the Egyptians, each of which was lifted when Pharaoh agreed to release the Israelites. However, each time the plague was lifted the king changed his mind, and the Israelites were not released.

Then came the tenth plague, which was the death of Egypt's firstborn. (Exod. 11:4-6) The firstborn sons of the Hebrew children could escape this plague if their families followed the Lord's instructions concerning the sacrifice of a lamb and the sprinkling of its blood upon the lintels and doorposts of their houses.—Exod. 12:1-27

As foretold, the Lord smote all the firstborn of Egypt on the night of the fourteenth day of their first month. (vss. 28-36) Not only did Pharaoh then consent to the Israelites' leaving Egypt, but their departure was urged upon them, so much so that the Egyptian people gave them many of their valuables, apparently to help encourage a speedy exodus.

A GREATER DELIVERANCE

The importance to us of this episode in Moses' experience as a servant of the Lord is the scripturally established fact that God designed it to serve as an illustration of a much more important deliverance—a release from the bondage of sin and death,

under the great taskmaster Satan, the Devil, whom the Bible speaks of as having the power over death.—Heb. 2:14

When the Lord's time came to prepare for the deliverance of the Hebrews, those among them who were exposed to immediate danger were the firstborn. As a result of the tenth plague, they would have lost their lives that night had it not been for the protection afforded them by the blood of the Passover lamb. (Exod. 12:12,13,22,23) This was designed by God as an illustration of a very important feature of his plan of salvation and future deliverance of all mankind from death. In the New Testament the indication is given to us that the footstep followers of Jesus, the true church of Christ, are the real "firstborn" foreshadowed by the firstborn of Israel.—Heb. 12:23

The Apostle Paul identifies Jesus as the true "Passover Lamb" who has been "sacrificed for us." (I Cor. 5:7, *New Living Translation*) We know that it is only through Christ's blood that we, his followers, receive life. Apart from his shed blood we could not be assured of life during this nighttime of sin and death.—I Pet. 1:18,19

In the Passover picture the firstborn and their families ate the literal lamb during the night, and it was in the morning that the deliverance of all Israel took place. So, at the present time, when the darkness of sin still covers the earth, the true church feeds, symbolically speaking, upon Jesus, the Lamb of God. Thus they are being prepared to participate in the deliverance of the whole world of mankind in the morning of earth's new day, the Messianic kingdom.—John 1:29; 6:51,63

Bitter herbs were to be eaten along with the flesh of the Israelites' Passover lamb. (Exod. 12:8) This suggests the severe trials which come upon the followers of Jesus as they feed symbolically upon him and lay down their lives in sacrifice. (I Pet. 4:12,13) These symbolic bitter herbs give us a greater desire to look to the Lord for strength and courage as we endeavor to be pleasing to him. Thus we are made ready to share in the glory and work of Christ's kingdom, which is to bring deliverance for all mankind from their bondage to Satan and to sin, sickness, and death.

Moses was given the assurance that it was the God of Abraham who was sending him to deliver the Hebrew people from Egypt. It was this true and living God who had promised Abraham that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. The Apostle Paul explains that it is Jesus and the church of the firstborn who together constitute the "seed" promised to Abraham. (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:8,16,27-29) The church is a faith seed, and when redeemed from death through the blood of Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, and brought forth in the first resurrection to live and reign with him, they will share in the promised deliverance and blessing of all nations.—Rom. 11:26

LAWGIVER

Three months after Moses had served God in delivering the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt he was assigned the major task of giving them the divine Law. (Exod. 19:1-3) The Law offered the Israelites the opportunity of gaining life upon the basis of full obedience to its requirements.

(Lev. 18:5; Rom. 10:5) Since the Israelites, even as the people of all other nations, were members of a sinful and dying race, born under condemnation to death, none of them was able to measure up to the full demands of God's perfect Law, so none gained life by this arrangement.—Rom. 3:20; 7:10

Nevertheless, the Law served a useful purpose in that it demonstrated that it is impossible for any member of the fallen Adamic race to keep God's perfect Law. Up to the time of the giving of the Law there had been no special demonstration of this, for all were dying because of Adam's transgression. However, when the Israelites agreed to keep God's Law, and failed to do so, they fell under an additional curse—the curse of the Law.—Gal. 3:10-12

Paul wrote that the Law served as a "schoolmaster" to bring the people to Christ. (Gal. 3:24) It did prepare some of the Israelites to receive Christ at his First Advent. Although they did not accept him as a nation, the experience of that people under the Law will always stand as a lesson of the fact that none can gain life except through Christ. "Wherefore then serveth the law?" Paul asked. "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed [Christ] should come to whom the promise was made."—vs. 19

While the Israelites for the most part did not make a serious effort to keep the Law, it served as a certain restraint upon them, and contributed to holding them together as a people until Messiah came and presented himself to them. Since the Israelites were the natural descendants of father Abraham, they were the first in line, when Jesus came, to be the inheritors of the promise made to him concerning a "seed" that was to bless all the

families of the earth. However, in this also, love for God and a sincere effort to do their best to obey his Law as a demonstration of faith in him and in his promises, were the conditions of becoming part of this seed, which God had described as a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”—Exod. 19:5,6

Disobedience to God, climaxed by their rejection of the Messiah, Head of the seed class, caused the Israelites to lose this choice inheritance. Jesus explained that the “kingdom” would be taken from them, and given to another nation, one that would bring forth the proper fruits of righteousness. (Matt. 21:43) The Apostle Peter identified this new “holy nation” for us, calling it a “royal priesthood.”—I Pet. 2:9,10

MEDIATOR

Moses received the Law from God while hidden in a cloud on Mount Sinai, where he remained in communion with Jehovah for forty days. Meanwhile the Israelites became weary of waiting for his return and set up a golden calf to worship instead of their God. (Exod. 32:1-6) The Lord was much displeased with this display of unfaithfulness. He told Moses that he would blot them out, and through him make a “great nation.”—vss. 7-10

Moses, serving as mediator between God and the people, interceded for them, and they were not destroyed. (vss. 11-14) When Moses came down out of the mount and saw the golden calf and noted the sinful revelry of the people in their worship of the false god, he became wroth and destroyed the tables of the Law which had just been given to him by the Lord.—vss. 19,20

Later Jehovah instructed Moses to hew other tables of stone like those he had broken and take them up into Mount Sinai. (Exod. 34:1-4) The Lord then stood with Moses in a cloud and proclaimed the virtues of his character, which now we see exemplified in God's plan of salvation. (vss. 5-7) It was while the Lord thus outlined the attributes of his character that the Law was written on the tables of stone. Then Moses, serving as a faithful mediator, petitioned God to pardon the iniquity of the Israelites and take them for his inheritance, which the Lord agreed to do.—vss. 9,10

Moses had again been on Mount Sinai for forty days and nights, and when he came down this second time, his face was aglow with the glory of the Lord. This glow remained on Moses as he started to speak to the people with respect to God and his Law, and he had to put a veil over his face when he spoke. (Exod. 34:28-35; II Cor. 3:13) In the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to this scene as pointing to the glory to be associated with the future mediation of the New Covenant by Christ, the Head, and the church, his body members.—II Cor. 3:3-12; I Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 12:22-24

FIRST OF THE HOLY PROPHETS

As indicated in our opening verses, Moses was one of the outstanding Old Testament prophets and was used by God to foretell various important features in the divine arrangement for the rescue of mankind from sin and death. He was the compiler of the first five books of the Bible, and in this capacity he recorded that original prophecy concerning the seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head.—Gen. 3:14,15

Moses also recorded the prophecy of Jacob concerning the “Lion” which would come from the tribe of Judah. (Gen. 49:8-10; Rev. 5:5) This was a prophecy of the coming of Jesus, first to redeem mankind from sin and death, and then to rule over the people throughout his earthly kingdom. In this regard, Jehovah explained to Moses that a “Prophet” would be raised up to the people, similar to him. (Deut. 18:15-19) The Apostle Peter referred to this promise, and indicated that it would have its fulfillment through Christ during the “times of restitution of all things.”—Acts 3:19-23

When the resurrected Jesus talked with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, he began, the record states, with Moses and all the prophets, pointing out to them that according to his divine purpose it was necessary that the Messiah should first suffer, and afterward enter into his glory. (Luke 24:25-27) From this we know that Moses foretold the suffering and death of Jesus. One of the ways in which he did this was through the institution of the Passover, as discussed earlier in our lesson, in which the death of the Passover lamb foreshadowed the death of Jesus as “the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29

In a prophetic prayer Moses calls attention to the sentence of death which came upon all mankind because of sin, and assures us that the time will come when the people will be summoned by divine power to return from destruction. (Ps. 90:3) This is one of the Old Testament prophecies which foretells the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus explained to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the

hope of the resurrection was set forth in connection with God's dealings with Moses. This is when he spoke to Moses at the burning bush, and referred to himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Jesus explained that Jehovah is not a God of the dead but of the living, because he proposes to restore mankind to life by means of an awakening from the sleep of death.—Exod. 3:6; Luke 20:37,38

Moses was a faithful servant of God as a deliverer, lawgiver, mediator, and prophet. Appropriately, he is mentioned in the last book of the Bible along with Jesus in connection with the glorious "song of Moses" and the "song of the Lamb." (Rev. 15:2,3) One of the songs composed by Moses pertained to the deliverance of the Hebrew people from their bondage in Egypt. (Exod. 15:1,2) How beautifully this prefigures the even sweeter melody of the "song of the Lamb," who will deliver all mankind from the bondage of sin and death. Let us rejoice in this prospect, foretold so long ago by God's faithful servant Moses! ■

To the End

*O Jesus, I have promised
To serve Thee to the end;
Be Thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend;
I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my Guide.*

—selected

General Convention Bulletin

July 20-25, 2024—Johnstown, Pennsylvania

PLANS ARE CONTINUING to move forward with regard to the 2024 General Convention, which will be held at the familiar facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, on the dates noted above.

Air conditioned rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style air conditioned apartments with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on the floor at no charge if both beds are occupied.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the room and meal cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid at the door.

In addition to a discourse on the theme text, Colossians 1:27, the convention program will include a discussion of the subject, “Hastening the Day,” based on II Peter 3:12. There will also be a two-person dialogue with the assigned topic, “Our Relationship to the World,” taken from Jesus’ words found in John 17:16,18.

A complete pricing table and registration form is provided for your convenience immediately following this announcement. We encourage you to register early. Advance payment is not required. If you pay in advance, it will be refunded in full if you determine later that you are unable to attend. We encourage you to start planning now to attend this year's General Convention. ■

	Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast		\$11.00	\$10.00
Lunch		13.00	12.00
Dinner		16.00	15.00
Total, three meals		\$40.00	\$37.00
Lodging (per night)			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$45.00	\$40.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$40.00	\$38.00
**single occ (LLC)		\$80.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$46.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals			
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)		\$445*	\$410*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)		\$315*	\$280*
**single occ (LLC)		\$655*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)		\$375*	n/a

*If no breakfasts, deduct—\$40

**Air conditioned

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

NOTE: A Convention Fee of \$15.00 per person, regardless of age, length of stay, or lodging and meal arrangements, will be added to your invoice to help offset convention expenses unrelated to lodging and meals.

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707
E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 19, 2024				
Saturday, 20th				
Sunday, 21st				
Monday, 22nd				
Tuesday, 23rd				
Wednesday, 24th				
Thursday, 25th				

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

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

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

O. B. Elbert

Orlando, FL March 2-4

L. Griehs

Orlando, FL March 2-4
Albuquerque, NM 29-31

T. Malinowski

Albuquerque, NM March 29-31

P. Mora

Orlando, FL March 2-4

J. Parkinson

Orlando, FL March 2-4
Albuquerque, NM 29-31

D. Rice

Orlando, FL March 2-4

J. Wesol

Highland Park, NY March 16

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Darlene Knafelc, Chicago, IL—January 6.

Age, 92

Brother Roy Paschal, Pleasant Garden, NC—January 13. Age, 80

Sister Anna Karavas, Apple Valley, CA—January 23. Age, 90

Brother Paul Brychcy, Lamorlaye, France—January 24. Age, 81

Sister Marjorie Hugelman, Casselberry, FL—January 31. Age, 90

Sister Elinor Nichols, Houston, TX—February 1. Age, 92

Sister Jeanette Kwiatkowski, Orlando, FL—February 10. Age, 89

CONVENTIONS

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

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 2-4—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—New Location—Winter Park Lodge, 1495 Grand Road, Winter Park, FL 32792. Contact J. Slavich. Phone: (407) 494-8421 or Email: JohnSlavich@gmail.com

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, March 16—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, March 29-31—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Boulevard SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

KAMPALA, UGANDA CONVENTION, April 20,21—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Jjuuko. Email: eliezer1874@yahoo.com

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 4,5—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Milford Senior Center, 1050 Atlantic Street, Milford Charter Twp., MI 48381. Contact B. Johnson. Phone: (248) 343-7636 or Email: beckystevej@aol.com

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 4,5—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Sewickley Grange Hall, 1011 Greensburg Pike, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact L. Mlinek. Email: lisa.mlinek@aol.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 5—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—West Hartford Senior

Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 25,26—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Doubletree by Hilton, 3003 Corporate West Drive, Lisle, IL 60532. Contact: T. Blackwell. Email: secretary@chicagobible.org

LOS ANGELES MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 25,26—IN PERSON ONLY—Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center, 24932 Veterans Way, Mission Viejo, CA 92692. For meal/hotel information, contact J. Bullockus. Email: jlbullockus@gmail.com. For program information, contact M. Davis. Email: lmkdavis@earthlink.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 28-30—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Bible Students Retirement Center, 1801 NE 201st Avenue, Fairview, OR 97024. For convention accommodations, contact D. Burke. Phone: (636) 222-2923 or Email: dmburke62@icloud.com. Other information, contact B. Hislop. Phone: (503) 351-5551 or Email: bwhislop@aol.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

*“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; ... They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
Acts 2:41,42 New American Standard Bible*

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

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

