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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

"Thus Saith the LORD"—Part 2 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

All Things Will Be New 18

A New Jerusalem 20

Living Waters 22

Alpha and Omega 24

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

Thanksgiving unto God Forever 26

Who Shall Stand? 39

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 62

VINEYARD ECHOES

Report of Trip to Germany 50

OBITUARIES 49

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 63

“Thus Saith the LORD”

***“Prove all things;
hold fast that
which is good.”***

***—I Thessalonians
5:21***

IN LAST MONTH’S ISSUE

of *The Dawn* we considered, in Part 1 of our examination of this subject, the methods whereby we may learn to properly interpret the Scriptures, in order to seek clear and harmonious assurance concerning the truthfulness of the doctrines which we believe. Using these methods, we then investigated the long-held teaching of the trinity. In so doing, we found that it does not meet the criteria of a “Thus saith the LORD” because of errors in the translation of certain Scriptures—errors that are well documented by Bible scholars and commentators. We also noted that the trinity does not harmonize with other important doctrines of the Bible, such as the ransom, and other teachings which show the true nature of the “oneness” between God, his Son Christ Jesus, and the consecrated followers of Christ, the church.

In Part 2 of our review of this topic, we will look at two additional teachings of Christianity—eternal

torment and “the day of salvation”—in order to determine their veracity, by use of the same methods outlined last month. As sincere students of the Bible, it should always be our desire to do as the noble Bereans, who “received the word with all readiness of mind,” and most notably, “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11) Only by so doing can we follow the words of Paul found in our opening text—“prove all things.”

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ETERNAL TORMENT?

To even the staunchest supporter of this teaching, the idea that a being could be literally tormented and tortured for all eternity is beyond comprehension and unfathomably cruel. Furthermore, to attribute the source of such an idea to the God of the universe should be nothing less than revolting and inconceivable. However, in spite of the inherent repulsiveness of this doctrine, it is claimed that numerous Scriptures support it. Let us quote some of the verses from the Bible upon which this teaching is based.

“He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night.” (Rev. 14:10,11) “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41) “The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Rev. 20:10) “Wherefore if

thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.”—Matt. 18:8,9

These appear to be perfectly good Scriptures, and a clear “Thus saith the LORD!” They are the words of Jesus during his earthly ministry and later, as the glorified Lord, part of his message given by vision to John the Revelator. These verses seem to teach eternal torment, but do they? Is that what God is truly saying through the mouthpiece of his beloved Son, the one who suffered and died, “the just for the unjust?”—I Pet. 3:18

EXAMINING THIS TEACHING

The first Scripture quoted above which is often used to prove the doctrine of eternal torment is Revelation 14:10,11. Paraphrasing, it is believed by many that the unfaithful person herein spoken of will be tormented with literal fire and brimstone, and this will be done in the presence of holy angels and the Lamb, Christ Jesus. In addition, the smoke of this fire will rise up to heaven eternally, and those suffering this fate will be tormented day and night forever.

The very first question we must answer is this: Does this description of “eternal torment” harmonize with the stated character of God? We answer: no, not even remotely so, as we will confirm according to the Bible. Thus, we additionally answer that there

must be another way of interpreting this Scripture than as a literal statement of fact. First, however, let us observe that the Bible teaches that love is the most fundamental feature of God's character—the essence of his very being.

We cite one powerful example: “God is love. . . . There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment.” (I John 4:8,18) The inseparableness between God and love is taught throughout both the Old and New Testaments. However, in these words of John, let us especially note in detail what is being said. It is “fear,” not God, that causes torment, the apostle says, and “perfect love,” the source of which is God, “casteth out fear.” John is in effect telling us that, because “God is love,” he is incapable of tormenting his creatures. It is entirely foreign to his character, contrary to his thoughts, and an abomination to him. Indeed, as church history corroborates, just the opposite has been the case—for centuries it has been the “fear” of eternal fire and brimstone which has caused “torment” in the hearts of millions of people, both good and evil. Such fear and torment have never been sanctioned by God!

God's view of this false teaching is confirmed by his words to Israel. He explicitly commanded them not to follow the methods which the heathen nations around them practiced in the worship of their gods. “Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, . . . for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire.” (Deut. 12:30,31) We note here that the practice of sacrificing humans by fire

was specifically forbidden under God's law to Israel. It was an "abomination to the LORD, which he hateth!"

Israel did not obey God's command, and his witness against them is later recorded by the prophet: "They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind." (Jer. 19:5) A second witness against Israel is given several chapters later, in which God said: "They built the high places of Baal, . . . to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination." (chap. 32:35) These detestable and loathsome heathen practices came straight from the mind of Satan, not from God. His character of love would never have fashioned such a plan.

GOD'S ATTRIBUTE OF JUSTICE

We are told in the Scriptures that another unchangeable element of God's character is justice. "Thy throne rests on equity and justice." (Ps. 89:14, *James Moffatt Translation*) Does eternal torment harmonize with God's character attribute of justice? Among the vast majority of fallen mankind, the most horrendous of crimes are, at the most, punishable by death, not torture and torment. Even in cases where the twisted minds of some, past and present, have resorted to brutal torture of those deemed "guilty" of some heinous evil, the agony suffered has most often been brief, with unconsciousness quickly following, then death, ending the torture. Is it reasonable to suppose that the

God of love, equity, and justice, would resort to practices far beyond what even the most perverted minds of fallen mankind have been capable of? We answer—certainly not!

God's plan for the obliteration of all wickedness and wicked ones forever from the heavens and the earth is by means of what the Bible calls "second death." (Rev. 20:10,14) God will certainly not keep any of the wicked alive in torment after his permission of evil has come to an end. On the contrary, we are told plainly that the wicked "shall be punished with everlasting destruction." (II Thess. 1:9) Eternal torment is completely out of harmony with the attributes of God. Second death—eternal destruction—on the other hand, is in full accord with his character.

The penalty for sin was announced by God even before Adam sinned. It was simply to be death, oblivion, the absence of life—"Thou shalt surely die," God said. (Gen. 2:17) Would it be just for God to declare the penalty as death, and then after the sin had been committed to change his mind and condemn the sinner to an eternity of torment? Such an action would be most unjust, and is not acceptable even in the courts of law which fallen man has set up. Paul states the matter very simply: "The wages of sin is death"—not eternal fire, brimstone, or torture.—Rom. 6:23

NOT IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S PLAN

In addition to failing the test of God's character qualities, the eternal torment teaching does not harmonize with the Bible's testimony concerning God's plan, centered in the doctrine of the ransom.

If the sentence upon Adam was eternal torment, and Jesus took Adam's place, Jesus must certainly endure torment forever in order to be a substitute for Adam. We know that this is false, because Jesus was raised from death on the third day to a place of honor next to the Father himself. Adam's sentence, clearly stated before his fall, and carried out at the end of 930 years upon this earth, was death. Jesus died to pay that penalty—a perfect life given, for a perfect life forfeited—as the ransom price.—I Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 2:9; Rom. 5:18; I Cor. 15:45

In addition to the ransom, the plan of God is also stated in the Scriptures to provide the opportunity for restoration of all mankind to perfection and harmony with God here upon earth. These “times of restitution of all things,” Peter says, God has “spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3:21) The tormenting of a large segment of humanity eternally is incompatible with Peter's words concerning God's plan for the restoration of the earth, and all who have ever lived upon it.

LITERAL OR SYMBOLIC?

Turning again to the words quoted earlier from Revelation 14:10,11, we ask a further question in order to help determine what these verses truly teach: Is this passage in Revelation literal or symbolic in its meaning? We answer that it is highly symbolic. Revelation is a book of symbols. As we read in the first verse of chapter 1, “things which must shortly come to pass” were “signified” unto John—that is, they were shown to him “by signs.” (*Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) Throughout this

symbolic book, information was imparted to John through signs and symbols.

The 14th chapter of Revelation, like the entire book, is replete with symbols. In verses 1-4, there is a “Lamb,” a symbol of Christ, standing on “mount Sion,” representing his heavenly kingdom. There is “great thunder,” a symbol of controversy, upheaval and trouble. “Harpers” play and sing a “new song,” harmoniously declaring the glad tidings of restitution. There is a “throne,” a symbol of authority and rulership. Then there are “beasts,” “elders” and “virgins,” all having symbolic significance.

In the 8th verse we are told that “Babylon is fallen,” which was once a “great city.” This too, is symbolic. Babylon means “confusion,” and is a representation of the confusing creeds of the false church system established by Satan after the apostles died. These words refer to the time when these systems would “fall” from the power and domination they once had over mankind. The “beast and his image,” mentioned in verse 9, also represent aspects of this great Babylon system which have impoverished society and filled the earth with false doctrines.

With this background, we are able to deal with the true meaning of the Scriptures under consideration. In verses 9 and 10, an angel, or messenger, says: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.”

Here we see several more symbols brought to our attention. First is the “mark,” or identification

of those in harmony or sympathy with the beast or his image. The fact that the mark is in the “forehead”—influencing their thinking—and in the “hand”—indicating their actions or works—is significant. The mark on the “forehead” implies a mental assent, even if only passive; the mark in the “hand” implies an active cooperation. These, God’s messenger says, will drink the “wine of the wrath of God,” out of the “cup of his indignation.” This indicates that those who endeavor to perpetuate these systems will feel the manifestation of God’s displeasure. They also will recognize eventually his denouncement of them, being compelled to drink a bitter dose as they see them falling apart, even as they are beginning to do in our day.

As we think upon the foregoing list of the many symbols contained in Revelation 14:1-10, any attempt to apply them literally would be most confusing, and prevent us from getting the lesson the Lord wishes to give. Jesus is not a literal lamb; a literal beast is not worshipped; and it does not have a literal image. Literal marks are not made on literal foreheads or hands. These are all symbols, which, when correctly interpreted, represent profound truths telling of important events of the past, present, and soon to come.

Now we come to the portion of Revelation 14:10,11, which states that those who worship the beast and his image shall drink of the wine of God’s wrath from the cup of his indignation—clearly a statement filled with symbolic terms. From this point on, however, many insist that the symbolisms cease, and that the remainder of the text suddenly demands literal interpretation—namely, that all those who

worship this symbolic beast or its image will be literally tormented with fire and brimstone, and the smoke of their torment will ascend up to heaven forever. It is further interpreted that this literal punishment applies to all the wicked of the earth, even though the verse specifically addresses only those who worship the beast and his image.

To further illustrate the difficulty of interpreting literally this portion of the text, we note that it says the torments take place “in the presence of the Lamb.” If the torment with fire and brimstone is literal, so must the lamb be a literal animal. By what authority can we say that one is literal and the other is symbolic, since they are spoken of in the same sentence? If one is literal, so must be the other. In this case, it is evident that, just as the beast and other terms can be logically understood only as symbols, the torment by fire and brimstone is likewise symbolic.

ANOTHER TEXT EXAMINED

As previously quoted, another verse cited as a proof of the reality of eternal torment is Matthew 25:41, in which Jesus speaks of some going into “everlasting fire.” This verse is part of Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats—symbolic terms once again—and describes their respective judgment at the end of Christ’s earthly kingdom. (vss. 31-46) Let us first note that no literal fire burns continuously, preserving alive that which is in its midst. By way of example, a fire will consume a piece of wood, and then go out. The piece of wood is forever destroyed. It is not preserved to continually burn. Thus, in this text, fire is appropriately used as a

symbol of destruction. “Everlasting fire” is a symbol of everlasting destruction—the second death—from which there will be no resurrection.—Rev. 21:8

We note, too, that in this case the fire was “prepared for the devil and his angels.” The Scriptures inform us as to exactly what is going to happen to the devil. We are told that through Jesus’ death as man’s Savior and Redeemer, he will be enabled, at the proper time in God’s plan, to “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Heb. 2:14) Here we have confirmation of the fact that fire is symbolic of utter destruction, and Satan’s end will be everlasting oblivion—he will exist no more. What a glorious prospect this is!

OTHER SYMBOLS

The third text cited earlier is Revelation 20:10, in which John sees in vision the devil “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,” to be tormented forever. We again suggest that the only reasonable interpretation of this verse is a symbolic one. Brimstone, or sulphur, is one of the most destructive chemical elements known. Together with fire, it symbolizes utter destruction. Likewise, a “lake” containing no water, but only fire and brimstone, can hardly be taken literally. The lake spoken of in this verse symbolizes the fact that the eventual destruction of Satan will be known and understood by all mankind.

Similarly, the torment “day and night for ever and ever” is symbolic. The root word in the Greek from which “torment” is translated means “a touchstone.” (*Thayer’s Greek Lexicon*) The destruction of Satan, the devil, will be an everlasting “touchstone” for

mankind. They will forever remember the sin, suffering, and death which he brought upon all people, and his resulting demise into everlasting ignominy and disrepute. Isaiah prophesies of the time when mankind will figuratively point their fingers at Satan—once called Lucifer—in abhorrence for all he inflicted upon mankind through his deceptive, deceitful actions, beginning with Adam and Eve, down to the end of this present evil world. (Isa. 14:12-17) Surely, this will be an eternal touchstone for mankind, and they will never again have any desires nor sympathies toward evil.

Finally, we will examine the verses cited earlier from Matthew 18:8,9. These are the words of Jesus. He speaks of our cutting off our hand or foot, or plucking out our eye, if these parts of our body are offensive. He further states that it would be better to go through life with only one hand, foot, or eye, than to have two of them, only to be eventually cast into everlasting fire. Did Jesus advocate self-mutilation? Certainly not—on the contrary he healed men, and restored their use of hands and feet and eyes. We must conclude again that symbolic idioms have been employed here to teach a lesson. The Scripture simply and powerfully teaches that it is better for a Christian to cut off and eliminate from his life, things as dear to him as symbolized by a hand, a foot, or an eye, if they would prevent him from pleasing God. Such elimination of treasured desires or possessions would be far better than to fail of God's calling, or to lose eternal existence in the second death.

As we have seen in our examination of this subject, everlasting fire means everlasting destruction.

We have determined what God desires that we understand from his Word, and what constitutes a complete “Thus saith the LORD.” These interpretations fully satisfy us. They square with the ransom, and are in full accordance with God’s plan for man’s salvation. They harmonize with God’s attributes of Justice and Love, and cause us to praise and worship him—not out of fear—but because we understand his righteous and equitable character.

WILL SALVATION BE AVAILABLE IN THE FUTURE?

We will now consider the teaching believed by a majority of professed Christians that there is no future opportunity for salvation—that it is limited to this life only. One Scripture used to support this thought is the statement from Paul: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (II Cor. 6:2) To believe that this Scripture says that now is the only acceptable time for salvation is adding a thought which Paul did not include in the verse. Beyond this, such a concept is contrary to God’s prime attribute of love. Billions have lived and died without ever having heard of the name of Jesus Christ, in whom alone, the Bible says, is found salvation. Peter, speaking of Jesus, said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”—Acts 4:12

Millions also have been unable by reason of mental illness or instability, or lack of judgment, to understand the message of salvation. Multitudes have been blinded by Satan, the prince of this world, to such an extent that they cannot discern truth from error. All these human lives are not expendable in

the eyes of God. Paul stated that it is God's will—his desire—for “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” (I Tim. 2:4) When God wills something, he has the power and the wisdom to make it happen.

The idea that the present life is the only day of salvation—which is not what the verse under consideration says—is out of harmony with the doctrine of the ransom. Since Christ died a “ransom for all,” all must have an opportunity for life. (I Tim. 2:6) That all must be saved from Adamic death is the foundation of the ransom doctrine. This is God's provision, but in this life, only a relative few have had the blessing of receiving a full, free opportunity for salvation.

The belief that this life provides the only chance for salvation is not in accordance with another important feature of God's plan. A future opportunity is plainly taught by Acts 3:21, which tells of “the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” Hence, the interpretation that salvation is available only before death cannot be correct, because it denies the testimony of all God's holy prophets.

UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURE

What, then, is meant in II Corinthians 6:2 by the words “the accepted time” and “the day of salvation?” Paul here is quoting from Isaiah, one of God's “holy prophets.” In Isaiah's prophecy, the words “an acceptable time” and “a day of salvation” are used. (Isa. 49:8) The indefinite articles “an” and “a” give an entirely different sense to the passage

than the definite article "the," which some translators have erroneously used in Paul's quote from Isaiah. This small detail makes all the difference in the understanding of this verse. There is "a day" of salvation now, and "a day" of salvation to come. Isaiah's prophecy, of which Paul only quotes a small portion, confirms this understanding. Referring again to Isaiah 49:8, the prophet states that those who are faithful during "an" acceptable time and in "a" day of salvation, will then be used to bless mankind by means of a "covenant of the people," and to "establish the earth," and reclaim its "desolate heritages." Such language would not make sense if there was to be only one opportunity for salvation.

These two days of salvation are contrasted by two Scriptures. Matthew 7:14 reads: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." These faithful few, Paul says, "by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." (Rom. 2:7) This is a difficult and restricted salvation, with the correspondingly high reward being the divine nature.—II Pet. 1:4

Isaiah 35:8 tells of the second "day" of salvation, which will be offered to all the remainder of mankind during the Messianic kingdom. A "highway," not a narrow way of sacrifice, "shall be there," Isaiah says. "It shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." This is the way to human perfection and eternal life on earth, promised to all the willing and obedient in the kingdom "day of salvation."

What a wonderful plan God has designed! It is not the gloomy prospect of the vast majority of mankind unsaved and eternally condemned. Rather, it is the delightful vision of each individual being saved from death, and then given an opportunity, under ideal conditions, to attain human perfection and everlasting life here upon earth. This truly harmonizes with God's character. It is in accordance with his plan, and squares with the doctrine of the ransom.

SUMMARY

In this two-part article, we have presented only three of the many teachings believed by many which lack a properly based "Thus saith the LORD!" To provide our readers with a more detailed examination of these doctrines, The Dawn is pleased to offer, free of charge or obligation, copies of the booklets: "*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*;" "*The Truth About Hell*;" and "*The Day of Judgment*." Simply contact us by phone, email, or in writing, using the information near the bottom of the inside back cover of this issue, and we will be happy to send you these valuable study aids.

Let us keep God's glorious plan of salvation always fresh and vital in our minds and hearts. By doing so, we will come to know his arrangements and purposes thoroughly, and any wrong interpretation of Scripture will instantly alert us. We will recognize it to be false, because it is not in harmony with what the Bible, in its entirety, has taught us. Only by thus "rightly dividing the word of truth," can we have a proper "Thus saith the Lord" for what we believe.—II Tim. 2:15 ■

All Things Will Be New

Key Verse: “*He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*”
—*Revelation 21:5*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 21:1-8

FOR ALL THINGS TO become new implies that old things must first pass away. In our lesson this is shown to us in the words just preceding our Key Verse: “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”—Rev. 21:4

John the Revelator, instructed by a miraculous vision, writes of some of the wonders of the coming paradise of God’s kingdom. Much of what he saw and reported was by way of symbols. We are able to understand many of these because it is now the “due time” for their revelation, through the guidance of God’s Holy Spirit. (John 16:13) With reference to our lesson, the exalted Lord also spoke, through John, of the time when all things would be made new, by identifying it with conditions in the paradise of Eden prior to our first parents’ disobedience. He states that in that new day there will be a “tree of life . . . in the midst of the paradise of God.”—Rev. 2:7

We recall that in Eden, there were many trees that provided life-sustaining food for Adam and Eve, highlighted by the “tree of life.” However, also in the midst of the garden was a “tree of knowledge of good and evil,” of which man was forbidden to eat, or even to touch, else

he would surely die. (Gen. 2:9,16,17; 3:3) By partaking of this tree, our first parents, and all mankind since, have surely been gaining a “knowledge” of the consequences of evil.

The “tree of life,” however, is still the focal point of God’s plan. Our Lord’s promise is that the overcomers of this present age have the first opportunity to partake of that tree. They are able to do this because they have become “dead to sin,” and are walking in “newness of life.” (Rom. 6:2,4,11) In God’s kingdom, under the rulership of Christ, the world also will be given this privilege. It is this that Jesus referred to when addressing the thief on the cross: “I say unto thee this day”—even though we now are both suffering death—in due time, “With me, shalt thou be in Paradise.”—Luke 23:43, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

Peter describes the conditions of this due time as a “new heavens and a new earth.” (II Pet. 3:13) This does not refer to the literal heavens or earth, but to a new order of religious and civil society. The new heavens and earth will “make all things new” because it will be governed by the righteous rule of Christ and the glorified church—his body members. This will be in stark contrast to the present heavens and earth, which are ruled by Satan, the “prince of this world,” whose influence “now worketh [through] the children of disobedience.”—John 12:31; Eph. 2:2

As John saw in vision “new” things to come, he also observed, “there was no more sea.” (Rev. 21:1) Here again, the thought is not to be taken literally. The “sea” is a symbol of the masses of people in a restless and unstable condition. How true this has been of the present heavens and earth under the rule of Satan. Under God’s new arrangement, however, the reconstructed social order will be so equitable and harmonious that mankind will no longer be as the sea—restless and churned up with dissatisfaction. We long for the time when God will “make all things new!” ■

A New Jerusalem

***Key Verse: "I saw
no temple therein:
for the Lord God
Almighty and the
Lamb are the
temple of it. And
the city had no
need of the sun,
neither of the
moon, to shine in
it: for the glory of
God did lighten it,
and the Lamb is
the light thereof."
—Revelation
21:22,23***

***Selected Scripture:
Revelation 21:9-
14,22-27***

AS WE STUDY THE BIBLE, we find many instances in which a city is used to symbolize, or represent, the authority of a government. "New Jerusalem," the subject of today's lesson, is used as a symbol denoting the new spiritual government of the coming Messianic Age. (Rev. 21:2) This government does not have its origin in earth, nor is it developed by man. In vision, John saw it as a "holy city, . . . coming down from God out of heaven." Its origin is spiritual in every sense of the word, coming directly from God. It is for this coming government that Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) By this, our Lord acknowledged his faith in the promise that a divinely appointed government would, in due time, be established on the earth.

John further declares that in his vision he saw the new Jerusalem "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This reminds us that the new government of the future will consist of more than one ruler. The Apostle Paul says of this time that Christ Jesus and his faithful

saints will “judge the world in righteousness.” (Acts 17:31; I Cor. 6:2) These “saints” are now being selected based on their faithfulness, unto death, as they “suffer with” Christ, so that they may also be “glorified together” with him. (Rev. 2:10; Rom. 8:16,17) In his account, John views these glorified saints when an angel calls to him, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”—Rev. 21:9-11

We are not to think of this city as comprising literal buildings made of stone that come down from heaven to the earth. To confirm that this is symbolic language, we recall Peter’s words, that those who are being developed at the present time to be part of this “holy city” are considered to be “living stones,” with Jesus Christ as the “chief corner stone” of this spiritual arrangement. (I Pet. 2:4-7) Regardless of the various symbols used in the Scriptures, the new Jerusalem will not be visible to the natural eye. However, it will have earthly representatives, “princes in all the earth,” and when it begins to operate, the whole world will be made aware of the fact that a new government has been instituted. (Ps. 45:16) It will be a rule of love, equity, and peace, and will bring blessings to all who desire to follow its righteous laws.

It is our understanding that the light of the sun and moon, spoken of in our Key Verse, signifies the present sunlight of the Gospel message and the reflective moonlight of the Old Testament types and shadows. In the new Jerusalem, however, “the glory of God . . . and the Lamb” will provide the full light of truth needed for mankind to learn the ways of the Lord. With this light, we are assured that no one will “hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.”—Isa. 11:9 ■

Living Waters

Key Verse: *“He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”*
—*Revelation 22:1*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 22:1-7

us with spiritual food, while the “still waters” refresh and sustain us. Together, these symbols emphasize the vital necessity of taking in the nutrients of God’s word of truth, in order to maintain our spiritual health. Jesus said this water is a gift from God, when speaking to the woman at the well: “If thou knewest the gift of God, . . . he would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.”—John 4:10-14

Symbolically speaking, God’s Word serves as both food and drink for the Lord’s footstep followers. The still waters of Psalm 23 portray more particularly the means by which the Truth refreshes us. A vital part of this refreshment is the privilege of approaching God in prayer, by which we may develop an intimate, personal relationship with him. This produces a peace and tranquility within us as is implied in the thought of “still

WATER IS USED IN THE

Scriptures as a symbol of the refreshing truths which emanate from God concerning his beneficent plans for the faithful, consecrated followers of Jesus and, in due time, for all of mankind. David said of God: “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” (Ps. 23:2) The “green pastures” nourish and strengthen

waters.” In another place, the psalmist writes, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”—Psa. 42:1,2

In these and others of the many beautiful psalms of David, we are encouraged to continually thirst after the water which comes from the true and living God. Indeed, it is our Heavenly Father—our shepherd—who daily guides and directs us beside the waters of truth, refreshing us through the knowledge of him and his dear Son, Christ Jesus. David, being himself a shepherd, understood that water was not plentiful in the desert country of his day. It was important, then, that he know where it could be found, and lead his flock to it so they would be refreshed—else they would perish. Jesus, as the “good shepherd,” is similarly guiding his sheep of the present Gospel Age to abundant spiritual pastures and refreshing waters. “The sheep follow him: for they know his voice.”—John 10:4-15

These conditions will likewise apply to the world of mankind in the future. In God’s kingdom, the people will realize their great need for the water of life. They will know that in the past, they lived in a “dry and thirsty land, where no water is,” and they will thirst for God’s glorious message of truth. (Ps. 63:1) To them, Jesus’ promise will be fulfilled: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”—Matt. 5:6

In our Key Verse, John describes a “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,” coming from God and the Lamb—Christ Jesus—in the coming kingdom. John goes on to say that there is a “tree of life” beside this pure river which bears all manner of fruit for nourishment, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the people. (Rev. 22:2) What a glorious prospect this is for mankind! The invitation will then be to all people: “Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—vs. 17 ■

Alpha and Omega

Key Verse: ***"I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."***
—**Revelation 22:13**

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 22:12-21

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND

the meaning of these words spoken to us by the Apostle John, let us begin with his Gospel account: "In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word." (John 1:1, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott, Interlineary Translation*) Continuing, John says that the Word "was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (vss. 2,3) In these verses, "Word" is a translation of the Greek word *logos*, and conveys the thought of a mouthpiece. John says that in his prehuman existence, God's only begotten Son acted as a mouthpiece, or Logos, to speak and act on his Father's behalf. As the Logos, he was used throughout the creative process, and was always with "the God"—Jehovah. The Logos, too, was "a god," a mighty spirit being.

In due time, the "Word [*logos*]" was made flesh." (vs. 14) He was given the name Jesus, and grew to manhood "separate from sinners" and distinct from all others. (Heb. 7:26) During his earthly ministry, Jesus "taught . . . as one having authority," and men said, "Never man spake like this man." (Matt. 7:29; John 7:46) Whatever others may have thought of him, Jesus knew his origin, testifying, "I came down from heaven," and again, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."

(John 6:38,51) When questioned by the Pharisees, he declared, "I know whence I came, and whither I go." "I am from above: . . . I am not of this world." "I proceeded forth and came from God; . . . he sent me." "Before Abraham was, I am."—John 8:14,23,42,58

These verses are but a sampling of the many Scriptures which point out the prehuman existence of God's dear Son. When he reached the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus expressed in prayer the great desire he had to once again be with the Father in the heavenly realm. His heartfelt words were, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me . . . with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."—John 17:4,5

Jesus left the riches of the heavenly courts and came to earth to be man's Redeemer. As a man, he had virtually no possessions. On one occasion, he told a prospective follower that "the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matt. 8:20) Paul said that God's Son "was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." (II Cor. 8:9) He left the glory and spiritual wealth he had with the Father as the Logos, and "made himself of no reputation, . . . he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." (Phil. 2:7,8) Thus we see that as God's instrument of creation, and later man's Redeemer, Jesus is qualified to have the title given in our Key Verse: "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end."

The Apostle Paul speaks of the excellence of Jesus compared to all other creatures, only God being excepted. In Jesus, "we have redemption through his blood, . . . Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, . . . And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. He is . . . the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."—Col. 1:14-18 ■

Thanksgiving unto God Forever

*“Blessing, and
glory, and wisdom,
and thanksgiving,
and honour, and
power, and might,
be unto our God for
ever and ever.
Amen.”*

—*Revelation 7:12*

IT HAS BEEN A LONG AND

difficult journey for our country since the first designated day of Thanksgiving was celebrated by our forefathers at Plymouth colony nearly four hundred years ago.

The population of our land has increased to 325 million people. Historically speaking, the country has fought in many wars. The Revolutionary War won freedom from the mother country of Great Britain. There was the Civil War between the North and the South, the Spanish-American War, the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. More recently there have been the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the United States continues to fight the ongoing war against terrorism. Through all these unpleasant experiences, many have lost faith in the existence of a loving God whose providences overrule in their lives.

Still, however, the custom of observing a national day of thanksgiving continues. Certainly those who

rejoice in a knowledge of the true and loving God, and his plans, are happy to take advantage of this special occasion for giving thanks. We recognize, of course, that it is our privilege as consecrated believers to give thanks to the Heavenly Father every day for his tender watch care over all our affairs. We know that while he may permit us to pass through difficult experiences, he is overruling these circumstances so that all things may work together for our good, as those “called according to his purpose.”—Rom. 8:28

The Apostle Paul wrote, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (I Thess. 5:18) To properly give thanks “in every thing” means that every day will be one of thanksgiving. It means that we will not thank the Lord merely for those things which contribute to our immediate well-being and joy, but also for the trials which he permits to test and to develop us as footstep followers of Christ.

FOR HIS SON

There are certain abiding blessings in our lives as Christians for which we should daily give thanks. One is the fact that our Heavenly Father gave his “only begotten Son” to be our Redeemer and Savior. (John 3:16) In II Corinthians 9:15, the Apostle Paul writes, “Thanks be unto God for his inestimable gift.” (*Twentieth Century New Testament*) This inestimable gift is Jesus, the one “who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”—Heb. 7:26

We have many reasons to be thankful for Jesus. He is not only our Savior and Redeemer, but also the captain of our salvation; our elder brother; our

great high priest; our advocate with the Father; our good shepherd who gave his life for his sheep; and our friend. In due time, at the marriage of the Lamb, he will be our heavenly bridegroom.—Tit. 2:13,14; Heb. 2:10,11; 4:14; I John 2:1; John 10:11; 15:14,15; Rev. 19:7

We should be thankful for the assurance that we will be given the necessary strength and courage to continue on in the narrow way of sacrifice and service, and, by God's grace, will attain victory and the crown of life. Paul wrote, "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." (II Cor. 2:14, *New American Standard Bible*) If we are dwelling in God's favor, humbly serving him, we cannot lose, but are sure to be victorious. Hence, we can say, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—I Cor. 15:57

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

Giving thanks to God for his many blessings is an important aspect of prayer, and is properly a part of all our petitions to him. By way of example, Paul had learned from a fellow worker, Epaphras, of the love and zeal of the brethren at Colosse. He wrote to them, saying, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his

glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”—Col. 1:9-12

What a wonderful summary this is of God’s blessings upon those whose chief desire and purpose is to know and to do his will. These are the ones whom God has made “meet,” or suitable, to partake of the “inheritance of the saints in light.” Truly, this is a cause for thanksgiving to all who have heard the invitation to the High Calling, and who have responded in terms of full devotion to God and to his will.

Another focus of our thanksgiving should be toward the truth concerning God and his great plan of the ages. It is through our understanding of this truth and its power that we are invited to take up our cross and follow the Master. It is by the application of its noble principles in our daily life that we are assured of victory, which will result in the glorious privilege of living and reigning with Christ as priests and kings unto God.—Rev. 5:10; 20:6

FOR THE BRETHREN

As already noted, one of Paul’s outstanding reasons for thanksgiving was his brethren in Christ. He appreciated and loved his brethren, and not only did he pray for them, but daily he gave thanks to God for what they meant to him. One of the outstanding examples of this is in his expression of love to the brethren at Philippi. He wrote, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he

which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”—Phil. 1:3-6

There is a special tenderness expressed in this message of greeting to the brethren at Philippi. “I thank my God,” Paul said, “upon every remembrance of you.” He assures these brethren that he remembered them in every prayer, and that he had been doing this from the “first day until now.” Apparently Paul held very fond memories of that first day, and well he might, for it was indeed a blessed day. Philippi was Paul’s first stop in Europe, as he responded to the call which had come to him in a vision, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”—Acts 16:9

Paul and his companions, responding to this call, went to the city of Philippi, “the chief city of that part of Macedonia.” There they remained for a few days, and “on the sabbath,” the account explains, “we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spoke unto the women which resorted thither.” Among these was a “woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, . . . which worshipped God.”—Acts 16:12-14

Verse 14 continues, stating that Lydia’s heart was opened by the Lord, and that she gave attention to the things which were spoken by Paul. This was genuine interest. She was baptized, together with her household, and then said to Paul and his fellow-workers, “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”—vs. 15

That was the “first day” mentioned by Paul, when he gave thanks to God for these brethren at Philippi. Truly it was a wonderful day! Imagine at the present time going into an area where, as a result of bearing

witness to the Truth, a group of brethren would become interested and furnish a meeting place for the start of an ecclesia. Surely Paul must have been assured that his affirmative response to the call, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us,” had been blessed by the Lord. Indeed, he had received this additional evidence that God was directing his steps.

IN THE GOSPEL

Paul thanked God for the “fellowship in the gospel” which he enjoyed with the Philippian brethren from that first day. The *Revised Standard Version* more properly uses the word “partnership” instead of “fellowship.” The brethren at Philippi were faithful partners with Paul in the great cause of promoting the Gospel. Their mutual discussions of various aspects of the Truth were surely part of their fellowship. However, they did more than talk about the Truth. They went out and proclaimed it to others, so that those to whom the Lord gave “ears to hear,” could have an opportunity to rejoice together with them.—Matt. 13:9,16

Brethren in Christ today enjoy this same partnership, for the promotion of the Gospel continues, and will do so until the last members of the body of Christ have passed beyond the veil. This should be one of our great causes for gratitude this coming Thanksgiving Day, and every day of every year, as we continue to witness for Jesus and for the Word of God. Are we thankful for our brethren even as Paul was—thankful for their partnership in the promotion of the Gospel? Do we rejoice in our partnership with the brethren, or are we hesitant about becoming involved (Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) in their works of sacrifice in the promulgation of the message of truth?

We, at The Dawn are particularly thankful for our brethren throughout the world. This is especially true as we consider the wonderful manner in which those who love the Gospel message continue to labor together for the promotion of the Truth. Like the Apostle Paul, we thank our God upon every remembrance of the manner in which our brethren throughout the world continue to enthusiastically lay down their lives in the work of the harvest. Our partnership in the Gospel with brethren everywhere is indeed heartening, and we daily give thanks for the goodness of the Lord in permitting us to enjoy this blessed fellowship.

THE LORD HAS BLESSED

We are thankful, too, for the many evidences that our labor together in the Lord has not been in vain. We continue to see those, here and there, who have been brought into contact with the Truth through the cooperative efforts of the brethren, and are themselves now rejoicing in their knowledge of the wisdom, justice, love, and power of our loving Heavenly Father. What a joy it is to note the love and enthusiasm of those whose hearts are still aglow with self-sacrificing zeal for the Lord and for his people!

That “first love” spirit of sacrifice and devotion to the Lord and to his cause should remain with us. What disappointment would be ours if we permit it to cool off to any degree. (Rev. 2:4) There is no valid reason why it should. Indeed, as we become better acquainted with our Heavenly Father and note daily his overruling providences in our lives,

our love and faith should increase, and our joy in the Lord should abound yet more and more.

God has blessed every aspect of the work of proclaiming the simple and glorious “gospel of the kingdom,” and for this we are thankful. (Matt. 24:14) It is great cause for thankfulness to realize that so many of our partners in the vineyard are engaged in this work. It is a joy to realize that, through this “fellowship in the gospel,” the truth of God’s plan continues to go out via the printed page, radio and television, and many forms of electronic media on a worldwide scale.

GOD’S KEEPING POWER

To note the keeping power of God in the lives of his people is always great cause for thanksgiving. We rejoice to realize that our faith in the precious doctrines of truth remains firm, and that those doctrines have lost none of their luster. This is a special cause for thanksgiving in these days when there is so much chaos and uncertainty in the world among professing Christians.

It is true that we are still waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promises respecting the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. That waiting period has been much longer than many of the Lord’s people expected. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,” wrote Solomon. (Prov. 13:12) However, this is true only if we lose sight of the vitality and validity of the precious doctrines of truth. We should remember that it is not God who is deferring our hopes, but our own lack of faith in his all-wise methods and ways.

The great fundamentals of the Truth are the same, and therefore should be just as precious today as they

have ever been. God is in full control of the timetable of events in the outworking of the details of his great plan of the ages. Let us be thankful for this, realizing that our faith and patience are being tested, and these are critical elements of Christian character. How appropriate are the words of Jeremiah: “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.”—Lam. 3:26

The salvation in which we are now particularly interested is that “great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.” (Heb. 2:3) This “great salvation” includes the future opportunity of living and reigning with Christ for the blessing of all the families of the earth. That blessing will be the salvation of mankind and the restoration of the willing and obedient to human perfection and life on the earth forever. (Acts 3:20-25) How thankful we are for the blessed prospect of sharing in the great project of offering this salvation to mankind, awakening all the dead from the sleep of death, and helping them traverse the “way of holiness” to full perfection.—Isa. 35:8

Finally, we are truly thankful that in this time when the hearts of the people are filled with fear because of the chaotic conditions throughout the earth, God, through his Word, has revealed to us the meaning of current world events. Present conditions most assuredly indicate that the Messianic kingdom is indeed near at hand. Truly, as Jesus admonished, because we see these things, we lift up our heads with confidence and thanksgiving, knowing that our deliverance into the kingdom is drawing near!—Luke 21:28, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* ■

Who Shall Stand?

***“Who may abide
the day of his
coming? and who
shall stand when
he appeareth? for
he is like a
refiner’s fire, and
like fullers’ soap:
And he shall sit as
a refiner and
purifier of silver:
and he shall purify
the sons of Levi,
and purge them as
gold and silver,
that they may offer
unto the LORD an
offering in
righteousness.”***
—**Malachi 3:2,3**

WHO SHALL WITHSTAND

this experience, the prophet asks, at the time of the Lord’s appearing? At his First Advent, Jesus came to his own—the Jewish people—but as a nation they rejected and crucified him. There were only a few who stood the test. (John 1:11,12) Using wheat gathering as a symbol, John the Baptist had said of Jesus: “He will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner.” (Matt. 3:12, *Revised Version*) Here was a testing and cleansing work which took place at our Lord’s first appearing.

Subsequently, throughout the Gospel Age, our Lord has been making himself known to those in the right condition of heart, that he might cleanse, test, purify and assist them in walking in his steps, and in being conformed to his image. Now, in the days in which we live, during the time of our Lord’s

Second Presence, there are also very definite testings. He is proving his people, individually. Each member of the true church is being tested, refined, and purified. Who shall stand these experiences?

We believe there is much evidence, through the fulfillment of prophecy, that soon the church—the bride of Christ, the Lamb’s wife—will be completed and glorified with her Lord beyond the veil. Through this spiritual class, identified as “the holy city, new Jerusalem,” God’s glorious kingdom in the earth will be established.—Rev. 19:7; 21:1-10

A DAY OF PREPARATION

We are today living at a time during which God is making preparation for one of the greatest dispensational changes in the world’s history. Therefore, a pressing question for us is, “Who may abide” and “who may stand” in this day? The Apostle John also asked the question, “Who shall be able to stand?” (Rev. 6:17) Here, however, the context refers to the world’s view of the climactic trouble toward which present arrangements in the earth are rapidly approaching.

The prophets, our Lord, and the apostles all prophesied of this period, in which the old order is to pass away, and the glorious kingdom of God is to be ushered in, which will stand forever. (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 6:10; II Pet. 3:12,13) We rejoice in the knowledge that we are living during this time, and it is in this connection that one of God’s prophets speaks of “the day of his preparation.”—Nah. 2:3

We see around us today that which Jesus foretold: “On the earth there will be dismay among the nations and bewilderment at the roar of the surging sea. Men’s courage will fail completely as they realize

what is threatening the world.” (Luke 21:25,26, *J. B. Phillips*) Selfishness, hatred, pride, and the spirit of aggression have led to the mustering of armies among nations small and great, as well as the rise of powerful dictators, tyrants, and extremist groups of the cruelest sort imaginable to the human mind. Such conditions will surely bring their legitimate awful consequences.

As dire as these conditions are, however, the Bible’s promise is that the human race will not be permitted to destroy itself. The Scriptures reveal that human selfishness would ultimately lead to this, if not restrained by divine intervention. Jesus, speaking of the climax of the period of distress toward which the world is now moving, said, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved,” but then adds that these days of trouble “shall be shortened.” (Matt. 24:22) This will mean divine intervention and rescue of the human race from the result of its own madness. Indeed, God’s kingdom, under the leadership of Christ, will solve all national and international problems, and we are promised that it will also eliminate from the earth all sickness, sorrow, pain, and death.—I Cor. 15:25,26; Rev. 21:3-5

Meanwhile, we are presently living in the “time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.” (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) It is developing and encompassing the world as a trap and a snare. Jesus prophesied of it, saying, “Take heed to yourselves, lest your souls be weighed down with self-indulgence and drunkenness or the anxieties of this life, and that day come upon you, suddenly, like a falling trap; for it will come on all dwellers on the face of the whole earth.”—Luke 21:34,35, *Weymouth New Testament*

To “take heed” means we must be continually prayerful and watchful, meditating upon our Father’s Word and will. We must also be on guard, so that this great worldwide trouble, although not coming upon us unawares, does not so completely fill our mental horizon as to hide from us another vitally important aspect of our earthly sojourn—that being the experiences, tests, and trials which are provided by God to prove us individually.

ON TRIAL

Peter said, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” (I Pet. 4:12) Earlier in the same epistle, he stated: “Now for a little while, (since it is necessary,) you are distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being much more precious than that gold which perishes, though proved by fire, may be found to praise and glory and honor, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 1:6,7, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) We again ask: Who shall stand these experiences?

Our faith, and our whole being as individuals, are on trial at the present time. We are exhorted: “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” and “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (I John 5:4; Rev. 2:10) Faithfulness of the members of the church unto death means joint-heirship with Christ in glory, and the privilege to bless all families of the earth. This is the greatest and most worthy theme in life, and the grandest position God could grant in all the universe. It is well worth our striving to attain, and to seek to be prepared for the blessed responsibilities of the kingdom.

The Lord asks for faithful loyalty and character-likeness to himself. As part of this, he goes about the process of purging out of us everything in the nature of dross, including self-will and all the works of the flesh. Our opening text suggests that God, as a refiner, wishes to purify us. As we picture in our mind a refiner in olden times, we see him seated at his crucible of valuable ore positioned over an intensely hot fire. By means of bellows, the furnace would be made sufficiently fierce to reduce the metal to a liquid state. The refiner, adding certain fluxing agents, and giving every attention to his work, watches the process very closely. It is his business to see to the separation and removal of the dross from the pure, precious metal. It is in such a manner that our Heavenly Father wishes to refine, cleanse, and purify us individually.

“He is . . . like fullers’ soap,” our text continues. An indication respecting the trade of a fuller is given in Mark 9:3. Concerning the shining brightness and whiteness of our Lord’s raiment on the Mount of Transfiguration, this verse reads: “His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.” The work of a fuller, using soaps which had strong cleansing properties, consisted chiefly in cleaning garments and whitening cloth. Concerning us, John says that “if we confess our sins,” God will “forgive us our sins, and . . . cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—I John 1:9

Throughout all this refining and cleansing work, the Lord is able to read our heart. He can discern our thoughts and intentions, as well as the extent of our faith and love. No human being is able to do this. We may be able to deceive those near and dear

to us on the human plane, but we cannot deceive the Lord. It is his will that we be refined, cleansed and purified, and we will be given experiences which are especially suited for the full accomplishment of this work. If properly exercised by them, we will be purged of pride, selfishness, bitterness, impatience, and all the works and deeds of the flesh.—Gal. 5:19-21

FAITH AND WORKS

It will always be necessary during this time of testing to remember Paul's words, "Thou standest by faith." (Rom. 11:20) Similarly, he says, we must "stand fast in the faith," as it is declared in God's Word. (I Cor. 16:13) If this kind of faith is developed in us, it will surely bear fruit and make an outward manifestation, according to our experiences.

The Apostle James, in dealing with this feature, would awaken those who have a measure of faith, but who have not progressed to the degree of making it a living and working faith. He asks, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14) The answer is no, which the *Diaglott* rendering of the last part of this verse confirms: "This faith is not able to save him."

If we are to endure, and stand fast before God, we must have a living, operative faith. This matter is clearly addressed by the subsequent words of James, in which he says emphatically, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works."—James 2:17,18

The reverse is also true. Works are essential and vital to our development. However, without a foundation of faith, works alone will not enable us to stand fast. It is only the proper combination of faith and works that is acceptable to God. True faith will manifest itself in works of obedience, and a life that is lived in harmony with that faith. If our life is not thus affected, we dishonor that faith. Indeed, such “faith without works is dead”—unproductive, and can never bring life.—vs. 20

Continuing his consideration of this important subject, James asks, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he brought up Isaac his son to the altar? Thou seest that the faith cooperated with his works; and that the faith was made complete by the works.” (vss. 21,22, *Diaglott*) If Abraham and other faith heroes had merely discussed their faith with one another they would never have been counted as obtaining “a good report through faith.” (Heb. 11:39) The Scriptures reveal that they walked and lived in faith. Works cooperated with their faith. They were very courageous, and their faith was made complete by works. Similarly, our faith, also, must be alive and active, working in us by love.—Gal. 5:6

ACTIVITY

We learn from God’s Word that consecrated believers constitute the body of Christ. Herein is a blessed, cooperative arrangement. In I Corinthians the 12th chapter, the Apostle Paul explains that in this “body,” of which Jesus is the Head, or controlling power, there are various activities to be engaged in. “There are diversities of operations,

but it is the same God which worketh . . . in all.” If there should cease to be “operations” or activity by a member of the body, he will become unfruitful, and must either be revived or be in danger of losing his place in the body. Rather, Paul explains that there is given to each member of the body some function or activity, and that these all combine to accomplish God’s will, under our one Head, Christ Jesus, and one Spirit, the Holy Spirit. —I Cor. 12:4-11

Furthermore, no member of the body can properly say to another, “I have no need of you.” (vs. 21) Neither should anyone have the attitude in which they conclude: ‘There is no service I can render; therefore, I will enjoy the benefits of the body, but not exert myself toward service for the other members, or for the Head, Christ Jesus.’ On the contrary, all should be motivated to assist in providing “that which every joint supplieth.”—Eph. 4:16

As we engage in activity on behalf of the Lord and his cause, we must do so with the proper attitude and motivation. Paul admonished, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life.” (Phil. 2:14-16) Although inactivity is an unnatural state for any of God’s intelligent creatures, we must remember that merely being active is not sufficient. It is, perhaps, for this reason that immediately following I Corinthians the 12th chapter, quoted from earlier, the Apostle Paul continues his lesson on the functioning of the body of Christ with the sober warning

that without love as the motivating power, no activity we might engage in would have God's approval. —I Cor. 13:1-3, *Diaglott*

LOVE

The importance of this attribute of love cannot be overemphasized. We are not to suppose, however, that it can merely replace other important considerations in the Christian life. For example, love cannot take the place of the fundamental doctrines of God's plan, but it does guide us in the proper use of these teachings. Love cannot take the place of faith, nor of activity in the Lord's name, but it should be the motivation for faith and for service acceptable to God.

We are to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27) As we do so, we must "love one another with a pure heart fervently," and "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." (I Pet. 1:22; Heb. 10:24) We are not to antagonize, but avoid every word and act, so far as possible, that might incite to misunderstanding, strife, envy, bitterness, hatred, and evil speaking. (Eph. 4:31) All of these are of the fallen flesh and of the Adversary. If we "stand fast" in a faith which is impelled by love, we will have a living faith and surely be "kept by the power of God . . . unto salvation." —I Pet. 1:5

Jesus prophesied of a time when "the love of many shall wax cold." (Matt. 24:12) Let this not be true of us. Our love toward others, as we stand fast in the faith, must remain fervent, even though it may be ridiculed and spurned. We may be criticized and

belittled, but we must see to it that “being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.” (I Cor. 4:12) Though we may be persecuted, let us never join the ranks of the persecutors.

ENDURANCE

To us the questions again come, “Who may abide?” and “Who shall stand?” Will we bear up under trials and stand fast while our beloved Lord refines and purifies us, that we may render to him “an offering in righteousness?” To do so will mean, as Jesus clearly stated, that we must “deny” self utterly, “take up [our] cross daily,” and follow him. (Luke 9:23) Endurance is vital for this work to be completed, but we are promised, “Blessed is he who patiently endures trials; for when he has stood the test, he will gain the victor’s crown—even the crown of Life—which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”—James 1:12, *Weymouth*

The beloved refiner is graciously working upon us, to bring us forth as “vessels of gold.” (II Tim. 2:20) Individually, we are to submit willingly to his work in us. We all need refining, because of the dross inherent in the earthen, fleshly vessel in which our spiritual treasure resides. “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark [observe or watch] iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Ps. 130:3) How true it is that from the beginning to the end of our pilgrim journey, we cannot stand before God without a covering for our sins. The Scriptures declare this gracious provision, stating that God has covered us “with the robe of righteousness.” (Isa. 61:10) Paul explains that it is “even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 3:22, *Revised Version*)

We are exceedingly grateful for this loving provision which is by faith.

As consecrated believers, we are all being tried and tested. There will be subtle tests as to what we believe, and why. In these tests, God will always be with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us, so that we can boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Heb. 13:5,6) Our loving Heavenly Father desires that we be conformed to his image, and that of his dear Son, Christ Jesus, as he views us in the crucible of his workmanship. Therefore, let us strive daily to bear up courageously under the refining and cleansing of his all-wise methods.

Let us not become “weary in well doing,” and remember that our test is not one simply of well doing, but of “patient continuance in well doing.” (Gal. 6:9; Rom. 2:7) Thus, keeping on “the whole armour of God,” that we may be able to stand in this “evil day,” we shall surely be able to say: “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”—Eph. 6:13; Job 23:10 ■

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 Percy Shantha Kumar, Mysore, India—July 14. Age, 69

Sister Reggie Kuchta, Detroit, MI—July 27. Age, 98

Brother Vincent Panucci, Los Angeles, CA—September 20. Age, 96

Brother Paul Mali, Portland, OR—September 28. Age, 90

Report of Trip to Germany

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.”

—Psalm 133:1,2

EARLIER THIS YEAR Brother Michael and Sister Vickie Balko visited the brethren in Germany. We are pleased to include the following report of their trip in this month’s issue of *The Dawn*. We believe their report will be a blessing to our readers, as we consider the sentiments of our opening text—that how good and pleasant it is for brethren throughout the world to dwell together in the unity and bonds of Christ.

Sister Vickie and I had the blessed privilege of traveling to Germany for eight days in May of this year. Our trip included visits with many brethren as well as attending and serving at the German General Convention, which was held on May 14-16 in Korbach.



Waiting at the airport for
the train

We flew to Frankfurt, Germany from our home in Orlando, Florida. Upon arriving at the Frankfurt airport, we made our way to catch the Intercity Express (ICE) high speed train to Bonn. It is a large international airport, and since this was our first trip to Europe, we could have been a bit overwhelmed in making our connection to complete the next leg of our trip. However, we soon discovered that this was not going to be of concern.

Since Sister Vickie was having problems with her leg, and was to have surgery in early June, we had arranged for a wheelchair to help her navigate through the airport. An airline representative was there at our gate to meet us upon arrival. This was certainly an overruling by our gracious Lord. The young woman that met us was one of the most helpful and understanding people we had ever met on one of our journeys. She wheeled Sister Vickie through the large airport to customs, the baggage claim, and then directly to the train station there. She even explained exactly where we should go to catch our train. The words of Jesus come to mind with regard to this: "Anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name, . . . because you belong to me, will surely be rewarded."—Mark 9:41, *Contemporary English Version*

For the first stop on our trip, we had been invited to visit with Brother Samuel and Sister Annick Stalder, and to stay with them in their home in

Bruchhausen. We were to meet Brother Samuel at the train station in Bonn, and although we had met him before in the United States, he told us that he would be holding a Dawn magazine so that we could more easily spot him.

The ride from Frankfurt to Bonn was a unique experience, because it was our first high speed train trip, and we were not sure what to expect. As it turned out, the trip was actually of short duration. We covered the 148 miles from the airport in Frankfurt to the station in Bonn in well under an hour. The train reached speeds up to 185 miles per hour, but the ride was very smooth and enjoyable. The route took us through the beautiful countryside of rolling hills, yellow fields of canola, forests, pasture land, and past several small villages. When the train pulled into the station, the doors opened, and we immediately spotted Brother Samuel. This was another evidence of God's providence. Although the train was at least twelve cars in length, when the doors in our car opened, there was Brother Samuel with a big welcoming smile on his face! It was truly a blessing to greet him so quickly and



Samuel Stalder, Michael and Vickie Balko

easily.

On the drive from the train station to the Stalder's home, we "caught up" with him concerning our mutual activities and studies with the brethren, and reported as to

how they were doing both here in the States and in Germany. Brother Samuel also provided commentary on the region as we rode through the Rhine River valley. The area was surrounded by beautiful forested hills, ancient lava outcroppings, grape vineyards, and small villages. We passed by several castle ruins and guard towers, and there was also a section of a wall and tower that the Romans had built when the area was part of the Roman Empire.

As we passed by the town of Erpel, we noticed two large towers with flags on top of them on each side of the Rhine. These were supports that remained from the Ludendorff Bridge which was the scene of fierce combat during World War II. The flags represented the countries that took part in the battles over control of this area of Remagen. When we considered the history of warfare in the region, including the many castles that still stand in the area, Roman occupation, and the battles that took place during both World Wars, our thoughts took us to God's precious promises. We were reminded of the words of the prophet: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."—Isa. 2:4

Arriving at the Stalder's home, we were lovingly greeted by Samuel's wife, Sister Annick. We sat down together and had a wonderful season of fellowship, which continued during dinner, as we spent several hours at the table discussing God's plan, and the beauties of his loving character. The next morning was again spent in sweet fellowship and discussion of the Scriptures. We talked together concerning the selection, development, and reward for faithful

footstep followers of the Lord, and the resulting blessings of the kingdom to mankind, spoken of in Scriptures such as Romans 8:28 and 12:1; Colossians 1:9; and Revelation 22:2.

That evening we were joined at the Stalder's home for dinner by several more brethren. I had been asked to give a discourse that evening, and

following our consideration of the subject, "Planted Together," the meeting continued with a further study of the subject, based on the text: "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:5) Joining us at the Stalder's home were Sister Dorchon Kotoulas from Dortmund, Brother Charlie Thompson from Cologne, and Brother Andreas and Sister Larvissa Geboa from Seabourg, who



With Dorchon Kotoulas



Andreas and Larvissa Geboa, Charlie Thompson, Annick and Samuel Stalder

traveled two hours to attend the meeting. Additional brethren joined the meeting online from Germany and France. Including the discourse and the study, we met for over three hours in sweet fellowship and discussion. This was truly a sacrifice for the brethren who came to the meeting, since some of them had to work the next day.

Sister Dorchon had traveled by train the day before to meet and get to know us, since she was to be our main translator during the upcoming convention. She spent the night at the Stalder's home, which provided a further opportunity to discuss matters pertaining to the Word of God. She took the train back to her home the next afternoon following the meeting at the Stalder's, so that she could join her family and travel to the convention in Korbach.



Andreas and Larvissa Geboa

Brother Samuel drove us to the convention, picking up Brother Charlie on the way, and we traveled together to Korbach. Here again, we spent time in sweet fellowship and consideration of the glory of our Heavenly Father, his wonderful plan, and in anticipation of the blessings which we would receive at the convention.

It was a rich blessing to greet the brethren that afternoon upon arriving at the convention, which has been held at the Hotel Touric for nearly twenty years. This site was originally chosen due to its central location within Germany. The convention



At the Korbach Convention Hall

theme text was Psalm 111:2, “Great are the acts of the LORD; they are within reach of all who desire them.”—*International Standard Version*

In addition to Germany and the United States, brethren attended the convention from the countries of France, Austria, Romania, Switzerland, Poland, and India. Sister Dorchen Kotoulas from the Dortmund Ecclesia, whom we had met earlier in the week at the Stalder’s home, acted as our interpreter throughout the convention. Sister Dora, as she is affectionately called, is the daughter of Brother Johannes and Sister Uschi Kotoulas. She did a wonderful service for us, and was so skilled that she not only handled the translation of the discourses, she was also able to translate the hymns from German to English that were not in the International Hymn Book. Sister Regina Albrecht also translated one of the



Stefan Thieme translating the discourse

discourses for us. Brother Stefan Thieme provided the translation of my services into German, and Brother Hubert Lipka translated from Polish into German. What a blessing these brethren were to all of us, as we rejoiced in this labor of love that was so willingly and lovingly done.

Brother Sven Kruse, a cousin to Sister Dora, opened the Korbach convention with the Welcome Address. Other discourses given by various brethren included:

Brother Hubert Lipka: "The Mediator of the New Covenant."

Brother Samuel Stalder: "The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares."

Brother Samuel Krolak: "Veronika Decided to Get Healed."

Brother Michael Balko: "Come and See."

Brother Lutz Ruthmann: "Jesus and the Third Day."

Brother Daniel Cap: "Chose Today Whom You Want to Serve."

Brother Helbring Schultz: "Creation and Redemption."

Brother Daniel Mlynek: "Time of the End and the Day of Preparation."

Brother Stefan Thieme: "A Tree Planted by Streams of Water."

Being a member of The Dawn, I was invited to attend the German Dawn and General Convention Committee meeting which was held on Saturday evening of the convention. Those attending the meeting, and their home ecclesias, were Brothers Martin Schluecker from Berlin, Hubert Lipka from Hamburg, Stefan Thieme from Ludwigshafen,



Convention Twins

Lutz Ruthmann from Dortmund, Bodan Szedigewicz from Ludwigshafen, Helbring Schultz from Bergheimfeld, Sven Kruse from Dortmund, and Samuel Stalder from Bonn. The meeting was very interesting,

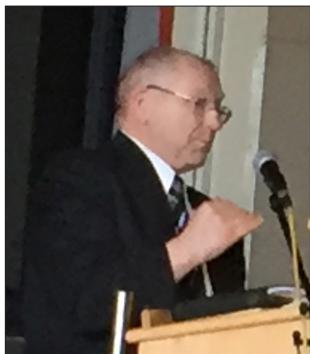
and lasted over three hours. The brethren discussed the current convention, selection of additional committee members, the upcoming joint French and German convention, and plans for next year's General Convention, which was approved to be held once again at Korbach in 2017. It was a blessed privilege to attend this meeting with such dedicated and zealous brethren.

Mealtimes at the convention were very enjoyable opportunities for fellowship, and gave us the privilege of getting to know our beloved brethren there better. It was truly refreshing to arise in the morning and see the familiar, smiling faces of our brethren in the dining area whom we had met the first day of the convention. We made an attempt to sit and visit with different brethren during each meal. Because they were served family style, it was easy to take advantage of this privilege. We spent one meal with



Uschi Kotoulas, Dorchon Kotoulas, and Esther Magiera

Brother Lutz Ruthmann, his wife Sister Eleni, their daughter Sister Monika and her husband Brother Arnd, all of whom attend the Dortmund Ecclesia. We also were able to visit with the Lipka family during a meal, and with the Thieme family during another, all which were rich blessings.



Hubert Lipka

A special blessing of the convention was the singing. Brother Hubert Lipka sang and directed all of the hymns that were selected. This was no small matter, since he and his wife, Sister Ruth, had recently been in a serious car accident, which left him in constant pain. Sister Ruth and their daughter, Sister Esther Magiera, accompanied the singing by playing instruments. In addition, Brother Daniel Cap played the violin during the singing throughout the convention.

On Sunday evening after the last discourse, a praise service was held which was very touching. Brother Lipka led the service. He asked that brethren select a hymn to be sung, and to tell why they had chosen it and what it meant to them. This unique praise service lasted about two hours. It was a rich blessing to hear of the special meaning of the hymns to the brethren. I chose the hymn "Face to Face," which was one that my father, Brother Mike Balko, often spoke of as one of his favorite hymns. Sister Vickie requested "I Need Thee every Hour," because these words have been



Ruth Lipka on the organ, and Daniel Cap on Violin

and continue to be of utmost importance in her life. It was a very emotional meeting for all of us, and truly brought us closer together in the bonds of love.

Another highlight of the convention was that I was asked to hold one of the bas-

kets of "broken bread" during the Love Feast. Brother Martin Schluecker, who was the convention chairman, held the other basket. Brother Helbring Schultz gave a beautiful closing discourse concerning the meaning and importance of the Love Feast. This made the occasion one of the most touching that we could remember in our many years of attending conventions. There were very few dry eyes, and it appeared that everyone who attended the convention took part in the Love Feast. Although we had only met a few of these brethren prior to this trip, we felt a special bond with all of them. Those who we had met for the first time had become just like longtime members of our family, and it was as though we had always known them.

It was very difficult to leave the dear brethren behind. After the



Love Feast

convention, following breakfast with many of the brethren the next morning, Brother Stefan Thieme drove us to his and Sister Wiebke's home in Ober-Ramstadt to spend the night, and where we had another season of sweet fellowship. The following morning, he drove us to the Frankfurt airport to begin our journey back to the United States. It was not with a feeling that we were going home, however, for we felt that we were always "at home" when we were with our dear brethren in Christ Jesus. We are indeed one body, as Paul states: "As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ."—I Cor. 12:12

It was a rich blessing to be able to travel to Germany to meet, study with, and learn from our brethren who live so many miles away, and we are very thankful to the Lord for giving us this great privilege. We will continue to remember, with joy in our hearts, the brethren we visited, and their example of dedication, labors of love, and service to our Heavenly Father. Truly, as the words of the hymn express:

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love." ■

*"Let us therefore follow after the things which
make for peace, and things wherewith
one may edify another."
—Romans 14:19*

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

J. Freer

Miami, FL November 1,2
Belleair, FL 3,4

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

D. Christiansen

San Diego, CA
November 25-27

M. Davis

Delaware Valley, PA
November 13

O. B. Elbert

New Haven, CT November 6

T. Krupa

San Diego, CA
November 25-27

H. Montague

New Haven, CT November 6
Southwest OR 12

T. Thomassen

San Diego, CA
November 25-27

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 3—"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."—Matthew 26:41 (Z. '01-80 Hymn 166)

NOVEMBER 10—"Love . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."—I Corinthians 13:6 (Z. '03-57 Hymn 37)

NOVEMBER 17—"He shall give his angels [messengers] charge concerning thee, to guard thee in all thy ways."—Psalm 91:11, *Leeser Translation* (Z. '04-75 Hymn 361)

NOVEMBER 24—"Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."—Acts 24:16 (Z. '00-360 Hymn 136)

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.

NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 6—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci. Phone: (203) 248-3793 or Email: annasuraci@comcast.net

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 25-27—Alpine Community Center, 1830 Alpine Boulevard, Alpine, CA 91901. For reservations, contact B. Bach. Phone: (619) 249-5238 or Email: bbach1@cox.net. For other information, contact K. Klepin. Phone: (619) 258-9169 or Email: kmklepin@cox.net

IBADAN END OF THE YEAR THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 3—Ibadan place of fellowship, #24 Fayemi Street Coca Cola Mokola Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: +234 803 333 9949, +234 808 214 6621, +234 809 857 8588 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com, egbucajetan1@yahoo.com

CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 31-January 2—Prisco Community Center, Aurora, IL. Contact L. Larson. Phone: (708) 341-2067 or Email: lambgram@comcast.net. Accommodations, contact A. Pop. Email: accommodations@chicagobible.org

PHOENIX CONVENTION, January 14,15—Drury Inn, 2335 W Pinnacle Peak Road, Phoenix, AZ 85027. www.druryhotel.com. For reservations, phone: (800) 325-0720. Reservations must be made by Dec. 19 to guarantee reduced room rate. For information, contact J. Zardja. Email: janellzardja@gmail.com

SACRAMENTO CONVENTION, February 17-19—Holiday Inn Express, 2224 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento,

CA 95821. Contact K. Freer, 8012 Vintage Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628. Phone: (916) 879-4657 or Email: winnerwear@aol.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 4-6—Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32822. For room reservations, call the hotel. Phone: (407) 851-6400. Specify “Florida Bible Students” to guarantee special convention rate. Deadline for special rate is February 25, 2017. For other information, contact M. Balko. Phone: (407) 339-7580 or Email: mbalko@cfl.rr.com

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A complete set of 2016 General Convention recordings includes all discourses, vespers, and Melodies of Praise.

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