

# The Land Given to Abraham

**FOR MORE THAN** the last 18 months there has been warfare, with numerous suicide bombings, in the land that was once given by God to Abraham. In the midst of this time period worldwide attention was drawn to the horrors of terrorism. Commercial airline planes in the United States were hijacked and used to destroy the World Trade Center in New York and inflict considerable damage to the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., with the loss of thousands of lives. The world has become aware of suicide bombers through these events, but Israel has had this terror in their midst for a long time. They have continued to suffer such attacks periodically since the September 11 incident in the United States.

## TERRORISM IN ABRAHAM'S LAND

It is little wonder then that articles started to appear in the media about the effect these terrorist attacks were having on the people of Israel. One such article appeared in the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper on February 2, 2002. It was entitled, "Israelis Appear More Open to Radical Change." It was an Associated Press article printed in conjunction with the *Los Angeles Times*. It said:

"Prime Minister Ariel Sharon started the week by reassuring Israelis that they had nothing to fear. 'Israel,' the former general told his Cabinet, 'has never lost a war and will win this war as well.' But between Sunday, when Sharon made that observation, and Wednesday, ten more Israelis were killed and the prime minister came under attack from left and right.

"After almost seventeen months of fighting with the Palestinians, growing numbers of Israelis are clamoring for a radical change. The ideas vary widely, from a unilateral pullout from most, but not all, of the West Bank and Gaza, to the no-longer-fringe notion of expelling Palestinians from their lands. But they share a common factor: the feeling that negotiating a peace deal has proved too difficult, perhaps impossible.

"On the right, members of Sharon's own Likud Party pronounced his year-old government a dismal failure. They urged him to launch a war to destroy the Palestinian Authority and oust its president, Yasser Arafat,

from the West Bank. On the left, growing numbers of Israelis called on the prime minister to dismantle at least some Jewish settlements and unilaterally withdraw from large parts of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip immediately.

“Both approaches are condemned by Palestinians and by Israeli centrists, who argue for the need to hold fast until peace talks can resume. But more and more Israelis fear that day may never come.

“An influential group of 1,200 former Israeli military, security and intelligence officials, the Council for Peace and Security, joined the argument this week by coming out for a pullback from much of the occupied lands while unilaterally imposing a new border.

“‘The peace process is at a dead end,’ but keeping troops in the West Bank and Gaza remains a ‘strategic and moral liability’ for Israel, the group said in a document written three months ago but publicized only now.

“It said Israel should withdraw from much of those areas, abandoning dozens of Jewish settlements, and also fortify the new border to keep most Palestinians out of Israel—both to minimize violence and preserve Israel’s Jewish majority.

“Israel’s efforts to protect its citizens have failed because attackers easily cross the invisible frontier that now snakes through hundreds of miles of hills, forests, fields and desert. And Jewish settlements are islands that require constant guarding.

“Born into the Arab-Israeli conflict more than 70 years ago, Sharon—as a general and, later, as a leader of the right-wing Likud in opposition—often taunted Labor Party prime ministers that he would know how to snuff out Palestinian terrorism if given the chance.

“Now he counsels Israelis to be patient as they cope with a national life dominated by the macabre parade of seemingly endless attacks, counterattacks and funerals. The way is long, the sacrifices are great, the prime minister is fond of saying, but Israel will prevail in the end.

“A reporter asked Sharon on Monday: What do you tell Israelis who are too scared to drive from their homes to their offices for fear they will encounter a suicide bomber en route?

“‘The citizens have greater endurance than those who write about them,’ was his terse reply.

## **POLICY CHANGES CONSIDERED**

“But experts here disagree with the prime minister. Israelis, they say, are longing for a clear-cut solution to the conflict and sickened by the carnage that has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 Palestinians and Israelis in the past seventeen months.

“‘We are getting very, very close to the boiling point,’ said Shlomo Gazit, a retired general and former director of military intelligence.

“‘From a security standpoint, it doesn’t make sense to invest so much effort in providing security to small, dispersed settlements that have no security value whatsoever’ said Nati Sharoni, a retired general and a leader of the group.

“Unilateral withdrawal is opposed by many Israelis, including Sharon, who say it would be perceived as a sign of weakness and only invite more demands from the Palestinians as well as attacks on a more vulnerable Israel. Land should be given up only in exchange for a formal peace, contend even some doves like Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

“Many Palestinians oppose the idea as well. They say they fear Israel would keep much of the land that Palestinians say they need to run a viable state.

“Indeed, few of the unilateralists are willing to leave all the areas Israel has occupied since 1967, as the Palestinians demand. That would mean abandoning or removing 200,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza and a similar number of Israelis in East Jerusalem.

“Under the plan by Sharon’s group, up to fifty settlements would be given up and Israel would keep relatively small parcels of land near the pre-1967 border containing scores of other settlements, where most settlers live. The proposal bears some resemblance to ideas now taking hold in Israel’s peace camp, whose members were crushed by the eruption of violence in September 2000 and the collapse of peace talks a year ago.

“Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak had offered the Palestinians a state in Gaza and more than 90 percent of the West Bank with a foothold in Jerusalem. Arafat held out for more land and a ‘right of return’ to Israel

for Palestinian refugees—convincing many Israelis that a final peace deal was unattainable.

“Many Israelis say opening their country to Palestinians would end its Jewish identity; Israel now has just over 5 million Jews and 1 million Arabs.

“Advocates of a pullout argue the same thing would happen from keeping the West Bank and Gaza, home to 3.5 million Palestinians.

“With their far higher birth rate, Palestinians would become the majority even without a refugees’ return if Israel, the West Bank and Gaza effectively melded into a single entity.

“That realization has caused growing numbers of nationalist Israelis to support the relocation—often called the ‘transfer’—of Palestinians to Jordan or other countries. Its proponents say they hope to induce Palestinians to leave voluntarily, but acknowledge that if this failed, the possibility of expulsion remains.”

## **SAUDI’S PEACE PROPOSAL**

Shortly after such articles appeared in the news media, a peace initiative proposed by Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia was leaked to the *New York Times*. The prince proposed that all Arab countries make peace with Israel if Israel relinquishes the lands it gained in the 1967 war. President George W. Bush immediately voiced his interest and approval of the plan. Should he have been so quick to voice his approval in light of the fact that fifteen of the nineteen hijackers in the September 11 attacks were Saudi Arabians? *Time* magazine in its March 11 issue published an article profiling the prince, entitled “The Man Behind the Plan.” It said in part:

“Abdullah’s leaking of a peace initiative to the *New York Times* was plainly part of a well-plotted charm campaign to improve Saudi Arabia’s image in the light of its connections to September 11. But the proposition has generated enormous attention worldwide, far exceeding the expectations of the Saudis themselves. Abdullah’s offering is simple: he proposes that all the Arab countries state in advance that they will make peace with Israel if Israel relinquishes the lands it conquered in the 1967 war—that is, if it returns the Golan Heights to Syria and hands over the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. That equation, ‘land for

peace' is as old as U. N. Resolution 242, passed in 1967, which the Saudis had already embraced by attending the 1991 Middle East peace conference in Madrid. But this is the first time the Saudis have explicitly defined 'peace' as full normalization between Israel and all Arab states.

"In the current environment, with the Israelis and Palestinians killing one another and no one so much as discussing a cease-fire, Abdullah's 'statement of vision' was at least something. Last week the latest Palestinian suicide bomber killed nine Israelis in Jerusalem. Israeli army incursions into two Palestinian refugee camps left twenty Palestinians and two Israeli soldiers dead. Abdullah's initiative prompted the Bush Administration to dispatch CIA chief George Tenet and Middle East special envoy William Burns to Jiddah to take the matter up with the Crown Prince in person. The European Union's foreign policy chief Javier Solana made the same stop the day before. Every key Arab state except Syria has voiced support for Abdullah's 'vision,' making the Crown Prince confident he will win official backing at an Arab League summit later this month.

"Even the Israelis could not entirely dismiss the initiative, despite the fact that its terms are unacceptable to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. To the *Times*, Abdullah spoke of 'full withdrawal from all occupied territories ... including in Jerusalem.' Israel insists on keeping parts of the territories, and Sharon rejects any Israeli pullback in Jerusalem. The Saudis might be more flexible on these points than Abdullah indicated; Saudi officials now say the kingdom would endorse any border compromises acceptable to the Palestinians and Syrians. In any event, Sharon invited Abdullah to explain his ideas in detail. He insisted that before Israel would judge Abdullah's offering, Saudi Arabia and Israel must talk directly. (They never have.)

"The Saudis insist on the opposite order; they aren't interested in talks unless Sharon endorses Abdullah's vision. In any event, the Saudis say they have nothing more to add. They have no interest in the laborious—and until now unsuccessful—work of hammering out details of a peace accord. 'We are not in the real estate or zoning business,' says Crown Prince's foreign policy adviser Adel Jubeir. According to Arab diplomats, Abdullah has two immediate objectives. One is to lure the United States back into its old role as mediator between the Israelis and Palestinians, a function President Bush has largely abandoned. The

second is to give Israelis hope in the peace process, so that they will throw Sharon out of office and elect a more moderate leader. That objective seemed somewhat farfetched; Abdullah's initiative created little popular enthusiasm in Israel.

"For his part, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat publicly supported Abdullah, though a senior official of the Palestinian Authority says that privately Arafat worries that the Saudi initiative is just meaningless talk. The consensus within the Authority, this source notes, is that Abdullah was less interested in helping the Palestinians than in improving Saudi Arabia's image."

Will it ever be possible through the negotiations of men to assure the Israelis that a fanatic of Islam won't jeopardize their society as a suicide bomber? Can land be given back that was miraculously attained? Should this land ever be given up?

## **THE LAND PROMISED TO ABRAHAM**

When God came to Abraham, he asked him to "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." (Gen. 12:1) Although God told Abraham that he would bless him and that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed, he said nothing more about the land until Abram and Lot separated several years later. Lot chose the plains of Jordan and went into the valley to live. Abraham stayed in the hill country of Judea where he had a good view of the land in all directions. The Scriptures say "The Lord said ... Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." (Gen. 13:14,15) The Lord also said, "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."—vs. 17

Later God renewed his covenant with Abraham and said, "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." (Gen. 15:18) In the succeeding verses are listed all the nations occupying the land at that time, who would have to be displaced. The boundaries indicate a greater area than currently is in dispute including lands occupied by Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Yet Stephen reminded us when speaking in his defense before the Sanhedrin,

that Abraham never came to own any of that land. (Acts 7:3-5) He had to buy a burial place for Sarah when she died.

The natural descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel, did get the opportunity to possess the land. After being liberated from bondage in Egypt, God gave Moses the Law on Mt. Sinai. In doing so he outlined how his angel would lead them to this land possessed by the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and the Jebusites; and that these nations would be cut off. The entire plan for giving them the land is outlined in Exodus 23:23-33. The boundaries of this land are confirmed as they were to Abraham in verse 31 which says, "I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert [the wilderness of Zin] unto the river [the river Euphrates]."

## **POSSESSION OF THE LAND**

The nation led by Moses was well on the way to take possession of this land. They sent spies out to explore the area, one from each tribe. Ten of the spies brought back a false and evil report, and were able to persuade the people that it would not be possible to conquer the inhabitants of the land. Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who brought back a favorable report. (Num. 13,14) As a consequence, the Lord had Moses turn around and march toward the wilderness which they did for a period of forty years. When all those who, at the time of the ten spies' evil report, were twenty years of age and above and had rebelled because of the report, died in the wilderness, then their children, along with other loyal Israelites, were permitted to enter the land. Prior to their entering the land, the Lord defined the boundaries of this land as recorded in Numbers 34:3-12. Joshua was told by the Lord what land was to be given to him.— Josh. 1:4

Under Joshua, the land finally came into the possession of the natural descendants of Abraham. They spent many glorious years there, but eventually because of their idolatry and sinfulness, they were removed from the land. The ten-tribe kingdom was taken captive to Assyria, and later the two-tribe kingdom of Judah was taken captive to Babylon. Although they were permitted to go back to their land after 70 years of captivity, they lived there under the control of the Gentiles. After God gave them 490 years of exclusive favor their polity came to an end and they were dispersed as a people throughout the earth. The land came

under the control of caretakers who were not interested in cultivating the land but defended it fiercely. They permitted it to become a desolate place.

## **THE REGATHERING OF ISRAEL**

The time arrived when God wanted to bring his people back to their land after centuries of dispersion throughout the earth. The land was now a part of the Ottoman Empire. With the revision of the treaty of San Stefano made by the Berlin Congress of Nations in 1878, the way was opened for portions of this land to be purchased by the rich international banking firm of the Rothschild's. This was done to encourage Jews throughout the world to return to this land. The Zionist organizations that were formed then did likewise and communities of Jews began to live again in this land.

World War I brought a complete liberation of the land from the Ottoman Empire. Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917 which pledged British support for the Zionist hope for a Jewish national homeland in Palestine with the proviso that the rights of non-Jewish communities in Palestine be respected. The British, with the aid of the Arabs, gained control of Palestine defeating the Ottoman Turks and were given a mandate by the League of Nations to control Palestine. The mandates issued by the League of Nations were in the form of trusteeships to be exercised until the people of the region could stand on their own. At that time (1919) there were about 568,000 Arabs, 74,000 Christians, and 58,000 Jews in Palestine.

There were problems for the British in carrying out the mandate. They had obligated themselves to the Arabs for their assistance in World War I. They also were obligated to Chaim Weizman for developing a chemical process for acetone to assist them in the war and the Balfour Declaration was in response to his wishes.

Because of these promises the mandate was considered unworkable, and Great Britain sought partition of the land as a solution. The Arabs rejected the proposal, and Great Britain, in struggling with the problem of a large influx of Jews, tried to limit immigration as well as purchase of the land. Despairing of finding a solution to the problem, Britain gave up its mandate and turned the Palestine problem over to the United Nations.



## **ISRAEL BECOMES A NATION**

The United Nations, in 1948, partitioned the land and gave part of it to the new nation of Israel that was formed, and the other to the Palestinian Arabs. The Arabs in their greed to have all the land were told by the Arab League to withdraw from the boundaries given to Israel, because their intent was to 'push Israel into the sea' and gain all the land for themselves. No independent state was set up by the Arabs as had been by the Jews. The Arab League declared war and the new nation of Israel had to fight for existence. Invaded by armies of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq they fought from May 1948 until January 1949 when armistice agreements were reached. By then Israel had increased its holdings of land by fifty percent.

Border clashes continued, and in 1956, provoked by threats of Arab invasion, Israel made a preemptive attack on Egyptian territory and in a few days took over the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. Pressured by the United States and the USSR, as well as the United Nations, Israel removed its troops from these areas and they were occupied by UN peacekeeping forces. However, Israel now had access to the Red Sea for commerce. Egypt, under Nasser in 1967, mobilized its army and planned to invade Israel. The Israelis attacked first and drove across the Suez Canal into Egypt. They also launched preemptive attacks on Jordan and Syria, taking over the West Bank and the Golan Heights in the Six-Day War. Israel was pressured by the USSR and the United Nations to withdraw from these occupied territories but Israel asked for negotiations for peace. Nothing happened until 1973 when Syria and Egypt attacked Israeli positions in the Sinai and the Golan Heights on Yom Kippur, catching Israel by surprise. Israel drove across the Suez Canal and encircled Egypt's third army while driving Syria back towards Damascus. A cease-fire was negotiated and peace negotiations were held in Geneva, Switzerland. By 1974 agreements were reached with both Egypt and Syria. Ever since, parts of this land have been used for negotiating peace. But peace has not come.

## **PEACE NOT ACHIEVED**

Since the Saudi peace proposal appeared in the *New York Times*, the Arab League held a summit meeting. Arafat was not permitted to attend the meeting being kept locked in at his headquarters in Ramallah by the

Israelis. No conclusion was reached at this summit meeting. The wording of the “full normalization between Israel and all Arab states,” proposed by the Saudis, was so vague and indefinite that Israel could not see any hope of achieving the peace they were seeking by this means. Instead, Israel has penetrated the West Bank and Gaza Strip with tanks and soldiers and has embarked on a program to ferret out those responsible for the suicide bombings.

Meanwhile, President Bush sent envoys, including Secretary of State Powell to broker a peace settlement, asking Israel to withdraw its troops from the West Bank and Gaza. As they started to comply, more suicide bombings occurred and at the conclusion of Colin Powell’s visit, the program remained the same for both sides.

What will happen to this land? The decision will be made by our Heavenly Father, because the land really belongs to him. As he has said, “The world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” (Ps. 50:12) Specifically referring to the land of Israel, he said, “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine.”—Lev. 25:23

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# The Right Way

**Key Verse:** *“The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”*  
—Psalm 1:6

**Selected Scriptures:**  
*Psalms 1:1-6; 19:7-10*

**THE LESSONS IN THIS** month’s series focus on various aspects of Christian endeavor and experience as presented in the Book of Psalms. The ‘Right Way’ is emphasized in this week’s Key Verse where we are reminded that God has his eye on those who are seeking to know and serve him. This is in contrast to the ways of the unrighteous who will not be blessed.

The Lord’s people recognize the significance of the fundamental truth of the opening passage of the psalm which says, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” (Ps. 1:1) The true child of God is instructed to have no part in the unrighteous elements of present society, nor to have any sympathy or fellowship with these. During the present Gospel Age, consecrated Christians have responded to the special calling that has been extended to those who are prepared to separate themselves from the world along with its unholy and degrading influences.

The admonition to seek righteousness is quickly recognized by the Lord’s people. We read, “His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” (vs. 2) The pure in heart appreciate these principles of God’s laws and strive to live in harmony with them. They are eager to be pleasing to their Heavenly Father, and direct their energy toward growth in meekness, humility, and love in all of life’s affairs. They abide in the promises of God with fullness of faith and trust.

Our attention is further directed to the Divine law in this lesson’s selected scriptures, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is

pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”—Ps. 19:7-10

The law of love prevails among those whose hearts are in tune with these wise precepts. Adhering to these infallible rules of righteousness inevitably transforms the very being and character of the child of God as he strives to conduct his life accordingly. Those whose hearts are not right, the psalmist says (Ps. 1:4,5), are like “chaff” that is quickly blown away by the wind. They will not endure before the seat of Divine judgment, nor in the congregation of the righteous.

The pure in heart seek the right way, and respond to Divine providence with positiveness. They give prayerful consideration to the marvelous teachings and ways of God, and show evidence of the graces of spiritual growth as outlined in his Word. The psalmist uses symbolic language to describe this Christian growth. The true child of God is seen as a beautiful tree that has been planted by God, and which derives its growth from the life-giving waters of Truth. Its increase and fruitage is reflected in the beautiful spreading branches that provide blessings to all who bask in it. “He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”—Ps. 1:3

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# Live in Hope

**Key Verse:** *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”*  
—*Psalm 42:11*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Psalm 42*

**IN LAST WEEK’S LESSON** from Psalms, “The Right Way,” we noted that to walk in the way of truth and righteousness will be a blessed way. Walking therein produces spiritual growth and fruitage according to the Divine promises. In this lesson we will consider what it means for the Christian to ‘Live in Hope.’

Love for God is the very life of the Christian as expressed by the psalmist. In our Key Verse he says that when we live in hope and put our trust in him there is no reason for the child of God to be cast down or disquieted. In verse one of this psalm he begins with an exaltation relative to the rich blessings that may be derived from such a course in life. He says, “As the deer pants

for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God.”—Ps. 42:1, *New American Standard Version*

A special blessing awaits those who thirst after the waters from the Lord’s brook of life. The psalmist continues, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?” (vss. 2,3) There is an increasing yearning and appreciation for spiritual blessings as the Lord’s people drink from these waters. The Prophet Isaiah said, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” (Isa. 55:1) The Revelator wrote, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. ... And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” (Rev. 22:17) No other symbol expresses the hope set before us better than water. It satisfies the longing heart as nothing else will do.

When the psalmist recalls these special blessings he pours out his very soul with rejoicing and joy. He looks back to the time when he was together with those who came to the house of God for praise and thanksgiving. He then asks, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” (vs. 5) How can we forget what God has done for us? There is no cause for us to become fearful or discouraged. We have experienced his blessings in the past, and if we put our hope and trust in him we shall continue to be led by him in the future.

The psalmist was comforted by his thoughts of God wherever he found himself, and he was ready to lift up his heart to him in song and meditation. He tells us, “The Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.” (vs. 8) He was not going to become discouraged or fearful in any of the affairs of his life.

Fear and discouragement are enemies of the children of God, and they must be overcome if we would prove ourselves faithful to our High Calling. As the specially blessed people of God now living at the end of the Gospel Age, we truly ‘live in hope.’ Although there is much fear in our world today, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.”—I John 4:18,19

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## Don't Be Afraid

***Key Verse: "I will lift  
up mine eyes unto  
the hills, from  
whence cometh my  
help. My help  
cometh from the  
LORD, which made  
heaven and earth."  
—Psalm 121:1, 2***

***Selected Scripture:  
Psalm 23:1-6***

**THE PREVIOUS TWO** lessons from the Book of Psalms considered the topics: "The Right Way," and "Live in Hope," as positive directions in the lives of the Lord's people. This third lesson entitled "Don't Be Afraid" will focus on some of the anxieties faced by Christians in this end of the Gospel Age and the need to put our trust and faith in God.

There is growing fear and anxiety amongst the human family in these very stressful and troublous times, but the child of God is encouraged to lift up his eyes, as our Key Verse states, and seek help from above. The Lord's people are directed to put their trust in him, and in his willingness to help and guide us in our every time of need.

There should be no cause for uneasiness if we have put our trust in God. The psalmist assures us (Ps. 121:3-7) that he that watches and cares for us neither slumbers, nor sleeps. He is the keeper of those who seek him; He will not permit the sun to smite his people in the daytime nor the moon by night, and he promises to preserve his children from all evil. "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."—vs. 8

One of the best-known psalms is included in this lesson's selected scripture reading. God is likened to a shepherd who cares for his people. David acknowledges, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Ps. 23:1) Those who recognize and appreciate this special relationship with God need never be anxious or uneasy about their spiritual care and growth. By using the shepherd as a symbol, the writer aptly illustrates the tender and loving care that God provides for his children. A good shepherd is known and loved by his flock, and they put their trust in him.

We further read, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” (vss. 2,3) Symbolic language lends expression and illustration to God’s providential care as the Divine shepherd. To ‘lie down in green pastures’ suggests the rest of faith and spiritual refreshment experienced by all who share in this relationship. We are led by the Eternal God to the pure, living waters of life, and shielded from every foe and whatever danger may arise. We have been justified to newness of life, and our pathway has been marked out for us through the wonderful word of Truth. This is our experience because we trust in the merit of the shed blood of Jesus on our behalf.

The psalmist reminds us that although we are walking in the valley of the shadow of death because of our consecration, we have no cause for fear because God’s providence is exercised on our behalf. We are feasting at the table of spiritual food prepared for us at this end of the Gospel Age, and our cup is running over.—vss. 4,5

Our lesson’s admonition to not be afraid has taken on new meaning and perspective as we approach the end of the present age. Let us not lose sight of the promise that, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”—vs. 6

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## Where Is Justice?

**Key Verse:** “*Arise,  
O God, judge the  
earth: for thou shalt  
inherit all nations.*”  
—*Psalm 82:8*

**Selected Scriptures:**  
*Psalms 82; 113:5-9*

**THIS LESSON CONSIDERS** the subject “Where is Justice?” The Key Verse points forward to the time when the Christ assumes power over the earth to administer righteous judgment during the kingdom reign. Our text also informs us that he will inherit all nations (see Psalm 2:8) from Jehovah, which promises that it will be a worldwide kingdom of justice for all mankind.

Psalm 82 begins with the prophetic statement, “God [referring to Jehovah] standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.” (vs. 1) The psalmist is speaking of the time preceding our Lord’s kingdom. God is shown as being in the congregation of the mighty (those selected to rule with Jesus), and is judging among the gods (the mighty ones of this present evil world). The next three verses tell of the failure of earth’s leaders to achieve justice in the earth.

During the Gospel Age a call has gone out to select a class (Jesus’ faithful bride) that will share with our risen Lord in the administration of that kingdom. The psalmist continues, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” (vs. 6) Jesus quotes this verse in John 10:34 applying it to his faithful followers. The psalm continues, “But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.” (vs. 7) No one can escape the death sentence because of Prince Adam’s transgression, but the consecrated children of God die with Prince Jesus. They are made conformable unto his death as joint-sacrificers during the present Gospel Age. Our text will be fulfilled when our risen and glorified Lord, together with his faithful bride, share in judging the world with justice and equity for all nations. The administration of Christ’s kingdom will bring an end to the injustice that now prevails in the world. It will be a time for delivering the afflicted, the poor, and the needy who

continue to walk in darkness because all of the foundations of the earth are out of course.—vss. 3-5

Psalms 113 also points forward to this blessed time. The psalmist writes, “Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord.”—Ps. 113:5-9

The ‘barren woman’ who is the mother of children points to the fulfillment of one of the prophecies of the kingdom as recorded by Isaiah. He says, “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.” (Isa. 54:1) Sarah, Abraham’s first wife, was barren a long time until she bore Isaac. His second wife, Hagar, who bore Ishmael, represented the Law Covenant. (See Gal. 4:22-31) Ishmael represented the nation of Israel which was cast off. Thus is shown the superiority of the Grace Covenant, represented by Sarah, under which the ‘seed’ of promise is developed. This promised seed will bless all the families of the earth. A glorious prospect awaits the poor groaning creation when there will be justice for all under the New Covenant of that kingdom.

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## Tell the Story

***Key Verse: “We will  
not hide them from  
their children,  
shewing to the  
generation to come  
the praises of the  
LORD, and his  
strength, and his  
wonderful works  
that he hath done.”  
—Psalm 78:4***

***Selected Scripture:  
Psalm 78:1-8***

**IN THIS FINAL LESSON ON** the Psalms, “Tell the Story,” the Key Verse emphasizes the importance of passing on to our children and the next generation the message concerning the law and wonderful works of God, as outlined in the Scriptures. Psalm 78 is entitled a “Maschil of Asaph” [“A Psalm for Asaph to give instruction”—*Marginal Translation*]. This is the tenth of thirteen Maschil, or teaching psalms. It is also the seventh of the twelve Psalms of Asaph. Asaph was one of David’s musicians (I Chron. 6:31,39), as well as a prophet, or seer.—II Chron. 29:30

Asaph’s message is an historical account of the people of Israel from their beginnings as the twelve sons of Jacob until his own day during the kingship of David. The psalmist put it into song, rather than in narrative, so that the singing might have greater impact and meaning to his people. It concerns the mighty deeds of God and the unfaithful response of the children of Israel over and over again to God’s wondrous works on their behalf.

As a prophet, Asaph served as a mouthpiece of the Lord in speaking to Israel and requiring their attention to his law. The psalm opens with the command, “Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.” (vs 1) God demands that his law might be known and observed by the children of Israel. “I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.” (vss. 2,3) Parables and dark sayings demand serious effort and study to be understood. These important matters were known by his people, and had been passed down to them from times of old. The words of our text take on added meaning when

they are put in context of this promise to pass these laws of God on to posterity.

The psalmist continues, “He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children.” (vs. 5) They were instructed to keep God’s laws and to make them available for their offspring. “That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children.” (vs. 6) This was a legacy which was left to them, “That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.”—vss. 7,8

The Lord’s people now living at the end of the Gospel Age may also learn this lesson concerning the importance of teaching the present generation of children about God’s laws and the promises of his coming kingdom. Let us continue to ‘tell the story’ about God’s wondrous love that will bring blessings and life to the whole creation that yet groans under the weight of sin and death. Soon that weight will be lifted as God’s Kingdom is established as “the mountain of the Lord’s house,” and “all nations shall flow unto it.”—Isa. 2:2

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***Dawn Bible Students Association***

# The New Testament —Its First Four Books

**THE NEW TESTAMENT** part of the Bible is similar to the Old in that it is made up of historical, prophetic, doctrinal, and devotional truths. But in the New Testament the proportions of these important elements of Truth are somewhat different. There is less that is historical and prophetic, and more that is doctrinal and devotional.

A considerable portion of the historical records which appear in the New Testament call attention to the fulfillment of certain important prophecies of the Old Testament. This is particularly true of the first four books, known as the four “Gospels,” and respectively written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These ‘Gospels’ record the life and teachings of Jesus, and by comparing them with the prophecies of the Old Testament confirm the fact that he came to earth in fulfillment of the promises of God—that he was indeed the foretold Messiah whom the Creator had sent to redeem and bless the world.

In the great theme of redemption and restoration which is presented throughout the entire Bible, the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are fundamentally important events, and in God’s providence the vital truths pertaining thereto have been set forth in no uncertain terms by those godly men who wrote the four Gospels.

To some extent these four accounts of the life of Jesus are repetitious, but there is much that is different in each of them, and this is particularly true with respect to the manner in which each writer deals with the subject matter in hand. Matthew presents Jesus as the foretold King, whom God had promised would come through the line of David—the One who would be “born King of the Jews.”—Matt. 2:2

When we think of a king there is associated in our minds the idea of a kingdom, and in Matthew’s record of Jesus’ life we find him quoting much that Jesus said pertaining to the kingdom of promise. The Prophet Isaiah, in foretelling the birth of Jesus, and the great objective of his birth,

wrote that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Isa. 9:7) Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was the promised King in this kingdom, or ‘government,’ and that through him all the reassuring promises of God were to be fulfilled.

Many of the parables of Jesus are introduced by the expression, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto.’ But to understand these parables it is essential to realize that many of them are illustrative, not of the glory and power of the kingdom, but of its slow stages of development; and some of them, in fact, of satanic efforts to counterfeit the real kingdom, these fraudulent and unholy efforts also being given the name kingdom.

The first chapter of Matthew’s Gospel traces the genealogy of Jesus, beginning with Abraham. The second chapter relates the appearance of the “wise men,” and how Herod used them in an attempted attack on the life of the newborn king. In relating this episode, Matthew calls attention to the manner in which it fulfilled one of the Old Testament prophecies. See Matthew 2:17,18; Jeremiah 31:15,16.

Matthew records some of the experiences and teachings of John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, and informs us that Jesus went to this servant of God to be immersed. It was following his baptism that Jesus was tempted by the great adversary from three different standpoints. One of these was in an offer of an easy and quick way to become king of earth. Satan said to him, “All these things [the kingdoms of this world] will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” (Matt. 4:8,9) Jesus refused. He knew that he was to become king of earth, but he wanted it to be in God’s due time and way.

Beginning with the fifth chapter, Matthew records Jesus’ famous sermon on the mount, in the beginning of which he sets forth what are commonly known as the Beatitudes, or ‘blessings.’ These, from their various standpoints, call attention to the essential qualifications of those whom God can use to be “the light of the world.” (Matt. 5:14) The record of the sermon on the mount continues nearly to the close of the seventh chapter, where Jesus is quoted as saying, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine,

and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”—vss. 24-27

Beginning with chapter eight and through many of the remaining chapters of the book, Matthew records daily experiences in the life of Jesus—the miracles which he performed, the parables which he related to illustrate one or another of his kingdom teachings, his enlightening discussions with his disciples, and his verbal encounters with his enemies, the scribes and Pharisees.

Five days before his crucifixion Jesus rode into Jerusalem on an ass and his disciples and friends acclaimed him as King. But the religious rulers of Israel refused to recognize him as such. Instead, they plotted his death and succeeded in bringing about his crucifixion. Matthew records these developments in simple, yet dramatic style.

During these last days of his earthly life, and in the shadow of the cross, Jesus gave utterance to the most outstanding prophecy to be found anywhere in the Bible. Matthew records it in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five. It was given in response to questions asked him by his disciples pertaining to the time of his return and the end of the age (mistranslated “world” in the *King James Version*).—Matt. 24:3

In this prophecy many of the outstanding developments of our times are accurately foretold. He speaks of a time of “tribulation” so great that unless brought to an end by Divine intervention, it would result in “no flesh” being saved. (vss. 21-22) Today men fear that nuclear bombs might yet destroy the entire human race.

The last three chapters record some of the incidents which occurred at the Last Supper, Jesus’ Gethsemane experience, his trial, Peter’s denial, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. Jesus voluntarily gave himself up to his enemies to be killed. He did this because he knew that it was his Heavenly Father’s will that he die as the Redeemer of the world from sin and death.

But Jesus, by the power of God, was raised from the dead, and in the closing words of his narrative Matthew quotes Jesus as saying, after his resurrection, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matt. 28:18) It is this power which will yet be manifested in the blessing of all

the families of the earth, as promised by God through the mouth of all his holy prophets.

## **THE BOOK OF MARK**

The Book of Mark, or, as its heading appears in the Bible, “*The Gospel According to St. Mark,*” is also a record of the life, work, and teachings of Jesus. Like Matthew, Mark also presents Jesus as the One who had come to fulfill the Messianic promises of the Old Testament. In the second verse of the opening chapter Mark writes, “As it is written in the prophets,” and he quotes Old Testament prophecies which foretold the coming and ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, and shows how these prophecies were fulfilled by the ministry of John.—Mal. 3:1; Isa. 40:3

The plan of God for human salvation from sin and death calls for miracle-working power, and emphasizes the fact that man cannot extricate himself from the result of his sin. Mark’s record of the life of Jesus calls special attention to the fact that Jesus, in his ministry, did utilize Divine power, that the things he did on behalf of the people were beyond human ability to accomplish.

It is against this background that Mark records the warning Jesus gave to the scribes and Pharisees who claimed that he was using the power of Satan to perform the miracles which so greatly benefited the people. In this warning, Jesus indicated that the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees was a sin against the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit (many times mistranslated ‘Ghost’ in the New Testament) is the holy power of God, and this power was unmistakably manifested in the miracles which Jesus performed. The scribes and Pharisees were acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies and with the manner in which God worked through his special servants. Therefore, there was no legitimate reason why they should misconstrue the evidence of Jesus’ messiahship which was so clearly demonstrated by the miraculous works associated with his ministry. To charge that he utilized the power of Satan made them all the more reprehensible, hence the suggestion by Jesus that they were committing a sin against the Holy Spirit which could not be forgiven.—Mark 3:22-30

Many of the miracles performed by Jesus were illustrative of the manner in which Divine power will be used throughout the thousand



years of his reign to heal the sick and to raise the dead. One of the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the blessings of Christ's kingdom likens the kingdom to a "mountain," and the promise is that in this 'mountain' the Lord will make unto all people a "feast of fat things."—Isa. 25:6-8

The 'feast of fat things' will include many wonderful blessings for which the world has longed, being climaxed by the destruction of death and the wiping away of tears from off all faces. It will indeed be a wonderful 'feast,' and it might well have been this viewpoint of kingdom blessings which Jesus illustrated by the miracle in which he fed the entire multitude, although having only a few loaves and fishes to start with. Jesus performed two such miracles, and Mark records both of them. See Mark 6:35-46; 8:1-9

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, when announcing him said, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 3:1,2) Jesus is the great king in this kingdom, and in order to demonstrate his Divine appointment to this high position he not only preached the Gospel of the kingdom, but gave illustrations of the manner in which his kingdom would bless the people when, in God's due time, it would be established in power and in great glory.

As the record of his life shows, Jesus also taught that some time would elapse before these kingdom blessings would reach the people on a worldwide scale as the prophecies had foretold. During this waiting period, a further work of preparation for the kingdom was to be accomplished. This was to involve the calling out from the world a company of people who would demonstrate their worthiness to reign with him in his kingdom by their willingness to follow in his footsteps, laying down their lives sacrificially with him.—Ps. 50:5; II Tim. 2:11,12

It was this phase of the Divine plan which Jesus taught when he said to the young rich man, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." (Mark 10:21) Wholeheartedness on the part of those who take up their cross to follow Jesus was illustrated by his reference to the widow who gave all that she had, even though her all was but 'two mites.' Mark records this lesson, which we quote, "Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the

treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”—Mark 12:41-44

In the closing chapters of the book, Mark records the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, even as Matthew does. Jesus’ ministry was performed in the Spirit, and by the authority, of his Heavenly Father. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and raised the dead. He set forth the Divine principles of righteousness as a guide to holy living. He engendered in the hearts of his faithful disciples the hope of reigning with him in his kingdom, inviting them to prove their worthiness by first suffering and dying with him.

Then Jesus surrendered to his enemies and they put him to death. He died to take the sinner’s place in death, and thus prepare the way for the future restoration of the dead to life. That this will be quite within the capability of Divine power was demonstrated by the fact that Jesus Christ himself was raised from the dead. The record of this mighty miracle, as recorded not only by Mark, but also by Matthew, Luke, and John, serves as a fitting climax to the Master’s ministry of miracles, and serves as the final demonstration that he was indeed the Messiah of promise.

## **LUKE’S GOSPEL**

The word gospel means ‘good tidings,’ so the word is very appropriate as a description of Luke’s record of the birth and ministry of Jesus. In the second chapter, he records the angelic message to the shepherds, when one of them announced the birth of Jesus, saying, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”—Luke 2:10

While all four of the Gospel writers are harmonious in their accounts of the essential facts concerning Jesus’ life and ministry, in the providence of the Lord each one sets forth certain points omitted by the other. Thus, by having all four of these records, we are furnished with all the needed information concerning the ‘greatest life ever lived.’

The ministry of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, is shown by Mark’s Gospel to be a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, but Mark

tells us nothing concerning the circumstances leading up to the birth of John the Baptist. This information is furnished by Luke. See Luke 1:5-80

It is in Luke's record that we are given the account of Jesus' birth, and the circumstances which led up to this humble entrance of the King of Glory into this world of sin. (ch. 2:1-14) These accounts are not unrelated incidents in the life of the greatest personality the world has ever known. However interesting and thrilling they are, the important thing to keep in mind is to realize that these stories are all related to the one great theme of the entire Bible, which is the redemption and restoration of a lost race.

As we learned in our brief examination of the Book of Genesis, after relating the story of the creation of man and his fall into sin and death, we are given the promise concerning a "seed" that would bring deliverance. In Genesis 12:3 and 22:18 it is identified as the 'seed' of Abraham, and in reality Jesus was that promised seed. In relating the birth of Jesus, Luke assures us of a forward step in the great plan of God to bring deliverance to the race, a deliverance from sin and death. This indeed was the core of the angel's message of 'good tidings'—a Savior had been born, one who would save the people from their sins.—Luke 2:10

As we looked briefly through the books of the Old Testament we discovered many promises concerning the coming Messiah and Deliverer. It was foretold that he would be born in Bethlehem, that he would be the King of kings, and the Prince of Peace. The opening books of the New Testament point out the beginning of the fulfillment of these wonderful promises, and we begin to see their reality.

Luke, however, records a lesson given by Jesus which was calculated to teach that although he was the promised Messiah (Christ in the New Testament), they were not to expect his kingdom to be established immediately. First there was to be an age of sacrifice and suffering on the part of his followers. This is recorded in chapter nine, verses eighteen through twenty-four. Peter had identified Jesus as the Messiah of promise, and we read that then Jesus "straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing." He explained that "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day."

Then Jesus told his disciples that if they desired to be his disciples it would be necessary for them to follow him into death, to “take up” their “cross daily.” He added, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” (vss. 23,24) This means that during the present age the only way to have life through Jesus is the way of joint-sacrifice with him.

Jesus taught, not only that he would suffer and die, but that all his true followers during the present Gospel Age would likewise be persecuted and have their names cast out as evil. But it will not always be thus with those who serve the Lord, for the Prophet Isaiah foretold a time when the Lord would take away the “rebuke” of his people from off “all the earth.”—Isa. 25:8

Jesus’ promise to the thief on the cross is familiar to many. It is Luke who records this promise, and the circumstances leading up to it. However, a misunderstanding of the plan of God led the translators to place the punctuation improperly, so that a wrong thought is conveyed.

There was an inscription at the head of the cross on which Jesus was crucified, which read, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.” (Luke 23:38) The thief was dying, and he grasped at this slim straw of hope that if Jesus were actually a king there might be something he could do for him.

Jesus answered, “Verily I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:43) Notice that we have placed the comma after the word ‘today’ rather than before it. This is in keeping with the fact that Jesus did not at once go to paradise, but was during parts of three days in the grave.

Foreknowing this, Jesus in his great faith was able to say, “Today,” even this day, “I say unto thee, shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

This was fully in harmony with the thief’s request to be remembered in Jesus’ kingdom, for it will be that kingdom which will restore paradise conditions worldwide. The thief will be there because he will be awakened from the sleep of death, and he will be given an opportunity to enjoy the blessings of that kingdom.

## **JOHN’S RECORD**

As we have seen, none of the Gospel records of Jesus' life contain all the details of what he said and did. John's is the least complete of them all. Nearly two-thirds of the whole book is concerned with the last six months of Jesus' life, and one-third is the Master's last week on earth.

In all four Gospels Jesus is referred to as the King of promise, the Son of Man, and also the Son of God. John, however, emphasizes a little more than do the other writers the fact that Jesus was the Son of God. He begins his account on this theme, informing us that Jesus, known as the "Word" (John 1:1)—*Logos* in the Greek language—was the "only begotten of the Father."—vs. 14

A faulty translation of the Greek text in this opening chapter of John's Gospel misleads the reader into the belief that the 'Word' which was "made flesh" was the Almighty God himself, rather than the Son of God. But this is not what John taught. According to the Greek text, what he really wrote was that the *Logos* was "a" god, that he was associated with "the" God in the original work of creation, and that now he had been "made flesh." (John 1:1,2, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott, Interlinear*) This makes the account harmonious with the remainder of the Bible, which shows the clear distinction between the Heavenly Father and his beloved Son.

It is in John 3:16 that we read those well-known words, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In this, and in other wonderful ways, John identifies Jesus as the one who had come to fulfill the great purpose of God to restore the human race to life through the work of a Redeemer and Savior.

It is John who relates the well-known conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus (the ruler in Israel who went to the Master by night). (ch. 3:1-13) Jesus explained to Nicodemus that in order to enter the kingdom of God he would need to be "born again." Nicodemus could not understand this, so Jesus explained that he did not refer to a second physical birth, but to being born on a higher, spiritual plane.

Jesus illustrated the powers possessed by those who are 'born again' by indicating that they are invisible to human eyes, that they can come and go as the wind. He experienced Spirit birth himself when he was raised from the dead, and all four of the Gospels reveal that he was then

able to go and come as the wind, for while he remained with his disciples forty days, they saw him only on a few brief occasions.

It is John who records that marvelous miracle, the awakening of Lazarus from the sleep of death. (ch. 11:1-46) Lazarus, it will be recalled, was the brother of Martha and Mary, and Jesus loved the entire family. But when Lazarus became ill the Master did not go to him at once. Instead, he allowed him to die, explaining that it was for “the glory of God.” This became apparent when Lazarus was restored to life.

Jesus referred to Lazarus as being “asleep.” This is in keeping with the general teachings of the Bible on the subject of death. The Lord considers the dead as merely sleeping because provision has been made through the redemptive work of Christ to restore them to life. They are not dead forever. Martha understood this, and said to Jesus concerning her brother, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”—vs. 24

The ‘last day’ referred to by Martha is the final age in the Divine plan of redemption and restoration. It will be during that day that “all that are in the graves” will hear the voice of the Son of Man and shall come forth. (John 5:28,29) The *King James Version* says that those who have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of “damnation.” This is an erroneous translation. The *Revised Standard Version* gives us the proper thought by using the word “judgment.” The last day is to be a trial, or judgment period.

John’s Gospel is the only one which contains so many of the wonderful lessons Jesus imparted to his disciples in the ‘upper room’ the night before he was crucified. This is recorded beginning with chapter thirteen and running through chapter seventeen, the latter containing a wonderful prayer with which he closed the service. These are among the most beautiful chapters in the entire Bible, and the sayings of Jesus found therein have comforted thousands throughout the age.

Chapters eighteen through to the end of the book record the arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, as well as some of his final instructions to his disciples. Jesus’ discussion with Peter is particularly touching, and also revealing. Peter was commissioned to feed the Lord’s “sheep” and “lambs,” indicating that there was a work of preparation to

be done ere the kingdom of Christ would be established for the blessing of all the families of the earth.—John 21:15-17

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# The New Covenant and Its Blood

***“This is my blood of  
the new testament  
[covenant], which is  
shed for many for  
the remission of  
sins.”  
—Matthew 26:28***

**JESUS WAS IN THE** “upper room” (Mark 14:15) with his disciples the night before he was crucified when he asked them to drink of the “cup” which, he explained, represented the blood of the ‘new testament,’ or covenant. (Matt. 26:27,28) It was on this occasion also that he invited them to partake of the “bread,” saying that it symbolized his broken body, his flesh, which previously he had said he would give

for the life of the world.—John 6:51

There is much said in both the Old Testament and the New Testament concerning God’s covenants, the understanding of which greatly enhances one’s appreciation of the Divine plan for the reconciling of the sin-cursed and dying human race to God.

## THE COVENANT MADE WITH ADAM

The word covenant itself, meaning an ‘agreement,’ suggests its relationship to God’s plan of reconciliation, for the human race has been out of agreement, or out of harmony, with God. In Hosea 6:7 (*Marginal Translation*) we read that Adam transgressed the “covenant.” This indicates that a covenant existed between God and Adam; that they were in harmony with each other, and would have continued if Adam had not “transgressed the covenant.”

But Adam did transgress! He broke the law of that covenant, that bond of friendship and fellowship which existed between himself and his Creator. God then invoked the penalty of the covenant, which was death—“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen. 2:17) Alienated from God by reason of his sin, with death commencing to work in him, Adam’s children were born imperfect, and because of



their imperfection they, too, came under condemnation. Not having God's favor they could not live, so, as Paul explained, all in Adam of necessity die.—I Cor. 15

Although death has continued to reign, God has indicated to those of the fallen race whom he has chosen to serve him that he had a plan to change the situation. He entered into a covenant with Abraham, promising that through his "seed" he would bless all the families of the earth. (Gen. 22:16-18) This indicated that God had not abandoned his human creation; that he intended, through this 'seed' which he promised to Abraham, to "bless" the people, implying that in his own due time they would be reconciled to him.

In the New Testament Paul calls our attention to a limiting factor in the downward course of the human race, saying that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." (Rom. 5:14) This is most revealing. Adam's transgression was willful. He could have elected not to eat the forbidden fruit, but he chose the course of disobedience. However, the situation was not the same with his offspring. They were born in sin, hence under condemnation, without themselves being willfully responsible for their position. Paul explained, death continued to reign, even though all were not, as Adam was, willful sinners.

## **THE LAW COVENANT**

But this universal and unchecked reign of sin continued only until Moses. Then there was a change. Not a change sufficiently effective to prevent even a single member of the fallen race from dying; nevertheless, by God's design a strong deterrent against the ravages of sin was provided for the one little nation of Israel. It was the Law, which became the basis of a covenant into which the Lord entered with that nation, with Moses serving as mediator.

It was God's Law, and therefore a standard of perfect righteousness required by him on the part of all who would enjoy his favor, and who would desire to be at peace with him. Paul wrote that the Law was "spiritual," meaning, simply, that it came from God. (Rom. 7:12,14) The Law promised life, but, as Paul explained, what was ordained to give life, they found to be unto death.—Rom. 7:10

Under the leadership of faithful servants of God, the nation of Israel at times seemed fairly enthusiastic in their effort to keep the Law and enjoy the blessings which it provided. Doubtless in every generation there were individuals who endeavored earnestly to maintain their covenant relationship with God upon the basis of keeping the Law. But they all failed. To keep the Law was beyond the ability of any member of the fallen race.

God knew this, but he wanted the Israelites to try, for he wanted this demonstration of the need for the atoning blood of the Redeemer. Paul explained that the Law was therefore a “schoolmaster,” which would teach the necessity of looking to Christ and to the provision of his shed blood. (Gal. 3:24) Very few of the Israelites throughout the long centuries of the Jewish Age continued their efforts to keep that Law, and hence failed to learn the lesson which it taught. Truth-enlightened Christians have learned, and, in the age to come, both Jews and Gentiles, when awakened from the sleep of death, will learn the lesson which that ‘schoolmaster’ was designed to teach.

Despite the continued failure of every Jew, no matter how earnest his endeavor, to gain peace with God and life under the Law, the nation was not left without hope, for the Lord made a definite promise to them of a “new covenant.” This promise is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The promise of a New Covenant was given subsequent to the division of the nation into the northern, ten-tribe kingdom, and the southern, two-tribe kingdom. These two segments of Israelites are frequently referred to in the prophecies as “Israel” and “Judah.” In making his promises of future blessings, however, the Lord included them all, so the New Covenant was to be made “with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.”

This New Covenant was not to be like the covenant he made with their fathers when the Lord “took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake.” The promise indicates that the essential difference between the two covenants would be in the fact that the latter, or New Covenant, would not be “written and engraven in stones,” as was the former Law Covenant, but that the Lord would put his “law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.”—II Cor. 3:7; Jer. 31:32,33

In the promise of the New Covenant it says that “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for,” as further explained, “they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.” Then the whole world will be reconciled to God, all in harmony with him, being restored to that original ‘at-one-ment’ with God enjoyed by Adam prior to the time when he ‘transgressed the covenant.’

## **THE BLOOD**

God made promises revealing his purpose to re-establish his law in the hearts of men and to reconcile the sin-cursed race to himself. From the beginning of human experience with sin, he began to call attention to the basis upon which this would be accomplished—through the shedding of blood. For this reason he showed his favor to Abel by accepting the animal sacrifice which he offered.

The slaying of the Passover lamb in Egypt, and the sprinkling of its blood upon the lintels and doorposts of the houses, constituted another picture emphasizing the necessity of the shedding of blood. In this instance, the firstborn of Israel were first saved, and the next morning all Israel was delivered from bondage, picturing the deliverance of all mankind from the thralldom of sin and death.

Just a little later, when the Law Covenant was made with the nation, there was again the shedding of blood. For two days Moses and his assistants were slaying “oxen,” and collecting the blood in basins. On the third day, when the Law Covenant was inaugurated, this blood was used to sprinkle “both the book [of the Law], and all the people.”—Heb. 9:19,20; Exod. 24:5-8

Following the inauguration of the covenant, the Tabernacle was built, and its services initiated, and again there was the shedding of blood. Important among these services were the yearly Day of Atonement ceremonies in which a bullock and a goat were slain, and their blood taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled upon the mercy seat for sin, to make reconciliation, first for Aaron and his house, and then for all the people.

Obviously, all this shedding of blood, beginning with Abel and continuing in one ceremony or another to the coming of Jesus at his First Advent, pointed forward to his blood. Paul explains that the blood of

bulls and goats could not take away sin, (Heb. 10:4) but the blood of Jesus can. It is sin that has alienated the human race from God, and that sin must be taken away, atoned for, expiated, before the people can be reconciled to God. Before he can ‘put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,’ the New Covenant must be made.

The making of this New Covenant and the expiation of sin is the great objective of the Divine plan of reconciliation. It is the ultimate in the “restitution of all things,” to be accomplished during the thousand years of Christ’s reign. (Acts 3:19-23) How fitting, therefore, that Jesus should speak of his blood as being the ‘blood of the new covenant.’ It is, indeed, his blood that will make possible the regaining of perfect human life by all of Adam’s race during the age to come.

## **MINISTERS OF THE COVENANT**

There are certain texts of scripture which, if interpreted apart from the general testimony of the Bible on this subject, might be thought to indicate that the promised New Covenant was inaugurated by Jesus at his First Advent, and that it has been gradually expanding since then as more and more believers come under its terms. In this we have much the same situation as that which exists respecting the Bible’s testimony pertaining to the promised kingdom of Christ. Many have contended that the kingdom was established at Pentecost, whereas merely the selection and preparation of Jesus’ associate rulers began there.

Jesus is the “KING OF KINGS” (Rev. 19:16) in his kingdom, but there will be 144,000 selected from the human race to reign with him. (Rev. 14:1) They will be both kings and priests. Jesus will also be the chief Mediator of the New Covenant, the principal one in bringing about the reconciliation of the world to God; but those who reign with him as kings will also be associated with him in the work of reconciliation. Paul speaks of these as “able ministers of the new testament [covenant].”—II Cor. 3:6

The work of the Gospel Age has been the selection and preparation of these for the high position they will occupy with Jesus during the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom, when the New Covenant will be made with the ‘house of Israel, and with the house of Judah,’ and with all mankind. Their training involves the necessity of sacrifice, of laying down life itself in proof of their fidelity to God and to the Divine

principles of righteousness which they will be called upon to establish in the minds and hearts of men.

These ‘able ministers of the new covenant’ themselves enter into a covenant with the Lord—not the foretold New Covenant, but a “covenant ... by sacrifice.” (Ps. 50:5) There is nothing said in connection with God’s promises of the New Covenant to indicate that those with whom it will be made will be called upon to sacrifice. Just as the original Law Covenant promised health and life, and blessings in “basket” and in “store” (Deut. 28:5), so it will be with the New Covenant. It is a restitution covenant, and those in whose hearts and ‘inward parts’ its laws are fully written, and lived by, will be perfect—mentally, morally, and physically—and will live forever as human beings.

## **SACRIFICE AND GLORY**

We have noted that there was a certain preparatory work which preceded the inauguration of the typical Law Covenant. It was a work of sacrifice. While in the type the sacrificial work required only two days, in the antitype it is spread out over the entire Gospel Age—approximately two symbolic days of a thousand years each. This sacrificial work of preparation for the New Covenant began with Jesus. That is why he referred to his blood as the blood of that covenant. It continues with his followers, who are invited to suffer and to die with him, thus sharing in the “better sacrifices” necessary for the preparation of the New Covenant.—Heb. 9:23

It is after this sacrificial work is completed that the New Covenant will be inaugurated. That will be the antitype of the wonderful display of God’s glory which accompanied the making of the original Law Covenant, including the glory which shone on Moses’ face as he descended from the mountain bearing the tables of the Law. (Exod. 34:29,30) In II Corinthians 3:3, Paul speaks of those “tables of stone” and the Law which was written on them, and then explains that by the Spirit of God his law is now being written in the “fleshy tables” of our hearts.

This suggests the manner in which, as Paul explains later in the chapter, we are made ‘able ministers of the new testament [covenant].’ As in the type, the ‘tables of stone’ accompanied Moses when he came down from the mount with his face ablaze with the glory of God, so the

promise is that those who are faithful in suffering and dying with Jesus, will appear with him in glory.

The ministry of the typical Law Covenant was a ministration of death, because the people could not measure up to the requirements of the Law that was “written and engraven in stones.” (II Cor. 3:7) But the ministration of the “spirit” which is now writing God’s law in the ‘fleshy tables’ of our hearts, preparing us to be able ministers of the New Covenant, will give life—restitution life—to all who then come into the covenant.—vss. 3-8

Paul speaks of the glory of Moses’ countenance, and how great it was, even though it “was to be done away.” Then he adds, “How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather [more] glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. ... Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.”—II Cor. 3:7-12

In the next chapter (II Cor. 4), verse seventeen, Paul again refers to the ‘glory that excelleth,’ describing it as “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” a glory which is preceded by our present “light affliction.” We have the afflictions now, while we lay down our lives in keeping with the ‘covenant by sacrifice’ into which we have entered with the Lord. If faithful, the promised glory will be ours later. As Paul explains, this glory that excelleth, the glory which will accompany the inauguration of the New Covenant, is as yet but a hope. In Romans 8:24 he explains that “hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” These scriptures are conclusive in establishing the fact that the glorious inauguration of the New Covenant is yet future, that the preparatory work of sacrifice still continues. Those who are called to be able ministers of the New Covenant continue to present their bodies “a living sacrifice,” knowing that such sacrifices are acceptable through the blood of the Redeemer.—Rom. 12:1

### **“HOW MUCH MORE”**

Paul explains that even the “blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean” had a certain purifying effect, that it “sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.” Then he adds, “How much

more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”—Heb. 9:13,14

We are being purged to ‘serve’ the living God, as ministers, or servants, of the New Covenant. “For this cause,” Paul adds, “He [Christ] is the mediator of the new testament [covenant].” (vs. 15) He does not mediate between God and us to bring us into that covenant, but purges us that we may offer ourselves in acceptable sacrifice, and thus qualify to be associated with him, as members of his body, in the future mediatorial work of the New Covenant.

Confirming the general testimony of the Scriptures, Paul states that the sacrificial work of the New Covenant will first of all result in the “redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament,” that “they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” (vs. 15) It was the house of Israel and the house of Judah that transgressed under the old covenant, so when the mediator class is complete—the Sion class—there “shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,” in harmony with the promise of the New Covenant, for the “gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” (Rom. 11:26,27,29) The nation of Israel are the ‘called’ of Hebrews 9:15, called under the old Law Covenant, but they must await their ‘eternal inheritance’ until the ‘better sacrifices’ of this age are complete.

While Jesus, the Head of the mediator class, finished his sacrifice, all of his body members have not. They are still being planted together in the likeness of his death, and the New Covenant cannot be in force until this aspect of the Divine arrangement is finished. “For,” as Paul explains, “where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.”—Heb. 9:16

## **GIVEN FOR A COVENANT**

In Isaiah 42:1-7 we have a prophecy concerning Jesus, the great “servant” of Jehovah. In verse 6 we read, “I the Lord have called thee [Christ] in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people.” The thought is that through Jesus the promised New Covenant would be made with the people, and that he would be offered in sacrifice as a surety for that covenant.

The Apostle Paul knew that Jesus would not be alone in this. In II Corinthians 6:1 he refers to our being co-laborers, and beseeches us to receive not this “grace of God” in vain. In the next verse he quotes from Isaiah 49:8 concerning “a Season acceptable” and a “Day of Salvation,” then adds, “Behold! now is a well-accepted Season; behold! now is a Day of Salvation”—*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

Thus the Apostle Paul identifies Isaiah 49:8 as applying to the followers of Jesus; those who become “new creature[s]” in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) In this prophecy a promise is made to these which is identical in meaning with the one made to Jesus in Isaiah 42:6. It reads, “I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” (Isa. 49:8) How clear it is from this promise that the inauguration of the New Covenant must wait until these joint-sacrificers with Jesus have finished their course in death! Because, by God’s arrangement, the covenant becomes operative through their death, as well as the death of Jesus, the Redeemer. They also are a part of the ‘testator.’

If we are to understand the lessons presented to us in the Book of Hebrews we must realize that Paul places the church, antitypically, not as being represented by the camp of Israel, but as the antitypical priesthood, the servants of the antitypical New Covenant. Their preparation as ministers of the New Covenant and their work of sacrifice in connection therewith require the merit of the blood in order to be acceptable to the Lord. And this is the work of the Gospel Age. We are now fulfilling our covenant with the Lord by sacrifice, and at the same time being trained for the future work of glory as kings to reign with Jesus, and be ministers of the New Covenant, to work with him in reconciling the world to God.

The entire scope of this work was suggested by Paul when he wrote that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” This is the great objective of the Divine plan as it is centered in Christ. And to us, Paul added, has been committed “the word of reconciliation.” (II Cor. 5:18,19) It is upon this basis that we are ambassadors for Christ. Even in the development of the church class, the individuals being drawn to the Lord and later called into his service, need to be reconciled to God, so we are commissioned to say to these, “Be ye reconciled to God.”—II Cor. 5:20



Thus, in the great economy of God, we are being prepared for the future work of reconciling the world through the arrangements of the New Covenant, by now serving an apprenticeship and thereby demonstrating our complete harmony with the future work in which we hope to share. And we are invited to do this under conditions which call for sacrifice and suffering, even unto death.

Our covenant with the Lord is one of sacrifice. In Galatians, chapters three and four, Paul indicates also our relationship to, and development under, the original covenant God made with Abraham. That covenant calls for the development of a “seed,” and if we are in the body of Christ, we are a part of that ‘seed.’—Gal. 3:27-29

In chapter four, verse twenty-eight, Paul says that “we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.” Isaac was undoubtedly a type of Jesus, but according to Paul the church is included in the picture. This would mean that the offering of Isaac as a sacrifice would foreshadow the sacrifice of both Jesus and his church—the ‘better sacrifices’ which lead to the inauguration of the New Covenant. Through this covenant the restitution blessings promised in the covenant with Abraham, are made available, first to ‘the house of Israel, and the house of Judah,’ and then to “all the families of the earth.”—Gen. 28:14

Surely, we can thank God for his “high calling” (Phil. 3:14) through Christ Jesus. We recognize, as Paul did, that the attaining of such an honored position in his plan of salvation is because “our sufficiency is of God.” (II Cor. 3:5) He covers us with a robe of righteousness, and as he held the hand of his beloved Son, Jesus, and helped him, we know from his promise that he will also help and preserve us, and together with Jesus give us as a “covenant of the people.”—Isa. 42:6; 49:8

# The Law of God

***“O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. ... I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.”  
—Psalm 119:97-99***

**THE ADMIRATION OF** David for the law of God, and the benefits he received from meditating upon the testimonies of God, gave him ‘more understanding’ than all his teachers. If David could receive such rich blessings from meditating upon God’s law, it should be well for us to do likewise. By the word law we understand a rule of conduct or action prescribed, and enforced, by a supreme authority.

We read in Psalm 89:14, “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.”

In these qualities are reflected and mirrored all of God’s attributes—his love, his wisdom, his justice, his power. It is of utmost importance, as well as of great interest, that we, as members of the Divine family, have a good understanding, a thankful appreciation, and an admiration for his law as it relates to all his works. As we increase in our discernment of the ways of our God, our love for him increases and with it our desire to walk more fully in the path of his light. Let us dwell, therefore, upon God’s law as it exhibits him, as it covers man, and as it rules the universe.

When we study the universe, we are at once impressed and awed by the tremendous size, the enormous distances of the heavens. On a clear night man can observe with the naked eye about 7,000 stars in the whole sky in both the northern and the southern hemispheres. With telescopes we observe many millions. It has been stated on good authority that there are in the galaxies within the range of our present day telescopes not less than one hundred million billion suns, differing greatly in size, temperature, and density.

Many of them are of enormous size which would dwarf our earth into a speck of dust by comparison. All the stars, whose course astronomers have been able to observe, move in an orderly fashion, each at a never varying speed in set orbits through the heavens. The planet Earth travels

in its orbit around the sun at a speed of eighteen and one-half miles a second, or 66,600 miles per hour. At the same time it rotates around its axis completing one revolution every twenty-four hours, while the moon speeds around the earth once every month. Their speed, or course, never varies.

From the movements of the earth and the moon, man obtains his units of time: the day; the month; the year. For accurate time he sets his timepiece by astronomical observation. In the same way, mariners can determine their position. While the enormous distances in space, the immense size of the stars, and the tremendous speeds at which they travel, may not prove anything in itself, the accuracy of their movements through the heavens proves that they are governed by certain laws and that their movements are orderly.

Let us consider the other extreme. At one time the smallest things known to men were electrons and neutrons. Even these have been subdivided. Certain combinations, according to their number, order, and arrangement make up various types of atoms. The number of neutrons and electrons varies according to the type of atom. There are, for example, hydrogen atoms with one revolving electron, carbon atoms with six, iron atoms with twenty-six, gold atoms with seventy-nine, and, among the heaviest materials known, uranium atoms with ninety-two revolving electrons to each nucleus.

Atoms are called the building blocks of the earth. All things earthly—the water we drink, the air we breathe, the soil, the plants, the bodies of animals, and our own bodies, are in the final analysis made up of combinations of atoms. The structure of all things, whether atoms, or molecules, or plants, or animals, is not haphazard, but systematic in their nature. They are wonderfully made and marvelous to behold.

All living things grow from a single cell. Into that tiny organism, smaller than a pinpoint, are packed the blueprints and the ability to develop accordingly into a full grown plant or animal, consisting of many billions of living cells. These blueprints are DNA and RNA molecules which determine the type of genes possessed by the cell.

Each group making up the roots, stems, leaves, or flowers as in plants, or the different structures and organs as in animals, will perform its

proper specialized function. This is necessary to maintain life in perfect coordination and harmony with all other groups.

These living things may be pictured as machines designed and constructed to carry on certain processes. These are capable of absorption of food, the changing of food into new chemical substances required by the organism, respiration, growth, repairs, elimination of waste material, and reproduction. These tiny organisms are as machines, which apparently build and maintain themselves and manufacture cells which form wood, leaves, flowers, seeds, as in plants; or bones, muscles, flesh, blood, skin, hairs, feathers and so on, as in animals.

Even the simplest living organism is infinitely more complex than the most intricate machine man has ever been able to build. A critical study of all these facts discloses the overwhelming and indisputable evidence that the universe and life are the result of a high degree of thought, intelligence, and order.

The whole arrangement, all the activities of the universe, are highly complex and in accordance with certain fundamental laws and rules. These laws always function perfectly and never fail, because they are established by our God, the all-wise and powerful Creator of the universe. Only thus is it possible for such complex organisms and matter, as we know them, to exist. No sequence of these activities, necessitating cooperation and coordination with other such activities, can be produced by chance even in a single instance. When we consider that such actions go on around us continually, all over the earth, in an astounding number of varieties of life, we are amazed.

From whatever angle we consider any part or action of the universe, we come to the conclusion that its creation and its activities are the result of laws made by Divine wisdom and enforced by Divine power. Without Divine guidance, without Divine laws, the universe and life could not have been developed nor continue to exist.

Man can plan profitably because of the dependability and constancy of these laws; he can rely on the uniformity and constancy of the material with which he works. He cannot change these natural laws according to his fancy. He can accomplish things only by complying with and taking advantage of these laws. He can build bridges or skyscrapers because he knows that a steel girder of a certain size and quality will support a certain

weight and any other girder of the same material, size, and quality will support a like weight. Man cannot violate these laws without harmful consequences.

It is evident, therefore, that if man wishes to make the best of life, he must learn these laws of the Creator and use them as his guides. Do we not see a wonderful illustration? Here are the laws of a great Creator, of our God, and all things are the result of his wisdom and his power. His laws and rules extend even to man and his behavior, and only the acceptance of these laws will bring the blessings man so much desires—eternal life and happiness.

Matter performs only in conformity with certain fundamental laws and rules made by the Creator. All forms of life on earth (lower than man) similarly have implanted within themselves a genetic code causing them to perform all the functions necessary to preserve life according to the will of God, and to carry out the purpose of God.

Man is the supreme creation in the material world of the universe. He was made in the image of God. He is as superior to the solar system as he is to the atom, because he possesses life and conscious purpose, the ability to think. He alone is a free moral being, having the privilege of doing good or evil, the privilege to keep the law of his Creator or to disregard it. The fearful conditions existing on this earth are convincing proof that mankind has chosen not to live in harmony with the law, the principles of God his Creator. As a result, man is reaping the consequences of his disobedience—death. “The wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6:23) “Dying thou shalt die.”—Gen. 2:17, *Marginal Translation*

We might ask the question: What is this law of God which man has failed to observe? Plainly and simply stated, it is love for God—love for his Creator. Our Lord himself summed up God’s law, saying, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.” (Mark 12:30) Such love implies reverence for, and obedience to, him, and a recognition of the fact that God’s authority is supreme. Man must recognize the fact that he cannot violate either God’s laws covering the material world of the universe or the laws concerning his intelligent creation, without suffering harmful consequences. If we can hear its voice, then, the natural world is preaching to us a constant sermon in regard to God.

If a man constructs a bridge or a building without sufficiently strong supports to carry the load intended for it, such a structure will surely collapse. Nor can any man transgress against the spiritual law of God without harmful consequences; even as we read, “The wrath of God is revealed ... against all ... unrighteousness.”—Rom. 1:18

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