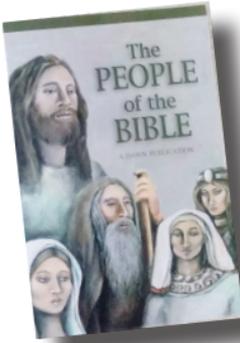


The Dawn

A Herald of Christ's Presence

JULY 2021





People of the Bible

*“Now these things happened to them as
an example . . . for our instruction.”
1 Corinthians 10:11*

Discusses the important persons of the Bible, how God used them to accomplish his work at the time, and how their work has contributed to the development of the great plan of salvation. It shows the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.
Soft cover, 467 pages.

\$6.00 U.S. INCLUDES SHIPPING WITHIN U.S.

Do you have a moment
in the morning and evening
to draw closer to your Heavenly Father?

If you want to improve your personal or family devotion time, consider the book:

DAILY HEAVENLY MANNA and SONGS IN THE NIGHT



This hard cover book embossed in gold letters contains morning and evening scriptures with comments for each day of the year, including an area for recording birthdays and anniversaries. This book matches the color and design of *Studies In the Scriptures Library Edition*. And it makes an elegant gift!

\$6.00 U.S. INCLUDES SHIPPING WITHIN U.S.

The DAWN

VOLUME No. LXXXIX, Number 7
(USPS 149-380), July 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Published monthly by The Dawn Bible Students Association, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167. \$12.00 a year.

ARGENTINA: A. Lupsor, Calle Almirante Brown 684, Monte Grande C.P., 1842 Buenos Aires

AUSTRALIA: Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

BRAZIL: A Aurora, Caixa Postal 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

BRITISH ISLES: Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

CANADA: P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

FRANCE: L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung e. V., Postfach 3, 64396 Modautal

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167 USA

INDIA: The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

SPAIN/ITALY: El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

HIGHLIGHTS OF DAWN

Armageddon—Then World Peace 2

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

Ten Lepers Cleansed 12

Living by Faith 14

Justification by Faith 16

Peace with God 18

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND DOCTRINE

His Marvelous Work 20

Lessons from the Book of Acts 37

Aaron and His Sons 50

Weekly Prayer Meeting Texts 63

OBITUARIES 62

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS 62

CONVENTIONS 64

Armageddon— Then World Peace

“He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”
—*Revelation 16:16*

THE BIBLE CONTAINS A number of words and phrases which, because of their almost universal application to human fears, hopes and experiences, are often quoted by the world,

although not necessarily because of a genuine faith or a correct understanding of what they imply. The expression, “They shall beat their swords into plowshares,” is one of these. The phrase “judgment day” is another. Still another is a word we hear of now more frequently than ever before, “Armageddon.”

The word “Armageddon” appears only once in the Bible, which is in our opening text. Two verses prior, reference is made to “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” In verse 15 the resurrected Jesus declares, “Behold, I come as a thief.” Thus it seems clear that the Armageddon of our text is related to events at the close of the present age, when Christ would return—thief-like, invisibly—and be present to establish his kingdom.

Revelation is a book of symbols, and the Armageddon of our text is no exception to this. We are not to

suppose that the gathering of the nations to a place called Armageddon means that they will be assembled in some particular location. In the symbology of the Bible, places usually represent conditions, and this is true with respect to the “place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” The conditions, or situations, symbolized by places are determined by that which is historically true concerning them. For example, mount Zion in Jerusalem symbolized the kingdom of God because he once ruled his people through the kings of Israel, whose thrones were established in mount Zion.—I Chron. 11:3-5; Ps. 2:6

Armageddon, called Megiddo in the Old Testament, was a battleground in Israel, the site where some of Israel’s most important battles against her enemies were fought. God oversaw and often fought for Israel in these conflicts. A unique fact concerning these battles was that God did not always give Israel the victory. At times his people needed to be punished, and he permitted them to be defeated. Whether a victory or defeat resulted, however, God directed the outcome of the campaigns fought by the Israelites at the valley of Megiddo.—Judg. 5:19; II Kings 23:29,30; II Chron. 35:22; Zech. 12:11

The battles which Israel fought and which God directed in the valley of Megiddo are used in the Scriptures to point forward to Armageddon. The symbolic Armageddon is a great world conflict at the end of this present age in which God takes a part and directs. The divine purpose for Armageddon is that it will bring about a glorious triumph of righteousness through the establishment of the long-promised Messianic kingdom.

NOT TRUE IN THE PAST

Among the people of the professed Christian world, the claim was made in the past that God fought with and for their armies when they went to war. The incongruity of this is that usually it was a case of one Christian nation fighting against another, with both sides calling upon God to help them. The soldiers on opposite sides of these wars were even taught that if they were killed in battle, they would go directly to heaven.

However, all of this was a deception and in reality a sacrilege against the true God of the Bible. The fact that God directs the issue of the great Armageddon of the Bible in no way implies that he fights for one nation against another. It is simply that there is such a divine overruling in the affairs of the nations as a whole that they are mutually defeated to the point where all concerned finally recognize the failure of human wisdom and planning to establish peace and order throughout the earth. Thus, they ultimately are caused to look to the Lord for help.

When our first parents transgressed divine law and were sentenced to death, the human race lost the benefit of God's directing and protective hand in their affairs. From the fall of man to the closing period of the present age God has not interfered in the affairs of men, except when the course of human selfishness would have been detrimental to the outworking of his plan for the ultimate recovery of his human creation from the result of sin.

Despite the fact that God has not interfered with the course of the world in general, his hand has most surely been involved in the affairs of those individuals and people of faith here on earth. In

every age there have been those who exercised faith in God's promises, and to whom the rewards implied in his promises were esteemed more highly than all the riches of fame, glory, and material possession the world could offer.

God's first veiled reference to this people of faith is found in his statement to "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan," in the Garden of Eden. He said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."—Rev. 20:2; Gen. 3:14,15

Later God said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18) Paul identifies this "seed" of promise as Christ Jesus, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. (Gal. 3:8,16) In a larger sense this seed also includes those of the present age who have exercised a living faith in the promises of God to deliver the world from sin and death. Thus, the apostle further informs us that this promised seed of Abraham is the entire Christ class—Jesus and those who are baptized into his death.—vss. 27-29

RIGHTEOUS PERSECUTED

God said that there would be enmity between the "seed" of the woman—his people—and the "seed" of the serpent—those who, under the influence of Satan, have oppressed and persecuted the people of God. In keeping with this, the true servants of God in every age have been a maltreated people. Any and all of those upon whom the favor of God has been manifested have been the special targets of the Adversary.

This was especially true with respect to Jesus. He was persecuted by the hypocritical religious leaders of his day, those whom he identified as the children of the Devil, the seed of the serpent. (John 8:44) Working through his "seed," Satan did all he could to destroy Jesus, and finally did bring about his crucifixion.

This was by divine permission, however, because in God's plan for the salvation of the human race from death, it was necessary that Jesus die as a Redeemer, that he give himself "a ransom for all." (I Tim. 2:3-6) Instead of defeating the divine cause as Satan designed, redemption was provided, and God intervened and raised Jesus from the dead.

Thus, in the case of Jesus, God's hand was manifested in human affairs, not to change events as such, but to accomplish his purpose as centered in Jesus. To a lesser degree this has been true with respect to the people of God in every age. These have been his special care, and whenever it has been necessary, God has intervened in the affairs of men and of nations in order that his purposes in connection with his special chosen ones might be accomplished.

Aside from this, the world in general has been allowed to follow its own selfish and sinful ways, under the rule of the "god of this world," until the end of the present age, and the time for the establishment of Christ's kingdom. (II Cor. 4:4) A prophecy concerning this reads, "The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea roar; he shall prevail against his enemies." Then the Lord speaks through the prophet, saying, "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself:

now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once.”—Isa. 42:13,14

Notice how, in the text just quoted, the Lord explains that he has held his peace, that he has refrained himself from interfering in human affairs. He also explains that he would not do this forever, that the time would come when he would go forth “like a man of war,” and that he would “prevail against his enemies.”

THE DAY OF VENGEANCE

The prophetic and symbolic Armageddon of the Scriptures belongs to a period in the divine arrangement described as the “day,” or time of God’s vengeance. It is that time foretold by Isaiah when the Lord’s indignation would be upon “all nations, and his fury upon all their armies,” the “day of the LORD’S vengeance.”—Isa. 34:2,8

It is the time foretold by David when he wrote, “Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.” (Ps. 46:8) The purpose of this period of trouble, however, is not the destruction of individuals, but of selfish and warlike nations; for in the next verse we read, “He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.”—vs. 9

Elsewhere in the Scriptures this great “time of trouble” is symbolically represented as a “storm,” as a “whirlwind,” and as a “fire.” (Dan. 12:1; Nah. 1:3; Isa. 66:15) After the present selfish order shall have passed away in this great struggle, God himself, through Christ, will manifest his authority and power for the uplifting and blessing of the distraught masses of the people. Concerning this he has promised,

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”—*Ps. 46:10, Revised Version*

“WAIT YE UPON ME”

It is during the time when God has refrained from interfering in the sinful and downward course of men and nations that many of the righteously inclined in the world, and even God’s own people, have wondered why evil has been permitted to continue with apparently nothing being done by the Creator to halt human suffering. To these are given this reply: “Wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.”—*Zeph. 3:8,9*

In this prophecy of the conflict of nations by which man’s present social order, the symbolic “earth,” is destroyed, it is said to be “devoured with the fire” of God’s jealousy. We know that this does not refer to the destruction of the human race itself, for we are assured by the prophecy that after the “fire” the Lord will “turn to the people a pure language,” and that they will have an opportunity to call upon and serve him. Such would not be possible if they were all destroyed, or if planet Earth was literally burned up.

We also are not to think of God’s “jealousy” as indicating vindictiveness on his part. The Hebrew

word here translated jealousy is the same one that is translated “zeal” in Isaiah 9:7, where we read, “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” What is it that will be performed by the Lord’s zeal? This prophecy answers: “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

This is one of the divine promises of the kingdom of Christ, that world government, the responsibility for which rests upon the “shoulder” of Christ following his promised return. Throughout the centuries Satan and his “seed” have endeavored to thwart the purpose of God to establish his rule of righteousness over the earth. They have done this by persecuting and destroying those whom God was preparing to be its rulers.

Jesus, the “King of kings” in this government, was put to death. His true followers from among both Jews and Gentiles are promised that if they suffer and die with him they will live and reign with him. (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12) When Jesus was put to death the purpose of God was not thwarted. The “zeal” and power of the Almighty raised him from the dead. At this end of the age those who have suffered and died with him are likewise raised from the dead, to live and reign with Christ.—Rev. 20:4,6

Nothing can hinder the accomplishment of the divine purpose when such power can be, and is used to carry it forward to success. That is why we can have full confidence that world peace through Christ's kingdom will become a reality following the great Armageddon struggle. The "zeal of the LORD of hosts" will most assuredly bring it to pass.

It is this same zeal and power that brought about the miraculous birth of Jesus, and that raised him from the dead when the "seed" of the "serpent" destroyed him. It is the same mighty power that raises Jesus' followers to reign with him. Finally, it will be this power which brings about the destruction of all institutions and influences that could possibly stand in the way of the victorious rule of the Messianic kingdom, that world government of peace and righteousness which will rest upon "his shoulder."

A "PURE LANGUAGE"

The prophecy quoted earlier from Zephaniah 3:9 speaks of the time when God will turn to the people a "pure language." It is through the dissemination of this "pure language" that the people of all the earth learn to know the true God, to call upon, worship, and serve him "with one consent." The people of all nations will be united in the worship of and devotion to their Creator and Lord, not through fear, but because they will respond, saying, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."—Isa. 25:9

With the people enlightened concerning God, and desirous of doing his will, they will, through Christ, attain peace with him. To be at peace with God is

a requisite to being at peace with one another. Through obedience to the laws of righteousness, mankind will learn the advantages of love over selfishness. Then, willingly and wholeheartedly they will “beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks,” and the nations will not “learn war any more.”—Mic. 4:1-4

Peace with God will result not only in peace among people, but also in health and in all of life’s affairs. When, in the Garden of Eden, God turned his back upon his fallen human creatures, condemnation to death also came upon them. In God’s favor is life, the Bible informs us. (Ps. 30:5) The withdrawal of God’s favor resulted in a long nighttime of sin, suffering and death. However, the psalmist continues, “joy cometh in the morning,” the morning of that new day of the Messianic kingdom, when there “shall be no end” to the “the increase of his government and peace.”—Isa. 9:7

During this long waiting period since man’s fall, those who have loved righteousness have often inquired, “How long, O Lord?” and the answer has been, “Wait ye upon me.” Paul wrote, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” (Rom. 16:20) Now the “shortly” period is almost ended. Today the rumblings of the great Armageddon, which signal the end of the reign of sin and death, can be heard. This means that those who hope, by being faithful unto death, to live and reign with Christ as part of the seed of promise, should more than ever “give diligence” to make their “calling and election sure,” knowing that in order to reign with Christ they must be “called, and chosen, and faithful.”—II Pet. 1:10,11; Rev. 17:14 ■

Ten Lepers Cleansed

Key Verse: “*He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*”
—*Luke 17:19*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 17:11-19
“The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.”—Lev. 13:45,46

In today’s lesson, Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem by way of Samaria and Galilee when he encountered ten lepers who cried out for his mercy, after which he directed them to show themselves to the priest. They must have had a measure of faith in the Master’s ability to cure them of this disease, because they obeyed his instructions. Once they reached the priests they were deemed cured and allowed to return to their family and friends.—*Luke 17:11-14*

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were

there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.”—vss. 15-18

In our Key Verse, which directly follows the passage quoted above, Jesus declared that this leper’s faith had made him whole. In actuality it was the divine power which Jesus exercised that effected this miraculous cure.

Let us now consider two lessons from this entire episode. First, leprosy appears to be a symbolic representation of sin in that it leaves us debilitated, estranged and in a hopeless condition. A vivid example of this is the fact that Adam, who was created perfect, disobeyed God’s instruction by eating of the forbidden fruit and was cast out of the Edenic paradise in which he lived. Eventually he died after living nine hundred and thirty years.—Gen. 5:5

Nevertheless, divine foreknowledge made provision for man’s ultimate recovery and an opportunity to attain everlasting life. God’s loving purpose would come through the faithful and perfect sacrifice of Christ Jesus, who provided the ransom price to accomplish this.—Mark 10:45; I Tim. 2:3-6

A second lesson we might appropriate from considering this narrative involving the ten lepers is that of expressing gratitude. Of all the lepers whom Jesus cleansed, only the Samaritan returned to Jesus and thanked him for this miraculous healing. So too, his prospective members of the Gospel Age church, as devoted Christians, will ever render praise and thanksgiving to God for his unspeakable gift of salvation through Christ.—Eph. 2:8

We look forward to the fulfillment of that oft repeated prayer, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) What a glorious outcome of God’s magnificent plan of the ages will result, for all will come to know and worship the Creator. ■

Living by Faith

Key Verse: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*
—Romans 1:16

Selected Scripture:
Romans 1:8-17

by whom God’s eternal plan of salvation for humanity would commence.

All of the apostles needed to be eyewitnesses that the Master was raised from the tomb following his crucifixion. As a result of his Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ, Paul also was authorized to testify about this miraculous event and its glorious import.—Gal. 3:8; I Cor. 15:9; Rom. 1:1-5

“Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son,

IN PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE brethren in Rome he referred to an earlier promise made to Abraham when God indicated that through him and his “seed” all the nations of the earth would be blessed. (Gen. 22:18; Rom. 4:1-22) Furthermore, this was affirmed not only by the sacrificial death of Jesus, but also by his resurrection from the dead, having then received divine power and authority to be the instrument

that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.”—Rom. 1:6-9

Following his greetings to the brethren at Rome, indicating his appreciation of their example of faith, Paul informs them of his earnest prayers on their behalf. He also expresses his desire to visit for the purpose of imparting some spiritual gifts that would enable them to be even more effective servants in the ministry.—vss. 10-15

In our Key Verse, Paul makes two important points. First, he emphasizes faith in the power of the Gospel is the manner in which we receive salvation, as opposed to works in general or those of the Mosaic Law. Additionally, the apostle points out that this offer was made to the Jews first, even though as a whole, they had difficulty in grasping the concept that justification is attained through faith in and acceptance of the ransom sacrifice of our Savior.

In verses 19-23 of our lesson, Paul continues by pointing out that mankind in general is still under divine condemnation and not presently in covenant relationship with God. Most do not properly acknowledge their condition of unrighteousness and do not honor the Creator nor appreciate his attributes. Many, in fact, engage in endless speculations and foolishly worship creatures such as birds, beasts and creeping things such as snakes.

Members of the Early Church and other consecrated, spirit begotten believers in Christ since that time have manifested faith in the Bible’s teaching that evil will not continue forever. Such are inspired by precious promises of Scripture pointing to an era when righteousness will prevail during God’s kingdom, and all evil will be destroyed. (Acts 3:20-26) How thankful mankind will be when they learn to appreciate the wisdom, justice, love and power of our most gracious and benevolent Heavenly Father. ■

Justification by Faith

Key Verse: “*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*”
—Romans 4:3

Selected Scripture:
Romans 4:1-12

exalted Creator.—Rom. 4:1,2

Our Key Verse states that because of Abraham’s faith in God he was counted as being righteous. Abraham followed divine instructions and was called “the Friend of God.” (James 2:23) The initial record of this relationship commenced when he was asked by the Heavenly Father to leave his own people and travel to a distant land. (Gen. 12:1-3) Paul records that when Abraham received this call he obeyed, and went out “not knowing whither he went.” (Heb. 11:8) A wonderful promise was associated with this call in that through his seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now

IN TODAY’S LESSON PAUL mentions Abraham to illustrate that because of his inherited sinful nature, even he was incapable of measuring up to God’s standard of absolute righteousness. (Rom. 3:10) Nevertheless, because of his obedience through faith to the Heavenly Father’s instructions, Abraham was granted access to and fellowship with his

dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him."—Rom 4:18-23

Abraham had other children by Hagar and subsequently through Keturah, but his obedience was severely tested when God instructed him to place his promised son upon an altar and offer him as a sacrifice. As Abraham was about to carry out this command, his hand was stayed. A ram in a thicket was provided which he offered in the place of his beloved Isaac, who had been brought forth from the womb of his wife Sarah as the seed promised by God.—Gen. 22:1-13

The foregoing narrative is illustrative of the fact that our loving Heavenly Father would offer his only begotten Son, Jesus. God's sacrifice of his beloved Son provided the ransom price to purchase Adam and all his progeny who have been under the curse of sin and death. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—Mark 10:45

Abraham lived and died centuries before our Lord left the courts of heaven and came to earth, thereby providing the means for human salvation. In preparing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, he deduced that God was able to raise him from the dead, in order to fulfill the promise that through his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called."—Heb. 11:17,18

Peace with God

Key Verse:
“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
—Romans 5:1

Selected Scripture:
Romans 5:1-11

IN OUR KEY VERSE, THE word “justified” means to be made upright or blameless in God’s estimation. As a result of his obedience and faith in God’s promises, Abraham was called a friend by God. (James 2:23) He and many other faithful ones of the Old Testament had “peace” in the sense that they were at rest through their trust in God, so that to a considerable degree anxiety was removed from their hearts. However, to have “peace with God” as stated in our text is the special portion of Gospel Age consecrated believers who have been begotten with the Holy Spirit.

Paul then elaborates further upon the grace of justification to life which was offered after the merit of Christ’s ransom sacrifice was presented to the Heavenly Father on our behalf. (Heb. 9:24) “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”
—Rom. 5:2-5

Much of the balance of our Selected Scripture addresses how justification is applicable during this

Gospel Age. The ransom price provided by Christ attests to God's great love for us even while we were yet sinners. Once we have been justified to life following spirit begetting, our entire attitude should reflect the rendering of praise towards our merciful Heavenly Father, to whom we have been reconciled as the result of Christ's atoning sacrifice.—vss. 6-11

Additionally, we should assess whether the condition of our hearts and minds reflects that which is described in the title of this week's lesson. If we lack peace, we should examine ourselves to determine why we are not living up to our privileges. Are we focused upon developing spiritual fruitage as opposed to engaging in the works of the flesh? (Gal. 5:19-24) Are we careful not to forsake the assembling of ourselves with other brethren so that we may obtain mutual strength and edification?—Heb. 10:25

Are our thoughts increasingly centered upon things which are true, pure, lovely, of good report and praiseworthy? (Phil. 4:8) Have we learned to be content in whatever state we are because we have fully acquiesced to the will of God? (Phil. 4:11,12) If we have physical, financial, family or other problems pressing upon us, do we believe that we will never be tested beyond what we can bear, but that by God's grace he will direct the issue for our highest spiritual welfare?—I Cor. 10:13

God's precious promises should provide peace for all who trust him. Here is one example. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 8:35,38,39 ■

His Marvelous Work

*“I will praise thee;
for I am fearfully
and wonderfully
made: marvellous
are thy works; and
that my soul
knoweth right well.*

*My substance was
not hid from thee,
when I was made
in secret, and
curiously wrought
in the lowest parts
of the earth.”*

—Psalm 139:14,15

TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE

in the true and living God, all his creative works are marvelous. The human organism, with its ability to see, touch, smell, taste, hear, think; and above all, to know that there is a difference between right and wrong, good and evil, love and hate, and to worship its maker, is one of the Creator's masterpieces. Indeed, it is true as our opening text expresses, that man is “wonderfully

made,” and that there is much concerning man's creation that is hidden from his understanding.

It is evidently because the human body is such a marvelous display of divine wisdom that the Creator uses it as a picture, or symbol, of the Christ, Head and body. It is to this symbolic “body” that our opening Scripture particularly applies. This comes to light through a New Testament use of the

expression in our text, “lowest parts of the earth.” In discussing the creation and development of the body of Christ, and the way all the members “fitly framed together” are developed “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” the apostle writes that Jesus “descended first into the lower parts of the earth.”—Eph. 2:21; 4:9-13

Jesus’ coming down from heaven into the “lower parts of the earth” had a direct bearing upon the way the members of his symbolic “body” have been “curiously wrought” or “made.” The term “earth,” as used by the psalmist and by Paul in this connection, does not apply to this literal planet. David was not himself “curiously wrought” somewhere beneath the surface of the ground, nor did Jesus descend literally to any such “lower” strata of the literal Earth.

Evidently the references in these passages are to the symbolic earth—that is, human society, and particularly what human wisdom considers to be the lower layers of society. As God views the human race, all are fallen, are under condemnation to death, and finally go into death. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” Paul wrote. (Rom. 3:23) It was into this “lower” part of the symbolic earth that Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, descended.

John speaks of Jesus as the one who “came down from heaven.” (John 3:13) In coming down from heaven, he who had previously been a powerful spirit being was “found in fashion as a man.” (Phil. 2:8) However, there was more than that involved. He associated with human society, and to a large extent with the lower members of society. One of the charges leveled against the Master was that he fraternized

with “publicans and sinners.” (Matt. 9:10,11; 11:19) When he died, he was “numbered with the transgressors,” and in death he “made his grave with the wicked.” (Isa. 53:9,12; Mark 15:28) Thus Jesus descended from the glory which he previously had with the Father to the “lower parts of the earth.”

“CURIOSLY WROUGHT”

Jesus’ death as a perfect human provided the “ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:5,6) However, his association with the sinful world prior to his death on the cross, and all the painful experiences which came to him as a result, had much to do with his own learning and development, and with the development of his body members as “new creatures” in Christ. (II Cor. 5:17) Hence, Paul explains that it was God’s purpose, “in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”—Heb. 2:10

Both Jesus and his body members are “curiously” wrought or developed. The Hebrew word here translated “curiously wrought” means to embroider. It is related to the Hebrew word translated “needlework” in the 45th Psalm, where the bride of Christ is symbolically depicted as being brought into the king’s palace in “raiment of needlework.” (vss. 13,14) It is a word, therefore, which in the Scriptures is associated with that which symbolizes Christian character development. This is the work which is “curiously wrought” in the lives of those who make up the body members of the Christ class, while dwelling in the “lower parts of the earth.”

We are told that Jesus “learned ... obedience by the things which he suffered,” because of his contact

with fallen humanity. (Heb. 5:8) This does not imply that Jesus was not obedient to his Heavenly Father before he came to earth. The thought is, rather, that by his descending into the “lower parts of the earth” he learned what it meant to be obedient to God under adverse circumstances which cost him ignominy, suffering, and finally death. Thus, it was true of Jesus, even as it is true of each one of his body members, that he was “curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.”

Through these experiences the Master was prepared to deal sympathetically and patiently with his body members, for he was tested “in all points ... like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4:15) Through our contacts with the fallen race and with world society we are subjected to the same tests of obedience as was Jesus. Being imperfect, however, it cannot be said of us that we are always victorious, or always “without sin.” We need the provision which has been made through our sympathetic High Priest to come “boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) This too, is a part of the arrangement whereby it is possible for all the members of Christ’s body to be developed and “curiously wrought,” through their contact with the degradation of this “present evil world.”—Gal. 1:4

Jesus said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” That is, How can I be completed, or how can the divine purpose be fully realized in me, until that baptism is fully consummated in death? (Luke 12:50) It was indeed a death baptism, and before Jesus was fully worthy to be exalted to the right hand of his

Father, and in this high position to be the Head over the church, his body, he must be fully faithful, even unto death, because it was the Father's will that he take the sinner's place.

Jesus inquired of two of his disciples, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They asserted that they were able, and so the Master added, "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." (Matt. 20:22,23) Jesus' question applies to all who would seek to follow in his steps. All his body members, to qualify for a permanent position in that body, must die with him by being "planted together in the likeness of his death." (Rom. 6:5) With these, as with Jesus, their full development as New Creatures is not complete until they descend fully into death, until they have stood every test, learned every lesson, and profited by every experience that comes to them, and continue faithful to their covenant with the Lord that is completed only in death.—Rev. 2:10

THE CREATOR'S SUPERVISION

Paul writes that we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10) Here we are reminded of God's work in bringing forth the New Creation. It was the Heavenly Father who raised up Jesus as a New Creature from the dead and exalted him to the divine nature, and Paul tells us that we are being "created in Christ Jesus." We, who were "dead in sins," and ourselves a part of the lower strata of the symbolic earth,

have been “quickenened” together with Christ. (Eph. 2:5) God, in his wisdom, and in order that the entire Christ company might be a sympathetic priesthood to deal with fallen humanity during the Messianic kingdom, is able to utilize our experiences in the world as creative tools, as it were, to prepare us for the part he wants us to have in his plan.

In this work of developing a New Creation, the Heavenly Father is testing every potential body member of Christ before exaltation to the divine nature is granted. With all the other works of creation it was different. The angels were created, and then tested. Some of them have failed under test, but many have not. Man was created in the image of God, and then tested. He failed, but God in his mercy and love has provided for another trial, through Christ. However, those who compose the Christ class, Head and body, are tested as they are being developed. This is essential, for their “creation” involves exaltation to the divine nature, to immortality, which is indestructible. God tests these thoroughly and knows upon the basis of these tests that they will always be loyal to him and to the principles of righteousness represented in his perfect laws.

It is this viewpoint which is enlarged upon prophetically by the psalmist in several verses of the 139th Psalm, from which our text is taken. In this prophecy Jesus speaks for himself and for all his body members, saying to his Heavenly Father, “Thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.”—vss. 2-4

The psalmist then expresses wonderment over the Creator's marvelous love and care, a supervision that reaches from an exalted position in the heavens, even down to the grave—the condition of death. We quote: "You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand! I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up into heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there."—Ps. 139:5-8, *New Living Translation*

Indeed, God's power will, in due time, reach down into the grave and restore all the dead. (Hos. 13:14) However, the thought of this passage seems to be especially fitting to God's dealings with the Christ class. God's presence is peculiarly with them in death, for his plan is that upon the basis of their faithfulness unto death he will give them a crown of life. (Rev. 2:10) Their resurrection to glory, honor and immortality is an evidence that he is pleased with the loyalty which took them into death, that he supervised this, gave them strength to endure, and will remember and reward them.—Rom. 2:7; 8:16,17; Rev. 3:21

REVERENTLY MADE

In the statement, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made," the Hebrew word translated "fearfully" would be more correctly translated "reverently," or to be filled with awe. It seems to describe the heart attitude of each one of the body members of the Christ toward the work which is being wrought in them, and the way it is done. The power of God, as

manifest in the lives of all New Creatures in Christ, is embodied in his Word. Paul speaks of it as the “gospel of Christ,” and says that it is the “power of God unto salvation.” (Rom. 1:16) This Word, or power of God, however, is a creative energy in our lives only in proportion to our reverence for it which causes us to yield in full submission to its molding influences.

The fear, or reverence, of God “is the beginning of wisdom.” (Ps. 111:10) Paul writes, “Let us therefore fear [give reverent attention], lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1) From this we gather that a proper reverence for the Lord is not only the “beginning” of wisdom, but that those who are truly wise toward God will continue to reverence him by giving careful attention to all he has said, that their lives might be fully pleasing to him.

Members of the body of Christ are also “wonderfully made.” The Hebrew word here used means to be distinct, or set apart. The use of this word in David’s prophetic description of the way we are brought forth as a New Creation suggests the thought of our being separated from the world and set apart to God and to the doing of his will. This is one of the conditions upon which each member of the Christ company is “curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” We are not removed from the world during the period of our development, but by heeding the divine call to consecration we become separated, in purpose and spirit, from the world. “I have chosen you out of the world,” Jesus said to his disciples, and to us. He said of himself, “I have overcome the world.” (John 15:19; 16:33)

He encouraged his disciples in the thought that although they would experience tribulation because of their separation from the world and its spirit, they would be able to overcome, not in their own strength, but in the strength and “power of his might.”—Eph. 6:10

This thought of separation to holiness is contained in what the Scriptures speak of as “sanctification.” Sanctification is a process by which followers of Christ are made holy and set apart by the doing of God’s will in their daily experiences. It is a lifelong work, and involves every facet of life. On behalf of his body members, Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17-19) The sanctification of the body members of Christ does not mean perfection of their flesh, but rather a full heart devotion to God and a complete loyalty to him. As a prophet of old declared, “The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”—II Chron. 16:9

God discerns and distinguishes between the world and his consecrated people, and he works with those who take a stand on his side. It is these, who, through carrying out the terms of their consecration to him, “work out” their own salvation, while God works in them “to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12,13) It is true also that those in whom the Spirit of God is working will exercise discernment in their tracing of the divine will in all the affairs of life. If they have applied the principles of the truth in their lives, they will be among those “who by reason of use [habit or practice] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—Heb. 5:14

HOW GOD WORKS IN US

We have seen how the experiences of Jesus in descending into the “lower parts of the earth” not only had much to do with his preparation for exaltation to the divine nature, but also furnished him with an understanding of the temptations and tests to which all his body members are subjected while they are being developed to share his glory. In addition to this, the apostle tells us that when Jesus ascended on high he “gave gifts unto men.” These gifts were the various servants of the church—apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists—as well as the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:8,11; Acts 2:38) The function of these gifts has been to assist in ministering the Truth in order that its sanctifying power might be operative in the lives of all the body members of Christ.

To use the apostle’s words, he explains that the purpose of these gifts to the church is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [complete] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:12,13) All of the gifts which God has provided are essential.

IN SECRET

“When I was made in secret,” David writes. (Ps. 139:15) So far as the world is concerned, the bringing forth of God’s New Creation has been a secret indeed. It is referred to in the Scriptures as a great mystery, “hid from ages and from generations,” but finally, when God’s due time came, revealed to his

“saints,” the separated and holy ones, those participating in God’s great project as prospective members of the body of Christ. (Col. 1:26,27) What a blessing has been the portion of those to whom this secret has been revealed! “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear,” said Jesus. “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.”—Matt. 13:16; Mark 4:11

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,” writes Paul, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” (I Cor. 2:9,10) He has revealed to us the hope of glory, honor and immortality, that it may be an inspirational power in our lives. In addition, the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God are given, Peter writes, “that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.”—II Pet. 1:4

“WHOM HE DID FOREKNOW”

In the verse following our opening Scripture, the Psalmist David writes, “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” (Ps. 139:16) Here we are reminded of God’s foreknowledge of the Christ, Head and body. Paul writes of this, saying, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” (Rom. 8:29) The thought here is not individual predestination, but rather of the characteristics each one must possess to qualify as a member of the body of Christ. “In thy book all my members were written,” David declares. The Prophet Malachi

explains who they are. “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Mal. 3:16,17

Those who have been thus “written” in the Lord’s book are those who reverence him and who speak often one with the other concerning him, thus thinking upon his name with the desire to please him. They are the ones “which in continuance were fashioned”—that is, who continued to be fashioned—into the image of Christ as the predetermined qualification of each of the body members.

All who continue to yield their lives in full submission to the molding power of the Word of God will maintain their standing as part of Christ’s body. This was true of Jesus, and it has been true of each body member since. To all these the Word of God is their life. “How precious ... are thy thoughts unto me, O God!” says the psalmist, and “How great is the sum of them!” (Ps. 139:17) The thoughts of God are indeed precious, and the more so when we realize that it is the power of his thoughts, made available through his Word in the lives of his consecrated people, which is bringing forth his New Creation.—II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15, *The Emphatic Diaglott*

The “sum” of God’s thoughts includes all his exceeding great and precious promises, also his instructions and commands. His thoughts tell us of his love in correcting his (Continued on page 36)

INFORMATIVE BOOKLETS . . .

COMING BACK FROM HELL SOON

A new approach to an old subject
(Available in large print)

CREATION

Examines the Genesis record

DIVINE HEALING

When sickness and death will end
(Available in large print)

GOD AND REASON

How God will bring peace

GOD HAS A PLAN

A comprehensive plan which will not fail

GRACE OF JEHOVAH

God's appeal is through love

HOPE

Comfort for our loved ones who mourn

HOW GOD ANSWERS PRAYER

Comforting and reassuring

LIFE AFTER DEATH

A bright future for all mankind

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Identifies the true witnesses of Jehovah and Jesus

OUR LORD'S RETURN

Reveals the manner and purpose

PARADISE WITHOUT POLLUTION

God's solutions to man's problems

REINCARNATION VERSUS RESURRECTION

Shows that life after death is through the resurrection

A ROYAL NATION

Deals with British-Israel doctrines

SCIENCE AND CREATION

Harmony of science and the Bible

SPIRITUALISM—ITS CLAIMS

Can the dead communicate?

THE TRUTH ABOUT HELL

What the Bible really says

TO US THE SCRIPTURES CLEARLY TEACH

Six basic Bible doctrines concisely presented

WHAT CAN A MAN BELIEVE?

What is truth? Does it matter?

WHEN A MAN DIES

Solves the riddle of death

WHY GOD PERMITS EVIL

A satisfying message of comfort

YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL

Who is he? Who created him?

FREE TRACTS - FREE CATALOGS - BOOKLETS 50¢

DAWN DVDs—Bible Answers TV programs and convention discourses.

DAWN AUDIO—The Dawn Magazine available in CD and cassette.

Bible lectures available in CD, MP3, and some cassette.

General Convention available in CD and MP3.

SEND YOUR REQUEST TO:

The Dawn, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

phone 1-800-234-3296

e-mail DawnBible@aol.com

Visit the Dawn web page at www.dawnbible.com



... BIBLE STUDY HELPS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Paul gives an insight into the “hidden things” and “better things” of the plans and purposes of God. 150pp-\$3.00

GOD’S PLAN IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

A chapter-by-chapter study, introducing the marvellous features of God’s plan from Creation and Adam to Joseph. 263pp-\$3.00

QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

A good knowledge tester and Sunday School help. 55pp-\$1.00

THE GOLDEN THREAD

Describes the Creator’s purpose throughout the ages, as outlined in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. 306pp-\$3.00

CREATION

Completely rewritten—takes you through the creative days, using the latest scientific and geological knowledge, refuting the theory of evolution. 94pp-\$1.75

THE BIBLE—THE SACRED BOOK

Answers questions that are often asked about this literary masterpiece—its origin, its structure, and its veracity. 44pp-\$.50

HEROES OF FAITH

Two stories of faithful men of God, and their special relationship with him. Adapted from an earlier work. 52pp-\$.50

THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

Clarifies the confusion which surrounds this universally practiced Christian tradition, and reveals the true biblical understanding of it. 24pp-\$.50

HOW TO INCREASE FAITH

As the apostles said in Luke “Lord increase our faith”—a fruitage that all need to encourage. 20pp-\$.50

OUR LORD’S MEMORIAL

A study of the sacred observance of sharing this solemn communion with our Lord in accordance with his exhortation. 34pp-\$.50



FRANK AND ERNEST RADIO

EVERY SUNDAY UNLESS NOTED

ARIZONA

Phoenix KFNX 1100 AM 8:15 a.m.

ARKANSAS

Little Rock KAAY 900 AM 8:15 p.m.

FLORIDA

Orlando WORL 950 AM/94.9 FM
6:45 a.m.

IOWA

Des Moines KWBG 1590 AM
7:30 a.m.

LOUISIANA

Baton Rouge WBRP 107.3 FM
10:00 & 10:30 a.m.

Lafayette KFZ 105.9 FM 6:30 a.m.

MICHIGAN

Jackson WKHM 970 AM/101.5 FM
11:30 a.m.

MISSOURI

Springfield KSGF 104.1 FM
8:00 & 8:30 a.m.

NORTH CAROLINA

Hickory WHKY 1290 AM 7:15 a.m.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia WTMR 880 AM
(Wednesday) 8:00 a.m.

Pittsburgh WJAS 1320 AM 6:30 a.m.
Red Lion

WINB Short Wave 9265 kHz
(Saturday) 1:15 p.m.
(Monday) 7:45 p.m.

TENNESSEE

Nashville WNAH 1360 9:30 a.m.
WWCR Short Wave
15.825 MHz 10:30 a.m.

TEXAS

Lubbock KFYO 790 AM
(Saturday) 7:30 a.m.

VIRGINIA

Norfolk WKQA 1100 AM
(Saturday) 8:00 a.m.

WEST VIRGINIA

Wheeling WWVA 1170 AM
6:15 a.m.

SOUTH AFRICA

Radio Africa #2 (Monday)
15190 kHz 15:15 UTC

WEST AFRICA

Radio Africa (Thursday)
7190 kHz 18:45 UTC

CENTRAL AMERICA

Panama Radio 1470 7:45 a.m.

NORTH AMERICA

WRMI Short Wave 9955KC
(Monday) 9:00 a.m.

SOUTH AMERICA

WRMI Short Wave 9955KC
Spanish/Portuguese
(Saturday) 6.15 p.m.

CARIBBEAN

Trinidad WRMI - NEW TIMES:
(Sunday) 2:00 p.m.
(Monday) 2:00 p.m.

ENGLAND

Reflections Europe
Short Wave 3910 kHz 8:00 p.m.

INDIA

Beacon of Hope
15205 kHz 14:30 UTC

BIBLE ANSWERS on URBAN AMERICA NETWORK

Sundays—10:30 a.m. C.T.—Satellite Network
Check local papers and program listings for
UAN (URBAN AMERICA NETWORK)

Watch “The Bible Answers” video series on YouTube
at the following YouTube channel name:

The Dawn Magazine - Monthly Video

The future is as bright as the promises of God!

HARVEST OPPORTUNITIES

If you would like to do more to spread the Good News of the coming kingdom, here are two opportunities in which you might be interested:

1. Request a DVD copy of the Dawn’s 30-second advertisements. Public Access television stations are always looking for new content. These stations offer free airtime as a public service. Contact your local station and offer to send them a copy.

2. Request a copy of our DVD catalog. Several Bible Students ecclesias are using the *Bible Answers* DVDs on their local cable stations.

Send your requests to:

Dawn Bible Students
PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167
1-800-234-3296 or dawnbible@aol.com

(Continued from page 31) people when necessary, and of his mercy in forgiving them. They tell of his loving arrangement through Christ, that by faith we may live in him and for him. They reveal the privilege of sacrifice which is ours, that “living sacrifice” which is holy and acceptable through Christ. (Rom. 12:1) Through the revealed thoughts of God we also have learned of his love for all mankind, and of his purpose to bless all the families of the earth through the “seed” of promise, that seed which is the Christ, his New Creation.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:16,28,29

“I will praise thee,” declares our opening text in describing the attitude of Jesus and his church. To know of the Creator’s marvelous works in connection with his New Creation, and of his purpose through the Christ to bless all mankind with life, is indeed a great cause of praise. Not only will we want to praise God, but we will realize this to be one of the great privileges of our lives, the use of which will prove our worthiness to be members of the glorified Christ. Using various terms to describe the glory of the Christ class, Peter writes, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—I Pet. 2:9 ■

“When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. ... For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death; To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.”
Psalms 102:16,19-21

Lessons from the Book of Acts

*“The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”
—Acts 6:7*

THE FULL NAME OF THE fifth book in the New Testament is “Acts of the Apostles,” although it is usually referred to simply as “Acts,” or as our title states, “The Book of Acts.” As its name implies, it is, for the most part, a chronicle of activities in which the apostles of Christ played an active part, especially as

related to the establishment of the early Christian church. Although Acts is largely historical in character, interwoven with its record of events are some of the most important doctrinal and devotional lessons to be found anywhere in the Bible.

The Book of Acts was written by Luke, who had previously written the Gospel account which bears his name. He refers to this as the “former treatise ... of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments

unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” (Acts 1:1,2) The opening chapter of Acts is a transition from the life of Christ into the era of the apostles. It records Jesus’ last appearance to them, and his commission for the service they were to render in his name after he ascended to heaven.—vss. 4-11

In verse eight of the first chapter, the resurrected Jesus is quoted as promising that the Holy Spirit would soon come upon the apostles. In the power, and by the authority, of the Spirit they were to be his “witnesses ... in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Thus was the stage set for the ensuing historical account of the experiences and Acts of the Apostles.

The second chapter records the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made concerning the bestowing of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. In some Bible versions the expression “Holy Ghost” is used. This is a mistranslation evidently designed to give the impression that the Holy Spirit is a person. However, this is contrary to the teachings of the Bible. The Greek word translated Spirit, or in some cases Ghost, in the New Testament, is *pneuma*, which is defined by *Strong’s Greek Dictionary* as a “current of air,” “breath,” or “breeze.” There is no thought of personality attached to the word, but it rather denotes an invisible power or influence, such as is manifest by a current of air or a breeze. Thus, the Holy Spirit signifies the invisible power and influence of God, used to accomplish whatever his purposes may be.

The Holy Spirit came upon the waiting disciples at Jerusalem in a miraculous manner, in order to

further establish their faith and confidence in Jesus as the Messiah. He had left them, and even though they had been convinced of his resurrection from the dead, they would have been in a difficult position to represent him without this definite evidence of his return to the heavenly courts. Consequently, in fulfillment of his promise, he had sent the Holy Spirit to rest upon them.

This wonderful experience occurred “when the day of Pentecost was fully come.” (Acts 2:1) Pentecost was one of the special feast and assembly days of the Jews, and many thousands of them visited Jerusalem each year for the occasion. (Lev. 23:11,16) This meant that there were Israelites in the city at the time from many countries, speaking the languages of the countries in which they lived.

This afforded an excellent opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate that his favor was upon the disciples, by miraculously empowering them to speak to their kinsmen from the various countries in their own languages. Thus, one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at that time was the ability of the apostles to “speak with other tongues [languages].” (Acts 2:4) This was a very practical demonstration of divine power, and accomplished God’s design to give all the scattered natural descendants of Abraham who were gathered there a witness concerning the position of Jesus as their Messiah.

The enemies of Jesus now opposed his chosen apostles and charged that they had become intoxicated. The Apostle Peter quickly and energetically refuted this charge. (vss. 13-19) Then, in one of the most eloquent sermons ever preached, he explained to his hearers the true significance of what was

taking place. He established the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and showed it to be in fulfillment of Psalm 16:10. There Jesus is prophetically represented as saying to his God, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."—Acts 2:27

The account states that many of the people were "pricked in their heart" by Peter's sermon, especially by the forthright manner in which he charged the nation with the crucifixion of Jesus. They asked what they could do under the circumstances, and he called upon them to repent, and to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The account states that three thousand responded to Peter's message that day and were baptized.—vss. 36-41

"TIMES OF RESTITUTION"

The third chapter of Acts records another marvelous sermon by Peter given a short time after Pentecost. The setting was quite different from that in which he delivered his previous sermon. Together with John, Peter had gone to the Temple at the hour of prayer. At the gate of the Temple called "Beautiful," he saw a man who had been unable to walk from the time of his birth. "In the name of Jesus," and by the invisible power of the Holy Spirit, Peter healed the man, enabling him to walk, even to the point of "leaping, and praising God."—Acts 3:1-8

The crowd was curious, and Peter took advantage of the occasion to explain to them that this miracle had been performed in the name of the resurrected

Christ, the one whom they had crucified. Then the apostle added, “And he [God] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”—vss. 20,21

The lesson here is based upon the miracle of healing the man who had been unable to walk. Peter is saying, in effect, that following the second coming of Christ, miracles of this sort will become universal, that there are to be times of “restitution,” or restoration, of all things. Then he adds that this glorious Gospel, or good news, has been spoken by the mouth of all God’s holy prophets.

Thus we have one of the key texts which helps to unlock the meaning of the entire Word of God. In examining the various books of the Old Testament, they are replete with prophecies which foretell of man’s eventual redemption and restoration. Now Peter confirms this, telling us in his outstanding sermon that the “times of restitution” was the theme of all God’s holy prophets.

PERSECUTION

Jesus had said to his disciples, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) The apostles and others in the Early Church experienced this persecution. Unbelieving Jews and Gentiles alike were unfriendly to them. In various ways, by intimidation and by imprisonment, these opponents of the Gospel endeavored to hinder and, if possible, to destroy their work. One example of this is recorded

in the fourth chapter of Acts. In this account, recorded in verses 1-18, Peter and John were brought before the religious council of the Jews, who commanded them not to speak any more “nor teach in the name of Jesus.”

At times, there was even trouble which came from within the church’s fellowship. In Acts 5:1-11, we have the record of Ananias and Sapphira, his wife, who were evidently members of the church in Jerusalem. They sold a piece of land for the alleged purpose of contributing all of the proceeds to the church treasury. However, they falsified their promise by secretly keeping part of the money for themselves. Their dishonesty was detected by the Apostle Peter, and they both immediately died. Thus was provided a sobering lesson that honesty in all of our dealings with the Lord, the brethren, and all those with whom we have to do, is of paramount importance.

Chapter seven of Acts presents the discourse which Stephen, the first Christian martyr, delivered before the Jewish Sanhedrin when called upon to defend himself against the accusations of his Jewish enemies. Saul of Tarsus, who was a Pharisee and zealous in persecuting Christians, consented to the death of Stephen, and assisted in his slaying by guarding the clothing of those who stoned this young deacon to death.

Two chapters later in Acts, we find the record of Saul’s conversion to Christianity. This account informs us that Saul, “yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or

women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.” (Acts 9:1,2) Provided with this authority, Saul was on his way to Damascus when “suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Upon inquiry as to who it was that thus addressed him, Saul heard the explanation, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.”—vss. 3-5

Saul was quick to discern that in persecuting the disciples of Christ he was in reality opposing God, for this experience revealed to him the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah. In answer to his question, “What wilt thou have me to do?” Saul was told to go to a certain home in Damascus, and that there he would receive his instructions. (vs. 6) From being a bitter enemy of the church, Saul, who was known afterward as Paul, became not only an enthusiastic follower of the Master, but devoted the remainder of his life to the service of the Lord and the Gospel of Christ. By divine appointment he became one of the leading apostles, his efforts being particularly toward the Gentiles.—Acts 26:15-19; Rom. 11:13

Beginning with chapter thirteen, most of the remainder of the Book of Acts is devoted to the relating of the many interesting, and ofttimes trying, experiences of Paul as he traveled from place to place in the ministry of the Gospel. On his second missionary journey Paul visited Athens and was taken by the learned men and philosophers to the Areopagus, the “Supreme Court” of Athens located on Mars hill. He was accused of introducing a new religious teaching. Facing his audience

on the hillside below, as Paul gave his defense, was a valley where numerous idols and altars attributed to various gods were located, among them being one ascribed to the "Unknown God." Calling his hearers' attention to this particular altar, Paul said, "The Being, therefore, whom you, without knowing Him, revere, Him I now proclaim to you."—Acts 17:16-23, *Weymouth New Testament*

Prompted by this setting and the imposing heathen temple on the hilltop near him, Paul continued: "GOD who made the universe and everything in it—He, being Lord of Heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries built by men. Nor is He ministered to by human hands, as though He needed anything—but He Himself gives to all men life and breath and all things. He caused to spring from one forefather people of every race, for them to live on the whole surface of the earth, and marked out for them an appointed span of life and the boundaries of their homes; that they might seek God, if perhaps they could grope for Him and find Him. Yes, though He is not far from any one of us. For it is in closest union with Him that we live and move and have our being; as in fact some of the poets in repute among yourselves have said, For we are also His offspring. Since then we are God's offspring, we ought not to imagine that His nature resembles gold or silver or marble, or anything sculptured by the art and inventive faculty of man."—vss. 24-29, *Weymouth*

Then, referring to the Athenians lack of knowledge of the true God, the apostle said that in times past, "this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because

he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”—vss. 30,31

It is noteworthy that Paul uses the word “assurance” to convey a positive meaning in his reference to the coming day of judgment. This indicates that the Judgment Day of the Scriptures is to be a blessing to mankind. If it were to be doomsday, there would be very little cause for “assurance” among “all men,” but rather fear and foreboding at such a prospect. However, when we examine the great plan of God set forth in the Bible, we find that the “day” of judgment is to be a thousand years in length, and will be a time in which all mankind will be given a true knowledge of God and of his laws, and have an opportunity to obey them and live.—Isa. 26:9; II Pet. 3:8,9,13; Rev. 20:6

Paul’s third missionary journey had Jerusalem as its final destination, and it was revealed to him by the power of the Holy Spirit that bonds and imprisonment awaited him there. His brethren in Christ endeavored to dissuade him from exposing himself to this danger, but Paul’s wonderful spirit of devotion to the Lord is displayed in his reply, “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”—Acts 21:13

JEWS AND GENTILES

In the Book of Acts we are also informed of the difficult situation that arose in the Early Church when Gentiles began to accept Christ and come in

among the Jewish believers. When Jesus first sent his disciples into the ministry, he instructed them not to go to the Gentiles. (Matt. 10:5) Just before his ascension, however, he told them that soon they were to go into all the world. (Acts 1:8) The apostles, especially Peter, found it difficult to become reconciled to this broader outlook. Nevertheless, he was used by God to begin the Gospel ministry to the Gentiles.

Cornelius, a devout believer in the God of Israel, was the first Gentile convert, along with his family. The Lord provided a vision to Cornelius and one also to Peter, to bring the two together so that the apostle could present the Gospel message to this sincere Gentile. This account is recorded in chapter ten of Acts. Peter fell asleep on the roof of "Simon a tanner." He had a dream in which he saw a "great sheet," let down from heaven, filled with all sorts of "fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air." He was bidden to rise, "kill, and eat."—Acts 10:1-13

Peter recognized, as his dream continued, that these animals were, according to the Jewish law, unclean, so he refused to obey. Then the Lord said to him, "What God hath cleansed," should no longer be called unclean. (vss. 14,15) Later, when by a further providence of the Lord, Peter was brought into the house of Cornelius and he and his family accepted Christ, the meaning of the dream became apparent. Peter then realized that God had been saying to him that the time had come when Gentiles, formerly considered outside of God's favor, were now to be accepted. Commenting on his enlightened understanding, Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive

that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”—vss. 34,35

This experience, wonderful as it was, did not entirely settle the issue for the whole church. Later, a conference of believers was held in Jerusalem at which the principal topic for discussion was the matter of Gentile Christians, and how best to integrate them in local groups which were at the time predominantly Jewish.

Peter was at that conference and testified concerning his experience in connection with the conversion of Cornelius. Paul also was there and testified of the many Gentile conversions he had witnessed. James, who apparently was the chairman of the conference, summed up the findings as follows, “Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon [Peter] hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles [a reference to Peter’s testimony concerning Cornelius], to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”—Acts 15:13-18

This is a very enlightening presentation of the proper sequence of God’s plan. The “tabernacle of David” refers to the ruling house of David. It had been overthrown six centuries earlier. The disciples believed that it was to be restored by Christ, but up

to this time they did not have a clear idea of when this would be accomplished. The last time Jesus was with them they had asked him, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus replied, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."—Acts 1:6,7

The outlook of the apostles was now broadening, however, and in this conference James discerned that the "tabernacle of David" would not be rebuilt until after "a people for his name" had been gathered out from among the Gentiles. The expression, "people for his name," identifies these called ones as members of God's divine family. At first this "high calling" had been confined to the Jews, but now it was extended to the Gentiles.—Phil. 3:14; I Pet. 2:9,10

When this work of selecting from the world those who are to be joint-heirs with Jesus is completed, then will come the rebuilding of the tabernacle, or ruling house, of David in the hands of Christ and his church. Then, as James further declared, "the residue of men," Jews and Gentiles alike, will be given an opportunity to receive the blessings of the kingdom. This will be the work of the millennium—the thousand-year judgment day spoken of previously.

NO EDIFICES OR DENOMINATIONS

Since the Book of Acts records the establishment of the Early Church, under the guidance of the inspired apostles, it is interesting to note what did not take place. For example, there was no building of costly edifices in which to conduct religious services.

There is nothing to indicate that a single meeting-house or church building was constructed under the direction of the apostles.

Several references are made to the “church” which met in the home of one or another of the believers. Doubtless some of the congregations, such as the one at Jerusalem, were too large to meet in homes, and probably assembly rooms of various types were used. So far as the records indicate, however, those early believers did not deem it necessary to build meetinghouses.

Another interesting fact is that there is no evidence of denominational names having been used. We are informed that believers were first called “Christians” at Antioch. (Acts 11:26) However, the single word “church” is, by far, the name most often attached to the believers. How appropriate this is, for the Greek word translated “church” is *ekklesia*, which simply means “an assembly of Christians gathered for worship.”—*Thayer’s Greek Definitions*

What strange departures from this simplicity have developed among Christianity since those early days! Would it not be wise for all those who are seeking the Lord to return to those simple ways and customs? The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” (Jer. 6:16) We believe that rich spiritual blessings await those who are courageous enough to do this. Let us learn from, and apply to ourselves, the lessons of simplicity, service, and faithfulness under severe trial, that are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. ■

Aaron and His Sons

“Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. ... He shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.”
—Exodus 4:14,16

AARON WAS THE BROTHER

of Moses. He was appointed by God to be a mouthpiece for Moses, as stated in our opening text. Because of this, his services and experiences for the most part parallel those of the great lawgiver, Moses. With the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, Israel's priesthood was instituted, and Aaron was appointed the first high priest, with his four sons serving as under priests.

Aaron was dependent upon his brother and received his authority from him. When Moses went up into Mount Sinai to receive the Law, Aaron was left on his own below, and displayed his weakness by yielding to the demands of the people to make the golden calf and worship it. He repented of this sin, and Moses gained forgiveness for him.—Exod. 32:21-24; Deut. 9:20

It was immediately following the making and worshiping of the golden calf that “Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.” (Exod. 32:26) Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, and later this entire tribe was substituted for the firstborn of all the families of Israel, to be the religious servants of the people.—Num. 3:41,45

The Aaronic family of the Levites was chosen as the one from which the priests of Israel would be taken, by succession from father to son, Aaron being the first high priest. God’s authorization for Moses’ appointment of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood is recorded in Exodus 28:1, which reads: “Take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.”

Aaron’s standing as high priest in Israel pointed forward to the position occupied by Jesus. Paul wrote that Jesus did not exalt himself to this high office, saying, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.” (Heb. 5:4,5) In God’s arrangement with Israel the principal work of a priest was to offer sacrifice and, upon the basis of his sacrificial service, to extend blessings to the people. Thus, Aaron’s position was emblematic of the manner in which, through Christ, the blessings which God promised through the “seed” of Abraham

will be extended to “all the families of the earth.”—
Gen. 12:3; 22:18

The priests of Israel offered animals in sacrifice, but Jesus offered himself. With Aaron, both he and his sons served as priests. Similarly, both Jesus and his faithful followers lay down their lives in sacrifice—Jesus dying as the Redeemer of the world, and the church being “planted together in the likeness of his death,” their sacrifice being made acceptable through his. (Rom. 6:5) Peter wrote that the church is being built as a “spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up ... sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”—I Pet. 2:5

AARON'S CONSECRATION

Not only were Aaron and his sons appointed by God to be Israel's first high priest and under priests, but a rather elaborate service was prescribed for initiating them into office. This service is outlined in the 8th chapter of Leviticus and was repeated each time a new high priest was installed into office. On this occasion, Aaron was clothed in his garments of “glory and beauty,” while his sons were clothed in white linen robes, with bonnets on their heads, to indicate that they were not the “head” of the priesthood, but rather members of “his body.” (Exod. 28:1-43; Eph. 1:22,23) Aaron's garments included a breastplate, an ephod, a robe, an embroidered coat, a headpiece called a mitre, and a girdle or waistband.—Exod. 28:4

In the service of consecration three animals were offered in sacrifice—a bullock for a sin offering, a ram for a burnt offering, and the ram of consecration. The bullock for the sin offering was offered first. (Lev. 8:14-17) Aaron and his sons laid their

hands on its head, indicating that it represented them collectively, as a sacrificing priesthood. This pointed forward to the sacrifice of Jesus and his body members, the church, prefiguring their experiences during the present Gospel Age.

This bullock was delivered up to Moses, who represented Israel's Law arrangement. To meet the demands of the Law the bullock had to be slain, "and he [Moses] slew it." Its blood was applied to the horns of the altar. Horns are often used in Scripture to represent power. Having the blood of the bullock applied to the horns of the altar points out that the power of Christ's sacrifice is represented in the blood, and that the church's sacrifice is acceptable to God only upon the basis of Jesus' shed blood. (I Pet. 1:1,2,18,19; I John 1:7) Moses also poured blood at the base of the altar, suggesting that through the power of the blood of Jesus, even the curse which is upon the earth because of sin will be removed as a result of his sacrificial offering.

Moses took the hide and flesh of the bullock and burnt them with fire outside the camp of Israel. This suggests that through the sacrificial work of Christ and his church, the world of mankind will ultimately be delivered, the value of this sacrifice being, of course, that of the perfect man, Christ Jesus. At the present time, however, this sacrifice is a vile thing in the eyes of the unbelieving world, but God accepts it and is pleased with the heart devotion which prompts it.

The ram for the burnt offering indicates the manner in which God accepts the sacrifices of Christ and his "body" members, the church. The ram was cut into pieces and laid on the altar—first the head, followed by the other body parts, and the fat. Thus

Jesus, the “Head” of the church, was first sacrificed, and throughout the Gospel Age the remaining members of the Christ class are being offered. (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18) God’s acceptance is shown by the fire which consumed the entire offering.—Lev. 8:18-21

The ram of consecration points forward to the effect of the spirit of consecration as manifested in Christ and the church. After slaying this ram, Moses took of the blood and put it upon Aaron and his sons separately, thus showing that our consecration and dedication to God are individual matters and place upon us a daily, personal responsibility.—vss. 22-29

Moses put the blood upon the tip of the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot. Thus, through our consecration we are given the hearing of faith and are enabled thereby to appreciate God’s promises as no others can. Our hands, too, are consecrated so that we do with our might what our hands find to do. Our feet are also consecrated so that we “walk in newness of life.”—Rom. 10:17; Eccles. 9:10; Rom. 6:4

The choice portions of the ram, its “inwards” and “fat,” represent our heart sentiments, zeal, and best efforts. These were taken in the hands of the priests and “waved”—passed to and fro before the Lord—representing the fact that our consecrated life is not given to the Lord merely for a moment, or a day, or a year. Rather, we are to keep our affections and efforts continually uplifted, never ceasing until our sacrifice is fully consumed and accepted by him.

Being installed in office, Aaron and his sons were then prepared to conduct the various religious services which God had outlined to Moses while on Mount Sinai. Just as their consecration pointed

forward to the dedication of the greater priesthood and the effect it would have upon the lives of Jesus and his followers, so the sacrificial services which they subsequently conducted were typical of the “better sacrifices” of this Gospel Age. (Heb. 9:23) This is particularly true of the services outlined in the 9th and 16th chapters of Leviticus.

Significant in connection with the service outlined in Leviticus 9:1-24 is the fact that after the work of sacrifice was over, Aaron, clothed in his garments of glory, came out and, along with Moses, blessed the people. Thus is shown that after the better sacrifices of this present Gospel Age have been completed, the glorified Christ, Head and body, will extend to all mankind those blessings of health and life which God promised would reach the people through the seed of Abraham.—Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:7,8

In the 16th chapter of Leviticus is recorded God’s instructions concerning Israel’s annual Day of Atonement, which was observed each year on the tenth day of the seventh month. On that day, two animals were sacrificed—a bullock and a goat—and each one was treated in the same way. We believe that in this picture the bullock represented Jesus, and the goat his body members, the church. The bullock was slain first. Aaron took burning coals from the brazen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle and put them on the golden altar in the Holy compartment of the Tabernacle. He then sprinkled the incense on the hot coals. The sweet perfume of this burning incense penetrated into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle, where the blood of the bullock was then sprinkled by Aaron upon and in front of the mercy seat. The fat of the bullock was burned on

the brazen altar, and its skin and flesh were taken and burned outside the camp of Israel.

The goat was sacrificed in the same way as the bullock. Paul identifies the followers of Jesus with this picture, when he writes, "Let us go forth unto him [Jesus] without the camp, bearing his reproach." Here the apostle shows the significance of the burning of the carcasses of the animals, as well as revealing that the church shares these sacrificial experiences with Jesus.—Heb. 13:11-13

The fact that the followers of Christ are shown to be fellow-sacrificers with him explains one of the critical aspects of the Christian life—that it is not merely a matter of accepting Christ and living righteously, but, as Paul explains, it is also "given in the behalf of Christ ... to suffer for his sake," as well as to "suffer with him." (Phil. 1:29; Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12) It also reveals one of the principal reasons that the blessings of life promised to come through the Messiah have not yet been offered to the world. This is because the foretold and prefigured work of sacrifice by Christ's body members is not yet finished.

THE REBELLION OF KORAH

In the 16th chapter of Numbers there is an account of a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, led by Korah. Korah challenged the right of Moses and Aaron to have full charge of the religious affairs of the nation. Moses properly left the matter in the hands of the Lord to decide. His decision was against Korah and his sympathizers, and an earthquake opened the ground under them, and they went down and were destroyed.—vss. 30-33

This, however, did not entirely put down the rebellion. The next day “the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, saying, Ye have killed the people of the LORD.” (vs. 41) The Lord then sent a plague upon the Israelites, and before it was stopped “fourteen thousand and seven hundred” of the people died. (vs. 49) The plague was halted when Aaron, obeying the instructions of Moses, ran among the people with a censer in which was fire and incense.

After this, Moses gave instructions that the heads of all the twelve tribes of the Israelites bring their rods, which denoted authority, to the Tabernacle. Aaron’s rod, for the tribe of Levi, was included. These rods were laid up in the tabernacle for a day, with the understanding that whichever rod budded would signify that the tribe for which this rod stood would be God’s choice for conducting the religious services devolving upon the priesthood.—Num. 17:1-7

The result was convincing. “It came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.” (vs. 8) This served to convince the Israelites that only the household of Aaron, assisted by the Levites, were to serve in the religious affairs of the nation.

While the tribe of Levi had previously been substituted for the firstborn of all Israel and the Aaronic family appointed for the priesthood, apparently the Israelites had not had this sufficiently impressed upon them. The rebellion of Korah, and the subsequent uprising of the people in sympathy with him, served a needed lesson. Now the Israelites

outside of the tribe of Levi who had not been obeying the Lord's instructions in connection with coming near to the Tabernacle were fearful lest they be punished by death, but they were spared.

The Lord said to Aaron, "Thou and thy sons and thy father's house with thee shall bear the iniquity of the sanctuary: and thou and thy sons with thee shall bear the iniquity of your priesthood." (Num. 18:1) Apparently God was willing to forget the past, but he made it clear that from this time forward the priestly family was made wholly responsible for the proper carrying out of the Tabernacle services.—vss. 2-8

The Lord was very strict with everything pertaining to the Tabernacle and its services because it was designed as a pattern of better things to come. Concerning the Aaronic priesthood, Paul wrote, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."—Heb. 8:5

Two members of the priestly family of Aaron, his sons Nadab and Abihu, were slain when they offered "strange fire" before the Lord, after having been fully instructed in all the Tabernacle services. (Lev. 10:1,2; Num. 3:4; 26:61) The "strange fire" was kindled by themselves for use in their censers, instead of being taken from that which burned perpetually on the brazen altar. (Lev. 6:13) When these two sons of Aaron were slain, the remaining sons were forbidden to mourn, emphasizing that the Lord's decisions are always just and right.—Lev. 10:6

THE DEATH OF AARON

While Aaron was a faithful coworker with his brother, Moses, serving as his mouthpiece and later as high priest, he was not always of a strong character. As previously noted, he readily yielded to the clamor of the people in connection with the erection and worship of the golden calf. In another instance, when Moses lost his patience and failed to give glory to God for bringing water out of the rock, Aaron participated in the wrong with him.

This was at Kadesh, in the desert of Zin. The people were without water for themselves and for their animals, and, as was often their reaction, they complained to Moses. Then “Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.”—Num. 20:6-8

These instructions were clearly stated, and were applied to Aaron as well as to Moses, but they were not properly carried out. With the people gathered before the rock, Moses did not speak to the rock as instructed, but to the people. He said, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Then he smote the rock twice.—vss. 10,11

The words, “must we” fetch you water, indicates that Aaron was sympathetic to Moses’ viewpoint, and they both failed to give glory to the Lord. As a

result, God not only decreed that because of this Moses could not enter the land of Canaan, but extended the same punishment to Aaron. (Num. 20:12) Later, as the Israelites journeyed from Kadesh, in the desert of Zin, they “came unto Mount Hor. And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.” (vss. 22-24) Meribah means “strife,” and is a fitting name given by the Lord to the water that came out of the rock at Kadesh.

God then instructed Moses to take Aaron and his son Eleazar up into Mount Hor and place Aaron’s priestly garments upon Eleazar. This was done, and Aaron died in the mount, being, as the account says, “gathered unto his people.” (vss. 26-28) The trio went up into the mountain in the sight of all the people, and after Aaron’s death, only Moses and Eleazar returned, so it was at once evident that Aaron had died in the mountain.

“And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel.” (vs. 29) Aaron’s death was a great loss to the Israelites, for he had served them from the time he and Moses first appeared before Pharaoh to demand their release from Egyptian bondage. He had shared with Moses the Israelites’ many accusations of evil intent in bringing them out of Egypt. The people evidently now realized that only by the mercy and power of God manifested through these two faithful servants were they kept

alive in the wilderness. It is no wonder that they mourned when he died. No doubt Moses shared in this mourning, for he had been more closely associated with his brother than any of the others. Aaron was by his side as a “mouth,” or spokesman, and was faithful in his service as high priest.

Now Aaron had been gathered to his fathers, and Moses knew that he also would soon die. The Lord had given him Aaron as a mouthpiece because he insisted that he was a man slow of speech. However, now that Aaron was no more with him, we find Moses in the last days of his life presenting to the children of Israel one of the most beautiful orations recorded in the Bible. It is recorded in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, of which we quote the first four verses: “Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

The Lord has limitless ways of giving his people the assistance they need. Aaron had been provided to make up for Moses’ slowness of speech, and without doubt he very capably filled the need. Now that he was gone, God gave eloquent utterance to Moses’ own tongue. Thus we see fulfilled in Aaron, in Moses, and in the daily experiences of our own lives as we endeavor to serve the Lord, the fact that he helps his people in all their needs and sustains them with his “abundant grace.”—II Cor. 4:15 ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

N. Austin

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

B. Keith

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

O. B. Elbert

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

T. Krupa

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

A. Fernets

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

D. Rice

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

K. Humphreys

Online Broadcast of Convention
Prince Albert/Saskatoon, SK
July 3,4

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Stanislawa Szelest, Lublin, Poland—May 9.

Age, 96

Sister Uma Agarwal, Bangalore, India—May 10.

Age, 71

Brother Erwin Hojnca, Chorzow, Poland—May 11.

Age, 80

Sister Janina Krakowka, Czestochowa, Poland—

May 12.

Brother Narasimha Murthy, India—May 18.

Sister Grace Saraswathi, Mangalore, India—May 21.

Brother David Nichols, Stony Plain, AB, Canada—May 23. Age, 85

Brother Jebasingh, Mettupalayam, India—May 24.

Brother James Avon, Portland, OR—May 28. Age, 90

Brother Amit Agarwal, Bangalore, India—May 30.

Sister Philomena, Bangalore, India—June 2. Age, 73

Brother Samuel Pradeep Anand, Bangalore, India—June 5.

*“Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his saints.”*

—Psalm 116:15

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JULY 1—“Walk as children of light ... proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”—Ephesians 5:8,10 (Z. '99-4 Hymn 315)

JULY 8—“The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”—I Timothy 3:15 (Z. '99-37 Hymn 217)

JULY 15—“Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, ... and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”—I Corinthians 13:3 (Z '99-77 Hymn 344)

JULY 22—“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.”—Psalm 34:18,19

“A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.”—Proverbs 24:16 (Z. 03-217 Hymn 111)

JULY 29—“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.”—Daniel 3:17 (Z. 99-171 Hymn 63)

CONVENTIONS

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

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

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

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

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 4,5—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact G. Passios. Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 4-6—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact L. Flinn. Email: laurie@flinn.us

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 10-12—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (HWY 72), Huntsville, AL 35806. Phone: (256) 562-2525—**WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ALSO**—Contact R. Armstrong. Phone: (256) 281-6807 or Email: robin@exzaktec.com

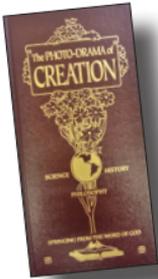
COLUMBUS, INDIANA HARVEST CONVENTION, September 18,19—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Ledwinka. Phone: (812) 546-5311 or Email: eledwinka@outlook.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 25,26—WILL BE BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact T. Malinowski. Phone: (616) 304-7691 or Email: malinowski.tjm@gmail.com

Bible Study Helps

In the golden era . . . before movies played in cinemas, there were live stage performances. And in the grand Opera Houses of the early 1900s, a famous audio-visual spectacle with slides and voice recordings played to crowds of thousands. It was titled:

THE PHOTO-DRAMA OF CREATION



This book of the same title is a faithful reproduction of the historic book offered then. It makes a wonderful Bible study aid, and provides a full explanation of the plan of God from creation to the resurrection and restoration of all mankind.

Hard cover, 100 pages, \$8.00

THE CREATOR'S GRAND DESIGN

An excellent presentation of the Bible's teachings concerning God's designs for man, including the hope of future life in the promised resurrection of all mankind. Great for home Bible study.



Soft cover, 240 pages, \$4.00

THE HEAVENLY CALL

Discusses important features of the heavenly call of the present Gospel Age, including its manner, requirements, and purpose in God's plan of salvation.



Soft cover, 158 pages, \$4.00

Read freely at www.dawnbible.com

DAWN BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 521167
Longwood, FL 32752-1167
1-800-234-3296



To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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

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

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

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

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD

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

