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THE TRUTH ABOUT HELL

EARLY IN 1996, several news service reports issued an article which was carried in many newspapers across the USA. Among the headlines was: "Hell: Not Hot, But Not Nice." This bulletin said, "A Church of England commission has rejected the idea of hell as a place of fire, pitchforks and screams of unending agony, describing it instead as annihilation for all who reject the love of God.

"Whether there be any who do so choose, only God knows', said a report by the church's Doctrine Commission, titled, 'The Mystery of Salvation'.

"Rejecting the medieval vision of the underworld, the report said: 'Christians have professed appalling theologies which made God into a sadistic monster and left searing psychological scars on many'.

"The report said, belief in everlasting punishment has steadily faded.

"There are many reasons for this change, but among them have been the moral protests from both within and without the Christian faith

against a religion of fear, and a growing sense that the picture of a God who consigned millions to eternal torment was far removed from the revelation of God's love in Christ'.

"Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely that the only end is total non-being.

"That is much like the definition of hell in the catechism of the US Episcopal Church: 'eternal death in our rejection of God'.

"Both churches are part of the Anglican Communion, but go their own ways on doctrine—for example, the Episcopal Church moved first to ordain women as priests.

"The catechism of the Roman Catholic Church says that 'the chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God'. But it also holds that the damned 'suffer the punishments of hell', 'eternal fire'."

The Very Rev. Tom Wright, dean of Litchfield Cathedral, and a member of the Doctrine Commission, said its definition of hell was "not new."

EARLY EPISCOPALIAN PROTESTS

As far back as 1958, some pastors of the Episcopal Church were already protesting against this teaching. A young Episcopalian minister, Charles Kinsolving, in Pasco, Washington, created a stir among Episcopalians when in a sermon he said: "Hell is a damnable doctrine—responsible for a large measure of this world's hatred. According to this doctrine, God, who commands us to love our enemies, plays the hypocrite by damning his enemies. This, in turn, stimulates the hatred of God

by people who abhor hypocrisy—and it gives sanction to our hatred of certain selected enemies.”

This, of course, was contrary to the official doctrinal position of the Episcopal Church at the time, so another pastor of the same denomination announced that he was in “complete disagreement.” The pulpit, said this pastor, should not be used to express personal views which are contrary to the teachings of the church. On the other hand, the Episcopalian bishop in Spokane, WA, while “deploring the argument,” said that Kinsolving’s preaching has been “within the allowable latitude of the church.”

The Episcopal Church in America is essentially the same organization and belief as the Church of England in Great Britain. The Church of England is, in reality, the State Church of Great Britain, although its association with the state does not hold the same implication as church-state union once did. The Premier, Cabinet members, and House of Commons, are the real governing factors of Great Britain, while royalty and the church occupy the sidelines.

ORIGINAL MEANING OF THE WORD ‘HELL’

But it was different in the past. It was different when King James ordered the assembly of a committee of scholars to produce a translation of the Bible which could be the official version for the use of the Church of England. This is the King James Version, and even when the scholars of the church made this translation they seemed to have difficulty over the subject of hell, as evidenced in the lack of uniformity in translation—for example, the Hebrew word sheol, the word in the Old Testament which applies to the state, or condition of the dead.

More than three hundred years ago, when the King James Version was first published, the original meaning of the English word 'hell', namely, 'hidden', or 'covered', would be better known by the English-speaking public than it is today. Perhaps this is one reason the translators felt justified in using it thirty-one times to translate the Hebrew word sheol, while using the word 'grave' an equal number of times in translating the same word, and 'pit' three times. They reasoned, perhaps, that each reader would understand the text in which the word 'hell' appeared in keeping with his own conception of the word.

But this was, in reality, sidestepping the issue. The truth concerning hell could have been told so clearly by the King James translating Committee, simply by being consistent in their translation of the Hebrew word in the Old Testament, and the Greek word hades in the New Testament.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE KING JAMES COMMITTEE

Considering that then the traditions of the Dark Ages were still a powerful influence in the thinking of even the learned, probably we should admire the translators for what they did accomplish, rather than condemn them for not coming out more definitely for the truth. Their honesty of purpose is revealed in their message to King James upon the completion of their translation, from which we quote:

"If, on the one side, we shall be traduced by Popish Persons at home or abroad, who therefore will malign us, because we are poor instruments to make God's holy truth to be yet more and more known unto the people, whom they desire still to keep in ignorance and darkness; or if, on the other side, we shall be maligned by self-conceited breth-

ren, who run their own ways, and give liking unto nothing but what is framed by themselves, and hammered on their anvil; we may rest secure, supported within by the truth and innocency of a good conscience, having walked the ways of simplicity and integrity, as before the LORD; and sustained from without by the powerful protection of your Majesty's grace and favour, which will ever give countenance to honest and Christian endeavors against bitter censures and uncharitable imputations."

HELL OR GRAVE

Surely we have to accept this testimony of the translators themselves as to their honesty of purpose, but this does not explain why, in their translation, they almost always used the word 'hell' to translate the Hebrew word *sheol* when the reference was to the wicked, and 'grave' when the text pertained to the righteous.

And how simple it would have been to use the word 'hell' instead of 'grave' in Ecclesiastes 9:10; and how truth-revealing it would have been concerning the doctrine of hell. We quote the text with this translation: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in hell [*sheol*] whither thou goest." From this text alone, the English-speaking Christian who reads the King James Translation would have known that hell is not a place of torture, but a state of unconsciousness.

Genesis 37:35 is another revealing use of the Hebrew word *sheol*, or would have been had the King James translators used the word 'hell' to translate *sheol*, as they did in thirty-one other texts. In this text, Jacob, a faithful servant of God,

weeping for Joseph, said, "I will go down into hell unto my son mourning." From this text, had sheol been translated 'hell' instead of 'grave', the Christian world would have learned that the righteous as well as the wicked go to hell when they die.

The word sheol appears again in Job 14:13. In this text we find Job asking God to let him die. Translating sheol by the word 'hell', this is what Job said: "O that thou wouldest hide me in hell, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!" The Old English word hell, or helle, meant 'to be covered', or 'concealed', and how appropriate it would have been to use it in Job's prayer—a prayer in which he asked to be hidden, and to be kept in secret.

There seems little excuse for the translators not using the word 'hell' in this prayer of Job's, yet, had they done so, the Bible would be saying that when a person dies he escapes God's wrath, instead of having divine wrath poured out upon him in all its Dark Age fury. Yes, the translators did have a problem, but if they had been consistent in their translation of sheol, possibly the bishop of Spokane would have no occasion now to 'deplore the argument' over hell among the pastors in his district.

HADES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

It is not that the King James translators were compelled always to use the word 'grave' as a translation of sheol unless the reference was to the wicked, for in Psalm 16:10 they departed from this pattern and used the word 'hell' when they must have known that the text applied to Jesus. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," the text prophetically says of Jesus. In keeping with this text, and

this translation, the Apostles' Creed [which the apostles never saw nor heard of] states that Jesus "descended into hell." Surely, if the Holy One, Jesus went to hell when he died the translators should have had no hesitancy in using the word 'hell' in texts referring to the death of other righteous persons.

It is obvious, of course, why they used the word 'hell' in the case of Jesus. If they had used the word 'grave', the text would have said that Jesus' soul went into the grave, and this the translators did not believe. Since they wanted the reader of their translations to believe that hell was a place in which souls are alive, and the wicked ones tortured, it was thought better to put Jesus' soul there rather than to have it die, as the Bible really teaches. Isaiah wrote of Jesus that "he . . . poured out his soul unto death."—Isa. 53:12

The Greek word, hades, in the New Testament is the one which corresponds with sheol in the Old Testament. The translators of the King James Version recognized this, and in Acts 2:27 used the word 'hell' to translate hades. In this verse, Peter quotes Psalm 16:10 pertaining to the death and resurrection of Jesus. How clearly and beautifully this reveals the divine plan for the salvation of fallen man from sin's penalty, which is death!

"The wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) Had the King James translators grasped the reality of this simple statement of divine truth, and in keeping with it, maintained uniformity in their translations of sheol and hades, how much easier it would have been for both the learned and the unlearned to grasp the truth of the divine plan!

Sheol, hades, hell, all describe the state of the dead. In the English language, 'grave' more prop-

erly describes the burial place, the excavation in the earth where the earthly remains of the dead are interred. In the Hebrew language the word qburah, or qeber, is the one most nearly corresponding to the English word grave. Since death is the penalty for sin, and Jesus took upon himself that penalty, it is logical that the Scriptures should speak of him as being in sheol, or hades, the Bible hell.

THE KEYS OF HELL

Because Jesus did take the sinner's place in the Bible hell, he now has the keys of hell; that is, the authority and power to unlock this great prison-house and set death's captives free. Jesus himself testified, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Rev. 1:18

In Revelation 20:13 we read, "The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." Here the Marginal Translation gives us the word 'grave' instead of 'hell', although it is a translation of the Greek word hades. The effort in this, apparently, is to conceal the fact that the Bible hell will give up its dead, for this would be contrary to the tradition of the Dark Ages. According to this tradition, those who go to hell must remain there forever, and even worse than that, suffer excruciating torment throughout the endless ages of eternity.

How thankful we are to have learned that there is no place of eternal torture, and that the hell of the Bible will release its prisoners, because Jesus, having the 'keys' of hell, will unlock its gates and set its captives free. This, of course, is just another way in which the Bible teaches the glorious doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; and the res-

urrection of the dead is the only hope of life beyond the grave that is held out to us in the Word of God. And it is a glorious hope!

We quite agree with Pastor Kinsolving's appraisal of the doctrine of eternal torture. It is, as he said, a God-dishonoring teaching which, through the centuries since it was foisted upon the professed Christian church, has done much harm. Indeed, as one writer described it, it is a "God-dishonoring, love-extinguishing, truth-beclouding, saint-hindering, sinner-hardening, damnable heresy." We are glad that, here and there, an occasional ministerial voice in the great churches of the land has been raised against it, and that now the Church of England has rejected the traditional hell concept.

It would be much better, of course, if these learned gentlemen would give the public the benefit of their higher education and explain the manner in which the Bible has been mistranslated and misinterpreted in order to support this terrible doctrine. Just to say that they do not believe it does not go to the root of the matter; but how much the educated clergy could do, if they would, to enlighten the general public concerning the truth on this subject.

Perhaps this is too much to expect now. We do rejoice in the fact, however, that the time is coming, and soon, when the true knowledge of the LORD will fill the earth. Then the people will know that God truly is love.* ■

*Note: For complete information on the subject of hell, send for a free copy of the booklet: "The Truth About Hell," Dawn Publications, East Rutherford, NJ 07073, or call 1-800-234-DAWN.

THE SENTIMENT THAT it matters not what a man believes, as long as he is sincere, is as unscriptural as it is absurd. Sincerity in belief has no more effect in warding off evil in the spiritual than in the natural kingdom. If the teachings and persuasions of a doctor should prevail on you to believe that smoking tobacco is harmless, would it therefore be harmless? Could you do so without injury? We know that smoke contains carcinogens, and is detrimental to health.

Neither will the sincerity of your belief save you from the consequences of error in religious faith. Right belief—God’s truth—is the only foundation on which you can rest your hopes. ■

IT HAS BEEN well said that the pen—symbol of the written word—is mightier than the sword. Words can be potent for good as well as for evil. Concerning his own words, God says that they will not return unto him void, but will accomplish that which he pleases, and prosper in the things whereto he sends them.—Isa. 55:10,11

The tragic effect of evil words is described by the Apostle James saying, “The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [gehenna].” (James 3:5,6) May we choose good words, the very best of which are God’s! ■

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 1

EXPERIENCE GOD'S JOY

KEY VERSE: *"They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the LORD blameless."*—Luke 1:6

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Luke 1:5-13, 24, 25, 59-64*

ZECHARIAH THE PRIEST and his wife, Elizabeth, had no children, not only because they were old, but because she was barren. They were both righteous, walking blamelessly in the sight of God. Despite the couple's piety, their heartfelt prayers for a child had gone unanswered. One day, Zechariah was performing his priestly functions, burning incense in the Sanctuary of the Temple, while a great crowd prayed outside in the Temple Court. Suddenly, Gabriel, the angel of the LORD, appeared to him and, in summary, said: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him

the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the LORD. . . . Many of . . . Israel will he bring back to the LORD their God."—Luke 1:13-16, *New International Version*

The good news that his prayer was answered evidently proved too difficult for Zechariah to accept by faith, and as a consequence, Gabriel told him he would live in silence, unable to speak, until the child would be born. The people waited outside for Zechariah, surprised that he was staying so long inside. When he did come out, he could not speak to them because of having been

struck dumb, but stood there making signs. Some time later, when Elizabeth was with child, and God's promise fulfilled, she praised God for his kind favor to take away her reproach among women. When her time came to be delivered, she brought forth a son.

When the jubilant family and friends gathered to celebrate the joyful occasion, they wanted to name the baby for his father, but Elizabeth said, "Not so; but he shall be called John." Zechariah "asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. His mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue was loosed, and he spake, and praised God."—vss. 57-64

Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied: "Blessings on the LORD, the God of Israel, because he has turned his face toward his people and has set them free!" (vss. 67,68, *Phillips Translation*) "Long, long ago, through the words of his holy prophets, he [God] promised to do this for us, so that we should be safe

from our enemies and secure from all who hate us. So does he continue the mercy he showed to our forefathers.

"So does he remember the holy agreement he made with them and the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to make us this gift: that we should be saved from the hands of our enemies, and in his presence should serve him unafraid in holiness and righteousness all our lives.

"And you, little child, will be called the Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for his coming. It will be for you to give his people knowledge of their salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Because the heart of our God is full of mercy toward us, the first light of Heaven shall come to visit us—to shine on those who lie in darkness and under the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the path of peace."—Luke 1:70-79, *Phillips Translation*

The child grew up, strong in spirit, dwelling in the desert until the day for him to serve Israel. ■

SURRENDER TO GOD'S WILL

KEYVERSE: *“Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”—Luke 1:38*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Luke 1:26-42*

VERSE 26 RELATES to the sixth month after Elizabeth's conception, as seen in last week's lesson. In today's reference, the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary reminds us of his prior visit to Zechariah with a message promising him a son to be named John.

The prophet, in Isaiah 7:14, had long ago declared God's sign of his goodwill to Israel and to the house of David when he said, “A virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” In fulfillment of that ancient prophecy, Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee named Nazareth.

There he approached Mary and said, “Greetings, you who are highly fa-

vored! The LORD is with you.” (Luke 1:28, *New International Version*) Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.

“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The LORD God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”—Luke 1:20-33, *NIV*

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel

answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God. I am the LORD's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.—Luke 1:34-38, *NIV*

Gabriel mentioned the experience of Elizabeth to inspire Mary with confidence, and to assure her that what was promised would be fulfilled. Mary truly is an inspiring example of faith. Having heard Gabriel's wonderful though perplexing words, she then surrendered to the will of God with great enthusiasm. For Mary, these events were a direct experience of God's miraculous power of creativity and faithfulness.

With little delay, Mary hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judah where she entered the house of Zechariah, and greeted

Elizabeth. When she heard Mary's greeting, the unborn child stirred inside her, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear!" (*NIV*) Mary said, "From this time all generations will pronounce me happy; for the Mighty One has done wonders for me: and holy is his name."—vss. 48,49 (*W.E.D.*)

Mary abode with Elizabeth about three months and returned to her house. For us, Mary and her involvement in bringing forth God's Son, the Savior of the world, has become a symbol of great faith in God. Mary also demonstrated her knowledge of the Scriptures which she may have heard sung in the synagogue from Psalms. In her song of praise her soul magnified the LORD. She quoted Psalm 34:2,3. Her expression of humility uses words from Psalm 138:6. Her song of exultation of the LORD has expressions which are found in Psalms 71:19; 126:3; 111:9; 103:17; 98:1; 118:15; 33:10; 113:6; 34:10; and 98:3.—Luke 1:49-54 ■

RECEIVE GOD'S MESSAGE

KEY VERSE: *"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."*—Luke 2:20

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Luke 2:8-20*

WHEN THE ROMAN Emperor, Caesar Augustus decreed that all citizens of the empire be registered for a census, each one was to do so in his own town. Joseph, a direct descendant of David, went with Mary to Bethlehem, the city of David, to be enrolled. "So it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."—Luke 2:6,7

At that time there were shepherds in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night, when

suddenly an angel of the LORD appeared to them, and the glory of the LORD shone about them. They were terror stricken, but the angel said, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."—vs. 10,11

With the angel was a great company of "the heavenly host praising God" (vs. 13) in honor of the newborn Prince of Peace. After the angels left them, the shepherds in one accord hurried to Bethlehem to see what had happened, as the LORD had told them.—vs. 15

When they arrived, they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. After they saw and worshiped Jesus, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this miracle child. Surely this good news could not be kept to themselves—all the shepherds felt it must be shared with others. All who heard it, were amazed at what the shepherds said. We, too, experience this same urge to tell others of God's plan when it is revealed to us. It is not just to be treasured up in our own hearts.

The Prophet Isaiah said, pointing to the Messiah, "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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Then he adds, that the throne of David in Messiah's kingdom shall be established "with judgment and with justice . . . for ever."—Isa. 9:6,7

Mary remembered all these things—all that had happened and all that was

said respecting her child—and she thought deeply about them. She remembered what the angel had said to her, what had happened to Elizabeth, and to the shepherds, and all the extraordinary circumstances which had attended the birth of her son. Surely she often wondered what these things might indicate respecting her child.

Finally, the shepherds returned to their fields, "glorifying and praising God" (Luke 2:20) for all they had heard and seen; it had been just as the angel told them. It is noteworthy that none of the noble, mighty, or rich were told of Messiah's birth. Rather, God revealed this great event only to the poor.

At this Christmas season, much of the world celebrates the good news of Jesus' birth, even though we know from other scriptures that it occurred in early October. Truly, God's ways are higher than our ways, and the message the shepherds heard is one of "great joy . . . to all people."—Luke 2:10 ■

RESPOND TO GOD'S SON

KEY VERSE: *"When they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."*—Matthew 2:11

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Matthew 2:11*

JESUS WAS BORN in the land of Judea, during the time Herod was king. Some time after his birth, some "wise men" followed a star to Jerusalem from the east and asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." King Herod and all Jerusalem were greatly disturbed at this, and the king called together the priests and scribes, anxiously inquiring where the Christ was to be born.—Matt. 2:1-3

They told him the words of the Prophet Micah: "Bethlehem . . . out of thee shall

come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel." (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:5,6) Herod then secretly called the wise men and sent them to search for the child, ordering the travelers to bring back word to him when they found the child so that he too might come to pay him reverence. (vs. 8) In reality, Herod was fearful of the arrival of a new ruler who might possibly replace him, so he was making plans to do away with the child when he was found.

Journeying on, the wise men followed the star until it stopped over the place

where the child was. They went into the house and "saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him When they had opened their treasures, they presented him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." —vs. 11

God, in his foreknowledge, warned them in a dream not to return to Herod, so they set out to their own country by another route.—vs. 12

After they had gone, an angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph in a dream, directing him to take the child and his mother and escape into Egypt. Because Herod was going to search for the child to destroy him, God told Joseph to remain safely in Egypt until further notice.

Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son." (Matt. 2:15; Hos. 11:1) This prophecy pointed forward to Jesus, saying that he

was 'called out of Egypt', a symbol of the world, to give his life as a ransom for Adam and all mankind.

"Then Herod, perceiving that he had been deceived by the Magians, was greatly enraged; and dispatching emissaries he slew all the male children in Bethlehem and in all its vicinity from the age of two years and under."—Matt. 2:16, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."—vs. 18

When Herod died, an angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to return to Israel, for those who sought the child's life were dead. "He arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel." (vs. 21) They went to Nazareth—a city not associated with the Messiah—where Jesus grew to manhood. ■

BELIEVE GOD'S PROMISES

KEY VERSE: *“It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the LORD’s Christ. . . . And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the LORD, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.”—Luke 2:26,38*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *Luke 2:22,25-38*

WHEN JESUS WAS eight days old, and it was time to circumcise him, he was given the name Jesus as the angel had said to Mary before she conceived. Later, his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the LORD as it is written in the Law. Every first-born male shall be counted consecrated to the LORD, and a pair of turtle doves or young pigeons were to be offered in sacrifice.

Living in Jerusalem at that time there was a devout man named Simeon, to whom, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,

God had revealed that he would see the arrival of the Messiah before he died. In turn, this would no doubt prompt Simeon to anticipate the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”—Gen. 22:18

The Spirit led Simeon into the Temple, and when the parents of Jesus brought their child there to fulfill the requirements of the Law, Simeon took Jesus up in his arms and said, “Mine eyes have seen thy

salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." (Luke 2:30-32; Isa. 42:6; 49:6) Joseph and Mary marveled at the things Simeon spoke of him. "Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign [Jesus] which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (vss. 34,35) Surely a sword must have pierced Mary's heart as she stood in sorrow and anguish by the cross of her tortured son.

The Isaiah 8:14,15 prophecy concerns the fall of Israel: "He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel. . . . Many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken." John 1:11 says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." But Paul, in Romans 9:33,

shows the recovery of Israel after the elect class of the Gospel Age has been completed. He says, "I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offense: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed [*Margin: confounded*]."

Also in the Temple was the Prophetess Anna, a widow who was very old. She never left the Temple, but continued to worship with fasting and prayer night and day. She was present at that very time, and gave thanks to the LORD and spoke of Jesus to all them who were expecting the deliverance of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had completed that which was in accordance with the Law, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child, Jesus, continued to grow and gain in strength; he continued to increase in wisdom, and the blessing of God was upon him.

Luke does not mention the visit of the three wise men, or the need for flight to Egypt. This occurred after these events of dedication in Jerusalem. ■

GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY!

THE SCRIPTURES SAY, "It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. . . . All went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the LORD came upon them, and the glory of the LORD shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And

this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

“And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the LORD hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”—Luke 2:1-18

TAX PROBLEM FOR ISRAEL

This simple record of the birth of Jesus brings great appeal to the imagination and is well known by Christians throughout the world. Despite all the centuries since the event occurred it has more meaning today than ever before. It is a most beautiful story. The background for these events might cause people to say that the world was no different then than now, because we still have tax problems, and it was a tax problem that took Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

But the tax problem confronting the nation of Israel was of more serious significance to them than is ours. To the Israelites it was a reminder that they had lost their national independence. Under King Solomon the nation occupied a position of glory and respect among other nations. At the time Jesus was born, these ‘chosen people’ (Amos 3:2) of God were under the relentless and

exacting domination of the Romans, and this is why they were compelled to pay tribute to Caesar.

Israel had been a vassal nation since 606 B.C. That was the year when their last king, Zedekiah, was overthrown. He was conquered by Babylon, whose king at that time was Nebuchadnezzar. Practically the whole nation was taken captive to Babylon, where they remained for seventy years. Then that world empire of Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and Persians, and the Israelites were permitted to return to Judea, not as a free people, but under the domination of the Medes and Persians; then the Greeks; and finally, the Romans—as at the time Jesus was born. When Israel's last king was overthrown, God's prophet, Ezekiel, declared that their kingdom authority would be overturned three times (Ezek. 21:27), until he came whose right it was, and it would be given to him.

These three overturnings of kingdom authority mentioned in Ezekiel occurred after the humbling of Israel by Babylon, and the Babylonians were overthrown by the Medes and Persians, who were, in turn, overthrown by the Greeks, who were then overthrown by the Romans. Following this third 'overturning', no world empire has intervened between the overthrow of the last remnant of the Roman Empire and the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

THE RIGHTFUL RULER BORN

At that time, the rightful ruler of the world came upon the scene. Yet, while destined to be earth's greatest king, he was born under very humble circumstances and laid in a manger. There was no worldly fanfare or splendor associated with the birth of this king. Nor was his birth announced to the great and learned of Israel, but

rather to humble shepherds. Never before in history was the birth of a king announced by an angel, yet none of the 'great ones' of earth were advised of his birth.

The shepherds were surprised and startled by the appearance of the angel to them, causing the angel to say, "Fear not." The shepherds may well have thought that a dire calamity was to befall their nation, Israel, but they were quickly assured to the contrary. Instead, the angel said, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Israel was expecting a Messiah to come, and although he had come, they were unaware of who he was.

THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON

However, the Christ—Messiah—of promise was to be a Christ and a Savior not only to Israel, but to all nations. When Jesus was eight days old, he was presented at the Temple in Jerusalem. While there, the Prophet Simeon, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said of Jesus as he took the child in his arms, "LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."—Luke 2:29-32

To faithful Israelites like Simeon, and the shepherds in the hills of Judea, the words of the angel, and the Old Testament prophecies of Isaiah meant salvation or liberation from the Roman yoke of bondage. Isaiah 42:6 reads: "I the LORD . . . will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." And Isaiah 49:6

reads: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." The angelic message and these Old Testament prophecies have far greater depth of meaning than national salvation for the Israelites. The prophetic message of the angel was an assurance that both the Jews and Gentiles—all people—are to be saved from the bondage of sin and death. Jesus was God's gift to the world, and the Bible declares that those who believe on him are to have everlasting life.—John 3:16

This great event occurred almost twenty centuries ago, yet the millions who have believed in Christ have continued to die. Not a single individual from the day Jesus was born until today has escaped death. Salvation from death means that when God's due time comes, mankind will be given the opportunity of living forever as human beings right here upon the earth. This is why God created man, and placed him upon earth. The privilege of living forever was lost because of sin, and Jesus, as the Savior of mankind, will deliver the people from death.

WHAT IS THE 'DUE TIME'?

The 'due time' for this to happen, as mentioned in I Timothy 2:6, speaks of Jesus Christ, "who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." It was not the 'due time' when Jesus was born, nor has it yet come. The angel's message was a prophecy concerning future developments in the plan of God. Jesus was born to be the Savior of the world, but his death as man's Redeemer was necessary before anyone could be saved. But even though Jesus died to redeem the world nearly two thousand years ago, the opportunity to escape death through faith in him, and to live forever upon the earth, has not yet been offered to anyone.

During all of the centuries since Jesus lived, those who have believed in Jesus have been given the opportunity of laying down their lives sacrificially, as Jesus did. Through faith in his shed blood, the Christian life of sacrifice is acceptable to God. The Scriptures show that all who are faithful unto death will, in the resurrection, be rewarded with glory, honor, and immortality. (Rom. 2:7; Rev. 2:10) But this arrangement is for Christians only, and is operative during the Gospel dispensation. Those who gain that which the Scriptures describe as the the "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14; Rev. 20:4,6), will be associate kings with him during the thousand years of his reign for the blessing of all the families of the earth. It will be during that age that believers will not grow old and die, but will have the opportunity of living forever, if they obey the laws of the kingdom.

So, too, the angel's message of peace on earth and good will toward men is a prophecy of the future and is to be fulfilled. Many think of the angelic announcement as merely the expression of a beautiful sentiment or idealism which will never be realized by the nations. But, as other scriptures similar to Isaiah 9:6 speak of Jesus as "The Prince of Peace," so the prophecy in Isaiah, as well as the angelic announcement, will become realities.

The expression, 'good will toward men', has more particular reference to God's goodwill expressed on behalf of mankind through the birth of Jesus. It was further emphasized by Jesus' death as the Redeemer of mankind. His goodwill is finally to be revealed to all the nations through the establishment of Christ's kingdom. The Prophet Isaiah declares that then "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isa. 52:10

When we take this scriptural view of the angelic message, we can understand why the angel labeled it as 'good tidings of great joy'. This is a joy that is coming to the entire world, and it will be a lasting joy for all mankind. It will be a joy of health, and life, and peace; a joy in a renewed and restored earth, with the curse of sin and death removed. It will be a time when there will be no more war, nor strife of any kind; a time when the scripture will also be fulfilled, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—Rev. 21:4 ■

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THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

THE APOSTLE PAUL'S illustration in Ephesians 6:11-17, of putting on the whole armor of God, has to do with our relation to Christ as soldiers. We know that there are a great many illustrations picturing our association with Jesus from one standpoint and another, and all these illustrations convey a particular line of thought emphasizing something important in connection with our Christian life. And yet not many comprehend all of what it means to be a Christian.

By way of contrast with the illustration of a soldier, the Christian is pictured as a sheep, and Jesus as a shepherd. The sheep is meek, docile, and very dependent upon the shepherd, and there are some very sweet and beautiful lessons illustrated therein. Yet, if we were only to develop the qualities displayed by sheep, we could never be overcoming Christians.

The Christian needs some fighting qualities. He needs to display strength and fortitude. He needs to battle. We could never think of a fighting sheep, except perhaps a ram, because a sheep is a very meek animal. It is the LORD who has supplied us

with this illustration of Jesus as the Captain of our salvation, and we as soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul, nearing the close of his Christian career and summing up his activities, said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—II Tim. 4:7

CHRISTIAN WARFARE

The thought of the Christian's warfare is made very prominent in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It is not merely in the last chapter of this book that he introduces this thought, although it is there that he outlines the need for the Christian's armor. It is in this epistle that Paul introduces the fact that we as Christians are symbolically dwelling together with Christ in the heavenlies.

This reminds us of the symbolism of the new heavens, which is one of the pictures of the kingdom of Christ when it is established upon the earth. On the other hand we know that the kingdom of Christ now, and all down through the age is the kingdom in its preparatory stage. Nevertheless it is the kingdom, and we as his followers are spoken of as part of that kingdom. Thus, the Bible symbolizes the kingdom as the new heavens.—Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1,2

The very fact that we are pictured by faith as included in this exalted position with Jesus, means that we are in a position to become the special targets of the Adversary. We are in a position in which the powers of the "heavens . . . which are now" (II Pet. 3:7)—made up of Satan and the fallen angels—are arrayed against us. Paul reassures us, however, of the fact that the almighty power of God stands back of every follower of Jesus to guarantee the victory.

Emphasizing the extent and greatness of this power, Paul says it is the same power God exerted

on Jesus' behalf, in the raising of him from the dead and in exalting him to the high position in the divine realm: "Far above Every Authority, and Government, and Power, and Lordship, and Every Name being named." (Eph. 1:21, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) There is no other power in the whole universe that transcends that of the resurrected Jesus, and it was the power of God that placed him in that position.

Paul was not writing randomly. He was leading up to a great fact—that we as Christians are to have severe trials—that we will pass through evil days—and in order to stand we will need to put on the whole armor of God. He said, "We wrestle not [merely] against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Eph. 6:12

Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, by the mighty power of God, was highly exalted above these principalities and powers. And it is our privilege by faith to dwell in this exalted position with Christ. Yet, at the same time, we are in a very dangerous position unless we avail ourselves of the provision which God has made for our protection, which is the whole armor of God. Paul's use of this illustration of the armor of God is based upon the ancient armor of the Roman soldier. He mentions the various parts, and tells us what each part represents.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The psalmist, David, speaking for the Christian, said, "His [God's] truth shall be thy shield and buckler." (Ps. 91:4) The Old Testament also alludes to this type of armor. Let us consider this armor beginning with the 'helmet of salvation'. This reminds us of what Paul says in Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ:

Continued on Page 40

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me unto thy holy hill,
and to thy tabernacles.”*

Psalm 43:3

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San Luis Obispo	KSLO-TV 20	Jasper	WBG-TV 27
COLORADO		Marion	WSCT-TV 25
Crested Butte	CB-TV 23	Salem	W17AT
CONNECTICUT		KANSAS	
Hartford	WO6BL	Kiowa	KDE-TV 36
West Haven	WNHW-TV 23	Wichita	K51DN
FLORIDA		Wichita	K55FS
DeFuniak Springs	W24AM		

THE BIBLE ANSWERS TV PROGRAMS

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East Bernstadt	WO9BZ	Olean	W20AB
LOUISIANA		NORTH CAROLINA	
Baton Rouge	K11TT	Kannapolis	WKAY-TV 64
Opelousas	K22EP	Reidsville	WAEU-TV 14
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Muskegon	W40AR	Edmond	KO7TX
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Ely	K30KR	Sulpher	K20DO
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Columbia	KXI-TV 11	Brookings	KBSC-TV 49
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Ashland	WBII-TV 20	PENNSYLVANIA	
Bruce	WO7BN	Monroeville	WTWB-TV 29
NEBRASKA		Philadelphia	WGTW-TV 48
North Platte	K11TW	Pike County	WWPs-TV 8
NEW JERSEY		TENNESSEE	
Atlantic City	WWAC-TV 53	Cookeville	WKZS-TV 28
Hammonont	WOCC-TV 8	Harriman	Cable TV 7
Wildwood	W05AX	Heiskell	WBU-TV 12
NEW MEXICO		Lenoir City	W38AQ
Albuquerque	KAZO-TV 13	Oneida	Cable TV 4
NEVADA		Union City	WOBT-TV 9
Hawthorne	KWI-TV 13		
Henderson	W08CJ		

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Atlanta	AOC-TV 42	Kanab	K12ND
Beaumont	K09VO	Logan	K0T-TV 12
Bryan	KTAM-TV 22	VIRGINIA	
Bryan	KYLE-TV 28	Farmville	W52BS
Corpus Christi	KOAO-TV 50	Hampton	WPEN-TV 68
Dallas	KATA-TV 60	Hampton	W07CZ
Dallas	KMPX-TV-29	Hayes	WPEN-TV 51
Greenville	KTAQ-TV 47	Keysville	W39BN
Greenville	KER-TV 53	Montclair	WDRG-TV 24
Harlingen	Cable TV 30	WASHINGTON	
Harlingen	K52EA	Yakima	KEBB-TV 60
Keene	K60FS	WISCONSIN	
San Antonio	K25ES	Kenosha	WHKE-TV 55
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NOSTALGIA NETWORK

Programs are shown every Tuesday at 7:00 a.m. ET

"They that deal truly are His delight."—Prov. 12:22

The principle of truth is honesty, and it affects not only our words, but all of the conduct of life; yea, and also our thoughts. Hypocrisy is deceit of action. To deceive another is lying in one of its most unworthy forms. And, as the mainspring of life is in the heart and "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the conduct of life is arranged, we may see that a deceitful heart and a deceitful mind are the most dangerous things in the world. How jealously, therefore, God's people should guard their thoughts—in respect to every word and act, to the intent that no injustice is permitted, no falsehood is recognized. Such are the pure in heart. Such are the saints. Such will see God and be joint-heirs with their Lord.

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for it is the power of God unto salvation." Then he makes it even more explicit when he admonishes us to put on "for an helmet, the hope of salvation." (I Thess. 5:8) This is the hope which comes to us through the Word of truth, the Gospel, or good news, of Christ. The helmet of salvation would represent the truth, and its effect on us, as a protection for us. The fact that it is worn upon the head represents a mental grasp of the truth, of things which we should and must know.

There is a knowledge that Christians must have in order to put on the whole armor of God. The Prophet Jeremiah speaks of this knowledge when he says: "Let not the wise man glory [boast] in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight." (Jer. 9:23,24) This is the type of knowledge represented in the helmet of salvation.

It is only through a knowledge of the truth revealed in his Word that his lovingkindness can be seen. We find revealed in that Word that God has permitted evil for awhile, and for a just and loving purpose. Through the divine plan of the ages we read about God's love, and how it will be manifested in his kingdom. The truth reveals God to us, the God who delights in exercising lovingkindness. By getting God's viewpoint through his Word, we can see his love, and rejoice.

In order to have this knowledge as part of our armor, it is necessary to have more than a theoretical knowledge about the ages and dispensations in God's plan. There are teachings in his plan which must become an integral part of our lives if we are to have in place the helmet of salvation.

But we cannot know that part of God's plan, and have God revealed to us, without our willingness to serve him. Unless we become dead with Christ, unless we lay our all upon the altar of sacrifice, we will not know the true fundamentals of God's plan. Such knowledge must be received and acted upon, and become part of us, in order for us to truly know God.

There is another feature of God's plan that is necessary for us to know. The Apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (I John 3:14) What kind of Christian soldier would we be, if we did not know this? Unfortunately, often there is a tendency to forget or ignore it. What does it mean to 'love the brethren'? Is it something we can speak about in a light, offhanded way? No, it is more than words. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends."—John 15:13,14

As Jesus laid down his life for the brethren, we also ought to do the same. Real love for the brethren is a consuming love—a love that impels us at any cost, time, or place. It is to give, serve, bless, help, build up, regardless of the cost to us. That is what love for the brethren means. And then, we know we have passed from death unto life! All this is involved in the wearing of the helmet of salvation.

In Romans 5:1,2, we read, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." We note that we have not attained to this hope as yet, because the apostle continues in this passage to say, "But we triumph also in afflictions, knowing that affliction works out endurance."—vs. 3, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

Affliction must bring us near to God instead of driving us away from God, and when we endure, we receive God's approval. And when we receive God's approval, we have this hope, and not before. (Rom. 5:4, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) Not until we have stood the test, and endured cheerfully, do we have the final approval of God which leads to having "a hope [that] maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." (vs 5) Thus, we see that the helmet represents the real hope of salvation.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

The next part of the armor is the shield of faith. (Eph. 6:16) The word faith is used in two different ways in the New Testament. One is in the sense of expressing trust, confidence, or belief, as when Jesus said to his disciples in the boat who were in dread of being drowned, "O ye of little faith." (Matt. 8:26) The second is in connection with those things which we believe, described as "your most holy faith." (Jude 20) This most holy faith seems to be what is represented in the shield of faith.

The shield was not fastened to the soldier. Its effectiveness as a means of protection depended upon the soldier's ability to hold it and keep it in the right place. For the application of this principle to the Christian, it might be discouraging to think that so much depends upon our skills in maneuvering the shield, except that there is another part of the armor, and that is the breastplate of righteousness. We will consider both of these parts of the armor together, because the breastplate protects the same parts of the body as does the shield—the vital organs.

It was necessary for the soldier to hold the shield by his own strength and skill, whereas the

breastplate was bound to him. We cannot be skillful warriors in our own strength, yet, at the same time, in the Christian warfare the LORD expects us to make the best possible use of the Truth that we can. He expects us to use the truth, not only for our own defense, but for the defense of the brethren and the Truth itself. Our success as Christian soldiers does not depend upon what we can do, except that we must do what we can.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

It has been suggested that the breastplate represents our justification, and this is true. But we must not think of putting on the breastplate as we would an overcoat. Justification cannot take place until our lives are fully dedicated to God, and he has accepted our consecration. If the truth has had a proper effect on our hearts, and brought us wholly to the LORD, and we have become wholly his, then the truth is working in our lives.

The breastplate of righteousness also represents the truth protecting the body. If the truth really becomes part of our lives then we can be said to have on the breastplate. The fiery darts of the Adversary may get by the shield, because of our weakness, but if the truth has become part of us, those fiery darts will strike against the breastplate and fall, and we, as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, will be uninjured.

Another part of the armor was the girdle, called 'the girdle of truth'. It was closely associated with the breastplate. The truth is God's means of protecting his people, and we should never forget this. The girdle is a symbol of servitude. A certain principle is represented to which Paul alludes when he suggests that some may not receive the truth in the love of it. (II Thess. 2:10) We know love is present when we see it reaching out to

bless. This is not a matter of accomplishing great works, but love that has the viewpoint of unselfishness.

Our lives must be filled with the love of God that desires to help and bless, whether it is in the home ecclesia, among our fellowmen, or anywhere else in the world. And, if we are really filled with the love of God, this desire will be fulfilled—not through great works, but through an unselfish spirit. We must not think to use the truth for personal advantage, for then such an attitude is equivalent to having the girdle lacking to hold the armor in place. Without the girdle, the armor will fall off. So, as Paul says, we are to put on love—it is the bond of perfectness. (Col. 3:14) Divine love in action is the girdle, which binds the armor in place.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

We now come to the sword of the Spirit. This is a wonderful weapon. It is the only part of the armor that is offensive rather than defensive. With it we can go forth and really fight, whereas, the rest of the armor protects us. Do we go forth to slay people? Or, do we go forth as peacemakers, fighting for peace as ministers of reconciliation? Strange as it may seem, the principal use of the sword of the Spirit is on ourselves.

This use of the sword is mentioned in two scriptures: "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) We note that it is the Word of God that does all the cutting, and it separates truth from error, spiritual from natural, and as a discerner of our

thoughts it brings the very thoughts and intents of our hearts into subjection to the divine will.

The other use of this sword is as follows: “(The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations [*Margin, reasonings*], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (II Cor. 10:4,5) Paul is not saying that we should not be reasoning Christians. We are to apply the test of reason to every feature of God’s plan. It is false reasoning that is to be cast down; and false reasoning is cast down with the sword of the Spirit.

The flesh may say that it is not necessary to follow such exact lines of thought, and that we can deviate a little. Or, it may say, that it is not necessary to take such a narrow view, and that we do not have to keep our sacrifice on the altar all the time—rather we should relax once in awhile. If we do not bring these reasonings down with the sword of the Spirit, we will soon reason ourselves back out into the world. It is this proper use of the sword of the Spirit on ourselves that is so important. It keeps us in the struggle against all of our other foes, fighting the good fight of faith daily and hourly.

THE SANDALS OF PEACE

The last item of the armor is described as ‘the preparation of the Gospel of peace’, the sandals of peace. (Eph. 6:15) This indicates that our daily walk, our entire activity, our whole course in life, must be ordered in harmony with God’s revealed truth. If God’s truth has been understood and appreciated in the proper way, it will produce a peacemaking quality in our lives. We will not be arguing with everybody, nor be troublemakers

wherever we go. If the Gospel of peace is directing our course in life, we will be peacemakers, and wherever we go we will promote peace. Our presence in the meetings, home, factory, office, will be accompanied by peace, joy, and happiness, and those we contact will discern this.

Paul follows the description of this armor of God with the words: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."—Eph. 6:18

While prayer is not part of the armor, it is a very important matter in the Christian warfare. Prayer keeps us in constant contact with our Captain and our Heavenly Father, just as soldiers in the field keep in contact with headquarters. With all these aids, may the LORD help us to continue fighting this good fight of faith, being faithful unto the end. ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

DECEMBER 5—"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."—Joshua 24:15 (Z.'01-284 Hymn 365)

DECEMBER 12—"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."—Proverbs 23:7 (Z.01-325 Hymn 198)

DECEMBER 19—"Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."—I Kings 20:11 (Z.94-155 Hymn 164)

DECEMBER 26—"Be thou strong and very courageous."—Joshua 1:7 (Z.02-285 Hymn 184)

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."

—John 14:16-18

WHEN JESUS INDICATED to his disciples that he would soon depart from them, they became very sorrowful, not understanding the necessity of such a course on the part of their Master. Jesus knew their inability to understand fully any explanation that he might offer, and explained that before they could understand, it was necessary for them to receive the Holy Spirit, which he referred to as the Comforter.

While the *Common Version* of the Bible uses the personal pronouns 'he' and 'whom' when referring to the Comforter, this by no means proves that the Spirit of comfort which later came upon the waiting disciples was the third person in a trinity of gods. As our text indicates, this same Holy Spirit is also spoken of by Jesus as the 'Spirit of truth.'

John 16:13 also refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, as follows: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come." In this passage the personal pronoun 'himself' is a translation of the Greek word *heautou*. In our *Common Version*, this same word is rendered in the masculine, feminine, common and neuter genders. As an example of its use in the neuter gender we have the following: "For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself [*heautou*]."—Matt. 6:34

Later translations of the Bible, such as Professor *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*, use the pronouns 'which' instead of 'whom', and 'it' instead of 'he', when referring to the Holy Spirit. The word 'ghost' as in 'Holy Ghost' is also dropped in these more recent translations—the word 'Spirit' being properly used, instead.

The Greek word *parakletos* is the one rendered "Comforter" in the passages under consideration. The word means 'to help', 'to encourage, assist and strengthen'. From this we see that the Master's promise to his disciples meant that the Holy Spirit, which the Heavenly Father would send in his name and as his representative, would be to them a present help in every time of need.

MINISTRATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus gives us to understand that all the various ministrations of the Holy Spirit are under his direction, saying, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." (John 14:18) Jesus identifies the Holy Spirit with himself, as being his representative. Because the Holy Spirit has been with the church to guide her, Jesus could say, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [Greek, age]."—Matt. 28:20

The power of God has been, and still is, with the whole church, yet each receives his share of this holy influence by individually connecting with the proper channels of the Spirit. The truth itself is the main channel of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is called the Spirit of truth. This is understandable when we remember that the entire Word of God, which is the truth, has been given to the church through the ministration of the power of God as that holy influence operated upon the minds of the prophets and apostles and our Lord Jesus Christ. This means that our minds as Christians, hold communion with the mind of the Heavenly Father through the study of his Word. Through the power of his mind, he guides us and comforts us in every time of need. All who are closely associated with the truth and have its Spirit as the guiding principle of their lives are to that extent also channels through which the Spirit aids and influences others.

The comforting influences of the Spirit of God may be imparted for the blessing of individual members of the church through the faithful ministry of other individuals. Jesus himself was filled with, and wholly controlled by, the Spirit of his Father. He was a comfort to his disciples while he was personally with them; and, since Pentecost, the same Spirit, reaching the church through the Word of God, continues to comfort the followers of Jesus in proportion as they are faithful in building up one another in the most holy faith.

This thought is beautifully expressed in the following message from the Apostle Paul: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let

each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 2:1-5

THE SPIRIT OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

There is nothing in the Master’s reference to the Holy Spirit as a Comforter or a helper for the church that implies the thought of another god, or of a trinity of gods. The context shows, to the contrary, that the comforting, or strengthening of the Holy Spirit is the work of the Father and the Son. The influence of both the Father and the Son reach the church through the written Word.

It is the Spirit of both, because the Father and the Son are wholly at one in mind and will, and the operation of the Spirit in the hearts and minds of Christians is designed to bring them into a similar oneness of purpose with respect to the divine plan. Jesus prayed on behalf of his followers, saying, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth. . . . That they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”—John 17:17-21

That the oneness of the Father and the Son is not physical, but rather a oneness of purpose which is held by two individuals is shown by the fact that each member of the church, when finally united with Christ in glory, will share the same oneness. This is because they will be fully sanctified, or set apart, by the Spirit of both the Father and the Son, for the accomplishment of the same divine purpose.

That the Holy Spirit is not a person, but rather the power or influence of God, is further shown by Jesus’ statement, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63) This statement of the Master is merely another way of

explaining the manner in which the influence of God's thoughts fill and control the Christian life. His words expressed the mind, the will, the spirit of God.

In order to be filled with the Spirit, it is necessary for us to study the Word of truth. There is no possible way of being filled with the Spirit of God apart from the study of God's Word, because God does not reveal his mind to Christians independent of that Word. We have the privilege of assisting each other in the study of the Word, and through this mutual fellowship and interest, to encourage one another in following more closely the leadings of the Spirit. But the basis of this fellowship must be the Word of God. Paul expresses the thought this way: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the LORD is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the LORD; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Eph. 5:17-20

THE SPIRIT NOT BY MEASURE

John 3:34 reads: "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." Here again the words of God are shown to be synonymous with the Spirit. Jesus always did and said the things that were pleasing to his Father because he was filled with the Spirit of his Father. He was filled and wholly controlled by the Spirit, because the revelation of the divine will to him was without measure—nothing was held back that he needed to know in order to be wholly sanctified and wholly controlled by the will and Spirit of his God.

Jesus was perfect, and by nature wholly devoted to God—there was nothing in his being to hinder the inflow of the Spirit of God by which he was at all times filled. Our goal as followers of the Master is, likewise, to be filled with the Spirit. But the imperfections of our flesh hinder our receiving of the Spirit of God without measure. The perfect man, Jesus, who was wholly in the image of God, could be in fullest harmony with his Father and with the Spirit of holiness in every particular.

God does not limit the outpouring of his Spirit upon the followers of Jesus. Rather, it is the degree of degradation through the fall that encumbers Christians, and that limits the measure by which they are filled with the Spirit. It is the duty and privilege of each of the consecrated to seek earnestly to know and to do the LORD's will. We are to keep our own wills in subjection, that they may not oppose the influence of the Spirit of truth in our lives. Yet, no member of the fallen race is capable of receiving the LORD's Spirit to the full; that is, to be in absolute harmony with God in every particular and at all times.

The scriptures which speak of God's Spirit being given without measure, and of being 'filled' with it, would be meaningless if the Holy Spirit were a person. But when we recognize that it is the power or influence of God which he exerts in the lives of his people by means of his Spirit-inspired Word, then we can understand how it is possible for some to be filled more, and some less, with his Spirit. We can see that consecrated believers who resign themselves wholly to the LORD, ignoring their own wills and preferences, can be more nearly filled with the Spirit than those whose consecration is not so absolute.

Those who are seeking to know and do God's will are said to be "led of the Spirit," (Gal. 5:18) are taught of the Spirit, and, through the inspiration of the Word, can "serve" the LORD "in newness of Spirit." (Rom. 7:6) To continue under the leading and instruction of the Holy Spirit, they must themselves have a "spirit of meekness." (Gal. 5:22,23; 6:1) To all fully devoted to doing God's will, we are told that the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" can give the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."—Eph. 1:17,18

QUICKENED BY THE SPIRIT

The Apostle Paul said, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8:11) Here we are reminded that it was the Spirit or power of God that raised Jesus from the dead.

This is a reference to the actual resurrection and exaltation of Jesus as further described by the apostle in Ephesians 1:19,20, where we read, "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." It was a power of God beyond the influence of his Word that raised Jesus from the dead following the completion of his sacrifice as man's Redeemer.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, he was at once surrounded by a new environment—a heavenly environment. He entered into the actual

presence of his Father, and was a partaker of his divine nature. He could from thenceforth carry on with the Father's work without the limitations of flesh and blood. All of these glorious realities of the actual resurrected life of Jesus are used by the apostle to illustrate the newness of life in which the Spirit-energized Christian is now privileged to walk. This new life of a Christian is referred to as a resurrected life. Paul said: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."—Col. 3:1-4

This newness of life is the result of being quickened by the Spirit. This quickening is not by a direct infusion of divine power into the mortal body of the Christian, as is sometimes erroneously supposed, but an energizing of the heart and mind through study and belief of the exceeding great and precious promises of God, all of which are Spirit-inspired.

To be filled, and consequently energized, by the Spirit of God is possible only in proportion as we give heed to the sanctifying power of the Word of God. The Spirit of truth through the Word has indicated various ways by which we may cooperate with the LORD in order to be filled and energized by his Spirit. We are, for example, to pray for the Spirit. If we neglect prayer we are neglecting one of the agencies by which the Spirit of truth energizes us.

If we neglect to assemble ourselves with others of "like precious faith" (II Pet. 1:1) when opportunity affords, we will fail to get the benefits and helps which "every joint supplieth." (Eph. 4:16) These helps include those which God has promised to the church as a whole, and are available through various members set by him in the body as it pleases him for the exposition of his word. We cannot be isola-

tionist Christians and expect to enjoy a rich infilling of the sanctifying power of God's Spirit.—I Cor. 12:25-28

DOING GOD'S WILL

To be filled and quickened by the Spirit of God means to be energized to an active participation in the doing of his will. The depth of our consecration will be the measure of our faithfulness in laying down our lives in the divine service. Proper consecration, however, is only that which is made to the LORD, based upon instructions in his Word. Some have consecrated themselves to a sect, and consequently have received a sectarian spirit of love for that particular organization. The devotion of such is to the sect, and their service and sacrifice are on behalf of that sect, rather than the LORD.

Others, recognizing the value of one or more moral principles, have consecrated themselves never to violate those principles. These receive, at best, merely the spirit of morality, which, while good so far as it goes, yet often leads to a self-satisfied, self-righteous spirit. Along this line there are those who pride themselves in their patience, or possibly are even proud of their humility.

Still others consecrate themselves to 'work' for the LORD, deciding that the LORD's work is that which is promoted by some particular denomination or organization of their choice. To these, the particular kind of work with which they busy themselves does not seem to be of paramount importance, so long as there is plenty to be done, and they have a prominent place in it.

Oftentimes the spirit of work for the LORD by which those are infused who make a consecration to works, so energizes them that they are so continuously

engaged in a frenzy of activity that they have little or no time to study God's Word, and thus to ascertain the kind of work the LORD wants done.

It is true, of course, that a consecration along any of these lines is far better than for one to be devoted to the service of evil, and thus to be energized by the spirit of evil. Any of them is better, too, than to be devoted wholly to the carrying out of one's own selfish desires. Certainly, to be devoted to almost any enterprise that is not in itself evil, is better than an aimless life of consecration to nothing.

TRUE CONSECRATION

True consecration to do the will of God, however, differs from all others. It is exemplified in our Lord Jesus Christ who, in his consecration, expressed the proper spirit of devotion to his Father, saying, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:7) These words reveal that Jesus' consecration was to do his Father's will. For Jesus, the Father's will was not that which he might himself decide to do based upon his own preferences. Neither was it that which his mother or brethren or friends might consider to be the proper thing to which he should devote his time and strength.

No, the will of God for Jesus was that which had been written in the "volume of the Book." His consecration, therefore, was an agreement to be guided by all of the Spirit-inspired instructions of the Word of God. Not only was the Master guided by these instructions, but he was also energized by the Spirit-inspired promises of the Old Testament which set before him a joy that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shameful end of the consecrated way.—Heb. 12:2

Jesus, therefore, is our example. His consecration reveals what our consecration should be; namely, to do the will of God, as that will is revealed to us through his Word. If our consecration is truly unto the LORD, it will cause us to bow to no other will but his. If our consecration is complete, it will permit no stipulations nor reservations. This true consecration will lead us to present our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” (Rom. 12:1) The spirit of consecration, causing us to yield to the instructions of God’s Word, will bring about a transforming of our minds as we endeavor daily to study the Word of God to prove what is his “good, and acceptable, . . . will.”—Rom. 12:2

The measure in which we are quickened by the Spirit depends on how fully we yield ourselves to the influences of the Word of God. The word ‘holy’ as in Holy Spirit, is of Anglo-Saxon origin from a root meaning ‘whole’ or ‘completeness’. From this standpoint, the Holy Spirit is a whole or complete spirit. That is, its influence through the Word of God reveals the entire will of God. To the extent that we, as Christians, are energized by the Holy Spirit, we become Godlike and Christlike.

If we have received the Holy Spirit in any good measure, we are in that proportion rounded out in all parts of our characters, and are better balanced than ever before in our judgments, having what the Apostle Paul described as the “spirit . . . of a sound mind.”—II Tim. 1:7 ■

ROMANIAN TRIP REPORT

RECENTLY, TIM AND Dawn Krupa made a two-week trip to visit our brethren in Romania. Daily meetings were held at various classes, with studies, question meetings, singing and fellowship. Attendance at the meetings ranged from 30 to 120. Often several classes would join together, resulting in standing room only for many. The zeal and hospitality of these dear ones was found to be of great spiritual refreshment, as was their high interest in discussion of the LORD's Word, and in living the consecrated life.

Our brethren in Romania have had much difficulty, especially during the fifty-year period from World War II through the totalitarian regime of President Ceausescu. In those days they were not allowed to hold church meetings, and small groups met secretly in homes and apartments. They were subject to government raids and searches. Some were put in prison. They kept their religious books in suitcases, just in the event that an emergency departure would be necessary. Through all this, they kept their faith, they kept the truth alive.

Their daily lives were a witness to all that they had been with Jesus. They also taught their children God's plan. They were called, "the people who talk about the kingdom." Finally, when the totalitarian government fell in 1989, communications were established with brethren in America. Their main source of Scriptural guidance has come from

Studies in the Scriptures, and they are eager to learn more about the later writings of Pastor Russell.

The lack of communication between the Romanians and the rest of the Bible Student movement has not in any way dampened their clear understanding or interest in what is presently taking place in God's plan. They are keenly interested in prophetic fulfillment such as the events involving Israel, and the evidences of the Lord's Second Presence. Their understanding is clear that we now live in the closing days of the Gospel Age, the time for the completion of the 'bride class', and are living lives of Christian consecration, witness, and service.

A new way of communicating with these brethren has opened up via E-mail, and it is one which the younger brethren are eager to use. The Bible Students at Cluj possess computerized E-mail capability, and are encouraging their brethren everywhere to use it for communication with them. Your brethren in Romania send their warmest love and greetings, and solicit prayers on their behalf. ■

OBITUARIES

The following brethren have recently finished their Christian course. We wish to express our sincere sympathy to the families and friends in the loss of these dear ones. We appreciate information concerning any brethren to be included in this list.

Sr. Betty Suraci Inclima, New Haven, CT—October 8.
Age, 67.

Br. Bill Jones, Orlando, FL—October 9. Age, 76.

Sr. Stas Wigda Pawlik, Detroit, MI—October 13.

Sr. Pearl Mead, Canyon Lake, CA—October 16. Age, 80.

Sr. Helena Gaw, New Jersey—October 17. Age, 74.

Br. Walter Jackson, Los Angeles—October 25. Age, 87.

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

JOY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Dear Ones in Christ: We do so look forward to your magazine. It brings us such joy and encouragement! We thank you all for the wonderful work you are doing. May God bless you and guide your good work. With Christian love.—TN

CLOSER TO GOD

Dear "Frank and Ernest": I heard the tail end of your WOR radio show last Sunday. I am very impressed with it—it made me feel very close to God. Please send me the free booklet, called: "*How God Answers Prayer.*" Sincerely yours. —NY

A TRUE BLESSING

Dear Dawn Publications: I am sorry that I cannot afford to send anyone other than myself your wonderful, inspiring magazine. Those

who have not read any of them do not understand the inspiration and help that I have received from them, but being alone and on disability hasn't been an easy task, and I wish that I could do more. But thank you so very much for your wonderful work. You see, you have truly been a blessing in my life. Don't ever stop your work! Not ever! Sincerely.—VA

WE LOVE YOUR BOOKS

Dear Dawn: I am adding \$5.00 extra to my check for postage and handling. We love your books. Where have you been all of our lives? Thanks.—AL

EXPLORING

To Whom It May Concern: I happened to see your TV program dealing with death. This is certainly a departure from accepted Christian

thinking, and I would be most interested in following up by reading the booklet you offer free, and comparing it step-by-step with your Bible references. I thank you for the offer of "*Hope beyond the Grave.*" Perhaps in the future I will want to contribute to your cause, but as of now I would just like to explore a bit first.—TN

INSPIRING AND HELPFUL

Video Cassette Department: I truly enjoyed this last convention tape you sent to me. Thank you very, very much for such inspiring and helpful tapes to do witness work with out here in California. I must once more thank you gratefully from my heart, truly and send me more of these types of tapes. Thanks again. With Christian love.—CA

ORDERS TAPES FOR HOME-SCHOOL GROUP

To Whom It May Concern: Our home-school

group is currently studying ancient Egypt, and would like to borrow the following video tapes: "*The Great Pyramid,*" and "*Archaeology Proves the Bible.*" Since we are currently studying ancient Egypt, we could use this film as soon as you can send it. Thank you for your time and consideration in lending me these tapes. I am, Yours very sincerely.—LA

BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN BOOKS

Dawn Publications: Please send me the following books, and thank you so very much for these beautifully written books. They are so full of understanding and truth. You should be very happy with your great work for our Heavenly Father! Could you please send me the book, "*The Battle of Armageddon,*" and "*The Time is at Hand.*" Much thanks.—VA

SO CLEAR ANYONE CAN UNDERSTAND!

Dear Christians: I can hardly wait for my next magazine. The articles are so interesting and bring out true Bible teachings so clearly that anyone can understand them—it is an eye-opener to the Bible. I thought that I would send a renewal subscription to friends and hope they may become better Christians from reading them. I do thank you from my heart for introducing the magazine to me. God bless you all.—IN

EXPRESSES HER MOTHER'S THANKS

Dear Dawn Brethren: Mother is thanking you for your dedicated work in serving the brethren with The Dawn magazine, and other books. They all contain our Heavenly Father's plans and promises from his words of wisdom which he communicated by

the prophets, angels, and even kings. Mother thanks you for the *Polish Dawn* with its excellent format. I am thankful that it is in print in the Polish language. This makes it easier for me to read and digest. All my other aids are also in the Polish language.

Our prayers are that our Lord's words will soon be fulfilled, and the church will be complete and have gone to their reward. Then Jesus Christ, head and body, will get to the last phase of God's promise—to raise all men from their graves and give them an opportunity to regain the oneness with God that Adam had before he sinned. My prayers are that in some way this donation I send will aid in continuing the work you are so ably doing in our Heavenly Father's cause. My Christian love to all.—NY ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

The speakers listed below are routed through the Pilgrim Department of The Dawn. Visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible:

M. Balko

Pittsburgh, PA December 22

D. Bruce

San Luis Obispo, CA December 3

Palo Alto, CA 4

Clear Lake, CA 5

The listings in this schedule have been arranged by local ecclesias cooperating with the Dawn:

W. Blicharz

Phoenix, AZ December 27-30

B. Brown

Phoenix, AZ December 27-30

R. Goodman

Phoenix, AZ December 27-30

R. Gorecki

Claymont, DE December 1

Phoenix, AZ 27-30

G. Passios

Middletown, NY December 15



THE PEOPLE THAT walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. . . For 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 . . . The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, . . . from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.—Isaiah 9:2,6,7

CONVENTIONS

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

SAN DIEGO, CA (Thanksgiving Weekend) November 28-December 1--Radison Hotel, 1433 Camino del Rio South, San Diego 92108. For reservations contact the hotel at (800) 222-2222 or (619) 260-0111, or by mail. Contact: Sandra Bierman, 624 Alta Mira Ct., Vista, CA 92083 for information. Phone: (619) 230-1717

PHOENIX NEW YEAR'S CONVENTION, December 27-30--Wyndham Garden Hotel, 427 N. 44th Street. For information, contact: Mrs. Esther Bachorski, 13223 Palmwood Dr., Sun City West, AZ 85375. Phone: (602) 546-0430

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA CONVENTION, February 1,2--Cape Coral Masonic Temple, 244 Santa Barbara Blvd., Cape Coral, FL 33910. For information, contact: Ed Futchkar, 3460 N. Key Drive, 306E, North Fort Myers, FL 33903. Phone: (941) 977-3008

CHICAGO BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION, DECEMBER 28,29--Elk

Grove Village High School, 500 W. Elk Grove Village Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL 60017. Contact Joy Kandel, Secretary, 802 Fairmont Ct., Des Plaines, IL 60018. Phone: (847) 298-6579

SACRAMENTO, CA, February 14,15,16--Beverly Garland Hotel, 1780 Tribute Rd., Sacramento. Cut-off date for reservations: January 31, 1997. Please send reservations directly to: Mrs. Betty Lankford, 6000 19th Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95826. Phone: (916) 457-0569

FLORIDA BIBLE STUDENTS CONVENTION, March 8,9,10--Holiday Inn, 304 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL 32801. For reservations, request special convention rate before Feb. 8. Phone (800) 523-3405. For other information, contact Leonard Wesol, 219 Paul McClure Ct., Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 695-3309

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION--July 26-31, 1997