

## The Recovery of Waste

***“They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.”***

***—Isaiah 61:4***

**IT HAS BEEN REPORTED** that, on average, everyone in the U.S.A. disposes of more than two pounds of cellulose each day. Cellulose is an abundant organic compound on Earth. It is found in all growing plants and trees. Paper is made from it, as are cartons and packing materials. A house for man's shelter depends on it since a large percentage is used in dwellings, even if the exterior is of brick or stone. It should not be

surprising, therefore, that it makes up 70% of all waste produced by society.

### GREEN CHEMISTRY AWARDS

In 1995, President Clinton launched what is called “The Presidential Green Chemistry” awards. These are awarded if the chemistry of a new technology reduces or eliminates the use, or generation, of hazardous or polluting substances. The award is a handmade crystal sculpture representing Earth as a round bottom flask, a flask that is a common piece of equipment for the chemist. In 1999, the *“Chemical and Engineering News Journal”* reported that five awards were received according to the five categories for these awards. One award is given to small business, and another to academia. An award is given to a company that produces a safer chemical, and to one that develops a new chemical synthesis that is more efficient, and less waste-producing. Finally, an award is given for a process reducing disposal of solvents. Two of the awards in 1999 involved reducing cellulose waste. Biofine received the small business award for a process that will convert cellulosic waste to a useful compound from papermill sludge, municipal solid waste, unrecyclable waste paper, waste wood or agricultural residues. Carnegie Mellon University of Pittsburgh received an award for developing activators for bleaching wood pulp, reducing cellulosic waste, and eliminating harmful

by-products. Both processes, when implemented, will be a benefit to society in reducing waste.

‘Waste’ is defined in many ways. It refers to land that has no utility, such as a desert. It refers to something of no value, as refuse, garbage, rubbish, sewage. It is something that needs disposition in one way or another. Our text from Isaiah 61:4 tells of God’s great recovery process of waste that starts with Messiah’s ministry.

## SIN CAUSES WASTE

The first of the great wastes that occurred upon earth was when father Adam sinned and plunged all his posterity into sin and death. In man’s experiences since then, whenever wars are fought and the young men of nations kill each other in the conflicts that occur, we say, “What a great waste this is of young manhood.” It truly is. Death is man’s great enemy that causes the waste of all mankind. Even under normal circumstances, disease, famine, and raging elements of earth bring premature death to many. We read, “In Adam all die” (I Cor. 15:22): all await the wasting away of the human body that ends in death.

Along with the death penalty came the cursing of the earth, or as recorded, “cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”—Gen. 3:17-19

The earth became a difficult place to grow the required ‘herbs’ or sustenance as food for man, because waste materials came forth instead. As described by the Apostle Paul: “that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.” (Heb. 6:8) The earth has become a huge waste dump for the disposition of the wastes arising from the penalty of sin and death.

All of this is graphically described by the Prophet Isaiah in the 24th chapter of his book. No one is spared. All have to suffer the consequences. He says: “Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with

the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.”—Isa. 24:1-6

## ISRAEL’S FAVOR

In these verses we find not only a description of the curse upon mankind and the earth, but also upon man’s social arrangement, pictured by the earth, which has to be wasted in order to make way for God’s kingdom. After the fall of man, and the further despoiling of the earth by “the angels which kept not their first estate” (Jude 6), God started to develop the nation of Israel, which he likens to a man preparing a place in the cursed earth for a vineyard with the expectation that it would bring forth luscious grapes. Instead, wild, sour grapes were brought forth. Isaiah wrote, “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.”—Isa. 5:1,2

This vineyard is clearly defined by Isaiah in the seventh verse, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant.” God gave Israel every advantage that any nation could receive, but they failed. As Paul asked, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom. 3:1,2) The Messiah was sent to them, but they rejected him. Not only did they reject him, but, as Jesus forecast in Matthew 21:33-40, they would slay him. He used the same illustration of a vineyard and how it was unlawfully possessed by the husbandmen representing the Scribes and Pharisees. When the owner of the vineyard (God, the Father) sent his Son (Jesus) to these husbandmen, they sought to solidify their possession

of the vineyard by killing the son. Every detail of this parable was fulfilled.

### THE VINEYARD WASTED

When Israel rejected Jesus, he rejected them, saying, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matt. 23:38) We note how accurately Isaiah prophesied of this happening when he asked: “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.”—Isa. 5:3-6

As Jesus said that it would be, so it happened that Israel’s house was left desolate. The nation was completely devastated by the Roman armies and the people scattered throughout the earth. Even the land came under the control of people who did not cultivate it, causing it to become a literal wasteland. These, also, jealously guarded the land and would not let any others take possession of it. Christian nations wanted it, but one crusade after another failed to dislodge the Moslems who had taken control of the land.

### JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

When Jesus began his ministry, he went into the synagogue of Nazareth on a Sabbath and stood up to read. The book of the Prophet Isaiah was brought to him and he unrolled the scroll to the 61st chapter and read the first two verses, saying: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” (Luke 4:18,19) He closed the book after reading half of verse 2, and said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (vs. 21) Indeed, this marvelous prophecy of Isaiah had begun its fulfillment. The one who would be able to bring reality to

these wonderful words of Isaiah had arrived, and had begun the necessary tasks of his ministry.

Jesus was to demonstrate the wonderful works of God's kingdom in the three and one-half years of his ministry, before voluntarily succumbing to death in providing the ransom price. (I Tim. 2:6) The end of his life upon earth opened the way for fulfilling every feature of Isaiah's prophecy, including the recovery of the wastes of earth mentioned in the fourth verse. Out of the wastes of mankind the first to be recovered are those who will be the "Priests of the Lord," who will also be called "Ministers of our God."—Isa. 61:6

## THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH

The great waste recovery project starts with those selected in the Gospel Age to be "joint-heirs" with Jesus. (Rom. 8:17) The recovery of these from the depths of sin is shown as a remarkable transformation when they are able to say (as the bride of the lamb), "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isa. 61:10) The 61st chapter is primarily a prophecy telling of the Lord's ministry leading to the selection of those who will be joint-heirs with him.

## RECOVERY OF ISRAEL

It does not stop with the work of the Gospel Age. It also was intended to forecast the recovery of Israel from its desolate condition. In our day we have witnessed the regathering of the nation of Israel, which began in 1878. As prophesied by Ezekiel, they had been "gathered from many nations upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste."—Ezek. 38:8, *Revised Standard Version*

Not alone were people recovered and brought back to the land of promise, but the land itself began to be recovered from its desolate condition. The new tenants started to cultivate the land and to use irrigation to grow crops, as the land was converted from a waste to a useful condition. There cannot be found a more dramatic illustration of this remarkable recovery work than that painted by the Prophet Ezekiel in the 37th chapter of his book. The desolation of Israel is pictured by a

valley of dry bones. “These bones are the whole house of Israel.” (Ezek. 37:11) The prophet saw a fulfillment of God’s promise to restore Israel as these bones came together to be followed by sinews, flesh and skin covering them. Finally, breath was given to them “and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”—Ezek. 37:10

Now, as a recognized nation with much capability of sustaining itself, Israel is a harbinger of God’s coming kingdom of blessing for all the people of the earth. Jesus likened the regathering of Israel to the fig tree blossoming. He said, “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it [God’s kingdom] is near, even at the doors.”—Matt. 24:32,33

## THE RECOVERY OF MANKIND

The events in the world, especially involving the nation of Israel, indicate the proximity of God’s kingdom and the time when all mankind will be salvaged during the glorious reign of Christ. The healing works of Jesus’ ministry on earth will become available for all people as the wonderful work of raising the dead begins. The recovery from death will begin as the words of Jesus are fulfilled as he himself said: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good [the church], to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil [have not been consecrated to a life of doing good], to the resurrection of judgment.”—John 5:28,29, *RSV*

The Judgment Day work will be an operation of recovery from the waste of the past. The works mentioned by Jesus in quoting Isaiah’s prophecy, as ‘healing the brokenhearted’ (Isa. 61:1), or those broken by the trials and adversities of the former life, the ‘deliverance to the captives,’ or the resurrection work for those in the prison house of death, the ‘recovering of sight to the blind,’ or the bringing of all men to a knowledge of the Truth (I Tim. 2:4), the ‘setting at liberty them that are bruised,’ or the freedom for mankind from sin, death, and the dominion of Satan (Luke 4:18), were demonstrated in part by his ministry, but will be fulfilled in Christ’s kingdom.

The work of the kingdom will be one of comforting all that mourn, or, as stated in Revelation 21:4, “God shall wipe away all tears from their

eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” The world will receive the ‘oil of joy for mourning.’ The great waste of ashes, the ashes of death in particular, will be replaced by the beauty of the resurrection.

Then God’s great recovery process of waste will be complete!

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## When Believers Fall

***Key Verse: “Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.”  
—II Samuel 12:9***

***Selected Scriptures:  
II Samuel 11:2-5,  
14-18, 26, 27;  
12:9, 13-15***

**EVEN THE MOST** faithful of God’s people must face the reality that they are not perfect, and as such are prone to the weaknesses, imperfections and sinful failings of the flesh. We all must learn that, while God loves and cares for his people, he never condones sin in any form, and will, when necessary, give us the needed discipline and correction if we fall short.

David was in Jerusalem, as his army was engaged in battle with the Ammonites. Walking about on the roof of the house, he first fell victim to inordinate desire as he looked down on the lovely Bathsheba (II Sam. 11:2), and then to the sin of adultery. (vs. 4) David’s sin was compounded because he was Bathsheba’s king. It was inexcusable for him as king to commit such a serious violation of

God’s law.

As so often happens, one sin led to another. As the result of David’s sin, Bathsheba conceived. Her husband, Uriah the Hittite, was off at war, and all that had happened would soon become known. David attempted to cover up the problem by calling Uriah back from the battle to Jerusalem (vs. 6), and telling him to go home to his wife. He thought that once Bathsheba’s condition was publicly known, all would conclude that she had conceived by her own husband, and all would be well. Uriah, however, chose to honor the position he had as a soldier in the ongoing war with the Ammonites, and refused to go home. (vs. 11) David then ordered his general, Joab, to have Uriah killed by setting him in the



forefront of the battle. Sure enough, Uriah died while defending the kingdom. David then took Bathsheba as his wife.—vs. 27

Nathan, the prophet of God, confronted David with his sin, and pronounced God's threefold judgment in the matter. First, violence would plague David's household. (II Sam. 12:11) Second, his wives would be taken and sinned against in a manner similar to his taking of Bathsheba—only it would be publicly known, not hidden like his sin. (vss. 11,12) Third, Bathsheba's child would die. (vs. 14) This third judgment was actually an act of grace. Rather than David dying, as he deserved, God would spare him. The child would die, however, so that there would be no fruitage from David's sin with Bathsheba.

David took Nathan's words to heart. He properly confessed that he had sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, and against God and his laws. Being a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14), David responded in genuine repentance and humility. God granted him forgiveness, but he did not change the consequences. David's punishment would come. However, because of his repentance, his relationship with God was restored, and he led Israel to the heights of its kingdom.

This account shows us that no position or place of privilege puts one above God's law. Further, confronting our sins honestly, and in humility, is a key element to being restored back into the favor of God. Finally, this lesson shows us that God is rich in mercy and forgives those who truly repent, but there are consequences to sin that he will neither compromise nor change.

## When Tasks Overwhelm

**Key Verse:** *“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”*  
—*I Kings 3:9*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*I Kings 2:1-4; 3:3-10*

**SOLOMON, SOON AFTER** the death of his father David, began to realize the immensity of the responsibility he had as the new king. God, also realizing this, appeared to Solomon in a dream. In the dream God said to him, “Ask what I shall give thee.” (I Kings 3:5) Solomon’s response is worthy of note. He first gave recognition to the fact that God had been with his father David during his reign, and had shown him great mercy and kindness. (vs. 6) He then showed great humility by saying concerning himself, “I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a

great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude.” (vss. 7,8)

Finally, Solomon asked for that which is contained in the Key Verse: ‘an understanding heart ... that I may discern between good and bad.’ (vs. 9) That is, Solomon asked for wisdom, with which he would be able to judge and govern the people fairly and righteously. “And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.” (I Kings 3:10) God was pleased that he had asked for such a noble thing as wisdom rather than long life, riches, or some other temporal blessing.

God immediately answered his request: “Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.” (vs. 12) In addition, God said he would give Solomon that which he had not asked for—riches and honor. (vs. 13) The only condition that God placed upon Solomon was that he walk in his ways, keep his statutes, and obey his commandments.—vs. 14

The Apostle James also admonishes us to ask for wisdom. He says, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5) Later in this same epistle, James elaborates on this heavenly wisdom saying: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure [holy], then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17) This wisdom is pure, or holy. It is not polluted with the doctrines of men or the spirit of this present evil world. It comes solely from the Word of God itself. Wisdom seeks to be peaceable, gentle, not to vaunt itself above its fellowman; to produce good fruitage to those who are properly exercised by it—to be fair, honest, and the same to all people at all times.

Just as Solomon realized the great need for wisdom to govern and judge Israel, so we also must ask for, and use, the heavenly wisdom that God is pleased to provide us, in order to say and do those things in our life that would be pleasing and acceptable to him. It is only this wisdom and our use of it that will enable us, as it did Solomon, to govern and judge our own characters, that we may be brought ever closer to the perfect pattern set before us in Christ Jesus.

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## When Goals are Reached

**Key Verse:** *“Will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”*

*—I Kings 8:27*

**Selected Scriptures:**

*I Kings 6:37, 38;  
8:22, 27-30; 9:1-5*

**ISRAEL NO LONGER WAS** traveling in the wilderness. They had entered the land of promise under Joshua, conquered many of their enemies under the judges, and even defeated their staunchest foes under King David. They were a kingdom now at peace under Solomon, and they desired a permanent place for their worship to be held. And so, in the 4th year of his reign, Solomon “began to build the house of the Lord.” (I Kings 6:1) It was a major undertaking, both in size, scope, and in the methods used. Of particular interest is the fact that all the stone was ‘prefabricated,’ away from Jerusalem. I Kings 6:7 says concerning this, “And the house, when it

was in building, was built of stone made ready *before* it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.”

Finally, after over seven years of construction, the house of the Lord was completed. (vs. 38) Solomon gathered the entire congregation of Israel together to dedicate this grand structure to the Lord. (I Kings 8:1-11) The priests placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place, thus signifying the presence of the Lord in their midst. Then Solomon prayed to God, thanking him for the honor and privilege of being the instrument used to build a house “for the name of the Lord God of Israel.” (vs. 20) He then acknowledged the greatness, faithfulness, and mercy of God.

In our Key Verse, Solomon asks a thought-provoking question: How is it possible for God to dwell anywhere on the earth, much less to be confined to a house such as this he had just built? Solomon knew in his heart the answer to this question, that God himself did not dwell there, but “My *name* shall be there.” (vs. 29) The thought in this statement is

that whatever took place inside and around this Temple should be only that which would bring honor and glory to the name of God.

Jesus said to the woman of Samaria that the true worship of God did not require one to be on a mountain, or in the Temple. He said, “The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. ... But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” (John 4:21,23) Stephen, when answering his accusers, further said, “Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; ... what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?”—Acts 7:48-50

The message that both Jesus and Stephen conveyed was that the real worship of God takes place within each individual’s heart and mind, and is exemplified by their words and actions. Paul said: “For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—II Cor. 6:16

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## When Compromise Ruins

**Key Verse:** “*The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice.*”  
—*I Kings 11:9*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*I Kings 11:1-13*

**ALTHOUGH THE NATION OF** Israel reached its greatest prosperity under Solomon, his reign and eventual shortcomings began to mark a decline in God’s favor to them. Much of this decline can be traced to the sinister quality of *compromise*, both in Solomon as well as in the people generally.

It was common in ancient times for a man to have more than one wife, or to have ‘secondary’ wives, called concubines. But the case of Solomon was indeed extreme. He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. It is easy to see how this would quickly have a negative impact

upon him. To make matters worse, many of these women were not Israelites, but were from those heathen countries which surrounded Israel: Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and others. (I Kings 11:1) They were nations of which the Lord had warned, “Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.” (vs. 2) As the Lord had predicted, verse 3 of our lesson states concerning Solomon: “His wives turned away his heart.”

Solomon, wanting to keep his wives happy, compromised by building places for them to worship their heathen gods such as Ashtoreth, Chemosh and Molech. (vss. 5,7) This was not all. Solomon himself began to worship these false gods rather than the God of Israel. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.” (vs. 4) It is interesting that Solomon is here compared with his father, who had likewise not been completely righteous in God’s sight, but recognized that he had sinned, and was sincerely repentant.

There is no indication that Solomon showed any remorse or sorrow for his departure from the ways of God. This made his standing before God much more unfavorable, to such an extent that he was told, “Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.”—vs. 11

The Key Verse indicates that Solomon had been warned at least twice previously against going after other gods. In I Kings 3:5-14 and 9:2-9, these warnings are recorded. Sadly, Solomon did not take these to heart. Perhaps he reasoned that as long as he did not deny the Lord directly, that a measure of compromise would do no harm. A little compromise led to still more, until eventually there was little time or desire left for worship of the one true God, the God of his father, David.

Truly this lesson points out that there is no room for compromise when it comes to the worship of God. Well did the Apostle Paul say, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.”—I Cor. 8:5,6

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## The Called of God

### CHAPTER 5

**VERSE 1** “Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin.”

Obedience, Divine appointment of those who serve God, and a studious application to the study and practice of the truths of the Divine plan are among the important lessons emphasized in this chapter. The high priests mentioned in this first verse are those of the Aaronic order. They were taken from among men in a very complete sense. The tribe of Levi, from which the priestly family, beginning with Aaron, was chosen, was one of the tribes of Israel. They were human beings in every particular, but they were chosen by the Lord and ordained by him to serve the nation in all matters pertaining to their relationship with God.

These priests, the apostle tells us, offered ‘both gifts and sacrifices.’ The gifts were the various thank offerings and peace offerings brought to the priests by the people, while the sacrifices for sin were more particularly the typical sacrifices which were offered on Israel’s Atonement Day. It was by virtue of these that the nation maintained its standing before God from year to year—at least in a typical sense.

**VERSE 2** “Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”

The high priests of Israel, taken from among the people, were men of like passions—that is, weak and imperfect. They were thus in a position to understand, sympathetically, the problems and failings of the people whom they served, and could, if they would, extend a measure of patient forbearance, particularly where sincere efforts were made to progress in righteousness. God exercised similar forbearance toward the whole nation in the wilderness, although finally provoked to anger against them.

**VERSE 3** “By reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.”



Since the typical priests of Israel were themselves imperfect, they needed atonement for their sins as much as those to whom they ministered. On account of this, provision was made whereby they could offer sacrifices for themselves. An account of this is recorded in Leviticus 4:3-12

**VERSES 4,5** “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.”

The elect character of both the typical and antitypical priesthood is made very definite in the Bible. No one can serve God acceptably unless called, or invited, by him. The matter of who will occupy a given place in the Divine arrangement is not left for human wisdom to decide. Aaron was God’s choice to be Israel’s first High Priest. Whether or not there were others who could have served just as well was not a matter for Israel, or anyone in Israel, to decide.

Korah, his sons and others, challenged the appointment of Aaron, and the Lord arranged a demonstration in order that his choice might be clearly and definitely established. The account of this is recorded in Numbers, chapters 16 and 17. A representative of each of the twelve tribes was instructed to bring a rod to Moses. He placed these rods in the Tabernacle overnight. The understanding was that the owner of the rod which miraculously budded and brought forth almonds during the night would be the Lord’s choice. It was Aaron’s rod that budded. This clearly indicated that Aaron was indeed ‘called of God.’

Even Jesus ‘glorified’ or ‘honored’ not himself to become a High Priest. Before he was ‘made flesh’ Jesus occupied the highest position in the universe next to his Father; but unlike Lucifer, who aspired to be as the Most High, the *Logos* humbled himself, taking on the form of a human servant. Although he had come to earth to be the world’s great High Priest, he did not assume this position. Not until at Jordan, when he heard the Father’s voice saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” did Jesus undertake his priestly work. (Matt. 3:17) While he was the “Only Begotten of the Father” in his original creation, the begetting referred to in this verse seems to refer to the beginning of his life as a New Creature at Jordan.—John 1:14

**VERSE 6** “As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Having established the fact of Jesus’ Divine appointment as the High Priest prefigured by Aaron, in this verse Paul verifies Christ’s appointment, or calling, to another order of priesthood, one which applies particularly to the work of the kingdom age. The apostle does this by quoting Psalm 110:4—a prophecy in which Jehovah declares his intention that his Son should serve in this high and honored capacity. So again, it is clear that Jesus did not take this honor unto himself. Melchisedec was king of Salem in addition to being a priest of the Most High God, and his twofold office serves well to illustrate Christ’s work during the millennium.

**VERSES 7,8** “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

There had never been any question about Jesus’ Divine appointment to the priesthood, yet it was essential that his worthiness for this high office be proved, and one of the methods chosen by the Heavenly Father to accomplish this was ‘by the things which he suffered.’

The prayers, supplications, and agony here referred to took place in Gethsemane. Jesus made no noisy outcry, else the disciples not far away would have been awakened. He bore this intense suffering alone, so far as human help was concerned. Not until he was ‘heard in that he feared’ did he receive strength which enabled him to endure calmly the physical suffering in his trial and crucifixion.

The Greek word translated feared in the above quoted passage means primarily ‘to be cautious,’ rather than to ‘dread,’ as the word fear suggests. Jesus had reached a very critical point in his earthly life and ministry, and was making sure that no missteps should be taken. Much the same thought is contained in Paul’s admonition to us: “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”—Heb. 4:1

Paul says that Jesus was heard in that which he ‘feared,’ or in that about which he was being so ‘cautious,’ or ‘careful.’ The text also states that he was heard by One who was able to ‘save’ or deliver him from death.

It would seem that the Master was concerned over the matter of his eternal existence. He knew that he was to die as man's Redeemer, but his concern was whether he had been fully faithful, so that he could confidently expect to be raised from death.

Jesus understood the lessons taught by the typical Tabernacle, and the services the priests rendered therein. When the high priest was offering sacrifices for sin, the blood of which was carried into the Most Holy and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, if he had not fully and correctly carried out every detail of that service as instructed by the Lord, he would die as he passed under the second veil. (Lev. 16:2,3) This would picture the Second Death. His rising alive beyond the veil pictured a resurrection from death.

So Jesus, the antitypical priest, offering himself in sacrifice instead of an animal, realized that if he had not carried out every detail of the Divine will, he would, in passing under the veil of death, fail to rise on the other side. No wonder he was concerned; and what a comfort it must have been when he was 'heard' and given complete assurance that his sacrifice was acceptable.

What did Jesus have in mind when he prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me"? (Matt. 26:39) 'This cup' represented the intense mental and physical suffering which he now realized would be involved in connection with the consummation of his sacrifice. For him to suffer as a blasphemer of the God whom he loved with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, was a terrible ordeal.

The manner of death—the horror of crucifixion with all of its long, drawn-out torture of thirst, of unbearable suffering and agony, and of fever—all of which frequently lasted for several days—would be very painful to his flesh. Could he endure this and yet remain perfectly obedient? With these thoughts flooding his mind, it is no wonder that he agonized with "strong crying and tears."—Heb. 5:7

But there was no question in Jesus' mind of wanting to avoid anything which was his Father's will. If the Father's will would allow for a less trying experience he would be glad, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," was the Master's sincere and wholehearted desire. (Matt. 26:39) He was willing to endure, but he sorely needed some assurance

that he was acceptable to his Father before entering the black darkness of death; and he needed strength to bear this awful experience.

But why did the Father withhold this assurance until Jesus had prayed in agony three times? Why was the assurance not given at once? As Jesus must pay it all, he must be tested to the utmost. Would he give up because the answer was delayed? Would he believe that his Father had forsaken him? What suffering the Father's heart must have endured, thus to permit his beloved Son to suffer until after his third pleading, by withholding the answer which would comfort him! Does it not shame us, who complain if our burdens seem heavy, or faint if the help is long delayed!

When the testing had accomplished the intended purpose of proving the Master's obedience, the Father sent him the assurance which he sought, and he was comforted. Then, with supreme confidence, he met all his persecutors triumphantly. Now he could not be turned aside from his course of faithfulness, although he knew what the consequences would be. As the first and only begotten Son of God, he had always been obedient, and had constantly been his Father's delight. But now, in Gethsemane, before his accusers, and on the cross, he learned to be obedient through suffering. Truly we can have confidence in such a High Priest!

**VERSE 9** "Being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

The word 'perfect' used here is a translation of a Greek word meaning 'complete.' Its use does not imply that Jesus was ever imperfect, in the sense of being a sinner. Rather, the thought is, that his training for the priesthood had been completed, the final lesson being the excruciating suffering through which he passed.

Because he was obedient, he became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him. Obedience is a basic requirement in all who will have eternal life on any plane. The whole world of mankind lost life through the disobedience of our first parents. How logical that the One who redeemed Adam and his race from death should prove his worthiness by obedience, and how appropriate that all who reap the benefit of his ransom sacrifice should do so only upon the basis of their obedience! This lesson of obedience must be learned by all Jesus' followers,

although not necessarily through such severe tests as came upon the Master.

**VERSES 10,11** “Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.”

The Jews, on the whole, seem almost completely to have overlooked, or to have forgotten, the special order of priesthood of which Melchisedec was a type, although they must have known about him, and that Abraham paid tithes to him. Jehovah foretold that the Messiah would be the antitype of Melchisedec, so it was only because the Jewish Christians to whom Paul wrote were ‘dull of hearing’ that they did not know about it.—Ps. 110:4

Later in his epistle Paul reveals further lessons based on the Melchisedec type, but nothing that seems especially difficult to understand. He was both a king and a priest, representing the double role of the Messiah during the millennium, and this is a beautifully simple truth to grasp. Apparently, then, their dullness of hearing was not a lack of intelligence, but simply a disinterested attitude. This lack of studious interest probably caused them to overlook what the Lord had said about Melchisedec, so anything that Paul might write to them about this type would seem strange.

What about ourselves? Are we giving the Master our undivided attention, listening with all our mind and heart? In Isaiah 50:4, *Leeser's Translation*, the prophet, personifying Jesus, says of his Father: “He wakeneth me morning by morning, he wakeneth my ear to listen like those who are well taught.” Is God blessing us in this manner, or are we hindering our own growth in grace and knowledge by our hardness of heart and dullness of hearing? It has been given to us to know the mysteries of heaven, and Jesus said, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” (Matt. 13:16) Do we properly appreciate this great honor, and are we keeping alert to learn and to apply all the lessons which the Lord is so graciously supplying for us?

**VERSES 12,13** “When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong

meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”

‘For the time ye ought to be teachers’—this indicates that God’s purpose in calling us into the Truth is in order that we may become teachers of the Word—his ambassadors and the “ambassadors for Christ.”—II Cor. 5:20

The Hebrew brethren to whom Paul wrote had been in the Truth long enough to be skilled in the use of the Word, able to explain, not merely the simple facts concerning sin, the need of a Redeemer, and the hope of life through Christ for both the church and the world, but also to be able to give a reason for this hope, from the promises of God and from the many illustrations he has provided to help us appreciate more fully what the Truth should mean to us.

Paul does not in any sense minimize the importance of the ‘milk’ of the Word. Indeed, he tells the Hebrew brethren that they needed to have the ‘first principles’ taught to them again. Because of neglected privileges, neglected opportunities for study and prayer and fellowship, they had not grown in the knowledge of the Lord and of his Truth, and had even lost some of the clear vision of the Truth which, for a while, they had enjoyed. Real growth in knowledge is possible only when the basic principles of the Truth are kept in mind and used as a foundation upon which to build.

The ‘first principles’ of the Truth referred to by Paul are not necessarily the simple truths of the Divine plan. They are ‘first’ because they are basic, or fundamental, to an understanding of all truth. The Greek word here translated principles conveys the thought of an orderly arrangement, and such are the basic doctrines of the Divine plan when seen in the light of the rightly divided Word of truth.—II Tim. 2:15

The Hebrew brethren had lost their clear vision of the Divine plan, and in order again to become skillful in the use of the Word they needed to begin their studies all over anew. Not only did they need to be taught again concerning the first principles, but it had become necessary that these basic truths be outlined to them in the simplest way possible—as illustrated by feeding a child with milk. Thus they could properly understand and assimilate the Truth.

**VERSE 14** “Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

The difference between babes in Christ and mature Christians is that the latter have made proper use of the Truth, and have thus grown strong in the Lord. They have been diligent both in their study of the Truth and in their application of its principles in their daily lives. *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* renders this passage, “possessing faculties habitually exercised,” that is, not allowed to grow dormant from neglect.

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***Dawn Bible Students Association***

## The Story of Ruth

**THE STORY OF RUTH IS** laid in the time of the judges, before there was any ruler in Israel except Jehovah their God to enforce good behavior. Each man did what was right in his own eyes. (Judg. 17:6) This condition lasted for 450 years. The Israelites, during that period, were perhaps the freest people the world has ever known, except during the time they were captive to other nations.

There was a famine in the land. God's covenant with them was that if they obeyed he would bless them in 'basket and store,' in bountiful crops and rain, and in freedom from their enemies. But if they disobeyed, then lack of rain and famine would be their portion, and they would become slaves to their enemies. So this famine was a chastisement. It was evidently very severe so as to reach even the well-watered region around Bethlehem, whose very name means 'house of bread.' The ancient name given to the region was Ephratah, meaning 'bearing,' or 'fruitful.'

A certain man, named Elimelech (meaning 'God is King'), went with his wife and two sons to sojourn in the land of Moab. As an Israelite he should have esteemed the Divine covenant promises and protection so highly he would not have left the land of promise and the covenant people to mingle with strangers and idolaters. Paul tells us in Hebrews 12:5,6, "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Isaiah says about our God (63:9), "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old."

### NAOMI'S SORROW

The name of the wife was Naomi, meaning 'lovely, pleasant.' One son's name was Mahlon, the other Chilion. Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, probably not long after his arrival in Moab, and before his sons married. God did not bless his move to Moab. The father feared he could not live in Bethlehem, and hardly had he arrived in Moab when he died. He had refused God's instruction by his leaving. Instead of crying out to



God and trusting him in Bethlehem they went to a land of idol worship. They sought to avoid one affliction and fell into a worse one; they escaped famine, but death overtook them; they had not trusted God's love at home, so his judgments smote them in a foreign land. Mahlon and Chilion did not go home, but proceeded, in violation of their covenant law, to marry heathen wives. (Deut. 7:3) The sons founded their houses in Moab, and Moab became their grave. Now Naomi had no husband and no sons. Her happiness had turned to sorrow and bereavement; she stood alone in a foreign land. What should she do now?

## NAOMI DECIDES TO RETURN

She heard that God had visited his people and the famine was ended. Perhaps Naomi's heart had never been fully in sympathy with their going, and now she turned her face and heart toward her native land. She felt that her two daughters-in-law would be sacrificing too much to leave their kindred and native land and friends, and go with her to a strange land to share her poverty. So she urged them to return to their own people, to their land and to their mother's house. But they wept and told her that they loved her too much to desert her in her hour of need. They insisted they would go and share with her. She said, "The Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband." (Ruth 1:8,9) They answered, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." (vs. 10) This is indeed a scene of unparalleled love and tenderness. What had produced such love as both these women showed?

It is an honor to the dead that the sons had chosen such women as these, for they must have been somewhat worthy of the enduring love they had awakened in these two girls. Evidently the sons and father had not become Moabites. During the ten years of married life these two girls had entered an Israelitish family, and breathed its good atmosphere. Marriage and home life are the real mirror of religion and worship. Israel had distinguished itself, not merely by the name of its God, but by its life at home, and in the family by faithfulness and love to wife and child. These two girls were gratefully attracted to the home life of Israel. They requited the kind and tender treatment they had received with self-sacrificing love. They not only had heard the religion of Jehovah confessed in the land of Moab, but they had seen it lived in the home.

Now gently and delicately Naomi tells them they cannot hope for a husband and home in Israel, for what her sons had done in marrying foreign wives was against the Law and custom of Israel. Usually the youthful widow married again, and found an asylum of protection, safety, and honor in the home of the new husband. This was Naomi's generous wish—"The Lord [Jehovah] grant you that you may find rest, ... in the house of her [a] husband" in your own land. The word here translated 'rest' has great beauty in its meaning. It has the thought of a permanent home, a sanctuary of protection, safety, and honor, a hearth-home of love and understanding, sympathy and comfort, rest of heart and mind.

### RUTH'S LOVE

Though she had deep love for Naomi, Orpah's natural desire for a resting place, a home, was stronger, and she saw there was no hope of a husband or home in Israel. But Ruth's love was deeper. Naomi's character, her loving, sunny, self-sacrificing disposition had won a similar love and gratitude in Ruth. Naomi had made Israel and Israel's God lovely in the eyes of Ruth, so she wished to go to a people whose representatives were as amiable as Naomi and her family. A God who had such worshipers must be a lovely God also. Ruth was willing to give up the prospects of a home and family, and the heart joys which might be hers among her own people.

Her answer to Naomi here is the most beautiful and complete expression of self-sacrificing love found in any language. Let us note it particularly! "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16,17) When Naomi saw that Ruth was stedfastly minded to go with her, she protested no more. Ruth had made her decision; she was no longer a Moabite at heart.

Ruth is like those who become Christians, giving up all earthly prospects. Such is consecration. To these, however, God is better even than he was to Ruth, far better than we can fully know. It is to these that he says, "Hearken, O daughter, ... and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him."—Ps. 45:10

## NAOMI RETURNS

“So they two went.” (vs. 19) What a sad homecoming for Naomi! No home, no family, and only poverty; no friends but this one daughter-in-law, and she was a jewel. Naomi’s resources were exhausted, but God’s patience and loving-kindness were not. Already he had begun to order and arrange for her blessing as she turned toward Israel.

The town was stirred at her coming, and they asked, “Is this Naomi?” She answered, “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara [bitterness]: ... for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.” (Ruth 1:19,20) Two widows were now alone in Israel without husbands to assist them. Naomi owned land in Israel which belonged to her husband Elimelech but it had not been farmed for many years. The Lord however, had made laws in Israel to provide for the poor and the stranger (see Deuteronomy 24:19-22), because the Israelites had once been strangers in the land of Egypt. The corners of the fields, and some of the grain were to be left for the poor and the stranger to glean. So Ruth went forth into the fields, and Jehovah directed her steps, though she did not know it, “She happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.”—Ruth 2:3, *Revised Standard Version*

While she was gleaning, Boaz came from Bethlehem and looked over the harvest field. His greeting to his workers showed a fine, godlike character. He said to the laborers, “The Lord be with you,” and they answered, “The Lord bless thee.” (vs. 4) That this was not merely a polite greeting, but a sincere wish, is shown by his later talk with the overseer, who was of the same spirit as his master.

## BOAZ SEES RUTH

Boaz watched the workers and noticed that one woman who gleaned industriously was not bold, noisy, nor too given to play. Her very manner showed she was not a common maidservant. He had never seen her before. She seemed serious, in deep earnestness, quiet and reserved. He asked the overseer who she was.

Like his master, the overseer knew his workers, the poor and needy also. She, who had so long been mistress herself, had not the manner of one grown bold in beggary. The overseer told Boaz that since morning the woman had not ceased to glean, and had rested but very little in the house. This praise induced Boaz to go and speak to her, and asked her to

remain gleaning in his field, where she would be safe. He told his reapers not to reproach her, though she was a foreigner. She answered, “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?” (vs. 10)

The Law of Israel provided this privilege of gleaning for the relief of the poor and unfortunate. Note the manly behavior of Boaz. He did not take advantage of his position to interfere in any way with her right, nor to wound her self-respect by too much liberality. He was careful in his kindness to respect her, even though she was a stranger. He even instructed his binders quietly to drop a handful now and then while binding the sheaves so her gleaning would be more fruitful, and told her to glean closer to the maidens binding the sheaves.

At the noon hour rest, he invited her to eat with the others of the reapers and binders, and even passed her bits of parched corn, and invited her to drink of the sour wine used for refreshing the reapers. Boaz told her that he had heard of how much she had done to help Naomi; how she had left her father and mother, and her native land to come and live among a strange people. His next statement is one of the most beautiful to be found in any language. He did not say, “I will help thee,” but rather, “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”—Ruth 2:12

Her sacrifice was too noble and too deep to expect man to give it full value. Jehovah can reach more deeply into the heart and life, and give more complete satisfaction. He wished that a full reward be given her, for she had come to seek shelter and trust under the protective power of a covenant-keeping God, amid a covenant people.

These words of Boaz were perhaps the first sunbeams that had broken through the grief and tears of many weeks. She had lived with the sense of loss of family and home and people. Now she was told about the God of Israel and his grace by an Israelite other than Naomi, and heard the voice of blessing from another of God’s people. Truly, she doubtless thought, this must be a great God and a great people. In gratitude she said, “May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord”... “You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not

have the standing of one of your servant girls.”—Ruth 2:13 *New International Version*

Her answer raised her still higher in the esteem of Boaz. It showed a refined nature. Many people in her place would say that in truth they were not accustomed to such labor, and then begin complaining. Ruth was unassuming and reserved, and not looking for any favors from others. She had youth and good health, and delighted to do what she could for herself. Boaz showed her kindness, not as a relative, but because of her excellence. A word of kindness coming to a loving heart like hers is like morning dew on a thirsty field.

Ruth went back to gleaning. She did not slack her hand, nor assume airs, nor take things easy, because the master had favored her. She worked diligently till evening, and even stayed over to thresh the grain. She had gleaned about an ephah of barley (about three and one-half pecks). She also took home to Naomi some of the food she had saved from dinner.—Ruth 2:18

#### RUTH REPORTS TO NAOMI

Naomi realized that God’s hand must be in all this, that he had guided Ruth to the field of Boaz and taken care of her. Naomi said, “Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead.” (vs. 20) It is a kindness to the dead to look after their loved ones. She advised Ruth to abide in that field throughout the harvest. Ruth reported Boaz’ words, “Stay with my workers until they finish harvesting all my grain. Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, ‘It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else’s field you might be harmed.’ So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz to glean until the barley and wheat harvests were finished. And she lived with her mother-in-law.”—Ruth 2:21-23 *NIV*

#### NAOMI PLANS FOR RUTH’S FUTURE

When the harvest was over and the heaps of grain were still on the threshing floor, Boaz himself came down to keep watch over them. The Scriptures say, “One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her [Ruth], ‘My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing

floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.”—Ruth 3:1-3 *NIV*

Naomi owned land in Israel and she sought to use it for the welfare of Ruth. Israel had a levirate law recorded in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. It rested on the desire to preserve not only the national spirit, but also the national body. The nation lived in its families, like a tree in its branches. If a man died without children, it was as if a branch withered. To remedy this, a new branch was grafted into the tree by the nearest male relative marrying the widow. Each family must take care that no branch died out. But no one who was not a blood relative could redeem anything for a family.

Naomi gave Ruth careful instructions on how to approach Boaz concerning the fulfillment of this law. Ruth carried out Naomi's instructions faithfully. And when she did what Naomi instructed her to do, Boaz responded, “The Lord bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it.”—Ruth 3:10-13 *NIV*

## **BOAZ TAKES ACTION**

When Ruth returned home and reported back to Naomi as to what had transpired she said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”—Ruth 3:18, *NIV*

Naomi knew Boaz well, indeed he did not let the matter rest. The Scriptures then say, “Meanwhile Boaz went up to the town gate and sat there. When the kinsman-redeemer he had mentioned came along, Boaz said, ‘Come over here, my friend, and sit down.’ So he went over and sat down. Boaz took ten of the elders of the town and said, ‘Sit here,’ and they did so. Then he said to the kinsman-redeemer, ‘Naomi, who has come back from Moab, is selling the piece of land that belonged to our brother Elimelech. I thought I should bring the matter to your attention

and suggest that you buy it in the presence of these seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, do so. But if you will not, tell me, so I will know. For no one has the right to do it except you, and I am next in line.’ ‘I will redeem it,’ he said. Then Boaz said, ‘On the day you buy the land from Naomi and from Ruth the Moabitess, you acquire the dead man’s widow, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property.’ At this, the kinsman-redeemer said, ‘Then I cannot redeem it because I might endanger my own estate. You redeem it yourself. I cannot do it.’”—Ruth 4:1-6, *NIV*

How would marrying Ruth endanger his inheritance? He owned other land and he was concerned that if he had a child with Ruth, this land would then become the property of Elimelech’s family. The Scriptures also say, “(Now in earlier times in Israel, for the redemption and transfer of property to become final, one party took off his sandal and gave it to the other. This was the method of legalizing transactions in Israel.)” (Ruth 4:7, *NIV*) So the other relative took off his shoe and gave it to Boaz.

The shoe, or sandal, is first a symbol of motion and wandering, but also of rest and possession. See Deuteronomy 11:24. “With ... shoes on your feet,” meant a journey is ahead. (Exod. 12:11) The expression in Deuteronomy 11 evidently refers to possession; something one actually had and could tread on with his feet at pleasure. So when this relative handed over his shoe to Boaz, it symbolized that he thus surrendered to Boaz all rights and claims to possession. Had he done his part, he would have set his shoe on Naomi’s inheritance and thus claimed it as redeemed. Ruth was the heiress of Mahlon, and must go with the possession. So Boaz redeemed the land, being a blood relative, and married Ruth. In Deuteronomy 25:5-10 we have this law and custom described in detail.

This story and procedure of redemption illustrates well the work that Jesus performed in redeeming Adam’s race. As there was no other redeemer, Jehovah furnished one in the person of his only beloved Son. (Isa. 63:5) But Jesus was to be blood-related to Adam, as well as to become a human being. He was ‘the seed of the woman,’ who would redeem mankind and ‘bruise the serpent’s head.’ So, as Luke tells us, the life spark of our Lord Jesus was transferred by Divine power into the womb of Mary, and in due time Jesus was born a perfect human baby. He did not inherit the death sentence, because God was his father, not Joseph. (Luke 1:35) When he was of full age, thirty years old (Luke 3:21-

23), he offered himself as a ransom for all, and carried out the contract to the end on the cross. With this ransom price he buys back, redeems, Adam and all his children as well as Adam's inheritance, the earth. Also, he marries a bride, one who was a daughter of Adam.

## RUTH PICTURES CALLING OF GENTILES

Ruth pictures the Gentiles who come into the family of God by a full consecration of their all, leaving behind their earthly hopes and lands and families, and as New Creatures, are taken into the family of God. They become the bride of the Prince, and are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus, who gave his life a ransom for all. And, like Ruth, they will become the mother of kings.

Ruth gave up her home, and God gave her a far richer one; she gave up a husband, and God gave her a prince in Israel; she gave up children, and God made her the mother of kings, for she was the ancestor of David and Jesus, the 'King of kings.' She gave up her own people, and God gave her a place among the covenant people; she gave up the hope of land and country, and God gave her the inheritance of Naomi, and a share with her prince in his rich estate. God deals with his church, and gives her a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—II Cor. 4:17

As the narrative continues of the story of Ruth, it says, "So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. ... And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. The women said to Naomi: 'Praise be to the Lord, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel! He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.' Then Naomi took the child, laid him in her lap and cared for him."—Ruth 4:13-16, *NIV*

What a happy ending this was for Naomi as she held her grandson on her lap. As the women in Bethlehem had truly said, Ruth was better to her than seven sons, so it must be said of those that the Lord is calling as a people for his name—they must be better than seven sons—and be of noble character. Some may see in the story of Ruth only the preservation of the genealogy of Jesus. There are also many beautiful lessons of the character of the bride that the Heavenly Father is seeking for his beloved Son. As the people of Bethlehem all testified of Ruth that she was of



noble character, so also must the world testify of the church that they were of noble character.

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***Dawn Bible Students Association***

## A Meditation of Thanksgiving

***“It is a good thing to  
give thanks unto the  
LORD, and to sing  
praises unto thy  
name, O most High.”  
—Psalm 92:1***

**ON THE FOURTH** Thursday of November the people of the United States, by proclamation of the President, are asked to pause from their ordinary pursuits of life to express thanks to God for the bounties with which he has blessed them throughout the year. In the hearts of many people, there is doubtless

a sincere feeling of appreciation to the Giver of every good gift, and they are happy to have this special opportunity of expressing their thankfulness. This should be especially so of all the truly consecrated followers of the Master.

### GIVE THANKS EVERY DAY

It is true that we should esteem every day to be one of thanksgiving—not merely one day in the year—for the blessings of the Lord which we enjoy at all times are more than can be primarily for the material good things of life—for food and clothing and shelter, for family and friends. Many in the western world feel thankful that they still enjoy a measure of liberty to worship and serve God as their conscience dictates.

We also appreciate these blessings, and in addition are especially thankful that the Lord continues to supply us with spiritual food—‘meat in due season’—by which we are strengthened and enabled to grow as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We are also especially thankful for the wonderful circle of friends with whom we enjoy sweet fellowship in the Lord, that as sons of God we are members of his family and share in common so many wonderful joys and blessings. Not the least of these is the privilege we have of collaborating in the service of the Lord and of his Truth, together laying down our lives in showing forth the praises of our God.

### SING PRAISES

Our theme text says, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.” It is a ‘good’ thing in the sense that it is appropriate and logical. It is

‘good’ because a failure to give thanks to God for his blessings would indicate a lack of appreciation. If we truly appreciate what the Lord is doing for us from day to day, our thanksgiving will spontaneously arise to him. It is also a ‘good’ thing to give thanks because it increases our own love for the Lord and our determination to please him and to be faithful to him. True appreciation of Divine blessings would be one of the impelling motives in our zeal to know and do God’s will.

It is also a “good thing,” David writes, “to sing praises” to the name of our God. Giving thanks to God for his loving-kindness is done more particularly in individual and congregational prayers to him, whereas singing his praises seems to be more in the nature of a public proclamation by which others are informed of Divine love. The Apostle Peter, for example, speaks of showing “forth the praises of him who hath called you [us] out of darkness into his marvellous light.”—I Pet. 2:9

In the verse following our text David speaks of showing forth the Lord’s “lovingkindness in the morning” and his “faithfulness every night”—or as the marginal translation states, “in the nights.” ‘In the morning’ and ‘in the nights’ suggests a continuous showing forth of the Lord’s praises. It is not something which we do as an obligation once a year; for one whose heart has been touched by the loving-kindness of our God will not be able to refrain from showing forth his praises at all times, that is, on all suitable occasions and in all proper ways.

In verse 3 the psalmist indicates that we ‘show forth’ the loving-kindness of our God “upon an instrument of ten strings.” It is believed that the ancient harp, such as was used by David, had ten strings, and we might properly think of it as representing the Truth as the principal medium by which we praise the Lord today. The ‘ten strings’ might even be considered as representing ten of the main doctrines of the Divine plan; and what a wonderfully harmonious sound they produce when properly used!

## A NEW SONG OF TRUTH

Psalm 40:3 states concerning each of the Lord’s truth-enlightened people, “He [the Lord] hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.” The truth of the Divine plan is illustrated in various ways in the Bible. It is likened to food, to ‘meat,’ and how thankful we are that, in fulfillment of his promise, our returned Lord has girded himself and

has served the household of faith with “meat in due season.” (Luke 12:37,42) This ‘meat’ has served to strengthen the Lord’s people, making them strong in him and in the power of his might.

The Truth is likened to an “armour” by which we are protected against all the “fiery darts of the wicked.” How greatly we need this protection, especially now when we are living in the foretold “evil day” in which Satan is making every effort possible to overthrow our faith and thus to destroy us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus!—Eph. 6:10-18

Water is also used in the Bible to represent the Truth. We are sanctified and cleansed with the “washing of water by the Word.” (Eph. 5:26) Besides, we are refreshed by the living waters of the Truth. Each of these illustrations helps us to comprehend more fully all that the Truth means to us. None of them illustrates the full ministry of the Truth in our hearts and lives. It is the Lord who has given us the Truth and caused it to nourish, strengthen, refresh, cleanse us, and to serve as a protecting armor, enabling us to resist the attacks of our adversaries.

## HARMONY OF GOD’S PLAN

The Lord has also given us the Truth as a ‘new song,’ that by its faithful use we may ‘sing praises’ unto our God. A song, or music, suggests harmony, so by this illustration we are reminded of the wonderful harmony of the Divine plan. This harmony sounds forth from the ‘instrument of ten strings,’ when it is properly played upon by one who has studied to show himself approved unto God by “rightly dividing the Word of truth.”—II Tim. 2:15

Naturally this harmonious song of praise fills our own hearts with thanksgiving to God for his loving-kindness. Spontaneously we give thanks unto him for permitting us to hear and to learn this song, especially since we realize that this great favor to sing a new song before the throne is given only to a certain class, as stated in Revelation 14:3. But our praises do not stop with giving thanks to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, for David declares that “many,” as a result of hearing this “new song” from our lips, shall “fear, and shall trust in the Lord.”—Ps. 40:3

This indicates a general proclamation of the Truth on the part of the Lord’s people. It does not say that the ‘many’ learn to sing the ‘new song’ themselves, for no one can do this except the ‘little flock;’ but they

are impressed by hearing it, and are influenced to put their trust in the Lord. The thought thus illustrated is quite understandable. Very few who listen with appreciation to a trained chorus of singers presenting the “Messiah,” for example, could actually ‘sing’ this anthem of praise as it should be rendered, nevertheless, they appreciate hearing others sing it, and are fascinated and influenced by its melody and harmony.

## BLESSINGS TO THE PEOPLE

So it is with the Truth. Only those whom the Lord draws, and to whom he extends the heavenly calling, are able to learn the new song, but as these sing it in their efforts to show forth the Lord’s praises many hear and enjoy it, and are influenced to put their trust in him. Later the Lord will have rich blessings for these, blessings of restitution, when their day of visitation comes. The fact that even now we have the privilege of bringing joy to their hearts by our singing the new song should be one of our great causes of thanksgiving, for in this respect also it is a ‘good thing’ to ‘give thanks unto the Lord.’

There is much evidence now that many are hearing and enjoying the ‘new song.’ People everywhere are losing their confidence in man’s ability to solve the present worldwide problems of earth. The foretold ‘distress of nations with perplexity’ is increasing, despite human efforts to establish peace and security. Fear is increasing as more deadly instruments of destruction are announced, and more and more people are realizing that it is futile to put their trust in armies and in armaments. So their hearts are made glad when they learn that God has a plan for the blessing of the people, to establish “the mountain of the Lord’s house.” Under the righteous administration of that kingdom, “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Isa. 2:2-4) In the Lord’s providence, and as a marvelous manifestation of his grace, the Lord’s people today are having the privilege of broadcasting this information far and wide, so that the new song of praise upon our lips is helping many to put their trust in the Lord and in the fact that his long-promised kingdom soon will be established.

We know that the time has not yet come for the general enlightenment of the world. Darkness pertaining to the Divine plan still covers the earth, and gross darkness the people. Nevertheless the time is near when the light from the “Sun of righteousness” will scatter the darkness and “the

earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Mal. 4:2, Hab. 2:14) Because this is true, the Lord is now permitting his people to bear testimony concerning the nearness of these kingdom blessings, thus giving them the opportunity of proving their love for him and their enthusiasm for his glorious plan to bless all the families of the earth.

How appropriate that this ‘witness’ to the Truth should be as a song of praise! It is not something which we do because we think the Lord requires it of us, although we do know that he wants us to do it. It is, rather, the result of a spontaneous expression of our love for him, a love which makes us desire to ‘tell the whole world these blessed tidings.’ We have learned that it is indeed a good thing thus to sing his praises, not merely one day in the year, but every day, and in whatever way we are given the privilege of singing the ‘new song.’

#### THE TIME IS SHORT

We do not know how much longer we will have the privilege publicly of singing the new song over the radio, TV, or on the Internet, by means of the printed page or personal witnessing. It is a cause for thanksgiving that in America and certain other parts of the world there is liberty to proclaim the message of the kingdom.

As the ‘dark night’ of world distress settles down more and more over the earth, we should not be surprised if liberty to sing the new song should be restricted in the future. It is appropriate that those of us who have this opportunity make the best possible use of it while it is ours. We should be thankful for the privilege we enjoy of meeting together to show forth his praises.

We realize that when the dark night has settled upon the whole earth it will mean that the glorious kingdom of light will be nearer. We can be thankful for whatever experiences the Lord may have for us along this line. We know that if we are faithful to him, it will be our privilege later to be associated with the Master in the glorious work of enlightening the whole world of mankind. Then we will be able to accomplish all things.