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The Solace of Silence: In a Noisy World

*“The work of
righteousness
shall be peace;
and the effect of
righteousness
quietness and
assurance for
ever.”
—Isaiah 32:17*

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE

Prophet Isaiah speaks of a future time when our Lord Jesus will establish his kingdom of peace and righteous quietness over a sin-sick and greatly disturbed human family. A thousand years has been set aside for “The Christ” to carry out this wonderful work of restoration. The prophet further proclaims our Heavenly Father’s ultimate purpose, “My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”—vs. 18

BE STILL

This wonderful promise of God has been confirmed by the psalmist, who wrote, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Ps. 46:10)

David spoke of our loving Heavenly Father's great power to carry out his ultimate purpose. "The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." (chap. 93:4) "Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people."—chap. 65:7

A GREAT CALM

The restless sea and pounding waves symbolically illustrate the present noisy and jarring condition of our world and its people. Jesus employed these powerful symbols during his earthly ministry when he performed one of his great miracles. He was pointing to the far greater power and authority that he will exercise on behalf of the whole human family when his future kingdom is established.

It is recorded, "When he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful? O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"—Matt. 8:23-27

Matthew described the actions that were taken by Jesus when he was awakened from sleep. He immediately rose to his feet and then exercised the mighty power that his Heavenly Father had given him. By that authority, he could rebuke the stormy

winds and the violent sea, and was able to bring those who were with him in the boat to a place of refuge, peacefulness, and calmness. Matthew's use of the word "arose" points to Jesus' taking authoritative control over the violence that had overwhelmed his disciples in the boat. He then used the word "rebuke," which shows that Jesus was not only able to restrain the restless waters, but also to sharply curb their ferocity and power.

JESUS' POWER MANIFEST

In Mark's gospel, the same word "rebuke" is used when describing our Lord Jesus' great power over evil. Mark records the incident when Jesus was in the synagogue at Capernaum with James and John, and was teaching on the Sabbath day. From the account, we read, "They were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him."—Mark 1:22-27

The prophet Daniel also speaks of the time when our Lord will arise to assume control over earth's

noisy and chaotic affairs. He wrote, “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”—Dan. 12:1

The Psalmist David pointed forward to the time when God would give the command for the Master to arise and assume power over the affairs of mankind. We read, “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” (Ps. 110:1,2) In this scripture, the word “LORD” is written in capital letters to identify the Heavenly Father, whereas the word “Lord” written in lower case letters refers to our Lord Jesus, who was to wait for the Father’s command. The promises for a restored earth and its people will be made manifest under the establishment of a new order—the administration of Christ’s future kingdom. At that time, “The Christ” will share in stilling the noisy waters and in bringing peace and quietness to a chaotic world.

THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE

When our earth and its natural surroundings were created, a loving God included in nature unique sounds that provide a further dimension of peace and tranquility. These sounds enhance our lives, and produce a sense of harmony, tranquility, and restfulness to earth’s inhabitants. Examples of these exquisite qualities include such sounds as a

babbling brook or splashing waterfall, a gentle breeze rustling through the leaves of the trees, or the melodious voices of singing birds. Among other comforting sounds within our natural environment are the gentle and rhythmic patter of warm rain drops as they land on the surface of flower petals during a refreshing spring shower, and the buzzing of bees, or the chirping of crickets at harvesttime.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOUND

Sound is produced by moving or vibrating objects that produce movements in the air, or other media. These reach our ears as waves. Without these vibrations, no sound can be produced. No sound is possible in a vacuum. When an object moves or vibrates it causes slight changes in air pressure. Sound waves contain energy, therefore they can move. This is what our ears detect and translate into distinctive sounds.

Harmonious sounds are in accord with one another and are marked by an agreement in the quality of tone that may be enjoyed as a tuneful melody. It is consistent and pleasing to the ear. Students of the Bible oftentimes speak of the Truth as being harmonious. There is no discord in the message, and it is thus pleasing to hear. Noise, or discordant sound, on the other hand, is a combination of in-harmonious tones sounded together in opposition and conflict. The lack of the essential concord produces a clash of sounds.

THE INTRUSION OF NOISE

Peaceful sounds are more difficult to come by in our modern-day industrial and technical world, and are becoming increasingly endangered. They

are rapidly being replaced with jarring noises and confusion that intrude upon us from nearly every direction. Some people may be more able to cope with unpleasant sounds and become partially immune to such disturbances. They may endure noise as a mere nuisance, and accept it as the inevitable outcome of our generation's technological advances. There is mounting evidence, however, to suggest that jarring and aggressive sounds have a detrimental influence upon our general health and well-being. Many people must spend a considerable part of their everyday lives surrounded by an endless and unrestrained barrage of intrusive and offensive sounds.

Sounds that may be classified as intrusive are generally associated with loud or aggressive activity. They may include such things as blaring music, barking dogs, heavy automobile and truck traffic, screeching aircraft flying overhead, loud machinery, and a wide variety of other unacceptable levels of noise that often affect our sense of peace. There is a wide variation in the threshold of sound tolerance that enables some people to endure more of these kinds of noises than others. What might be an intolerable level of noise to one person may be more acceptable to someone else.

SURROUNDED BY SOUND

It is becoming unavoidably clear that we are seldom really alone anymore—with only our own thoughts and the sounds of natural silence about us. Nearly everywhere we go nowadays, we are being involuntarily accompanied by noise of some kind or another, whether it is in the form of a music

sound track, radio or television, or the noise of traffic or machinery. Sound follows us to the grocery store, to the local coffee house, into the doctor's waiting room, when we go to the bank, while we are waiting for our car to be serviced, and even at the airport. In addition, there is the incessant ring of mobile phones. There are few options left to us in our modern society for peace and quiet.

NOISE POLLUTION

Industrial, manufacturing, and other types of environments create excessive levels of noise, often referred to as "noise pollution." Some of these workplaces have become concerned about protecting their employees from the common occupational hazards that may lead to permanent hearing loss. Interference with speech communication is also a concern in noisy offices and various other business-type environments. Even low-level office noise makes it harder to focus and stay motivated. Researchers have found that noise reduces the ability to cope in problem-solving tasks, which, in turn, increases frustration.

Hearing problems are on the increase and affect many people in a variety of situations. Noise pollution now plays a considerable role in such health hazards as chronic insomnia. It has been linked to mental and behavioral disorders. Elevated levels of traffic noise, especially during the nighttime hours, have been found to trigger ulcers and other health disorders. Excessive or unnatural sounds may cause anxiety and depression. To counteract this condition, many have had to resort to taking anti-anxiety medications or anti-depressant drugs.

Studies have shown that aggressive and irritating noise can raise blood cortisol levels and keep them elevated. This condition, if not attended to, may lead to high blood pressure, heart disease, and impaired mental performance. Simply finding moments of silence in our hectic lives can undo some of the damage done by noise pollution.

PEACE AND QUIETNESS

There are increasingly few silencing techniques in our modern world that may help provide a few moments of peace and quietness in our everyday lives. When first awakening in the morning it has been suggested that we do something relaxing before starting out for the day. Students of the Bible often include the reading of the *Daily Manna* scripture and comments in their morning routine as a source of inspiration and meditation for the day.

It is important that we learn to appreciate the recuperative qualities of peace and quietness. Silence enables us to get more deeply acquainted with our own bodies, such as our muscles, breathing, and posture. With no outside interference we may be able to think more deeply and to reconnect with ourselves. Finding silence within allows positive thoughts to help relax us into a gentle inner peace. True silence is found when those worrisome and frantic elements begin to fade away.

Finding a natural approach to inner peace amid a noisy and boisterous world may also include a simple exercise routine such as taking a short walk. Putting ourselves in tune with our natural surroundings may help free us from the frenzied world of noise and unnatural sounds.

HEALING POWERS OF SOUND

An interesting perspective in connection with the study of sound waves and their positive effects on mankind was submitted in an article published by *Woman's World* magazine (August 24, 2007) under the title, "The Amazing Healing Power of Sound" from which we quote in part. "Scientists are finding out that some sounds we hear every day are more than just relaxing—they actually have the power to heal broken bones, cure life-threatening heart ailments, fight depression, and even prevent disease.

A KITTEN'S PURR

"Scientists think they now know the secret behind a cat's nine lives: 'Their purrs are the same frequency already being used by orthopedists to strengthen bones, and the sound can even help speed healing of fractures!' says Elizabeth von Muggenthaler, Ph.D., of the Fauna Communication Research Institute. Experiments are already under way to see how this sound can benefit humans, preventing osteoporosis and fractures. The music of a harp has such powerful vibrations, it can reduce blood pressure and calm the nervous system—and studies show the resonate notes harps produce can normalize irregular heartbeats."

RESTFUL WATERS

The article goes on to say, "Hearing the rhythmic crash of ocean waves along the surf can fight anxiety and depression! In a recent study, students who listened to ocean sounds had less stress and anxiety than students who didn't hear the crashing surf sounds. Sea sounds are an especially

relaxing form of ‘white noise’—background sound that subconsciously induces serenity and calm. Scientists have found that dolphin vocalizations vibrate so powerfully, they can strengthen your immune system. ‘Dolphins emit frequencies that stimulate tissue repair and blood circulation,’ says acoustic therapist Laurie Seligman. No wonder dolphin songs help fight headaches, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, and more.

“Can the gentle patter of rainfall make you sleepy? Yes! People who went to bed in a room with the sound of a rain shower fell asleep 50% faster than those with no noise at all! This is a sound the Earth makes naturally. Humans are hardwired to calm down when we hear this sound. Researchers discovered that patients in pain found relief from listening to a waterfall. Another study found that patients with chronic pain had a 20% to 30% drop in stress hormones after listening to rushing water sounds.”

DAVID’S CALMING HARP

The Scriptures provide a most revealing account of the benefits of soothing and calming sound. One time when King Saul was troubled by an evil spirit his servants suggested that he call for someone to come and play a harp to calm him. Thus instructions were given, “Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.” (I Sam. 16:16) The scriptural account continues, “And David came to Saul, and

stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”—vss. 21-23

MUSIC THERAPY

David was a musician, and he represents our Lord Jesus. (II Sam. 7:12-17) This wonderful account of David’s comforting music depicts the greater David—our Lord Jesus—who will bring peace and contentment to the whole human family under the administration of his future kingdom of righteousness.

In our present day, there are trained professional therapists who have been accredited by approved programs to work in hospitals, schools, prisons, and in private practice. These people work closely with clients to achieve positive therapeutic goals. They emphasize that music directly affects health and helps cope with grief, illness, depression, and stress in our everyday lives. Among music’s many interesting benefits, they point out that harp and piano music can reduce chronic pain. They have also found that music can enhance heart health, affect brain development and improve memory. Gentle singing makes sick babies less irritable and less likely to cry.

A TROUBLED WORLD

The human family has lived in a turbulent world ever since sin and death were introduced by our

first parents—Adam and Eve—in the Garden of Eden. Although there have been noble attempts from time to time to help alleviate some of the suffering associated with the sentence of death, nevertheless fallen man has had to deal with its reality. The Scriptures make plain the fact that the only solution for man in this sin-sick and dying world is through the promised future kingdom of our Lord Jesus that will ultimately bring peace, quietness, and the blessings of life to all the families of the earth.

However, before this righteous rule over the affairs of the earth can begin, the present social structure, based on selfish practices and pride, must give way to the approaching new world order under Christ that will be established in its place. We believe that we are now living during the closing scenes of this present Gospel Age, and that the nations and peoples of the earth are being prepared for that grand day so near at hand.

TURBULENT WATERS

We read the prophetic words of Isaiah, who wrote in symbolic language to illustrate the preparation work necessary for that wonderful world of tomorrow. It was the Father's purpose to gather the nations at this end of the age for their destruction, that the way for the promised kingdom could be prepared. In our day in prophesy, Isaiah likened this gathering together of nations and peoples as the clamoring sound of rushing, mighty waters.

He said, "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like

the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing [thistledown, *Marginal Translation*] before the whirlwind. And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.”—Isa. 17:12-14

The Apostle Peter also spoke of our time and called it the “day of the Lord.” We read, “The heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”—II Pet. 3:7

The faithful little flock of the Lord’s people, however, were to continue to abide in the assurance of the Father’s care for them. He continues, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”—vs. 10

CALM IN A STORMY SEA

The Lord’s people are now witnessing the closing scenes of this present Gospel Age. Yet, we have the inner peace of which the Apostle Paul spoke. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:7) The followers of Jesus have much advantage in every way. They can trust him not only as respects the life that now is, but also for the life which is to come. “Commit thy way

unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”—Ps. 37:5

As we continue to wait upon the Heavenly Father for the peace and quietness of his promised kingdom, let us hold fast the confidence of our faith. “These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”—Ps. 107:24-30

GOD’S PROMISE

“The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.”—Isa. 32:17,18 ■



OBITUARIES

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

Sister Mickey Gamble, New Haven, CT—May 31.

Walk in God's Path

Key Verse: *“The woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.”*
—Judges 13:24,25

Selected Scripture:
Judges 13:1-8,24,25

and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing.”—Judg. 13:3,4

“For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name.”—vss. 5,6

After Manoah's wife had reported her encounter with

AS A RESULT OF ISRAEL'S

continued disobedience to God, the Philistines were permitted to enslave them for a period of forty years. While this oppression was going on, the angel of the LORD appeared unto the wife of Manoah, and indicated that, although she had been barren, she would become the mother of a son. “The angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee,

the angel of the LORD to her husband, Manoah prayed for another visitation by the angel for further instructions as to the manner in which their son, Samson, should be raised. Again, the angel appeared to the woman. She brought her husband to meet this heavenly visitor, who merely reiterated the information given during his first visit.—vss. 8-14

Manoah then desired to prepare a meal for the angel, who proposed that a burnt offering unto the LORD be made instead. Evidently, Manoah thought the angel was merely a man, but after the sacrifice was made and the angel ascended heavenward in the flame of the altar, Manoah and his wife fell on their faces as an act of reverence.—vss. 15-20

The Key Verse of our lesson records the birth of Samson, and indicates that the LORD blessed him as he grew to maturity in preparation for his role in delivering Israel out of the hands of the Philistines.

Despite Samson's ultimate success in carrying out God's will with regard to Israel's deliverance, there were aspects of his life that would not be appropriate for Christians to emulate, including his involvement with a harlot (chap. 16:1), and his well-known liaison with Delilah.—vss. 4-20

Samson was granted superhuman strength and was able to perform mightily in God's service until he fell asleep on Delilah's lap, had his hair shorn, and was blinded because of his failure to maintain his Nazarite vow.

Similarly, as believers we must not forsake our vows of consecration by allowing the attractions of the world to blind us from keeping our covenant of sacrifice. Let us heed this sage spiritual counsel: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."—Eccles. 5:4,5 ■

Choosing a Community

Key Verse: *“Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.”*
—*Ruth 1:6*

Selected Scripture:
Ruth 1:8-18

DURING THE PERIOD OF the Judges, Elimelech, Naomi, and their sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehem Judah and traveled to Moab to seek sustenance because there was a famine where they lived.

This was an unwise decision. Instead of possibly settling with his Jewish brethren in another section of Israel where perhaps the family’s temporal fortunes might have been better, Elimelech by his actions violated God’s earlier instructions—“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter

into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever. . . . Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.”—Deut. 23:3,6

While the family dwelt in Moab, Elimelech died, his sons married Moabite wives and, after ten years, Mahlon and Chilion also died, leaving their mother, Naomi, with two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.—Ruth 1:3-5

Our Key Verse reveals God’s mercy, as ultimately the famine was removed from Judah and Naomi decided to return to her land alone. Naomi’s daughters-in-law refused to leave her. In Orpah’s case, this was seemingly a polite gesture; but Ruth’s expression was genuine. Naomi

again urged them to depart, noting that Ruth and Orpah should seek to remarry and bear children, while she was too old to marry and bear sons for them to wed. Orpah then took Naomi's advice and returned to her family and her gods, but Ruth vowed, using one of the most beautiful expressions of love recorded in any literature, that under no circumstances would she separate from her mother-in-law. "Intreat 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."—vss. 10-17

When Naomi returned to Bethlehem with Ruth, the inhabitants of the city were happy to see her again and greeted her cordially by name. She responded by saying not to call her Naomi, which meant "pleasant," but instead to call her Mara, which meant "bitter," for she had been chastised for living in Moab. She explained that she had departed many years ago with her husband and her two sons, and now she had returned empty, as a widow without children.—vss. 19-21

A very important lesson that may be derived from a consideration of this narrative is the value of positiveness in making a decision. Ruth determined that she would make a commitment to go to Judea with her mother-in-law and convert to Judaism. Evidently, the testimony she had received concerning the power, wisdom, justice, and love of the Creator was so forceful that she was willing to forsake everything connected with her former life in Moab to embrace the promises that were given to Israel, who were God's chosen people.—Amos 3:2

During his earthly ministry, Christ set forth the requirements of self-denial and cross bearing for all who desire to be his disciples. (Luke 9:23,24) Let us each manifest the same determination to follow our Master as Ruth demonstrated in leaving Moab and accompanying Naomi back to Judea because of her love and desire to serve the God of Israel. ■

Empowering the Needy

Key Verse: *“The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.”*
—*Ruth 2:12*

Selected Scripture:
Ruth 2,3; Leviticus 19:9-10

by Boaz.—*Ruth 2:1,3*

Boaz came from Bethlehem to visit his fields and, seeing Ruth, inquired as to the identity of the young woman he found toiling on his land. Upon learning that she was Naomi's daughter-in-law, he invited her to continue gleaning and also to share the water which was provided for his workers. He appreciated how much Ruth cared for Naomi, and now associated herself with the people of Israel.—vss. 4-11

Our Key Verse reveals something concerning the character of Boaz. Knowing of Ruth's devotion to Naomi and her commitment to God, he kindly asked the

NAOMI HAD A WEALTHY kinsman, Boaz, through her deceased husband Elimelech. As part of the Mosaic Law, Israelites were not allowed to strip the fields bare when harvesting, but were required to leave some of the grain for strangers, or the needy, to glean.—*Lev. 19:9*

Laboring to support herself and Naomi, Ruth took advantage of this provision by going out into the fields to glean, happening to come upon one owned

LORD to bless her.

Boaz continued to show great favor to Ruth, and because he was so impressed with her, he invited Ruth to eat with his workers and also instructed them to leave extra grain in the fields for her to gather. By the end of the day, Ruth had gleaned a considerable amount of barley, and also brought home food for Naomi.—vss. 13-18

“Her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man’s name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.”—vss. 19,20

Naomi then counseled Ruth to stay in the fields owned by Boaz who had been so gracious towards her, rather than to go elsewhere and spurn her benefactor’s protection and goodness. Ruth heeded this sage advice.—vss. 22,23

Believers who once were Gentiles, as Ruth was a Moabite, were aliens and strangers from God’s favor. Ruth, having renounced her former condition, reminds us that, as believers, we have determined that our former way of life, interests, and pleasures should be no longer entertained if we would prove pleasing to our Master. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—II Cor. 5:17

Just as Boaz, a man of great wealth, showed compassion upon Ruth, granted her protection, and supplied her necessities, so our Redeemer’s mercy has abundantly been manifested in our lives and brought us security and comfort. How thankful we should be! ■

Respecting Community Standards

Key Verse: *“Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.”*

—*Ruth 4:5*

Select Scripture:
Ruth 4

have the first option of purchasing the property.—*Ruth 4:1-4*

In the Key Verse, Boaz informs the nearer kinsman he must also take Ruth as his wife, implying that by doing so future children from this union would receive an inheritance of the land as well.

“The kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it. Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and

THE MOSAIC LAW RE-
quired that when a man died childless, a close relative should marry the widow, thus keeping the deceased’s land in the family. Additionally, if the man died without a son, it was important that his widow remarry so that a son could be born and the family name perpetuated. (Deut. 25:5-10) Ruth and Boaz had fallen in love, desiring to marry, with Boaz fulfilling the role of a kinsman-redeemer, but there was a nearer kinsman who would

concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel. Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.”—vss. 6-8

Boaz then joyfully proclaimed that he would redeem both the property and the posterity of Elimelech and claim Ruth to be his wife. All the people present when Boaz made this declaration testified to being witnesses to this arrangement. Boaz married Ruth and she bore him a son named Obed, who later became the ancestor of Jesse, the father of King David. Naomi also was blessed in having the privilege of becoming a nurse to her grandson.—vss. 9-17

There are some interesting correspondences between Boaz and Christ pertaining to the concept of a kinsman-redeemer. The kinsman-redeemer had to be a member of the same family. Regarding Christ Jesus, we read the following concerning his relationship to humanity, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”—Phil. 2:6-8, *New International Version*

Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer, purchased land that had been forfeited. Jesus purchased the earth that was sold to Satan through sin. Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer, was not motivated by selfishness, but rather by his love for Ruth. Similarly, Jesus was motivated to serve as a kinsman-redeemer because of his great love for fallen humanity. As kinsman-redeemer, Boaz took Ruth as his bride. Let us faithfully keep our vows of consecrated living that ultimately we will realize the fulfillment of the station to which we have been called, as the bride of Christ, “the Lamb’s wife.”—Rev. 21:9 ■

The Joy Set Before Us

*“Looking unto
Jesus the author
and finisher of our
faith; who for the
joy that was set
before him endured
the cross, despising
the shame, and is
set down at the
right hand of the
throne of God.”
—Hebrews 12:2*

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE Apostle Paul points to Jesus, who walked in a very narrow and difficult way during his earthly ministry. This is also true of those who faithfully follow him during this present Gospel Age. There are trials and besetments on every hand, and we are cautioned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”—I Pet. 5:8

GOD’S PROMISES

Although Satan is ever searching for ways to discourage us, the Heavenly Father in his great love has provided us with the encouragement that we need. By the ear of faith, his “little ones” hear the reassuring promises of God to protect and keep them in the narrow way and under the shadow of his wings.—Matt. 18:10

Jesus was constantly confronted with circumstances which could have discouraged him, but the promises of God lifted him above the trials that were part of his work of sacrifice. Shame and ignominy were heaped upon him, especially as it pertained to his trial and crucifixion. Through these trials, Jesus experienced a compensating joy of anticipation—"the joy that was set before him."

Jesus did not serve his Heavenly Father in order to obtain a reward, and neither should we. Yet, the promises of God assuring Jesus of a reward were a great source of strength to him, and enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame. Paul says that Jesus is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This was foretold in the promise recorded by the Psalmist David. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Hebrew *sheol*, the grave]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." (Ps. 16:10,11) That joy is also set before us. Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21) Like Jesus, we realize the joy that awaits us when we have finished our consecrated course. This is a great encouragement when the trials are severe.

THE PROMISED SEED

In addition to the joy of spending eternity with his Heavenly Father, was Jesus' great anticipation of the joy of restoring the dead world of mankind to

life during his future kingdom. This was another incentive to faithfulness which enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame and ignominy that he endured as he was laying down his life for the sins of the world. This joy is also set before us because we are promised to share in the promised “seed” of Abraham. The Apostle Paul explained, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.” (Gal. 3:16) “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (vss. 26-29) Paul admonishes, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”—Gal. 6:9

MOUNT ZION

Zion is one of the symbols of the spiritual phase of Christ’s future kingdom in which we are promised a share. Our association with Jesus and Mount Zion is shown in Revelation, where we read, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new

song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.”—Rev 14:1-4

During the thousand years of Christ’s future kingdom, the entire dead world of mankind will be awakened from the sleep of death. The Prophet Isaiah wrote concerning God’s plan for their recovery. “The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:10

THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM

When writing to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul said, “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.” (Heb. 12:22) This wonderful symbol emphasizes the glory of the bride of Christ, the Lamb’s wife.

Mount Zion was a hill in ancient Jerusalem, therefore both of these symbolisms blend into one. We are thus assured that if we are faithful we will participate with Jesus in that glorious kingdom, in the light of which all mankind will walk and be blessed. What an incentive this should be to continue following the Lamb and to endure the cross daily as we are crucified with Christ.

THE ANGELS

The “innumerable company of angels” is a reference to those marvelous spirit beings who serve the followers of Jesus as guardian angels. Paul mentions them again in his letter to the Hebrew brethren. “Of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” (Heb. 1:7) “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”—vs.14

Speaking of the angels, Jesus said, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 18:10) In this instance, Jesus used the expression, “their angels” which indicates the angels who minister to God’s little ones. The angels ministered to Jesus when he was in Gethsemane, and he said to Peter, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?”—Matt. 26:53

It is evident that one or more of these holy, invisible ministers are constantly at work in shaping divine providences for the best spiritual interests of all those who are followers of the Lamb. How marvelous it will be, when exalted to the divine nature, to see and fellowship with those who have had so much to do in guiding and helping us as we walked in the narrow way of sacrifice.

There are many experiences in the life of every Christian, including times of great trial and moments of joy. At times, the trials may threaten to overwhelm us, and our loving Heavenly Father seems to hide his face. Through tears, we may look

up to him in prayer. Then, in his due time when he sees we have learned the needed lesson, the darkness scatters and, once more, we realize his promised grace to help in every time of need. The angels who always behold the face of our Heavenly Father, and who know exactly what his will is for us at all times, are present to change our sorrow to joy and our darkness to light.

What great joy it will be to meet the angels who have been closest to us throughout our earthly pilgrimage, and to converse with them concerning their part in helping us in our weaknesses, and in guiding us when the way was dark and lonely. There may be times when we wonder how circumstances could change so suddenly, or what it was that removed an obstacle that stood so threateningly in the way. Beyond the veil, we will have the joy of asking our guardian angel about the matter, and we will look back and praise the way our loving Heavenly Father, through the ministry of his guardian angels, led and helped us day by day. We look ahead to this great joy of meeting and being with this innumerable company of angels.

THE FIRSTBORN

By faith, we now see the “general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” (Heb. 12:23) Paul is emphasizing that this is a large, comprehensive company. It is the entire spiritual class in the wonderful plan of God. The expression “firstborn” refers back to the time when God was dealing with the nation of Israel. The tribe of Levi was later substituted for the firstborn of the nation.

From the scriptural record, we read, "The LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel." (Num. 3:40,41) "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD."—vss. 44,45

The firstborn are those foreshadowed by the tribe of Levi. The whole tribe of Levi served the other tribes in matters pertaining to God and Israel's worship of God. When Canaan was divided among the other tribes, the tribe of Levi received no inheritance. The priests of Israel were of the tribe of Levi and were special servants in the Tabernacle and in the offering of sacrifices.

In the tribe of Levi, which took the place of Israel's firstborn, there is a general type of the two spiritual classes in the kingdom. There will be the antitypical priests who shall reign with Christ. "Thou didst make them to our God a Royalty and a Priesthood, and they shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:10, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*) These are the overcoming class who will share with Jesus in his future kingdom. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Rev. 3:21

There will also be a great multitude who will not be part of the faithful bride of Christ. “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” (Rev. 7:15-17) These will be servants in the kingdom. However, all are included in the “church of the firstborn” who gave up their inheritance in the land—their hope of restitution blessings here on earth.

If we continue to lay down our lives in sacrifice, and faithfully follow the Lamb, we can look forward to participating in that glorious general assembly beyond the veil. There we will meet all who have suffered and died for upholding the banner of Truth as witnesses for Jesus and for the Word of God. What a joy it will be to participate in the congregation of the saints beyond the veil over which Jesus will preside. There are also many whom we have known personally in our own lifetime, during the closing years of this present Gospel Age, who may be part of that general assembly. Surely the anticipated joy of such a meeting should do much to help us endure the cross as we walk in newness of life.

JUST MEN MADE PERFECT

The Apostle Paul spoke of another class of devout men of God, and referred to them as, “the

spirits of just men made perfect.” (Heb. 12:23) This is a reference to the ancient prophets and those who, in ancient times, faithfully looked to God for guidance. As a reward for their faith, they will constitute the representatives of the earthly phase of the kingdom of Christ—the earthly Jerusalem.

Following the completion of the first resurrection and the meeting of the general assembly of the church of the firstborn, the Worthies of Old will be resurrected to human perfection on the earth. The Apostle Paul devoted the entire 11th chapter of his letter to the Hebrew brethren to that wonderful company of sacrificing servants of God.

The spirit of all these faithful servants was well illustrated by the three Hebrews who expressed their faith by telling King Nebuchadnezzar that their God, whom they served, was able to deliver them, but, even if he did not deliver them, they would still remain faithful to him. From the account, we read, “Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery

furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”—Dan. 3:14-18

Under the administration of Christ’s Millennial kingdom, all of these men of faith will be restored to life and will be the representatives upon the earth of “The Christ” in glory. In the spirit of their minds, they were always loyal to the Heavenly Father but, when they are made perfect, they will be able to render the kind of service they always longed to offer but were hindered by their imperfections.

INTERCESSION FOR US

We know that God is causing all things to work together for the benefit of our spiritual growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. Paul explained, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”—Rom. 8:32-34

When we have completed our earthly pilgrimage, we will no longer need to have intercession made for us. Our loving Heavenly Father has cared for us throughout our consecrated walk in Christ Jesus, and by his power will ultimately exalt us to the very highest of all spiritual natures.

JESUS THE MEDIATOR

In his letter to the brethren at Corinth, the Apostle Paul encouraged them to greater faithfulness,

and explained the wonderful privileges awaiting them in Christ's future kingdom. He wrote, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [covenant]; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (II Cor. 3:6) The Prophet Isaiah had foretold God's purpose centuries before, when he said, "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages."—Isa. 49:8

We have the great joy of anticipation of the time when Christ's future kingdom will be established over the earth and "The Christ," as glorified ministers of a new and better covenant, will be privileged to share in the work of writing its laws in the hearts of all mankind. We may look forward to the superlative joy of being personally and intimately associated with Jesus as he mediates the New Covenant.

Jesus has been our Advocate, and in his name we have prayed to our Heavenly Father. He has been the Captain of our salvation, our Leader, and our Forerunner. Our Lord has been our Head, and his will has been our will. We have the unspeakable hope of seeing him face-to-face, and realize that soon we will be in the actual glorious presence of him who is so precious to us.

EXALTATION

Above and beyond all of the other joys that are set before us is the unsurpassed joy of meeting our loving Heavenly Father. "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of

the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.”—Ps. 89:6-9

The psalmist further wrote of our Heavenly Father, “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.”—vss. 14-16

Our finite minds are incapable of grasping fully what it will mean to be ushered into the actual presence of God and to see him face-to-face. With untold ecstasy, we shall then behold him whose abundant love has lifted us out of the miry pit of sin and death. At that time, we will come to know him even as we have been known by him.

The psalmist has recorded the wonderful scene when the bride meets her Lord. “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace.”—Ps. 45:13-15

A NEW COVENANT

The sacrificial blood of Christ will be used symbolically to seal the New Covenant through which

the world of mankind will be blessed. Under the just terms of that covenant, the faithful members of the church will share with Jesus in the future work of blessing the whole world of mankind. This is one of the great joys to which we may look forward.

THE CURSE LIFTED

The blood of Christ will cry out to lift the condemnation which rests upon all mankind because of sin. The voice of Jesus' blood will make life available for all in their graves, and the curse of death which yet rests upon man and the earth will be lifted. What a blessing this will mean for the sin-cursed and dying human family!

Imperfect mankind will be restored to perfection. Those incarcerated in the great prisonhouse of death will be released. Health, joy, and life will spring forth everywhere because the "blood of sprinkling" will have spoken with a voice which will proclaim the glorious provisions of divine love for the dying race, and announce that the time has come for the fulfillment of God's promises to bless all the families of the earth. It is for this great blessing that our loving Heavenly Father has called us out of the world during this present Gospel Age to share with our dear Redeemer in this wonderful future work.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Heb. 12:2 ■

Visions from the Lord

*“I was not
disobedient unto the
heavenly vision.”*
—Acts 26:19

DURING THE TIME WHEN the Bible was in course of preparation, much of God’s instructions and warnings to his people, as well as the revelation of his plans and purposes, were imparted by means of “visions.” These visions were frequently, if not always, of a miraculous nature and so impressive that they left no doubt in the minds of those to whom they were given that the Lord had spoken to them.

These visions were not given to satisfy curiosity, but in order that those receiving them might be equipped to co-operate with the Lord in the out-working of his plans, either for themselves or for others, or for both. In many instances, visions are referred to in the Scriptures as the “voice” of the Lord speaking to his people. A glance through a Bible Concordance is sufficient to impress one with the importance which the Lord placed upon obedience to his voice and the dire consequences which would result from disobedience.

God spoke to Noah not merely that he might know of the coming flood, but in order that he might warn

the people and make preparation for the saving of himself and his family. God also spoke to Abraham in Ur, told him of his purpose to bless all the families of the earth, and gave him instructions to leave his own people and his father's house and go to a land which he would show him. The blessings to be derived from this contact with the Lord depended upon Abraham's obedience to these instructions.

God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush and commissioned him to be a great deliverer of his people. Even the ground on which Moses was standing at the time the vision was given to him became holy, or sanctified, for God was using it as the place where he was imparting information to his servant as to what he wanted him to do. If Moses from then on was to enjoy the continued favor of the Lord, he had no alternative but to obey the vision.

The Prophet Isaiah was given a vision in which he saw the Lord "high and lifted up." (Isa. 6:1,8) In this vision, Isaiah heard the Lord asking, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" The prophet's response was, "Here am I; send me." This in reality was the meaning of most of the visions with which the Lord favored his people in ancient times, although not always so plainly stated.

NEW TESTAMENT VISIONS

The most notable vision mentioned in the New Testament was the one given to Jesus at the time of his baptism, when the heavens were opened to him. Here, at the age of thirty, Jesus was beginning his earthly ministry. He had come to perform the will of his Heavenly Father—all that had been written in the volume of the book, the Old Testament.

(Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-9) All the instructions written in the Old Testament for the guidance of the Master were recorded under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There had been no one to interpret their meaning. Even for the perfect mind of Jesus to comprehend their import it was necessary that he be given a special revelation—a vision—and it was this with which he was blessed when the heavens were opened unto him.

Jesus had come to do the things which had been written concerning him. When their meaning was revealed, he unhesitatingly entered upon the task of performing them. At what great cost did Jesus obey the heavenly vision! The period of his ministry was short, and every day was a tiring one. He was rebuffed by his enemies, misunderstood by his friends, and the great “contradiction of sinners” finally resulted in his arrest, trial, and cruel crucifixion. (Heb. 12:3) This was the meaning of the vision. Jesus was to be led “as a lamb to the slaughter.” (Isa. 53:7) He was to give his flesh “for the life of the world.” (John 6:51) He was to be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” (Isa. 53:3) He was obedient to his Heavenly Father in all these difficult experiences. He learned what it meant to be obedient even when passing through severe experiences of suffering.—Heb. 2:10; 5:8

To offset the cost of obedience, the Master experienced also a rich reward even while he was laying down his life. His heritage of peace and joy more than compensated for the sacrifice he was making. Indeed, it was this that enabled him to obey “for the joy that was set before him,” and to endure “the cross, despising the shame.” (Heb. 12:2) True,

this was a future joy; but the anticipation of it, and his complete confidence that he would receive the promised reward, gave Jesus a present peace and joy which the world could neither give nor take away. So, while he was “a man of sorrows,” he was undoubtedly at peace with his Heavenly Father. The “joy of the LORD” was his strength.—Neh. 8:10

PAUL'S VISION

Saul of Tarsus had always been a zealous servant of God, although at first he had been wrong in his understanding of what the Lord wanted him to do. It was on an errand of misdirected service that he was favored with that revealing vision mentioned in our text, and concerning which he later testified that he had not been disobedient. It was this vision that halted Saul in his wrong course. It revealed to him the place he was to occupy as a fellow-sufferer with Christ, and the task he was to perform as the apostle to the Gentiles.

So far as Paul's earthly service for Christ was concerned, perhaps the briefest summary of its deep implications for Paul is given in the statement made to Ananias, when the Lord commissioned him to tell Saul what great things he was to suffer for his name's sake. Obedience to the heavenly vision did mean much suffering for Paul. In this he rejoiced, for the vision revealed that he had the privilege of suffering with his Master in the great Messianic cause.—Col. 1:24

These sufferings came as a result of his obedience to the vision—obedience in making known to others what the Lord had miraculously revealed to him. After declaring to Agrippa that he had not

been disobedient to the vision, Paul added, "But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance." (Acts 26:20) It was for "these causes," Paul explained to the king, that he was accused by his fellow Jews. It was for "these causes" that he continued to be persecuted by both Jews and Gentiles until, finally, he finished his course with joy.

Because Paul had implicit faith in the Lord and knew that nothing would be permitted to come into his life that was not for his highest spiritual welfare, he enjoyed rest of mind and heart. He had no rest, though, from the impelling urgency of laying down his life in obedience to the heavenly vision. Whether in Jewish synagogues, in heathen temples, on shipboard, or in prison, the one consuming passion of his life was to impart to others the meaning of that heavenly vision. The knowledge which had been revealed to him was that Jesus was the Christ and that the hope of both the church and the world centered in him as the Redeemer. The vision further identified Christ as the one who was to reign until all enemies were put under his feet, even the great enemy death.—I Cor. 15:25,26

Paul's faithfulness did not end with bearing witness to the gospel of Christ. He was zealous in his service of the brethren, not shunning to declare unto them "all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27) He was a faithful defender of the faith among the brethren, and outspoken in his opposition to the spirit of carnality in the church. He emphasized that Christ is the true head of the church and that

for his brethren to say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," is inappropriate.—I Cor. 3:4

THE END OF THE AGE

Prophecies by Paul, Peter, and John all assure us that the Lord's people at the end of the age would be blessed with an effulgence of light concerning the plans and purposes of God. The Master's own testimony is to the same effect. In describing the manner of his return and Second Presence, Jesus said that it would be as a bright shining coming out of the east and shining even unto the west. (Matt. 24:27) While this is an assurance that ultimately, and as a result of the Master's presence, the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea, the Master's own disciples are the first to be illuminated by the light of his presence.

Using a different illustration of the Truth which would be given to the household of faith at the end of the age, Jesus explained that when he returned he would sit down with his people and would serve them with "meat in due season." (Matt. 24:45-47; Luke 12:37) The combined testimony of Jesus and the apostles leaves no doubt that the Lord's people at this time should expect to be blessed with further enlightenment of truth. However, there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that this latter-day vision would be given by God in a miraculous manner such as in the past when he illuminated the minds of the prophets, the apostles, and our Lord Jesus. Further visions of this sort are not now necessary, for all the plans and purposes of God are now recorded in the Scriptures.

We have reason to believe that a special understanding of the Word of God has been given to his

people in this end of the age and in the manner indicated in the prophecies, particularly by the prophecy of Jesus concerning the “meat in due season.” What we must discover is whether or not that which we call the Truth—“present truth”—is in fact the plan of God and the vision which had been lost sight of during the hundreds of years of the Dark Ages. We must examine whether it is in harmony with, and is the sum total of, the promises and prophecies of the Word of God.

GOD’S PLAN

Do we, then, have the Truth? When it comes to an understanding of the entire plan of God for human redemption and salvation, we cannot properly judge truth from error simply by examining one or even several individual points of doctrine. What we must first identify is the central theme of the divine plan and the great objective to which every detail of the plan is leading. What is it that comes to light as we look into the prophecies and promises of the Word of God? It is the fact that God purposes to establish a kingdom here on earth which will quell the rebellion of fallen man against his sovereign will, and that man, by accepting God’s provision of life through Christ, may be restored to perfection and live forever.

Jesus summed up this great theme when he taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10) The Prophet Isaiah reveals that the accomplishment of this divine purpose is not dependent upon the frail arm of flesh, but that “the government shall be upon his shoulder,” and that “the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—Isa. 9:6,7

Interpreting this great theme which permeates the Word of God, it simply means that the divine plan is the outline of what God will do for man. It was from this fundamental truth of the Bible that the church fell away for many centuries. Instead of praying and waiting for the kingdom of God to rule and bless the world, a counterfeit kingdom was gradually set up by uniting church and state. This was called Christendom and, while the failure and corruption of that system is now recognized by many, the underlying principle upon which it was based still governs the thinking and actions of those who are not enlightened by present truth. That principle seems to be that unless we do God's work for him it will not be done at all. The result of this is that many professed Christians are blind to the fact that God has a plan for the blessing of the nations and will carry out that plan regardless of human help.

VISIONS OF PRESENT TRUTH

The vision of present truth began to come to light well over one hundred years ago. Previously, students of the prophecies had discovered, by the signs of the times and by certain prophecies, that the end of the age and the return of the Master were close at hand. They suffered disappointment in their expectations, however, because of a failure to understand the manner of Christ's return, supposing that he would come as a human with nail prints in his hands and feet. They had overlooked the fact that he had given his flesh for the life of the world and had been raised from the dead a glorious divine being, invisible to human eyes. Hence, when he returned he would be present "as a thief"

(Rev. 16:15; Matt. 24:43), unrecognized by all except those who discover him by noting the fulfillment of the prophecies.

A group of earnest students of the Bible had, over a considerable period of time, studied the prophecies. One of the great truths which became clear as a result of that study was the object of the Lord's return. The Scriptures showed that he was to come to restore mankind to life, not to destroy the earth, and that the prophetic end of the world was in reality the end of the present evil social order. In Acts 3:19-21, the Apostle Peter tells us about the plan of God which was to be accomplished through and by Christ during his Second Presence. He describes it as "times of restitution," and adds that it was this of which God had testified by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. This is the voice of God—the vision—as heard and relayed to us by the prophets.

THE VISION COMPLETE

This vision of truth which has reached us in God's appointed way, and in which so many of us today are rejoicing, is complete and all-comprehensive. It embraces the meaning of all the great visions which God gave to his people in ancient times. Noah may not have understood the Truth as we have it today, or realized that his experiences concerning the ending of that world prefigured the "days of the Son of man" in which we are now living, and the end of this present evil world; but it was a blessed thing for Noah to be informed of the coming flood and to be granted the privilege of service which he had in connection with it.

How Abraham must have rejoiced when God informed him of his purpose to bless all the families of the earth through his seed! He did not know, however, that this “seed” of blessing was to be a faith seed made up of Jesus and his body members who suffer and die with him that they might live and reign with him.

Moses was awe-inspired when he saw the burning bush and heard the voice of God instructing him to take off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. He learned that he was to be the deliverer of his people from Egypt and to be their lawgiver. He was given little conception, however, of the greater deliverance that was to come to all mankind, and of the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles to God under the terms of the New Covenant. While it is true that Moses prophesied that one greater than he was to come, like the other prophets of the Old Testament it is doubtful if he understood very clearly the implications of this and others of his prophecies.

Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up” (Isa. 6:1), and he was inspired with the sight to do the bidding of such an exalted and holy one, but his vision of God did not fully reveal the glories of the divine character as we see them today. He did not understand, as we are privileged to do, the marvelous harmony of God’s attributes—his wisdom, justice, love, and power.

When the heavens were opened to Jesus there was revealed to him the meaning of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the purpose of his earthly ministry—that he was to suffer and

die for mankind. It was not possible then to impart that knowledge fully to his disciples, for as Jesus said, they were not able to bear it. (John 16:12) When later Jesus did open up the Scriptures to them concerning the meaning of his death, their hearts burned within them.—Luke 24:32

It was at Pentecost when the meaning of the vision was enlarged to include the church. Then they learned more fully of their privilege to suffer and die with the Master, thus to share in the “better sacrifices” of this age—the sin-offering feature of the divine plan. (Heb. 9:23) This precious truth was also lost sight of during the Dark Ages, but it is part of the glorious vision with which we have been blessed today.

The vision to which Paul was not disobedient was glorious in all its implications. In it, he saw that the plan of God had progressed to include the Gentiles and the offering to them of the opportunity to become fellow heirs with the Jews in the kingdom promises. Later, Paul was given other visions. He was “caught up” to the “third heaven” and to “paradise” and saw things which he was not permitted to utter because it was not then the due time. (II Cor. 12:1-7) Today, we also can see the “third heaven” and know what Paul saw in “paradise.” He saw God’s purpose of a future restitution accomplished, and the entire human race living in a worldwide Eden of perfection of life and peace. Instead of our not being permitted to declare what we see, we are bidden by our vision to tell the whole world the blessed tidings of Christ’s kingdom soon to be established!

RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRUTH

As we have noted, when in ancient times God gave visions to his servants they were in the nature of commissions for service. So it is in connection with the vision of truth with which God has favored us. There is something for us to do about it. It is to us also a commission of service as well as a commission hedged about with conditions and qualifications which must be met in order for our service to be “holy, acceptable unto God.”—Rom. 12:1

We want our hands to be used in God’s service. We want our feet to be swift in carrying the message of divine love to “comfort all who mourn.” (Isa. 61:2) We desire to use our lips and our tongues to tell of his love. Indeed, if we catch the proper inspiration of the vision we will want all that we possess to be used in God’s service. “Nothing, Lord, would I withhold,” is what we will say to him who has opened the eyes of our understanding to behold his glory. We will gladly devote our all to him.

All of this is included in our full obedience to the heavenly vision. Paul wrote that we should bring “every thought” into obedience to Christ. (II Cor. 10:5) Nothing short of this will be wholly pleasing to the Lord. Christ said that we should let our light shine and, in addition, outlined the many qualifications of righteousness which will make our light-bearing acceptable to God. Let us, then, yield ourselves fully to the power of the Truth and, in our obedience to the vision, rejoice in whatever experiences may result. The time is short. Let us be faithful while the opportunity is still ours. ■

What God Has Given

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

—II Timothy 1:7

THE BIBLE IDENTIFIES various gifts of God, the chief among them being his beloved Son as stated in John 3:16. There is also the gift of the Holy Spirit, a blessing which Jesus said the Heavenly Father was more willing to give to his children than earthly fathers are to give good gifts to their children. (Luke 11:13) In our theme text, Paul assures us that God has not given us the “spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” The spirit of “power,” “love,” and a “sound mind,” is the Holy Spirit in three aspects of its operation in the life of the Christian.

All careful students of the Bible realize that any of its individual statements are best understood in relation to the context in which they appear. We think that this is particularly true with respect to Paul’s observation of what God has not given and what he has given.

There is much in the epistle which throws light on this text. It reveals that Paul was nearing the

end of his Christian way. He was incarcerated in a Roman prison and condemned to death. He was not at all disturbed by this, for he wrote, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."—II Tim. 4:6-8

Paul was ready to be "offered," but he longed for some fellowship and comfort, and urged Timothy to visit him as soon as possible. After affirming that he was ready to be offered, Paul continued, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry."—vss. 9-11

Paul refers to Alexander the coppersmith who did him much evil. (vs. 14) Continuing, Paul wrote, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."—vss. 16,17

Paul said, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." (II Tim. 1:15) Taking this together with what he reveals in the 4th chapter concerning those who had forsaken him, and in some instances

turned against him, we can understand why Paul felt that he needed Timothy and Mark to visit him. At the same time, Paul knew that a certain risk was involved in this requested visit. His statement that no man had stood with him on the occasion of his first trial, might well suggest the reason for their forsaking him. They may have been fearful of being identified as his friends, imprisoned, and possibly condemned to death.

Paul did not endeavor to hide this situation from Timothy. Instead, he reminded his beloved spiritual son that any fear he might have in connection with the proposed visit was not from the Lord. The fact that a proposed service is dangerous, and will naturally entail a certain amount of risk, should not be used as a criterion as to whether or not it is the Lord's will. So Paul wrote, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."—II Tim. 1:8

THE POWER OF GOD

Fear should have no part in directing the Lord's people as they seek to determine his will in any given circumstance. Paul asked Timothy to visit him in his Roman prison realizing that a certain danger was involved. Timothy must have also known this. We may not understand the full reason Paul considered this visit so important, but we do not need to know this in order to get the lesson which the situation presents to us. The lesson is that if a situation arises in our lives which calls for action, the mere fact that it involves danger does

not necessarily indicate that it is contrary to the Lord's will. The total situation must be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, the Lord's people are not needlessly to expose themselves to danger simply to display their courage. This might well be tempting the Lord, as Jesus indicated his jumping from the "pinnacle of the temple" would have been. (Matt. 4:5-7) While the Lord has not given us the spirit of fear, he has given us "the spirit of power" which enables us to be partakers "of the afflictions of the gospel." If we are faithful to the Gospel, bearing witness to the good news of the kingdom with zeal and courage, we will partake of the "afflictions of the gospel."

These afflictions of the Gospel may be in the form of persecution, or they might well be simply in the mental and physical weariness which often is involved in faithfully bearing witness to the Truth. The point is that we should be willing and glad to endure these "afflictions," knowing that, at all times, the Lord will give us the necessary strength. Paul assured Timothy that the Lord would give him "the spirit of power." We can be sure that he will do the same for us.

GOD'S PROMISES

An important source of strength for the Christian is found in the promises of God. By faith we lay hold upon these promises and receive strength to continue on in the difficult way of the cross. We hear the Lord saying, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Heb. 13:5) We take courage in the assurance that the Lord is always at our side to

guide us by his spirit and to overrule all our experiences for our good as New Creatures.

Then there is that wonderful promise, “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Ps. 34:7) By faith, we see these invisible messengers of God as they go about their assignment of ministering to the needs of those who are “heirs of salvation”—that “great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”—Heb. 1:14; 2:3

Paul assures us that the mighty power which raised Jesus from the dead is operative on our behalf. (Eph. 1:19,20) In order to experience the operation of this power, Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all things. (Phil. 3:8-11) He knew that this involved fellowship in the sufferings of Christ—a partnership which led to death. When Paul was first called into the ministry, the Lord revealed to him the course of suffering which lay ahead. (Acts 9:16) This did not deter him because he also knew that the divine “spirit of power” would sustain him through all the difficult experiences he would encounter. So now, from his prison home in Rome, he assured Timothy of this same glorious reality of the Christian’s way of life which leads to death.

The Lord gives strength to his people: “Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. “—Isa. 40:28-31

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

Paul informs us that the Lord also gives his people the spirit “of love.” It is through the divine plan that God’s love is revealed to us. Through this glorious truth of the Word, “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.” (Rom. 5:5) For this to be true, we must empty our hearts of selfishness. Divine love cannot operate in the lives of the self-seeking.

How important it is that the spirit of love does find expression in our lives and becomes the motive for all that we think, say, and do. Paul wrote, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity [love], I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity [love], it profiteth me nothing.”—I Cor. 13:1-3

Paul requested that Timothy visit him in prison which, from the human standpoint, involved a great risk. If this visit, in the Lord’s providence, had led to a complete sacrifice of life on Timothy’s part—the giving of his “body to be burned”—the sacrifice would have been without profit from the Lord’s standpoint had it not been motivated by

love. It is a privilege to suffer and to die with Jesus. Those who are called to thus walk in his steps are assured of the future privilege of living and reigning with him, but only if we have been emptied of self and have wholeheartedly embraced God's gift "of love."

THE SPIRIT OF A SOUND MIND

In addition to the spirit of "power, and of love," the Lord also gives his people the spirit "of a sound mind." What is a sound mind? From the human standpoint, a sound mind is a mind which can properly assess and evaluate the various facts, ideas, and circumstances of life, and make rational decisions based upon them. To the mentally unsound, almost nothing is seen and understood in its true light. Everything becomes distorted.

The present is not the time in the divine plan when God is giving soundness of mind to the mentally unsound in general. We rejoice, however, in the assurance that, in "the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3:21), all who are physically and mentally unsound will be restored to soundness of mind and of body.

We think that the spirit of "a sound mind" referred to by Paul is something which goes beyond the ability of the human mind to think rationally and reach logical conclusions. It is, we believe, a reference to the manner in which the New Creature is guided by the Holy Spirit to do the Lord's will. It is quite possible, in fact almost certain, that one who is thus directed by the Spirit of God will do things, even take a course in life which, from the standpoint of worldly wisdom, would seem quite irrational.

We have a good example of this in the Apostle Paul. At the point in his Christian walk when he appeared before Festus and bore witness to him, this Gentile ruler said, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." (Acts 26:24) The "learning" referred to by Festus is what Paul had received in the school of Christ. It gave him the spirit of "a sound mind" which to an outsider, seemed sheer folly, or worse.

TIMOTHY'S VISIT

From the human standpoint, it would probably not have seemed wise for Timothy to visit Paul in the Roman prison. The mind of the flesh would reason that nothing could be accomplished by such a visit, and that, perhaps, he would lose his life. In his letter to Timothy, Paul expressed a different view. Should this beloved young soldier of the cross be fearful, Paul reminded him that the spirit of fear is not from the Lord. Instead, God gives strength unto his people to do what he calls upon them to do. Paul, the mouthpiece of the Lord, evidently believed there was an important reason why Timothy should visit him in Rome.

Paul's second letter to Timothy contains much instruction for this young teacher in the church. These were instructions which would help him to continue on successfully in the ministry after Paul's departure. He wrote, for example, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (II Tim. 2:1,2) Probably, Paul felt there were

many more instructions and admonitions he would like to impart to Timothy than would be possible by letter. This may well have been one of the reasons he wanted to see him.

A REASONABLE SERVICE

In any case, Paul certainly felt that Timothy would be exercising the spirit of a sound mind to visit him in Rome, even though it would entail hardship and a certain degree of danger. After all, this is what they both believed was involved in following the Master. Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) A sound mind is a mind capable of reasoning. The New Creature knows that it is a reasonable thing to present one's body a living sacrifice. Having thus presented oneself to the Lord, it would be unreasonable, or the exercise of an unsound mind, to hold back from the way of sacrifice.

We have in Jesus an excellent illustration of this. He is our exemplar, and we are walking in his footsteps. Jesus poured out his soul unto death and was led as a lamb to the slaughter. In the beginning of his ministry, Jesus avoided exposing himself to danger. Realizing that he had bitter enemies in Judea, he moved north to Galilee. He did this not because he was fearful, but because he knew that the Father's time for the consummation of his sacrifice had not yet come. However, when the "due time" did approach, Jesus unhesitatingly returned to Judea and announced to his disciples "that he

must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed.”—Matt. 16:21

PETER OBJECTS

Peter seemed certain that his beloved Master was making a serious mistake in thus exposing himself to danger. He rebuked Jesus, and said, “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” (vs. 22) Jesus replied to Peter, saying, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”—vs. 23

Peter meant well, but he was using human reasoning as a guide. Anyone not guided by the Holy Spirit would reason the same way. From the standpoint of the divine will for those who have covenanted to lay down their lives in the divine cause, such human reasoning is not sound. Jesus explained why, and included his followers in the explanation. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—vss. 24-26

In this explanation, Jesus assured the disciples that he was not actually throwing away his life, but taking the only possible course that would lead to life—divine, immortal life, that is. Jesus had entered into a covenant with the Heavenly Father which called for the sacrifice of his life as the world’s redeemer. In return, the Father had given the Master many assurances of life in the resurrection.

These promises were a great joy to Jesus. They were a joy that enabled him, in the laying down of his life, to endure the cross and to despise the shame entailed in being viewed as a blasphemer in the eyes of his enemies.—Heb. 12:2

Jesus knew that the only way to enter into that future life in the resurrection and to be with his Heavenly Father in glory, was to faithfully consummate the sacrifice of his earthly life. If he failed in this, he would lose everything. Thus, to him, the only way to “find” his life in the resurrection, was first to “lose” it through obedient and loving sacrifice.

WE FOLLOW HIM

Jesus invited his disciples to take up their cross and follow him into death. When we take this step of full dedication to the Lord’s will, we are obligated to walk in the way that he walked. The Lord’s mind becomes our guide, and thus we are given the spirit of a sound mind. This is not a mind that holds us back from sacrifice, but a mind that urges us to take advantage of every opportunity to lay down our lives. Having devoted ourselves to this course of sacrifice, let us not allow human reasoning to turn us aside from the pathway of faithfulness, whether it be our own, or someone else’s.

Paul was well acquainted with the fact of Jesus’ life. He knew how courageously Jesus took that final journey to Jerusalem, knowing that death awaited him in that holy city. It is quite possible that Paul had this experience in mind when he, likewise, found himself confronted with the question as to whether or not he would go up to Jerusalem where bonds—and possibly death—awaited

him. Paul was warned by the Holy Spirit, through Agabus, that he would be bound in Jerusalem and delivered to the Gentiles.—Acts 21:10,11

Paul's friends, as Peter did with Jesus, endeavored to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. Although not realizing it, they were using human reasoning which, from Paul's standpoint, and the Lord's, was unsound. "Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—vs. 13


OUR "JERUSALEMS"

Our "Jeruselems" consist largely of little ways of laying down our lives. Is our earliest thought each morning a reaffirmation of our consecration vow to lay down our lives in divine service? Each evening, as we look back upon the experiences of the day, can we say to the Lord that we have done as faithfully as possible all that he gave us to do? Can we say that we did not turn down any opportunity simply because it seemed too difficult?

As day by day we face our little "Jeruselems" may it be without fear, knowing that fear is not of the Lord. Let it be with courage, knowing that the Lord will give us the spirit of power. He will give us all the power we need to do the things he gives us the opportunity of doing. May we also daily cleanse ourselves of the spirit of selfishness. Having denied self, let us seek to do the Lord's will, in his way, which is the way of love, for he has given us the spirit of love.

If we are ridiculed by the world and our worldly friends for being too one-sided, too radical in the

way we serve the Lord, let us ever remember that presenting our bodies daily as a living sacrifice is our “reasonable” service. It is only by the sacrifice of our earthly life, that we can hope to gain heavenly life, and live and reign with Jesus. Let us be like Paul who, in referring to experiences which awaited him in Jerusalem, said, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”—Acts 20:24 ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

AUGUST 4—“The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.”—II Timothy 2:24,25 (Z. '00-14 Hymn 95)

AUGUST 11—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Revelation 2:10 (Z. '04-63 Hymn 32)

AUGUST 18—“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”—I Thessalonians 5:21 (Z. '03-26 Hymn 49)

AUGUST 25—“We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”—I John 3:2 (Z. '03-151 Hymn 105)

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R. Goodman

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NIGERIA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 19-21—Emmanuel College Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. O. Egbu. Phone: 2348033339949 or 2348082146621

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2-5—Seabeck Conference Center, 15395 Seabeck Hwy NW, Seabeck, WA 98380. Room reservations, contact L. Flinn. Phone: (253) 838-3822. Other information, contact D. Christiansen. Phone: (360) 440-3283

JACKSON CONVENTION, September 3,4—Fa-ho-lo Camp & Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Unit 1, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact V. Lumley. Phone: (517) 782-7252

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 3,4—Doubletree Hotel, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ 07430. Phone: (201) 529-5880. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 9-11—Radisson Inn Huntsville Airport, 8721 Madison Blvd., Madison, AL 35758. Contact J. Cothren, 1300 Huntsville Hills Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802. Phone: (256) 852-8505

CLAY CITY CONVENTION, September 16-18—Canyon Inn, McCormick's Creek State Park, 451 McCormick Creek Park Road, Spencer, IN 47460. Contact S. Clark, 7861 Clearwater Parkway, Indianapolis, IN 46240. Phone: (317) 578-2634

COLORADO CONVENTION, September 16-18—Red Lion Hotel-Denver Central, 4040 Quebec Street, Denver, CO 80216. Contact L. Turner, 1966 Mount Zion

Drive, Golden, CO 80401. Phone: (303) 278-4091 or (303) 809-1957

KALISPELL CONVENTION, September 23-25—Hampton Inn, 1140 Hwy. 2 W, Kalispell, MT 59901. Room reservations, contact hotel directly at (406) 755-7900. Other information, contact F. Blicharz. Phone: (406) 314-4945

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 1,2—Sewickley Grange Hall, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139 Or contact L. Mlinek. Phone: (724) 689-8733

SAN LUIS OBISPO CONVENTION, October 15,16—Masonic Temple, 859 Marsh Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401. Contact M. Allard. Phone (805) 773-2962

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 29,30—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 831-2098

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To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

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

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35