

The DAWN

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RECONCILIATION THROUGH ABRAHAM

"Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and he was gathered to his people. Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah."

Genesis 25:8,9, RSV

RECENTLY AN ARTICLE appeared in the news media entitled, "*A Biblical Call for Reconciliation in the Middle East.*" It was based on our theme text from Genesis, which tells of the death of Abraham and how his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, came together to bury him. The article said, "In the difficult Middle East peace effort, control of the West Bank city of Hebron has emerged as a particular challenge. Hundreds of Jewish settlers live in enclaves there, amidst tens of thousands of Palestinians. The Israeli government has delayed pulling out its army, angering the Palestinian authority.

"What has always given Hebron a special status is its religious significance to both Jews and Muslims. The Bible identifies it as the burial place of

Abraham, regarded as a patriarch by both faiths. Jews trace their descent through Isaac, born to Abraham and Sarah, while Muslims trace theirs through Ishmael, born to Abraham and Hagar.

"In this link, some have wondered lately whether there might be a religious basis, a Biblical call to reconciliation, to spur the negotiations.

"One person wrestling with this idea is Menachem Z. Rosensaft, a Manhattan lawyer with an international practice, the son of Holocaust survivors and a very early participant in the peace effort. In December 1988, Mr. Rosensaft was one of five American Jews who met with Yasir Arafat, then chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, in Stockholm. Not long thereafter, Mr. Arafat promised that the P.L.O. 'accepted Israel as a state'.

"In an interview, Mr. Rosensaft, speaking of the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, said, 'Whether you say they were written by God or inspired by God, the traditional view is that no word in the Bible is superfluous'.

"In the case of Hebron, the Biblical words that most intrigue him are in the 25th chapter of Genesis. Its eighth verse reports: Abraham died, 'an old man and full of years'. The ninth says, 'His sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah' (which Abraham had bought from the Hittites as a grave for his wife, Sarah).

"Until Genesis 25:9, Ishmael had not been heard from since Abraham sent him and his mother, Hagar, into the wilderness, where they were taken under God's protection. Yet, after Abraham's death, Ishmael returns to mourn with Isaac.

“ ‘Who buried Abraham?’ Mr. Rosensaft asked. ‘His two eldest sons together. Clearly, there has been a reconciliation that let Isaac and Ishmael pay their respects to their father. There is no record in the text of any hostility’.

“Mr. Rosensaft is not alone in wanting to call attention to the verse. So, too, does Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky, a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, whose monthly discussion groups about Genesis have lately become the basis for Bill Moyer’s public television series, ‘Genesis: A Living Conversation’. ‘I think it’s a very apt text’, Rabbi Visotzky said, ‘I’d say for Menachem, he’s on the mark. That’s what we have to preach’.

“Rabbi Visotzky has, in fact, preached on Genesis 25:8,9 before formal peace talks began between Israelis and the Palestinians. ‘What I’ve said about it is, How many more graves do Isaac and Ishmael have to stand over before they realize they are brothers?’”

The article then deals with the obstacles facing Israel and the PLQ in trying to negotiate a peaceful settlement respecting authority over and ownership of the land, and then continues with the thought of reconciliation. We quote:

“Mr. Rosensaft said Genesis 25:9 posed ‘an absolute religious argument’ for interfaith reconciliation. ‘It is relevant, in my opinion’, he said, ‘because Hebron has become a symbol of religious fanaticism in the Middle East, on both sides’. He called it essential for both sides to ‘de-demonize each other’. ‘From a secular standpoint’, he said, ‘the peace effort has done some of that. The time now,’ he added, ‘is to bring this same respect. and

this same tolerance and understanding, into the philosophical and theological sphere, in order to persuade the imams and the rabbis to say, 'Wait a minute, we do have common ground'."

Abraham is the key figure to the reconciliation sought by both descendants of that noble patriarch. But how is it to be accomplished? In order to answer that question we need to examine the background of Abraham's life and faith, and in particular the part that God has in mind for him. Abraham was called by God to leave his country, his people, and his father's house and to go to a land he would show him. A promise was made to Abraham, that if he would do this, God would bless him. God said, "I will make you [Abraham] into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Gen. 12:2-4, *New International Version*) And Abraham obeyed God.

This is known as the Abrahamic Promise and Covenant, although the word 'covenant' concerning this promise does not appear until Genesis 15:18, which reads: "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates'." The background for this statement was Abraham's concern that they were approaching ten years since God had promised to bless all families of the earth with his seed, and there was no seed. So Abraham suggested that Eliezer, his steward, be adopted as his son and heir. God's answer was, "This shall not

be thine heir." Rather, a son coming from Abraham's body would be the heir.—Gen. 15:1-5

It was then that Sarah, Abraham's wife, suggested that Abraham take her Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, as a wife and bear a child since Sarah was barren. Abraham decided to help God in this matter, and took Hagar as a wife and she conceived. Hagar became contemptuous of Sarah, and Sarah had to deal hardly with her, causing Hagar to flee.

In the wilderness she encountered an angel of the LORD who advised her to return to her mistress, also telling her that she would bear a son and call him Ishmael. He would be the father of a multitude of people that could not be numbered. (Gen. 16:9-11) A prophecy was pronounced concerning Ishmael which said, "He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." (vs. 12, *NIV*) Hagar returned to Sarah and bore a son whom Abraham named Ishmael. Finally, Abraham had an heir which came from his own body.

However, this was not the promised seed God had in mind when he made the promise to Abraham. Thirteen years after Ishmael was born, when Abraham was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to him and confirmed the covenant with him. God then introduced circumcision as a token of the covenant between Abraham and himself. Also, he made it plain that the promised seed would not only come from him, but that Sarah would be the mother. This seemed incredible to Abraham, because he was almost 100 years old, and Sarah was 90, past the age of childbearing.

It prompted him to plead for Ishmael, saying: "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. 17:18) But God was adamant, and said: "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."—Gen. 17:19-21

True to God's word, Isaac, the miracle child, was born to her who was barren. When Isaac was weaned and no longer absolutely dependent upon his mother, Abraham made a great feast to celebrate the occasion. The Scriptures say: "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."—Gen. 21:9,10

Abraham was grieved and did not want to do this because he loved Ishmael. But God told him to heed Sarah, because it was through Isaac that his seed would be called, and that he would also make a great nation from Ishmael's seed. As a consequence Hagar and Ishmael were sent out into the wilderness. When their water was gone, Hagar was sure that Ishmael would die. But the angel of the LORD calmed her, and God opened her eyes to find water for their survival. The LORD's promise was fulfilled—a great nation came from Ishmael.

It is generally believed that the Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael, in particular the Bedouins living between Sinai and the Persian Gulf. Ishmael's son, Kedar, is reported to have been an ancestor of Mohammed. Mohammed was born in Mecca on the Arabian peninsula, and that city has become an important city for Muslim pilgrimages. Every Muslim must, during his lifetime, make a pilgrimage to Mecca to visit the great mosque, the Haram which enclosed the Kaaba. The Kaaba is supposed to contain the bodies of Hagar and Ishmael. It is highly revered by the Muslim. Pilgrims make various stops in Mecca, and one of the locations is where Mohammedan tradition says Ishmael was offered up by Abraham as a sacrifice, but that he was prevented from doing so by God's hand. Mohammedan tradition also says that Abraham went to Mecca to help Ishmael rebuild a temple.

It might appear that Ishmael and Hagar were banished for the slight offense of mocking. But the 'mocking' mentioned was more serious than the word conveys. The Apostle Paul, in using Ishmael and Isaac in his allegory in Galatians wrote: "As then he [Ishmael] that was born after the flesh persecuted him [Isaac] that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." (Gal. 4:29) How did Ishmael 'persecute' Isaac? The Bible does not supply details. We have to look to traditional accounts to determine what may have happened.

Ishmael was nineteen years of age when Isaac was five years old. Ishmael had become skillful with the bow and arrow, and, according to tradition, would aim his shaft at Isaac, shooting the arrow close to him. One might call that playing, teasing, or mocking, but what mother would tolerate that

form of play? Hence, we can understand Sarah's reaction, and also why the Apostle Paul called it 'persecution'.

We have support for this traditional account from the Midrash—a collection of Rabbinical Comments on the Scriptures—and, in an indirect manner, from the Scriptures themselves. When Ishmael and Hagar were banished from Abraham's home and went into the wilderness, apparently Ishmael took his bow and arrows with him. When Hagar thought Ishmael was going to die, she removed herself "a good way off, as it were a bowshot" (Gen. 21:16), the distance being measured by a bowshot. After their miraculous deliverance we further read: "God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer." (Gen. 21:20) Ishmael did not see Isaac again until Abraham died. Most likely they were not on friendly terms. However, they came together for the burial of their father, Abraham.

Isaac was truly the son that God told Abraham to offer as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. (Gen. 22:9-19) The Apostle Paul mentions this incident in Hebrews 11:17-19, where he says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Isaac's descendants through his son, Jacob, became the nation of Israel, whose history is documented so well in the Scriptures. This nation received special blessings from God, and also special punishments. Their restoration to the land

given to them as the natural seed of Abraham is one of the important signs of our day concerning the proximity of God's kingdom.

It is interesting to note that Abraham never received that land as a possession. Stephen testified concerning Abraham, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child."—Acts 7:2-5

Later, Abraham's natural seed did possess the land, and remained there until they were taken captive to Assyria and Babylon. After the seventy years of captivity in Babylon, some returned to rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, but they continued to be subject to all the universal empires of that era. Finally, during Rome's tenure, they were dispersed from the land again and scattered all over the world.

When their punishment ended, favor gradually returned to these natural descendants of Isaac, and they started to return and rebuild a land that had become occupied by the sons of Ishmael. There have been many conflicts between these descendants, and as suggested in the news article, a reconciliation is due. But are they able to effect a

reconciliation without assistance from God? We do not think so.

An important part of God's plan is the resurrection of the faithful people of the Bible, often referred to by Bible students as Ancient Worthies. These are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as examples of faith. Abraham is one of these, who "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (vs. 10) Abraham looked forward to the kingdom of God, or that city whose builder and maker is God, which he never found during his sojourn on earth. As the apostle says in summarizing the activities of these ancient, faithful people, that these were willing to endure afflictions to "obtain a better resurrection." (vs. 35) This 'better' resurrection is described in Psalm 45:16, as being made "princes in all the earth" where they will be the administrators in God's kingdom over all the family of mankind.

If the death of Abraham brought about a reconciliation between Ishmael and Isaac, what do we suppose the resurrection of Abraham will do for the sons of Isaac and Ishmael? These children of Abraham will rejoice to see him, and will give him utmost respect. Will they listen to his counsel and wisdom? Most assuredly. Petty differences will disappear. The land that they have fought over will be used by them for good, as they recognize that the true owner of the land is Jehovah, the great Creator of the universe, even as he said: "All the earth is mine;" and again, "The land is mine." (Exod. 19:5; Lev. 25:23) Here God was specifically speaking of the Land of Israel. It will be Abraham who will preside over a highly successful Middle East peace! This will be a happy ending to the long conflict that

has endured for centuries, and has been heightened in the last hundred years as God restored Israel to the land he promised to them.

But most importantly, Abraham will be able to see the true fulfillment of the promise made to his 'seed', which really is Christ. As the Apostle Paul has said, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:29) It is Christ the Deliverer who shall come out of Zion and "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Rom. 11:26) Abraham will be one of the earthly representatives of that glorious kingdom of peace under Christ. Considering his background, we do not have to stretch our imagination to see the impact his resurrection will have on his natural progeny.

The best part of this reconciliation will be the blessing of *all* the families of the earth (Gen. 22:16-18); a promise which, when it is fulfilled, will fill even Abraham's heart and mind with awe for the wonderful Creator he worshiped faithfully when living upon earth so many centuries ago.

All mankind will echo the sentiments of the Apostle Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the LORD? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."—Rom. 11:33-36 ■

"THE glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."
—Isaiah 40:5

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.—Hebrews 12:1

EACH ONE ON this racecourse should examine himself, rather than examine others, in respect to progress in this narrow way; for each knows his own heart condition and the weaknesses of his own flesh better than any other knows these, the LORD alone excepted. Let us each note just where he is in the racecourse, rejoicing that he is in the race at all; considering it a great privilege to be thus called and privileged to enter in this race. If we find that we have passed the first quarter mark, let us rejoice and press on. If we find that we have passed the second also, let us rejoice so much the more, but not slack our running. If we find that we have passed the third quarter we may properly rejoice so much the more, and press with vigor on; and if we have attained to the fourth mark of perfect love, which includes even enemies, we have indeed cause for great rejoicing. —*Songs in the Night, May 22*

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Walter Edwards, Sagle, ID—February 26. Age, 83.

Sister Irene Chupa, Detroit, MI—April 5. Age, 79.

Sister Sue Anderson, Green Valley, AZ—April 13. Age, 87.

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDIES

LESSON FOR JUNE 1

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

KEY VERSE: *"Exercise thyself . . . unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."*—*I Timothy 4:7,8*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *I Timothy 4:6-16*

IN TODAY'S LESSON we discover false teachers causing trouble in Ephesus, teaching a doctrine different from that which the Apostle Paul taught, and that led away from the faith. Paul counsels Timothy that Christ's servants must practice godly living to be an example to others. Because one who is a son of God and a follower of the Savior is an ambassador for God, he has no time to make his own personal care his uppermost thought but must be about

his Heavenly Father's business. Such must show forth the praises of him who called him out of darkness into his marvelous light.—*I Pet. 2:9*

The effect of these new ambitions and hopes upon one's physical health is often surprising, stimulating us to great zeal and activity in serving the LORD. Train yourself in godliness, says Paul, for 'while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life

and the life to come'. The new mind does not suggest carelessness of our body.

Timothy is urged to train—to exercise—himself in godliness. Intense practice is required if the body is to be developed for competition in the games. Likewise, one must approach spiritual development with the same intensity, the same consistency, because it is really much more important to train for the exercise of discipleship for so much depends upon it, not only in this life but also in the life to come.

Timothy's mission is to bring instruction to the people. If the words of the faith have nourished his spirit, as food and water vitalize the body, surely they will nourish the members of the congregation as well. His instruction is to consist not only in the reading of the Scriptures, but it is to be followed by exhortation and preaching which explains or expounds on the text, and applies it to everyday life.

Of equal importance, Timothy was to take heed and pay close attention to himself, for we teach in our

attitudes and behavior as well as in words. We are to be examples or models of the Gospel we preach. This was the course Paul recommended to Timothy: that he might keep himself pure from worldly contamination, and be an example and faithful minister to others, saying, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity. . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."—I Tim. 4:12,15

In view of the knowledge of the wonderful day about to dawn, how then shall we live? The apostle says we are children of the day, and we are to show it. We are God's representatives and ambassadors. We are to tell the people about the light and knowledge and glory of God that is soon to come and fill the whole earth. We are to help them contrast the present with the glorious conditions that will then exist, so all who love the light may take heed to the Word of God. ■

PURSUE GODLINESS

KEY VERSE: *"Thou, O man of God, . . . follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."*—*I Timothy 6:11,12*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *I Timothy 6:2-21*

WHAT IS THE value of godliness, and why should we pursue it? The Apostle Paul says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." (I Tim. 6:6-8) In verses 9 and 10, Paul admonishes not to place confidence in money: "Those wishing to be rich fall into a temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and injurious desires, which sink men into destruction and utter ruin; for a root of all kinds of evil is the love of money; which some

longing after, wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves around with many sorrows."—*Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

He then counsels his hearers to flee those things, and to fight the good fight of faith in the vital work of following after righteousness, godliness, and all the elements of Christian character. To the Philippians Paul wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to

abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”—Phil. 4:11-13

The apostle’s admonition is to “walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.” (I Thess. 2:12) One cannot expect to gain the victory and the great reward without a battle with the Adversary, sin in all associations, the world, and weakness in his own flesh—though the latter is covered by the merit of Christ’s righteousness.

In Ephesians 6:13, Paul says, “Take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.” No man ever puts on armor unless he expects to fight. If he is a soldier of the cross, the “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) is the greatest weapon with which he will prove his loyalty and strength.

How, then, and against what, shall we exercise our combativeness that it may be well directed to the LORD’s pleasing, and in the service of his cause?

If we see someone else’s imperfections and faults

and we make a vigorous campaign against his weaknesses and errors, we will be making a mistake. This struggle must first begin with ourselves.

The battle with self is the greatest battle, and we have the LORD’s Word for it that he who “ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16: 32), because to that extent he has learned to exercise the combativeness of a true character in the right direction—in self-control.

True soldiers of the cross must endure a hardening campaign of experience through trials in the LORD’s service to come off victorious in the LORD. “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (I Cor. 4:1) This stewardship involves a responsibility of achieving godliness and of dispensing God’s grace to others, or, as the Apostle Peter has said:

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”—I Pet. 4:10 ■

THE COST OF COMMITMENT

KEY VERSE: *"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—II Timothy 2:3*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *II Timothy 2:13*

WHAT PRICE AM I willing to pay for the sake of following Jesus Christ and the Gospel? The Apostle Paul's illustration in the Bible, which represents the Christian as a soldier, answers this question and gives us depth of understanding. It may seem difficult for some to compare the service of Christ with that of a good soldier, but both were informed at the very beginning that it would be necessary to fight a good fight. The Christian was invited to enlist in the army to battle against Satan, sin, and the powers of darkness as found in the world and the flesh. He should have full confidence that ultimately faith will have its victory. The Chris-

tian soldier will find that the greatest opposition can arise in his own character because he has tendencies toward sin as a member of the fallen human race. In Ephesians 2:3, Paul says we all fulfill "the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and are by nature "the children of wrath." The soldier of the cross was also told that he must suffer, laying down his life as Jesus, his forerunner, laid down his life.

It has been said, "A true soldier does not debate his cause. He is rightly supposed to have settled upon its justice and righteousness before he enlisted to serve it. Thereafter he avouches it and defies contradiction of it. He is ready

to spend all and be all spent in its defense." Jesus said, in a different illustration, "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (Luke 14:28) He continues: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."—vs. 33

To be a disciple of Christ signifies much more. Our Lord's words are explicit in defining the terms of discipleship to be nothing less than a full, complete consecration. It must be a consecration to daily crossbearing and of following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Paul clearly expresses the terms as the presenting of our bodies as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your [our] reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) No one failing to do this is recognized by the Lord as his disciple, or enjoys the privileges of that relationship. Further, only those who do this intelligently are accepted by him. His reasoning on the subject shows that the Lord would not have anyone

take upon himself the responsibilities of this relationship without due deliberation and forethought.

A commentary on our text says, "There is an ineffable joy in being on the right side, in knowing that beyond the field of blood and the valley of shadows is an abundant entrance into the joys and peace of the triumphant King of kings. For that hope, none should shrink from the hardness of battle, none quail before the rage of the enemy, and none tremble before the certainty of hunger, thirst, nakedness, wounds, or death."

The final honor to which God has invited these is the honor of sharing his great kingdom with his Son. This implies a change to the spirit nature of all who have become soldiers of the cross, followers of the Lamb, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. These are called upon to forego the rights and privileges of the present time, their lives bearing testimony to the world of the glory of God, and meanwhile calling others to walk in the same path. ■

KEEP THE FAITH

KEY VERSE: *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."—II Timothy 4:1,2*

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: *II Timothy 4:1-8*

The Apostle Paul said, the time is coming when men "will not endure sound doctrine." (II Tim. 4:3) This would occur because, having itching ears, they would gather to themselves teachers to suit their own desires, would turn away from listening to the truth, and wander away to myths. (vs. 4) Paul's addressing Timothy as "his son" (I Tim. 1:2) indicates the close relationship they had, and his great confidence in him to be his successor in the general "care of all the churches."—II Cor. 11:28

Against this backdrop, Paul directed Timothy: "Preach the Word; be in-

stant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (II Tim. 4:2) Timothy was reminded of how great his privileges were, having been instructed in the Scriptures from his infancy by his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois.

He was reminded, too, in a modest manner, of how he had received his understanding of the Scriptures through the Apostle Paul, and was assured that the instructions were of God. Paul had been given the Gospel by God, which he had faithfully kept by being obedient and making it known through his many

trials and difficulties, including his pending martyrdom.—II Tim. 4:7,8

He cautioned Timothy that he should not lend support to another Gospel than the one he had received, or, as described by the Apostle Peter when he wrote, “which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.” (I Pet. 1:12) The presentation of any other gospel by anyone was to be shunned. See also Galatians 1:8.

“Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” (II Tim. 4:5) The mission of the Gospel was not the conversion of the world, but to call out from the world the church members to be glorified with the Redeemer at his appearing and kingdom.

Peter, agreeing, said, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.”—I Pet. 3:15

Paul recognized that, as a Christian, he had certain lessons to learn in the school of Christ, and this was part of his course of preparation for joint-heirship with Christ in the glories of the Millennial kingdom. He became a partaker with Christ in the sufferings of the present time. He had finished his course and could now declare, “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.” (II Tim. 4:6,7) Paul had kept the faith—the true faith delivered unto the saints—faith in the Redeemer’s sacrifice.—Jude 3

The apostle knew and taught that there would be a “resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (Acts 24:15) When he received the crown of righteousness as a mark of faithfulness, it would afford him untold opportunities of blessing all mankind in association with his Lord during the Millennial kingdom. Such will be the honor of all who keep the faith! ■

BE GOOD TO ONE ANOTHER

KEY VERSE: *"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men."*—Titus 3:8

SELECTED SCRIPTURE: Titus 3:1-11

HOW CAN WE be good to everyone, including those we think are undeserving? In answer, today's lesson steers us to God's treatment of us when we were the undeserving. Verse 3 reminds us that we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, filled with envy, hating one another.

It was when we were like this that the kindness and consideration of God appeared to us, and resulted in our salvation, which is not a reward for any works of righteousness that we have done. (vss. 4, 5) But we, who have left

the world, who have renounced its spirit, are under the most solemn obligations as New Creatures in Christ to bring our fallen nature with its tendencies to evil into full subjection to the new nature, to bring the old creature under control of the holy will of God, crucifying the flesh and bringing every thought into captivity of obedience to Christ.

Paul contrasts the fruits of the Adversary and of the fallen flesh with the precious fruits of the Spirit of God. The one spirit is heavenly, Godlike; while the other is "earthly, sensual, devilish." (Gal. 5:22,23;

James 3:15) Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance are the heavenly fruits. They are the very opposite of the spirit of the Adversary. As we endeavor to do the will of God and to cultivate the sweet qualities of the Holy Spirit, we find continual warfare with the inherited weakness of our fallen flesh.

In Ephesians 4:26, the Apostle Paul admonishes us, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." No matter what provocation one may have had, he should see to it that the matter is settled as quickly as possible. Anger or wrath must not be harbored for it is sure to lead to permanent bitterness and hatred. He emphasizes this matter in writing to the Hebrews: "Follow peace with all men, . . . lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."—Heb. 12:14,15

No one has the right or ability to judge the heart of another; we should be very slow to anger and very careful how we express ourselves. We should guard

our tongues against evil-speaking, backbiting, or slander, for these are assassinations of another's character. Each should seek to purge out the old leaven of malice and envy and strife and evil-speaking, that he may be pure in heart—having a copy of the LORD's pure heart.

The law of love forbids the LORD's people to follow the harmful example of the world. Paul admonishes us of this, saying, "Speak evil of no man" (vs. 2), even declaring against evil surmisings, and in I Corinthians 13:5 the apostle says that "[love] thinketh no evil."

Jesus instructs us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." (Matt. 6:12-15) Again he declares, "So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matt. 18:35) If we treasure up resentment against others, the Heavenly Father will not forgive us! So, we are to be ready to do good to one another, and thereby, to be pleasing to our loving and forgiving God. ■

GOD'S WILL

***"Be not conformed to this world:
but be ye transformed by the renewing
of your mind, that ye may prove what
is that good, and acceptable,
and perfect, will of God."***

Romans 12:2

THE QUESTION OF the Divine will occupies a prominent place in the teachings of the New Testament. Consecrated Christians who are seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus have agreed to think, act, and speak according to the will of God for their entire journey. It is part of God's will that his children be able to endure hardship and suffering. They may not be able to understand why fully, or be able to analyze their experiences correctly, but to endure suffering they must have faith, especially where they cannot understand the need for the experience. Jesus set the example of resignation and complete submission to the will of God. Through his example we learn how to have God's will done in us.

From the standpoint of the world, not much may have been accomplished by Jesus. He lived thirty-three and one-half years in the land of Israel. Although he was not well received by all, yet he

accomplished everything he had set out to do, fulfilling God's will. As prophesied of him, he said: "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Ps. 40:7,8) Had he not been doing God's will before? Most assuredly he had. Why should he say, then, that he came to do the Divine will? It is one thing to do God's will under favorable circumstances, and quite another when the circumstances are difficult—and especially if it means setting aside one's own will.

JESUS AS A PERFECT MAN

Jesus, as a perfect man, had a perfect man's will. He gave up his will and accepted instead the Divine will. He was tested, and continued to do God's will under these new, difficult circumstances. In the Divine program the responsibility of being the world's Redeemer was laid upon him. Yet, according to the prophetic utterance of Isaiah, when God set out to put down the rebellion of sin on earth and asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" the Logos, Jesus in his prehuman condition, responded saying, "Here am I; send me." (Isa. 6:8) The Apostle John tells us, "The Word [Greek, *Logos*] was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."—John 1:14

He came to do God's will. The Apostle Paul, speaking of Jesus fulfilling the types in the Tabernacle rituals, quotes the *Septuagint Version* of Psalm 40:6, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure." (Heb. 10:5,6) All of this was done so

that Jesus could fulfill Psalm 40:7 and come to do God's will. We note in particular the spirit in which he did it: "I delight to do thy will, O my God." (vs. 8) He continued to do God's will as always before. He would not have it be any different. Having been made flesh, he delighted to do God's will whatever it might be. He said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."—John 4:34

WHAT CAN IMPERFECT MEN DO?

God has made arrangements whereby imperfect men who are followers of Christ can do his will as acceptably as Jesus did. None of these can live a perfect life, but they can consecrate their lives to him, and have a perfect desire to do his will. God will make up all their deficiencies. Jesus said to the apostles and his followers after his resurrection, when he was about to leave them: "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts 1:8) Included in that power was the ability to do God's will. By the power of the Holy Spirit given to all of the followers of Jesus, they are able to say, 'I delight to do thy will, O my God'. The will of God becomes their 'meat' and 'drink', even as it was for Jesus. Doing God's will becomes their whole life, the theme of their life, even as Jesus chose as the theme of his life to do God's will.

The Apostle Paul's admonition is very appropriate to those who present their bodies a living sacrifice, when he said, "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2) Do not conform your lives to the things of this world,

but, rather, be transformed through the power that Jesus promises in granting the Holy Spirit.

God's influence in our lives should be evident, enabling us to see clearly how to live in order to discern God's will, and enabling us to have faith concerning invisible things. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives should be as real for us as it was for the apostles. When it was given on that Day of Pentecost, it was the beginning of an experience for all God's people during the Gospel Age, as in the picture given to us of the anointing of the High Priest of Israel. The anointing oil, representing the Holy Spirit, was poured upon the Head, our Lord Jesus, and continued as it flowed over the rest of the body. This illustrates that the doing of God's will necessitates coming under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.—Ps. 133:2

LEARNING OBEDIENCE

As Jesus Christ carried out God's will, he learned the lesson of obedience, but this is not to infer that he had ever been disobedient, previously. Rather, Paul says, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. 5:8) What, specifically, was it that Jesus had to learn? He had lived long in God's presence and had done God's will under favorable circumstances, and was always obedient. Upon earth, in an environment of sin, he proved obedient to a degree and intensity that could not have been realized under previous favorable conditions. He learned to obey God under circumstances that cost him all he had, including life itself.—Matt. 8:20

Obedience required intensity of effort and endeavor, which he could not have learned in any

other way. It was part of his development as a New Creature. It pleased God to prove him perfect through sufferings, and to set aside the Gospel Age for the development of the Christ. These tests, trials, and sufferings are inseparably linked with doing God's will. Likewise, when we agree to do God's will, we must be willing to endure heart-aches, distress, pain, and agony of soul. It is God's way, and in this age it is 'the way of the cross'.

When Jesus gave his disciples closing words of advice, he said, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." (John 14:4) They knew he was going back to the Father. But how did they know 'the way' to go to God? They knew 'the way' by acute observation of our Lord's life, and his example in doing God's will. They knew that he had to walk in 'the way of the cross', as he frequently mentioned.—Luke 9:23

Jesus presented 'the cross' in his teachings, and made it a requirement of discipleship. He said, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Mark 8:34) It is God's will that all followers of Christ should have their portion of life's disciplines and sufferings. All of us might question the need for certain experiences: "Why is this test being given to me?" "Why must I endure this trial?" "Why must I suffer this affliction?" "Why must I suffer this loss?" God does not always answer these questions for us as we like, but he permits these things to happen, and we must draw upon our faith and trust in his providential overruling to endure.

Today, at the close of the Gospel Age, the matter is no different than it was at its beginning. The test is to continue to do God's will, being properly exer-

cised by our experience, and being transformed by the renewing of our minds. The aim of each disciple is the attainment of the character of Christ, or, "to be conformed to the image of his Son."—Rom. 8:29

God has not called us to convert the world. God's plan is not to convert the world now, but when he does, the results will be astounding! This does not mean that when we are called to discipleship and fellowship with Jesus, we have no privileges of working with him. Rather, we do have the privilege of letting our light shine and should proclaim the message of the kingdom. But the important work that God is doing in the Gospel Age is the sanctification of those called to be in the body of Christ, as we read: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification."—I Thess. 4:3

The services and ministries we perform today will be insignificant in comparison to those we will be able to perform during the kingdom of Christ. We are being prepared for the great work of "reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18), and are developing the necessary qualifications by making ourselves "sufficient for" our "share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." (Col. 1:12, *Rotherham Translation*) It is necessary that we be fitted and qualified as priests and kings in order that we can "reign with him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) We do so by proving what is "that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:2

Those who follow Christ are those who have learned of him, as was recognized and spoken of Peter and John: "that they had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13) If others can see the Christlikeness in us, we should be most pleased, and praise God for the fulfillment of the Apostle Peter's admonition to

us: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]." —I Pet. 1:15

It is necessary for us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12) Yet when the Apostle Paul thus advised us, he did not expect that we could do so in our own strength. He follows this admonition by saying, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (vs. 13) God does this by imparting his Holy Spirit to us, illuminating our minds and assisting us in the transformation work through the renewing of our minds. This is possible for those who have made God's will their will.

In 'renewing' the mind, we make it new by dwelling upon the Word of God—then the great transformation occurs. Our flesh is called the 'outward man', and the New Creature is called the 'inward man' by the Apostle Paul: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."—II Cor. 4:16

The most important factor in the Christian warfare is to control our thoughts, and to bring them into subjection to God's will. This warfare is not with carnal weapons. Paul explains: "(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."—II Cor. 10:4,5

By dismissing from our minds those thoughts that are of this world, and replacing them with "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are

honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report" (Phil. 4:8), we will provide great assistance to the work of transformation and renewing of our minds in proving 'what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God'.

The importance of controlling our thoughts is well expressed in the saying:

Sow a thought, reap an act
Sow an act, reap a habit
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny.

OUR GOAL IS CHRIST

Our goal or destiny is Christ. If our thoughts are on things of this earth, we will be conforming our lives to this world. If our thoughts are on spiritual things, we will transform ourselves by the renewing of our minds. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7) Jesus advised us to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, because, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—Matt. 6: 21

If we succeed in regulating our thoughts, our motives, and our ambitions, we will please God in doing his will. We will be bound to hear his commendation: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—Matt. 25:21 ■

THE HEAVENS DECLARE the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

—Psalm 19:1-4

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The listing of Dawn publications, five-cent booklets and ten-cent booklets, usually printed on pages 32 and 33 of *The Dawn* magazine will be omitted every other month including this month.

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“MARVELOUS ARE THY WORKS”

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.”

Psalm 139:14,15

ALL THE CREATIVE works of God are marvelous, and quite beyond the ability of finite minds to fully comprehend. The human organism, with its ability to see, to touch, to smell, to taste, to hear, to think, and, above all, to know that there is a difference between right and wrong, good and evil, love and hate, and to worship its Maker, is one of the Creator's masterpieces.

Many books have been written describing the complexities of man's anatomy, and while something is known of the functional coordination of the almost numberless parts of the human organism, of the basic secret of life we know nothing. It is very true that man is 'wonderfully made'. It is also true that there is much concerning man's creation that is hidden from his understanding.

It is probably because the human body *is* such a marvelous display of divine wisdom that the Creator uses it as a picture, or symbol, of the Christ, Head and body. And it is to this 'body'—the footstep followers of our Lord—this New Creation, that our text particularly applies, which comes to light through a New Testament use of the expression in our text, 'the lowest parts of the earth'. In discussing the 'creation' of the body of Christ, explaining Jesus' relationship thereto, and the manner in which all the members "fitly framed together" are developed "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," the apostle writes that Jesus "descended first into the lower parts of the earth."—Eph. 2:21; 4:13,9

Jesus' coming down from heaven into the 'lower parts of the earth' had a direct bearing upon the manner in which his body has been 'curiously wrought' or created. Evidently the term 'earth' as used by the psalmist and by Paul in this connection, does not apply merely to this literal planet. To attempt a strictly literal application would present difficulty. David was not himself 'curiously wrought' somewhere beneath the surface of the ground; nor did Jesus descend to any such lower parts of the earth.

Evidently the references in these passages are to the symbolic earth—that is, human society—and particularly what human wisdom considers to be the lower strata of society. As God views the human race, all are fallen, all come short of his glory, all are under condemnation to death, and all finally go into death, thus sinking into the very lowest depth of experience to which sin inevitably leads. It was into

this 'lower' part of the symbolic earth that Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, descended.

John speaks of Jesus as the one who "came down from heaven." (John 3:13) In coming down from heaven, he who was the *Logos* was "found in fashion as a man." (Phil. 2:8) However, there was more than that involved. He could have come to earth as a man and held aloof from fallen humanity. The sacrifice of his perfect human life would have provided the ransom price for Adam had he never mingled with the fallen race at all. But he associated with human society, and to a large extent with the lower strata of society. One of the charges leveled against the Master was that he fraternized with "publicans and sinners." (Matt. 9:10; 11:19) When he died he was "numbered with the transgressors," and in death he "made his grave with the wicked." (Isa. 53:9,12; Mark 15:28) Thus did Jesus descend from the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, to the 'lower parts of the earth'.

"CURIOUSLY WROUGHT"

Speaking prophetically of the Christ, Head and body, the psalmist says, "I was . . . curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." As we have seen, Jesus' death as a human being provided the ransom price, and this was quite apart from any contact he had with the human race. His association with the sinful world, and all the painful experiences which came to him as a result did, however, have much to do with his own development as a New Creature—a new Divine being—and with the development of his body members. Paul explains that it was God's purpose "in bringing many sons

unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”—Heb. 2:10

Both Jesus and his body members are ‘curiously wrought’, or developed. The Hebrew word here translated ‘curiously’ means ‘to embroider’. It is the word translated “needlework” in the 45th Psalm, where the bride of Christ is depicted as being brought into the king’s palace in “raiment of needlework.” It is a word, therefore, which in the Scriptures is associated with that which symbolizes Christian character and development. This is the work which is ‘curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth’.

Thus Jesus was prepared to deal sympathetically and understandingly with his body members; for as a New Creature he was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4:15) Through our contacts with the fallen race and with world society we are subjected to the same tests of obedience as was Jesus. But we being imperfect, it cannot be said of us that we are always victorious, always without sin, hence we need the provision which has been made through our sympathetic High Priest to come “boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) This, too, is part of the arrangement whereby it is possible for all the members of the Christ body to be developed—‘curiously wrought’—through their contact with degradation and death.

Jesus said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” That is, How can I be completed, or how can the Divine purpose be fully realized in me, until that baptism is fully consummated in death? (Luke

12:50) It was indeed a death baptism, and before Jesus was fully worthy to be exalted to the right hand of his Father, and in this high position to be the Head over the church, his body, he must be faithful even unto death—even the ignominious death of the cross—thus descending all the way into the lower parts of the earth, going all the way that man has fallen, even into the land of the enemy—not because he was a sinner, but because it was the Father's will that he take the sinner's place.

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

THE CREATOR'S SUPERVISION

Paul writes, “We are his [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10) Here we are reminded of God's part in

bringing forth the New Creation. After all, he is the Creator. It was the Heavenly Father who raised up Jesus as a New Creature and exalted him to the Divine nature: and Paul tells us that we are being 'created in Christ Jesus', that even we who were dead in sin, and ourselves part of the lower strata of the symbolic earth, have been "quickenened . . . together with Christ." (Eph. 2:5) We are not to suppose that the base elements of this world are the creative power in our lives. It is merely that the Creator, in his wisdom, and in order that the entire Christ company might be a sympathetic priesthood to deal with fallen humanity during the Millennial Age, is able to utilize our experiences in the world as creative tools, as it were, to prepare us for the part he wants us to have in his plan.

In this work of creation, the Heavenly Father is testing every member of the Christ body before exaltation to the Divine nature is granted. With all the other works of creation it was different. The angels were created, and then tested. Some of them have failed under the test, many have not. Man was created in the image of God, and then tested. He failed, but God in his mercy and love has provided another trial, through Christ. But those who compose the 'new man' of this Gospel Age, the Christ, Head and body, are tested as they are created. This is essential, for their 'creation' involves exaltation to the Divine nature, to immortality, to a condition which is indestructible. If they were raised to the Divine nature and then tested, those who failed in the test would continue to live, and forever would be a detriment, a threat, to the other orders of Creation. Hence God tests these thoroughly, and knows upon the basis of these tests that they will

always be loyal to him and to the principles of righteousness represented in his perfect laws.

It is seemingly this viewpoint which is enlarged upon prophetically by the psalmist in a number of statements in the 139th Psalm, from which our text is taken. In this prophecy Jesus speaks for himself and for all his body members, saying to his Heavenly Father, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassedst my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."—Ps. 139:1-4

The psalmist then depicts Jesus to be almost lost in wonderment over the Creator's marvelous love and care, a supervision that reaches from an exalted position in the heavens, even down into the tomb, into *sheol*. We quote: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge [such understanding of all my needs] is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit [power]? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [Hebrew, *sheol*, the death condition], behold, thou art there."—Ps. 139:5-8

While it is true that God's power, and in this sense his presence, will reach down into *sheol* and restore all the dead, the thought of this passage seems to be especially fitting to God's dealings with the Christ. God's presence is peculiarly with them in death, for his plan is that upon the basis of their faithfulness unto death he will give them a crown of life. Their resurrection to glory, honor, and im-

mortality is an evidence that he was pleased with the loyalty which took them into death, that he supervised this, gave them strength to endure, and will remember and reward them. Paul says that God has made us to "sit together" with Jesus in heavenly places, as mentioned also in this passage, and surely God's presence is with us there!—Eph. 2:6

The prophet continues, "If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." (vss. 9,10) And then, the 13th verse: "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb." This could well be a reference to the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic Covenant, a covenant which, throughout the Scriptures, is symbolized as a woman, from the womb of which is born the Christ. All the features of this covenant—its promises of help and guidance—are a covering, a protection, to all the body members while they are growing up into Christ to form this 'new man', the 'seed' which will bless the world.

REVERENTLY MADE

In the statement, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (vs. 14), the Hebrew word translated 'fearfully' would be more correctly translated 'reverently', or to be filled with 'awe'. It seems to describe the heart attitude of each one of the body members of the Christ toward the work which is being wrought in them, and the manner in which it is done. The creative power of God in the lives of all New Creatures in Christ is that of his Word. Paul speaks of it as the "Gospel of Christ," and says that

it is the "power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16) This Word, this power of God, however, is a creative energy in our lives only in proportion to our reverence for it, a reverence which causes us to yield in full submission to its molding influences.

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

Members of the Christ are also "discerningly" made—the King James Version says 'wonderfully'. but the Hebrew word here used means 'to distinguish'. The same word is translated "sever" in Exodus 9:4, which reads: "The LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel." The use of this word in David's prophetic description of the manner in which the Christ is brought forth as a New Creation suggests the thought of our being separated from the world and set apart to God and to the doing of his will.

This is one of the conditions upon which each member of the Christ company is 'curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth'. We are not removed from the world during the period of our development, but by heeding the Divine call to consecration we become separate from the world. "I have chosen you out of the world," Jesus said to his

disciples, and to us. (John 15:19) He said of himself, "I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) He encouraged his disciples in the thought that although they would experience tribulation because of their separation from the world and its spirit, they too would be able to overcome, not in their own strength, but in the strength of the LORD, the power of his Spirit.

This thought of separation is contained in what we speak of as 'sanctification'. Sanctification means "to set apart to God for the doing of his will." It is two-sided. Jesus said, "I sanctify myself," and on behalf of his body members he prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth." (John 17:17-19) The sanctification of the body members of the Christ does not mean perfection of their flesh, but rather a full heart devotion to God, a perfect heart condition of loyalty to him. As the prophet of old declared, "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."—II Chron. 16:9

Thus it is that God discerns, or distinguishes, between the world and his consecrated people in the world, and works with those who take a stand on his side, who, through carrying out the terms of their consecration to him, "work out [their] own salvation," while he works in them "to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. 2:12,13) It is true also that those in whom the Spirit of God is working, preparing them for the glory of the Divine nature, will exercise discernment in their tracing of the Divine will in all the affairs of their lives. If they have applied the principles of the truth in their lives they will be among those "who by reason of

use [of the truth] have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”—Heb. 5:14

HOW GOD WORKS IN US

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

To use the apostle’s words, he explains that the purpose of these ‘gifts’ to the church is “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man [reverently and discerningly made], unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Eph. 4:12,13) A proper reverence for this arrangement which the Creator has made for the development of his New Creation is very important on our part if we are to remain in the body. All the servants which God has provided are essential. We need the apostles, the prophets, the teachers, the evangelists, and the pastors.

IN SECRET

“When I was made in secret,” David writes. So far as the world is concerned, the bringing forth of God’s New Creation has been a secret, indeed. It is referred to in the Scriptures as a great mystery, “hid from ages and from generations,” but, finally, when God’s due time came, revealed to the “saints,” the separated ones, the ones participating in the great project as prospective members of the Christ. (Col. 1:26,27) And Oh, what blessedness has been the portion of those to whom this secret has been revealed! “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear,” said Jesus, for to those who “are without,” he explained, “all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand.”—Matt. 13:16; Mark 4:11,12

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

“WHOM HE DID FOREKNOW”

Again, the LORD puts words into the mouth of David, referring not to himself, but to Jesus, the Head of the Christ, saying, “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of

them.” (Ps. 139:16) Here we are reminded of God’s foreknowledge of the Christ. Paul writes of this, saying, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Rom. 8:29) There is no thought here of the predestination of individuals, but of the characteristics each individual must possess in order to qualify as a member of the Christ. “In thy book all my members were written,” David declares. It was predestinated by the Creator just who would be written in his book as members of the body of Christ, his ‘jewels’, and the prophet explains who they are. We quote, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Mal. 3:16,17

This is clear enough! Those who were written in the LORD’s book “when as yet there was none of them,” are those who reverence him and who speak often one with the other concerning him, thus thinking upon his name with the desire to please him. They are the ones “which in continuance were fashioned”—or, who continued to be fashioned—into the image of Christ as the predestinated qualification of each of the body members. Any individual who does not thus continue to be fashioned loses his position in the body.

None who continue to yield their lives in full submission to the molding power of the Word of God will ever be severed from the body. This was true of Jesus, and it has been true of each body

member since. It is still true today. To all these the Word of God is their life. "How precious . . . are thy thoughts unto me, O God!" says the prophecy, of Jesus and all his body members, "How great is the sum of them!" (Ps. 139:17) The thoughts of God are indeed precious, and the more so when we realize that it is the power of his thoughts—made available through his Word—in the lives of his consecrated people, that is bringing forth his New Creation.—II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

How great, indeed, is the sum of God's thoughts! This 'sum' of God's thoughts includes all of his exceeding great and precious promises; also his instructions, and his commands. His 'thoughts' tell us of his love in chastening his people, and of his mercy in forgiving them. They tell of his loving arrangement through Christ, that by faith we may live in him and for him. They reveal the privilege of sacrifice which is ours—that "living sacrifice" which is holy and acceptable through Christ. (Rom. 12:1,2) Through the revealed thoughts of God we also have learned of his love for all mankind, and of his purpose to "bless all the families of the earth" through the "seed" of promise, that seed which is the Christ, his New Creation. (Gen. 22:18) This joy which is set before the Christ inspires us to be faithful, and helps us to endure the trials incidental to our training for the glories of the kingdom. What a glorious prospect!

"I will praise thee," declares our text, in describing the attitude of Jesus and his church. To know of the Creator's marvelous works in connection with his New Creation, and of his purpose through the Christ to bless all mankind with life, is indeed a great cause of praise. Not only will we want to

praise God, but we will realize this to be one of the great privileges of our lives, the use of which will prove our worthiness to be members of the glorified Christ. Using various terms to describe the official glory of the Christ, Peter writes, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."—I Pet. 2:9

Truly, O God, How "marvelous are thy works."—
Ps. 139:14 ■



WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JUNE 5—"In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust."—
Psalm 31:1 (Z. '95-157 Hymn 197)

JUNE 12—"This one thing I do."—Philippians 3:13
(Z. '95-250 Hymn 277)

JUNE 19—"Light [truth] is sown for the righteous,
and gladness [the joys of the truth] for the upright
in heart."—Psalm 97:11 (Z. '96-55 Hymn 238)

JUNE 26—"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of
the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High
Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."—Hebrews
3:1 (Z. '96-208 Hymn 65A)

PATIENT ENDURANCE —THE FINAL TEST

*"Let patience have her perfect work,
that ye may be perfect and entire,
wanting nothing."*

James 1:4

THE SCRIPTURES EVERYWHERE represent patience as an important element of character. In every phase of human experience we can see its need. To be just and fair in our dealings with others under present conditions, we must be patient, not rash; for it would be injurious to be impatient and severe with the unavoidable imperfections and weaknesses of our fellowmen. Therefore, the spirit of a sound mind demands that we be forbearing in dealing with fallen humanity.

God himself possesses this quality of patience, and has long exercised it. In dealing with the world in the next age, the church will need to have much patience, and under our present environment we need it constantly in order to develop the character necessary for a place on the throne with our Lord.

Patience is closely allied to love and mercy. If God were unloving, he would be without patience. In

man's present blemished, fallen condition, patience is sadly lacking, although it is often exercised outwardly for policy's sake. This Godlike quality, just as all the other qualities of character inherent in God and in all perfect beings created in his likeness, has been largely obliterated in humanity by the fall of the first pair.

In the New Testament there are two Greek words translated patience. One of these words signifies forbearance, long-suffering. The other carries the thought of cheerful or hopeful endurance. The latter is the word used in our text, and has a much deeper significance than attaches ordinarily to our word patience. This constancy—the endurance of evil in a cheerful, willing manner—represents an element of character, and not merely a temporary restraint of feeling or of action. It signifies a development of heart and character which manifests itself in an endurance of wrong or affliction with contentment, without rebellion of will, with full acquiescence in the requirement of Divine wisdom and love, which, while permitting present evils has promised in due time to overthrow them.

It will surely be profitable for us to cultivate carefully this element of Christian character of which our LORD speaks in such high commendation, and without which, his Word assures us, our character cannot be perfected. The Christian requires patient endurance to put on the whole armor of God, and having put it on, to keep it securely buckled.

We need it in dealing not only with others, but also with ourselves, with our own blemishes. We should always take into account the various circumstances and conditions surrounding ourselves and others. As we look around we see that the world

is in a condition of blight, of sin. This knowledge should give us great sympathy with humanity, without which we would have but little patience. All of our brethren in Christ, like ourselves, are by nature members of this fallen human race. Therefore, we should have a great deal of patient endurance with the LORD's people, as we would have them exercise this grace toward us.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

As the quality of justice will always endure, so will the quality of patience, though not in the sense of patient endurance of evil. God patiently works out his own glorious designs, in perfect balance. At present this requires the exercise of patient endurance with evil, sinful conditions; and in the ages of glory to come God will, we believe, still work out his purposes in perfect patience.

But in the exercise of patience under present evil conditions, wisdom must have a voice. God has declared that in his wisdom the time will come when he will cease to exercise patience toward the world. That is to say, he will no longer bear with the world in their present sinful, imperfect condition. That time has almost arrived. The great cataclysm of trouble, now about due, will sweep away the entire present order preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom of God under the whole heavens. Then God will give men the fullest opportunity of coming into harmony with himself and righteousness before he will deal with them summarily.

The time is coming when there will be no more sin and God will have a perfect universe. But he will first give everybody an opportunity to walk up the "highway . . . of holiness" to perfection. (Isa. 35:8)

Then God's patience and long-suffering will cease to be a necessity toward such. God's patience has arranged the thousand years of Messiah's reign for man's blessing, and his wisdom has decided that those thousand years will be sufficient for the elimination of evil.

OUR MASTER'S LESSON ON PATIENT ENDURANCE

Referring to the word 'patience' as used in our text, we note in our Lord's parable of the sower how our Lord said, "That which fell . . . on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." (Luke 8:14,15) The thought here is that to be of the fruitbearing class which the Lord will approve and accept in his kingdom we must do more than to receive the Word of his testimony, even though we receive it with joy. Those of the 'stony ground' class (vs. 13) first received the Word with joy. For a brief time these seemed to give evidence of fruitfulness and vigor; but when the hot sun of persecution arose, they withered away because of lack and depth of soil.

In this parable, the Lord shows that patient endurance, or constancy, is the final test of character. After the ground has received the seed and it has sprouted, and the fruits of love, hope, joy, and faith have been brought forth, patient endurance then is necessary in order that the fruit may be developed and thoroughly ripened, and so that the grain may be made ready for the garner.

How important this grace is seen to be in the light of God's Word! We must remember that the endurance must be cheerful. We cannot suppose that he who judges the thoughts and intents of the

heart would be pleased with his children, even when he sees them bearing much for his sake, if they endured it in an impatient, dissatisfied, or unhappy frame of mind. Those who would thus endure surely would not be copies of God's dear Son, whose sentiment found expression in the words, "I delight to do thy will, O my God!"—Ps. 40:8

All of the royal priesthood are sacrificers, as was our great Chief Priest; and God, who accepts our sacrifices through the merit of our dear Redeemer, informs us that he loves a cheerful giver (II Cor. 9:7)—one who performs his sacrifices gladly, with a willing heart. This does not mean that our bodies will never grow weary; but that our spirit will rejoice in the privilege of suffering weariness of the flesh in so noble and wonderful a service. But if our Father should see best to lay us aside from active work for a time, when our hearts are longing to serve, this, too, will be an opportunity to endure cheerfully, carrying out his will for us. It may also be a test of the full submission of our wills to his, and thus be an important stepping-stone upward toward the kingdom glories and privileges.

The other instance in which our Lord used this word, patience, or patient endurance, is recorded in Luke 21:19. He had just been telling his followers that they must expect tribulations as the result of being his disciples during the present time when sin abounds, when Satan is the 'prince of this world'. They must expect opposition from various quarters; but he assured them that, nevertheless, they would be fully under Divine care and protection even though persecutions would be permitted to reach and to affect them. Then followed the

words, "In your patience [patient endurance, cheerful constancy] possess ye your souls."

Our faith and trust in the LORD and his gracious promises should be so strong and unwavering that they will far more than counterbalance the opposition of the world, of false brethren, and of Satan's blinded servants. So implicit should be our faith in our Father's love and care that all these persecutions will be recognized and rejoiced in as the agencies of his providence in chiseling, shaping and polishing us as living stones for the glorious temple which he is constructing, and which is now so soon to be set up.

Viewing our trials from this standpoint, we can, indeed, rejoice and can possess our souls, our lives, as New Creatures, even amid tribulations, with cheerful endurance. Yea, we may realize that the soul, the real being, to whom God has given the "exceeding great and precious promises" (II Pet. 1:4) of the future, cannot be injured by the persecutions of the flesh.

THE NECESSITY FOR PATIENT ENDURANCE

Let us here examine carefully the reason why it is necessary for us to develop this grace of patient endurance. It appears that the development of this quality is one of the conditions which God had attached to the call to joint-heirship with our Lord in the kingdom, and one of the same conditions required of him. The wisdom of this is manifest when we consider the work to which the church is called—the work of blessing all the families of the earth in God's Millennial kingdom, in joint-heirship with the only begotten Son of God, our great Redeemer.

That will be a mighty work; and it is eminently proper that Jehovah should require that those whom he shall account worthy of that exalted position shall not only appreciate his goodness and his glorious character, and prefer his service rather than to serve sin and iniquity, but demonstrate their thorough loyalty to the principles of righteousness and to his will to the extent of a joyful willingness to suffer on behalf of these principles. A transitory endurance of one or two or three brief trials would not prove the individual to have an established character for righteousness; but a patient, cheerful endurance even unto death would be necessary to demonstrate such a character.—Rev. 2:10

We might illustrate this with the diamond. Suppose that we were able to make diamonds out of some plastic material with the brilliancy of the real diamond; and suppose they became hard, but not so hard as the genuine diamond. Would these imitation diamonds have the value of the true diamond? By no means. If they were subjected to severe pressure, they would be crushed. And so with the Christian. One might possess every grace of character save this one of patient endurance or constancy, yet he would not be qualified to be one of the LORD's jewels. Hence we see the necessity of the LORD's demand that patient, cheerful endurance shall be a characteristic of each one who shall be accepted to a place in his royal diadem.

The importance of this quality in the Christian character is again emphasized by the Apostle Paul. When enumerating the character qualities of an advanced Christian he declares that they must be "vigilant, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love,

in patience.” (Tit. 2:2, *American Revised Version*) The final test of patient endurance must be passed before we can be accepted as of the very elect.

The same Apostle in writing to Timothy reminds him: “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity [love], patience.” (II Tim. 3:10) We need this important grace more and more as we speed along on our racecourse, and near the end of the way. Feet grow weary; trials and testings abound; therefore, we need to “gird up the loins of your [our] mind” (I Pet. 1:13), and looking to our great Exemplar for the needed inspiration and strength, to set our faces like flint for the homestretch.

TRIALS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL

Our ability and strength to patiently endure should increase as we progress in the narrow way. We should grow “strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.” (Eph. 6:10) But we cannot possibly develop this essential trait of character without trials—experiences intended to call for the exercise of cheerful endurance. So, let us not think it strange if we are called upon to pass through protracted trials which prepare us for a place in the kingdom. Let us repeat that the virtue is not merely the bearing of trials, but it is particularly the manner in which we endure. At heart we must be sweet and submissive—in the fullest harmony with the LORD’s process of development. This may be hard at times; but his grace will be sufficient, if we constantly apply for it. “Having done all,” let us “stand!”—Eph. 6:13

We now see a new reason for the LORD’s arrangement that we should have our trial as our Master

had his—in an evil environment—that we might not only have all the necessary qualities of Christian character, but have them rooted, grounded, fixed, established.

The Apostle James likewise draws our attention to the importance of this quality. He says, “The trying of your faith worketh patience.” (James 1:3) That is to say, if our faith stands the trial, it will work out in our character this patient endurance. On the other hand, if we do not attain this development, it will mean that our faith has not stood the test satisfactorily, and that we are not fit for the kingdom. Thus we see clearly what a great mistake has been made among Christian people in general in supposing that religion is a thing to be gotten suddenly as an answer to prayer. On the contrary, the step of repentance from sin is only the beginning, and not the end, of the Christian way. The next step is consecration of ourselves and our all to God. But this also is far from the end. Not only must we go on to the attainment of faith, fortitude, self-control, meekness and love, but having attained all these, we must patiently endure. We must “run with patience [cheerful endurance] the race set before us” (Heb. 12:1), and to be taught of the LORD.

THE HOUR OF TEMPTATION

The church of the Philadelphia period (Rev. 3:7-13) was promised by the Lord that because of their faithfulness, because they had “kept the Word of my patience” (Rev. 3:10), they should be kept from “the hour of temptation,” which was to come upon all the world. The church of Laodicea—the church of our day—is not kept from the ‘hour of temptation’, but we may be sure that we will be kept while

in it, if we are faithful and true. Our dear Lord's special message to the Laodicean period of the church has been, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne."—Rev. 3:20,21

Though we are not spared from this 'hour of temptation', we have a counterbalancing blessing as a result of living in the time of our Lord's presence (Greek: *parousia*). We have his dispensing to us of spiritual food, "meat in due season" (Matt. 24:45), in a manner and to a degree never before enjoyed by his people. And, as we might expect, this great favor is counterbalanced by the subtle and severe trials and testings of this special hour of temptation. If there was ever a time when patient endurance was needed by the LORD's faithful, it is now. If ever they needed the counsel, "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19), they need it now. Those who are able to patiently endure *will* stand in this evil day. As the apostle forewarned us, the fiery ordeals of this day will "try every man's work of what sort it is."—I Cor. 3:13

There is a general tendency of the civilized world today toward impatience, and rebellion against restraint. For those who are seeking to walk in the narrow way, only by Divine grace can this tendency be successfully resisted, and progress be made toward the development of the likeness of Christ. This special grace needed today by the LORD's children will be granted to those who are walking close to the LORD, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

This spirit of impatience so prevalent in the world today is at the bottom of much of the violence

we see in the news media as outbreaks against law and order. We may expect this spirit to continue to grow. There is a feeling among many of the down-trodden in the third world nations that they have been too patient, not sufficiently aggressive—the feeling that if they had taken things into their own hands long ago present conditions might have been averted. This has brought them to the verge of anarchy.

But those who have kept the LORD's Word of patient endurance have sought from him the wisdom from on high, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." (James 3:17,18) These have learned that he has a due time in which his purposes will be accomplished, and they are willing to bide his time patiently, knowing that he knows best. Thus they are able to avoid the devilish wisdom that causes envying and strife.—James 3:14,15

The apostle counsels us respecting this 'hour of temptation' which is now upon us. Its besetments and trials will be many, and some of them will be subtle and deceptive. All who are not thoroughly rooted and grounded in the truth will be carried away by the false arguments of those whom Satan is now permitted to use as his agents in trying all those who dwell upon the face of the whole earth.

THE LAST DAYS

The hour of trial is not coming alike upon all. These tests upon the Christian world and the world in general, however, are mentioned by the Apostle Paul writing to Timothy, where he enumerates certain characteristics of this 'hour of temptation'. He says, "Mark this: there will be terrible times in the

last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power.”—II Tim. 3:1-5, *New International Version*

This is a graphic picture of conditions in the world today. As Paul wrote in another place, “Because they received not the love of the truth” therefore God has sent them a “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,” and should be condemned thereby. (II Thess. 2:10-12) This ‘hour of temptation’ has not yet reached its greatest intensity. Blessed are all they who have made the LORD, “even the Most High,” their habitation. (Ps. 91:9) These shall not be moved (Ps. 46:5) although many will have to pass through severe trials and temptations.

Let us all be very solicitous for one another, counting the prize held out as far dearer and more precious than all else beside. “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you [us] should seem to come short of it.” (Heb. 4:1) Let us so love the LORD’s dear children that their welfare will be one of our chief concerns, and this will contribute to our own spiritual health.

Let us patiently hold to the blessed narrow way! Do with your might what your hands find to do, for soon the harvest will end. If faithful, we shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father! Let us come with rejoicing, bringing in our sheaves, remembering that we have need of patience, that after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise!—Matt. 13:43; Heb. 10:36 ■

THE LAMB'S WIFE

*"Come hither, and I will shew thee the bride."
Revelation 21:9*

THE WORD 'BRIDE' in the Hebrew is *kallah*, which is from a primitive root meaning "to complete," also, "a son's wife." The Greek word used in the New Testament is *numphe*, and means "a betrothed girl," "a son's wife." We read in Genesis 2:18 that Eve was made to be a "help meet" for Adam; in other words, to complete Adam; for while he remained alone, he was not from God's standpoint complete.

Different illustrations are used in the Scriptures to convey the thought of the unity of Christ and the church. The term 'bride' particularly applies to the marriage day, but no one picture can adequately reveal all the glories that will come to the church. During the Gospel Age, the church is the body of Christ, called unto his eternal glory, after that they have suffered awhile, the God of all grace will restore, establish and strengthen them.—I Pet. 5:10, RSV

Paul, in II Corinthians 11:2, says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a

chaste virgin to Christ." God does not want the affections of the church turned to the world. The term chaste suggests that we should not set our affections on anyone else, or allow them to stray to the world; for does not James 4:4 say that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?

Paul feared that as the serpent beguiled Eve through subtlety, so we might be allured from our Lord. (II Cor. 11:3) Satan's attack on Eve was, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat? . . . God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods." (Gen. 3:1-5) Similarly Satan seeks to beguile the church by suggesting doubts regarding the fulfillment of the Divine Word. Let us see that we are not corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The account of Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac is given in Genesis 24. Abraham admonished him not to seek a bride from the people of the land, but to go to Abraham's own people. This illustrates the selection of the bride of Christ. Rebekah made the journey to the bridegroom she had not seen; so also it is written of the church in relationship to her Lord, "Whom, not having seen, you love; . . . but believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and glorious."—I Pet. 1:8, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

In Revelation 19:7 we read, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Upon the robe provided by her Lord the needlework of the approved character must be worked out. She proves herself faithful and to her is "granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."—vs. 8

Revelation 3:4 says of those in Sardis who had not defiled their garments, "They shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." All the overcomers will be worthy because of their faithfulness, and on the marriage day, in glory and beauty arrayed, will be manifested as the bride of Christ. The panorama of Revelation can only be seen by those in the Spirit during the Lord's day. (Rev. 1:10) We read in Revelation 21:10, "He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city"—for the bride had become the holy city. As stated in verse 2, John saw the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The illustration of the bride specifically refers, as we have seen, to the marriage day. Thereafter the bride class has become the new heavenly government for the blessing of humanity. The term 'bride' alone could not adequately show the splendor of the church glorified. This is better portrayed under the heading of a city having the glory of God, and of which the Lamb is the light thereof, where God dwells.—Rev. 21:23

This will be the capital, the center of world government, and the nations being saved will walk in the light of it, for there shall be "no night there." (Rev. 22:5) It will be for the salvation of humanity. Should we not thank our Heavenly Father for having invited us to be of the bride class and, as the espoused, watch carefully every step that would draw us away from our Lord, remembering that the Adversary is very subtle and would lead us away from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

These speakers are routed through the Pilgrim Department of the Dawn. Their visits are furnished free upon request. Write to: The Dawn Pilgrim Department, East Rutherford, NJ 07073. A visit will be arranged whenever possible:

S. Jones

New Haven, CT June 11
Paterson, NJ 13

M. Balko

Pittsburgh, PA June 1

The listing in this schedule has been arranged by a local ecclesia cooperating with the Dawn:

M.J. Balko

St. Petersburg, FL June 8

L.B. Post

R. Goodman

Middletown, NJ June 8

Louisville, AL June 8

CONVENTIONS

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

WATERBURY, CT, CONVENTION, May 31-June 1

Litchfield Fire House Hall. For information on how to find hall, contact Mrs. Anthony Tsimonis, Secretary, P.O. Box 1494, Waterbury, CT 06721

ALLENTOWN, PA, CONVENTION, June 13, 14, 15

Lafayette College, Easton, Pa. Contact: Mrs. Margaret Young, P.O. Box 3214, Allentown, PA 18106

Phone: (610) 867-5418

DETROIT, MI, MONTH-END CONVENTION, June 22

Redford YWCA, 25940 Grand River, Redford Twp. Contact: George Tivador, 11202 Lorman Drive, Sterling Heights, MI 48312

Phone: (810) 978-7444

PORTLAND, OR, CONVENTION, June 27-30

Collins Retreat Center, Hwy. 211, Eagle Creek, OR. Contact: Tim Krupa, 1801 NE 201 Avenue, #A3, Troutdale, OR 97060

Phone: (503) 669-4191

**NORTH SASKATCHE-
WAN BIBLE STU-
DENTS CONVENTION,
Canada, June 28,29,30—**

East Central School, High-
way #302 E., Prince Albert,
Sask. Contact Secretary:
Ann Michalyca

Phone: (306) 752-2197

**YORKTON, SASK.,
CANADA CONVEN-
TION, July 12,13—Holi-
day Inn, Yorkton, Sask.
Contact: Doris Karutsky,
Box 625, Sturgis, Sask.
SOA 4AO**

Phone: (306) 548-2872 or
Connie Jakubowski, Box
10, Sturgis, Sask. SOA
4AO

Phone: (306) 548-4665

**BIBLE STUDENTS
GENERAL CONVEN-
TION, CA, July 26-31,
1997—Claremont, CA**

(Ontario, CA Airport)
Registration Form and
Program in May, 1997
Dawn Magazine. Contact:
Michael Nekora, 1425
Lachman Lane, Pacific
Palisades, CA 90272

Phone: (310) 454-5248

**ALBERTA BIBLE STU-
DENTS CONVENTION,
Canada, August 16,17—**

Ethier Lodge, Wetaskiwin,
Alta. Contact, Janice New-
meier, Box 428, Fox Creek,
Alta. TOH 1PO

Phone: (403) 622-3809

**NEW YORK LABOR
DAY CONVENTION,
NY, August 29,30,31—
Ramada Inn, Two Bridges
Rd. & Exit 52, Route 80,
Fairfield, NJ 07006. Contact:
Janet Jeuck, Secy. for room
reservations. Please let us
know *before August 18th*
what meals you will be eat-
ing.**

Phone: (201) 531-8617
or 438-6421

**JACKSON, MI, LABOR
DAY CONVENTION,
August 30,31, Septem-
ber 1—Holiday Inn, I-94
at 127 North, Jackson.
Contact: Mrs. Ray Lumley,
2531 Ashton Rd., Jackson,
MI 49203**

Phone: (517) 782-7252

**SEATTLE, WA, LABOR
DAY CONVENTION,
August 30-September
1—Best Western Lynn-
wood Inn, 4300-200th St.,
SW, Lynnwood, WA 98036
Contact: Byron Keith**

Phone: (206) 481-3297 or
Michael Brann
Phone (206) 353-8983