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Is “Lent” Christian Sacrifice?

*“I beseech you
therefore, brethren,
by the mercies of
God, that ye
present your bodies
a living sacrifice,
holy, acceptable
unto God, which is
your reasonable
service.”*

—*Romans 12:1*

ON MARCH 5, 2014, MANY sincere believers in the Christian world will observe Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Lent is a period of forty days of penitential preparation prior to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. It is observed by Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox Church, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and various other Protestant denominations. Strange as it may seem, the Bible says nothing about Lent or any such observance. To learn about this ritual it is necessary to search writings that came later, starting around the fourth century.

The establishment of this period of penitential preparation seems to have formally begun as a result

of the actions which took place during the Nicaean Council of A.D. 325. The council called this period by the Latin name *Quadragesima*, meaning forty days of fasting. As conflict arose in the church and it split into Western and Eastern branches, the exact time period assigned to Lent varied because of their different rules on fasting.

The features of “forty days” and “fasting” appear to have been associated by church leaders with our Lord’s forty days in the wilderness. Jesus went into the wilderness to meditate immediately following his baptism in the river Jordan. There he fasted forty days and forty nights, and there the devil came and tempted him. (Matt. 4:1-11) However, our Lord’s meditative period in the wilderness was not intended to be a pattern for a ritual concerning his later death and resurrection, but rather an illustration of temptations that beset all consecrated followers of Christ.

When Lent was first established, fasting consisted of one meal a day with no meat, fish, eggs or butter. There was also public penance for notorious sinners. They were clothed in sackcloth and ashes and kept apart from everyone until the Thursday before Easter Sunday, at which time they were reinstated into church fellowship. This treatment of these sinners was discontinued several centuries later, when a form of public penance was imposed upon the entire congregation, including the clergy. This was done by burning the palm fronds saved from the previous year’s Palm Sunday and using the ashes to form a cross on the foreheads of all penitents on Ash Wednesday. This ritual remains to this day in many churches.

Somewhere between the fourth and eighth century, the word "Lent" became associated with this period of fasting and penance. Lent is an old English word meaning "spring," and is further derived from a Germanic word meaning "long," because in the spring the daylight hours visibly lengthen. Thus it is evident that the church leaders sought to combine this period of forty fasting days with the spring season. Similarly, the term Easter was adopted from the Saxons and refers to their goddess Estera, whose festival was celebrated in the spring of the year. The adoption of the two names, Lent and Easter, and their application to the period leading up to and including our Lord's death and resurrection, were ostensibly designed to assist the supplanting of heathen beliefs by Christian events.

A RELATED CELEBRATION

There is yet another strange outgrowth of this imposition of the church upon its congregations, and that is the Mardi Gras. This is a French name, sometimes referred to as Shrove Tuesday—Shrove meaning confess—and is the day before Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Since it was the last day before the fasting season, it became the occasion for great merrymaking in the Middle Ages. In the cities or regions of some countries, the custom of holding carnivals for Mardi Gras has not only been continued, but has become more elaborate. The carnivals, with spectacular parades, masked balls, mock ceremonials, and street dancing usually last for several days, or in some cases as long as two weeks, ending the day before Ash Wednesday.

Some of the most celebrated carnivals are held to this day in the countries of Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden. In the United States, the cities of New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mobile, Alabama are especially noted for their celebration of Mardi Gras.

The development of carnivals and merrymaking before Lent came as a natural consequence of forcing fasts and sacrifices upon a people not truly consecrated to God. It is evident that church leaders have not been too concerned about this development. They, in fact, are mostly supportive of it, satisfied that after the gaiety their congregations return to them, fast, and obediently support the church.

Although we have taken the liberty of describing these rituals and celebrations in some detail, our real interest is in the answer to the question: “Is Lent a way of Christian sacrifice authorized by—and in harmony with—the Scriptures?” The answer is “No.” The Word of God is clear in its testimony that the Almighty has never forced anyone to sacrifice. The Scriptures plainly state that a true follower of Christ must willingly sacrifice, or not sacrifice at all.

DRAWN BY GOD

The first step toward becoming a willing sacrificer, according to the Scriptures, is for God to draw that person to himself. Jesus explained this when he said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” (John 6:44) Once the Father has drawn one to Jesus, then must come the willingness to follow Jesus and be a sacrificer. In Matthew 19:16-22, we have these words recorded

concerning a rich young man who came to Jesus, asking, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."

It is noteworthy that Jesus had a very simple requirement of those whom the Father drew to him. They were to follow him. In order to get treasures in heaven, they had to be willing to give up treasure on earth. This was not a sacrifice for just a certain period of time each year—during Lent—but for the rest of their lives.

This young man was rich and unwilling to give up his possessions. Jesus continued on this occasion to make the point of how necessary it is to give up all we have. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it,

they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?”—Matt. 19:23-25

THE NEEDLE’S EYE

The lesson given by Jesus was that earthly wealth and possessions were a burden to a rich man, and that they would more likely hinder than help him enter the kingdom of heaven. The illustration of the camel going through the eye of the needle makes this point. In the walled cities of biblical times, the gate to the cities would be closed at night. One small door, called the “eye of the needle,” provided guarded access to the city. A traveler coming to the city late in the day—toward sundown—might find the gates closed. To get through the needle’s eye, it was necessary for one to take all of the camel’s burden off his back, have him kneel, and then by pushing and tugging get the camel through the needle’s eye. This illustration was not intended to convey that it was impossible for a rich man to enter the heavenly kingdom. Rather, it showed that it was possible to enter through humility, sacrifice of earthly goods, and with difficulty—these being illustrated by the camel kneeling, being unburdened, and by the struggle of pushing and tugging. The disciples, upon hearing this illustration, were amazed, and asked, “Who then can be saved?” The attitude of sacrifice sought by God of those whom he was calling seemed to them very difficult to attain.

Jesus, sensing their discouragement, said, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.” Then Peter was encouraged enough to say, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed

thee; what shall we have therefore?” Jesus answered, “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” (Matt. 19:26-29) Notice how much is to be sacrificed—houses, family, lands—every earthly possession and all earthly ties.

ALL TO BE SACRIFICED

There is even more, however, to the requirement of sacrifice. The Apostle Paul’s words, contained in our opening text of Romans 12:1, say, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Those whom God calls are to give up their all in sacrifice. Their very lives are to be devoted to him. The Apostle Paul calls it a “reasonable service.” It is not a ritual that is imposed upon an individual for a period of time. It is a lifetime of reasonable service to God. Also associated with this willing sacrifice is a desire to be transformed so that one does all things as God desires. Hence, the Apostle Paul adds, “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.” (vs. 2) To the true follower of Christ it would be a delight to do God’s will in such a manner, rather than partake of worldly pursuits

and rituals. To those fully consecrated, the merry-making before Lent would not be sought as a relief, or escape, before sacrificing some little thing and being bound by the penance requirements of a few short weeks.

Jesus mentioned, in answer to Peter's claim cited earlier, that the proper carrying out of one's life of sacrifice would have a manifold compensation to those who are faithful. In his kingdom, these brethren would be with him ruling over Israel and the world as a reward for their sacrifice.

AWARENESS OF SIN

Another objective that church leaders had in setting up the observance of Lent was to make people aware of their sins and to be penitent. The awareness of sin should always be with us. The Apostle John writes, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."—I John 2:1,2

We are to so chart our course of life that we "sin not." Of ourselves, however, we cannot succeed in this endeavor. John makes this plain earlier in his epistle: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his

word is not in us.” (I John 1:7-10) We have the assurance that Jesus died for our sins and has become the satisfaction not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world. This appreciation of our Lord, particularly that he died for our sins, should be a matter of reflection every day, and not merely for a period of forty days within a year.

TRUE FASTING

When Lent was conceived, it was to be particularly associated with fasting. Fasting can be a way whereby people show devotion to God. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus presents three ways of showing devotion to God and comments on them. One of these is fasting. The other two are prayer and the giving of alms. Each of these can be misused, and so Jesus says, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret;

and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. . . . Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”—Matt. 6:1-6,16-18

In each of these acts of devotion, Jesus recommends that others not be aware that we are performing them or it will all be for naught. Above all, these things must all be done willingly, at any time, and never by decree. Setting up a period of time in which all must fast violates these principles. Hence, church leaders were not wise when they imposed “Lent” rituals upon their congregations. They opposed the principles laid down by Jesus and, as a result, set in motion a way of developing hypocrisy.

THE CALLED ONES

As a final consideration of this matter of observing Lent, we note that church leaders had in mind the forty days that Jesus was in the wilderness after being immersed by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. We realize, however, that it would be difficult—if not impossible—for anyone merely keeping a ritual to comprehend the import of these particular experiences of Jesus. This understanding is only obtained by those called of God to be joint-heirs with his Son and to partake of his sufferings—“joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him.”—Rom. 8:17

The Apostle Paul describes these as “the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) Hence, we should not expect everyone in the world to understand the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, nor should we expect those who are followers of Christ to duplicate what he did when he spent forty days and nights without food. In fact, it would be inadvisable to try this and, for most, impossible. The real lesson of this forty day period concerns the temptations presented by the Adversary—to which all of Jesus’ consecrated followers are similarly exposed—and how to deal with them.

JESUS’ TEMPTATION

The Scriptural account of these temptations is found in Matthew 4:1-11: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the

world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.”

In the first two of these temptations, the Devil used the approach, “If thou be the Son of God,” attempting to goad our Lord into proving his identity by sensational means. The first temptation to Jesus was to gratify his desires as a man. Being hungry, he could use his power to provide food, as he was later to do when he fed 5,000 people. The second temptation was the suggestion that Jesus bring himself before the eyes of the people by jumping from a pinnacle in the Temple. This is believed to be the top of the royal portico, in itself 150 feet high, and the valley below it about 600 feet deep. When these approaches failed, the Devil appealed to Jesus to consider avoiding the course of sacrifice, suffering, and humiliation as a path to glory, and take a shortcut—suggesting that his gain would be as great—by joining forces with him. In each case, the answer Jesus gave came from God’s Word: “It is written,” and the Devil failed in his temptation of Jesus.

FOLLOWERS ALSO TEMPTED

All three temptations of Jesus are typical of those which his followers must endure. Although the Devil was involved in all three, the first two are especially emblematic of how our flesh and the world are particularly used, under Satan’s direction, to

tempt us, whereas the third is typical of the Adversary himself.

The first test points to those temptations besetting the followers of Jesus that involve the gratifying of their senses—their fleshly desires. The second test is illustrative of those temptations that involve entanglement with the world and its ambitions, desires, and appetites. The third test is clearly that of the Adversary appealing to us to worship him. If we are to succeed, as Jesus did, in resisting these temptations of the Devil, we need to be thoroughly acquainted with the Word of God and his plan. We could never hope to succeed by merely setting aside forty days in which to fast. Our temptations will come every day, and must be met every day.

The way of true Christian sacrifice is not open for all. This is made clear by Jesus when he explained to his disciples why he spoke to the people in parables and dark sayings: “He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand

with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.”—Matt. 13:11-17

The opportunity for the rest of the world of mankind to understand God’s words will come in Christ’s Messianic kingdom, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” “They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD.”—Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:34

In summary, the observance of Lent implies that whoever will join a Christian church can sacrifice and fast as Jesus did. This is not so. God has reserved this privilege for a few. Those who have been invited to do so should appreciate this privilege and seek to carry out their consecration vows faithfully every day, not merely at a particular time of the year. “If we suffer [with him daily], we shall also reign with him.”—II Tim. 2:12 ■

*“Not for ease or worldly pleasure,
Nor for fame my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with thee.
Close to thee, close to thee,
Gladly would I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with thee.”
—Hymns of Dawn*

An Eternal Kingdom

Key Verse: *“Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”*
—II Samuel 7:16

Selected Scripture:
II Samuel 7:4-16

DAVID'S FIRST SIX YEARS

as king of Israel were spent resisting the nation's enemies and enlarging its borders in harmony with divine instruction. Having accomplished much of this work, David built a new palace in Jerusalem. However, his reverential character caused David to notice an inconsistency. He had built his new palace while the Ark of God, the symbol of God's presence, still remained

housed in the Tabernacle. Desiring to give some outward expression of his gratitude, David conceived a plan to construct a house for the Lord where the symbol of his presence might permanently reside.

David properly consulted with the Prophet Nathan, who rejoiced in this manifestation of the king's loyalty to God, and endorsed his plan. That same night, however, the Lord gave Nathan a message for the king which forbade him from going forward with this project. This was not because God did not appreciate David's desire to honor him, but rather to let David know it was not yet time for a permanent structure to be built. The Lord showed David that the work of establishing Israel in the land of promise must first be completed by taking full possession and destroying all of their enemies. This work would take the entire reign of King David. The Lord assured him, however, that in due time a permanent

temple would be built, and that his son should erect it.

Upon closer examination, we find that our Key Verse has a twofold application. David's son, Solomon, did indeed build the Temple his father had envisioned, but his reign eventually came to an end, along with its glory, and the Temple was eventually destroyed. The everlasting house and kingdom refers not to Solomon's reign, but to that of the "root and . . . offspring of David," our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev. 22:16) The "temple" in that eternal kingdom will be Jesus and his church, which is being "constructed" throughout the Gospel Age, and which is prefigured in David's reign. Despite being a man after God's own heart, David could not envision the details of God's plan for establishing the coming eternal kingdom and the preparation of the living stones for the spiritual temple.

We find important lessons in this incident. The Lord's people must not conclude that because their plans and projects are reverential and designed to be for the glory of God, they have automatic divine approval. The words of the Prophet Isaiah should always be our guide in serving God: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:9) If, after prayerful consideration and proper consultation with other spiritual Israelites, we do not find the Lord's approval in our plans to serve him in some matter, let us quietly acquiesce to his will and cooperate fully according to his superior ways. In so doing we will demonstrate our complete trust in following divine guidance in all of our affairs.

Another lesson found in this account refers to the construction of elegant church buildings where God might be worshipped. While many seek to emulate David's desire to build a grand temple, the Apostles and the Early Church found no such divine instruction, and they met in simple accommodations. May our desire to praise God not be found in fancy places of worship, but in the heart-felt desire to bring glory to his name. ■

Son of David

Key Verses: “*She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name*

JESUS: *for he shall save his people from their sins.*

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet.”

—*Matthew 1:21,22*

Selected Scriptures:

Psalm 89:35-37;

Isaiah 9:6,7;

Matthew 1:18-21

THE NAME DAVID SIGNIFIES “beloved,” and the Scriptures describe a close and tender relationship between David and God. While in the depths of despair due to his own sins, David turned to the Heavenly Father for forgiveness with a repentant heart and found comfort. (Psalm 32) When David’s desire to build a temple to house the Ark of God was not granted, the Lord lovingly reassured him that his desire to show gratitude would be accomplished through his seed. “When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”—II Sam. 7:12,13

This promise appeared to be fulfilled when David appointed his son, Solomon, to be the next king of Israel. The name Solomon means “the peaceful one,” and this accurately describes one of the outstanding features of his reign. However, Solomon’s peaceful rule eventually ended when he took heathen wives in opposition to God’s instructions. The eleventh chapter of I Kings gives a

detailed account of Solomon's turning away from the Lord. His actions finally led to the division and loss of Israel's kingdom: "Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon."—I Kings 11:31

In the eyes of the world, it appeared God's promise to David had been broken. We see through the Scriptures and the prophets, however, that this was not the case. God's promise was not broken, but merely hidden in prophetic testimony. The Prophet Ezekiel explained that God would establish the promised kingdom under David's rightful heir in due time: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."—Ezek. 21:26,27

Our Key Verse identifies Jesus as the son to be born to Mary and Joseph. More importantly, he is spoken of earlier in this chapter as being the "son of David" (Matt. 1:1), for whom the throne prophesied of by Ezekiel has been waiting. Jesus is shown to be the rightful heir of David through the birth lines of both Mary and Joseph. (see Luke 3:23-31 and Matt. 1:1-16) Indeed, he is the one who has earned the "right" to sit on the throne of the promised kingdom.

This throne will not be an earthly one such as those filled by the kings of Israel. The Apostle Paul declares, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." (II Cor. 5:16) The throne spoken of represents the sovereign power and dignity of Christ's office. "Of the increase of his [Christ's] government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."—Isa. 9:7 ■

Peter's Report

Key Verse: *"He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."*
—Acts 2:31

Selected Scriptures:
Psalms 110:1-4;
Acts 2:22-24, 29-32

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT was imparted to the eleven apostles on the Day of Pentecost, they began to see and understand details of God's plans previously kept secret—"Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." (Col. 1:26) As large crowds gathered in the streets of Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, the eleven found that, as they spoke to these multitudes from every nation, the Holy Spirit caused each to understand in their own language.

Comprehending the power of the Holy Spirit for the first time, Peter addressed the crowds by quoting the Prophet Joel: "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." (Acts 2:17) Peter was eager to begin preaching the Gospel of Christ to those whose ears might now be opened to hear and understand. He reminded the crowd that they had seen with their own eyes God's approval of Jesus "by miracles and wonders and signs," and that he was delivered to crucifixion "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and that "God hath raised [him] up" from the dead.—vss. 22-24

In order to impress upon his Jewish audience the

arrival of the long awaited Messiah, Peter draws their attention to the testimony of the patriarch David. He quotes Psalm 16:10, which says, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Peter continues, saying that David could not have been speaking of himself because “he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.” (Acts 2:29) Peter declares that David spoke as a prophet to proclaim the one who would one day sit upon his throne and rule over an eternal kingdom, and because the Jewish leaders had killed the Messiah, he must first be raised from the dead in order to sit on that throne. “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.”—vss. 30-32

God had indeed sworn to David that he would raise up one from his own lineage to sit on his throne. Jesus had arrived, having lineage traced directly back to David. He had demonstrated he was the Son of God through wonders and miracles, and now he had been raised from the dead in order that he might complete God’s plan of establishing an everlasting kingdom which would bless all the families of the earth. Peter states it was Jesus, not David, who ascended to heaven. Indeed, Peter says, David himself had declared, “The LORD [God] said unto my [David’s] Lord [Jesus], Sit thou on my right hand.” (vs. 34) Finally, says Peter, the long awaited son of David had been made “both Lord and Christ,” and would make his “foes” his “footstool.” (vss. 35,36) Of his resurrection, the glorified Jesus would later declare, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”—Rev. 1:18 ■

Worthy Is the Lamb

Key Verse: “*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*”
—*Revelation 5:12*

Selected Scripture:
Revelation 5:6-13

The establishment of such a kingdom, however, would need someone to rule who was worthy of that position. Today’s lesson, through the words of John the Revelator, identifies this one, so used from the beginning through the completion of God’s plan. In this vision of God’s throne, we at first see God holding a book that no one was able to open, and John “wept much” as a result.—Rev. 5:1-4

The lack of a worthy one to open this “book” of life was the condition at the beginning of God’s plan, after man’s fall from perfection. God’s justice required a corresponding price to ransom Adam from the curse of death caused by his disobedience. A perfect man had to die to release another man, who had been perfect, from the sentence of death. Jesus, in his prehuman existence as the *Logos*, knew of the need for this corresponding price and volunteered to provide it himself.—Ps. 40:7,8; Isa. 6:8

THE BIBLE IN MANY PLACES declares God’s intention of blessing all the families of the earth in a coming righteous kingdom. The Scriptures additionally paint a beautiful picture of that kingdom, when God’s favor will return to men. He will wipe away all the tears of thousands of years of the pain of this present evil world, and be the God of all mankind.—Rev. 21:3,4

The mere act of volunteering, however, did not meet all of God's requirements. The corresponding price must be of human stock, and had to be proven obedient until death. For over four thousand years man had lived and died with no chance of recovery from death until the arrival of Jesus, now "made [born] of a woman." (Gal. 4:4) When Jesus was about to begin his ministry, John the Baptist recognized the promised one and declared of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) God also acknowledged Jesus after his baptism, when there came "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17) For the next three and a half years, Jesus, obediently and without sin, carried out his Father's plan, culminating in his death upon the cross, thereby purchasing Adam and all his posterity. "Since by man [Adam] came death, by man [Jesus] came also the resurrection of the dead."—I Cor. 15:21

The prophets had all pointed to Jesus as the one who would be worthy of sitting on David's throne in the kingdom to bless mankind. This is reaffirmed twice in the throne scene of our lesson. "One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." (Rev. 5:5) Jacob had spoken of this "Lion" of "Judah" many centuries earlier (Gen. 49:9,10), prophetically pointing to Jesus. In the sixth verse of our lesson, we read again of John the Revelator's description of this worthy one as a "Lamb as it had been slain."

Our lesson concludes with a joyous scene, in which acknowledgement is made of the presence of one worthy to open the book of life: "They sang a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men . . . from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" —Rev. 5:9, *New International Version* ■

Triumphant and Victorious

Key Verse: *“The multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.”*
—**Matthew 21:9**

Selected Scriptures:
Zechariah 9:9;
Matthew 21:1-11

IT WAS NEAR THE END OF our Lord’s ministry that he was to present himself as Israel’s Messiah, which had been prophesied by the holy prophets. The Israelites knew that God had promised an everlasting kingdom to be established under the rule of David’s seed. (II Sam. 7:13-16; Ps. 132:11; Isa. 9:6,7; 16:5) As a result of these promises, and in harmony with time features given to the Prophet Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27), many among the people realized the time had come for the arrival of their Messiah. However, they looked for a mighty warrior like David, not the son of a carpenter who preached love and humility.

Jesus had not proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, but never denied the fact when others made the claim for him. Before his birth, Mary had been told by the angel Gabriel, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” (Luke 1:32) Yet Jesus himself never claimed to have received the throne of his

father David. When Jesus asked his disciples who they thought he was, Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ [Hebrew: *Messiah*], the Son of the living God,” to which Jesus responded, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”—Matt. 16:15-17

Knowing the hearts of God’s chosen people, Israel, Jesus had to literally fulfill all of the prophecies related to the coming of their Messiah, lest they later claim they were not allowed to recognize him. Therefore, he made arrangements to enter into Jerusalem on the 10th of Nisan, a detail which his faithful disciples later understood to signify that he was the antitypical lamb of the Passover. He had a donkey provided so he could ride upon it into the city, not because he was tired, but because it was traditional for kings of Israel to ride this animal to their coronations (I Kings 1:33-35), and it would also fulfill the prophetic words of Zechariah.—Zech. 9:9

Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was viewed by the people of Israel as the long-awaited arrival of their Messiah. Commentators have estimated that a million or more people may have been in attendance, so the cries of “Hosanna to the Son of David” must have been deafening. Branches of palms were strewn before him, symbolizing victory and honor. Garments were also laid before him as they celebrated Messiah’s arrival. Knowing their hearts were hardened, however, and not in harmony with God’s plans, Jesus “beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”—Luke 19:41,42

This “triumphant” entrance had a very different meaning to Jesus and his Heavenly Father. They knew that rather than assume a throne as the prophets had declared, this day showed the fact that Jesus would soon die on the cross to redeem Adam and become a ransom for all. ■

Labors of Love

“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”
—*Hebrews 6:10*

DEVELOPING THE “MIND of Christ” most assuredly includes the thought of our title. It was love which prompted the labors of the Master on behalf of mankind in securing redemption for Adam and his race. It was also love which prompted many other works of our Lord during his earthly ministry. These “labors of love” were not only provided to show forth Jesus’ beautiful character, and that of his Heavenly Father, but also served as examples to the Lord’s footstep followers of the privileges we have toward one another as members of the “little flock.”

Ministering to the saints is one of the Christian’s most blessed privileges, as indicated in the words of our opening text given to us by the Apostle Paul. In I Thessalonians 1:3, he also writes of the “work of faith,” the “labour of love,” and “patience of hope.” The work of faith seems to refer to those activities of the Christian life which require faith to meet challenges, such as preaching the Gospel, and standing loyal for God, the Truth, and the

brethren in the face of opposition and persecution. Patience of hope implies the need for endurance and constancy as we view the hope set before us in the midst of trials and difficulties.

The expression “labour of love” is descriptive of those kindnesses which we extend to our brethren because they are fellow members of the body of Christ, and because we esteem it a great privilege to serve them—even to lay down our lives for them in rendering services which may tend to lighten their burden. All of the Lord’s people enjoy such opportunities. Many of us have had labors of love extended to us, and how much we have appreciated these. In many instances, our love for the brethren has thereby been increased.

THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

These labors of love on behalf of the people of God have not been limited to the present Gospel Age. In the Jewish Age, we recall the Prophet Elisha as being the recipient of the labor of love from a man and woman of God totally unknown to him until he became the benefactor of their love. The account of this is found in II Kings 4:8-18.

It is the story of a Shunammite woman, otherwise not identified, except that she is referred to as “a great woman.” It seems that the Prophet Elisha, in his rounds of service, often passed through the town of Shunem. He apparently, in doing so, followed a road that was not far from the home of the “great woman” of the account. After noticing this, the woman used the first opportunity she had to assist, and “constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he

passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.”—II Kings 4:8

After this occurred a number of times, the Shunammite woman said to her husband, “Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.”—vss. 9-11

This woman’s great labor of love must have meant much to the Prophet Elisha. It was a simple act of kindness—beginning with taking him into her home for lunch, and then, with the consent and cooperation of her husband, building an extra room on the home so this man of God might have a place to rest when he needed it, and perchance to stay overnight. The kindness to this man of God was not without expense, because the building of an extra room on one’s home is quite costly. However, this woman’s love was great. Her spirit of sacrifice abounded toward Elisha, and we are sure the Lord was pleased.

Certainly Elisha was pleased. He instructed his servant to learn from the woman what they could do for her in return for all her kindness. She wished for nothing in return, but the servant learned from her that she was childless, her husband was old and the probability of ever having a child was very slight. Elisha prayed to the Lord about this, and his prayer, coming from a righteous man, availed much. In due course, the woman gave birth to a son.—vss. 12-17

Later, while the lad was still young, he suffered what was possibly a sunstroke, and died. Elisha was sent for, and he returned to the home, and restored the boy's life. (vss. 18-37) Thus, while this "great woman" had not desired any favor from Elisha or from the Lord for her labor of love, she did receive a highly appreciated blessing, as is so often the case with those who unselfishly and wholeheartedly minister to the people of God.

MARY'S LABOR OF LOVE

Martha and Mary are two women of God who stand out prominently in the life of Jesus. Jesus loved them because of their devotion to God and to his Word, and they loved him for the same reason. Their brother Lazarus died, and Jesus returned from Galilee to Bethany, the home of these two devout women, and awakened him from the sleep of death. This was a genuine labor of love by Jesus, and they showed their appreciation in part by arranging for a special supper the next day, at which Lazarus and Jesus were present.

This was a remarkable setting for such a gathering. Lazarus, who had been dead four days, had been awakened, and was with the others to enjoy the meal and the fellowship. Martha served at this supper. While it was in progress, Mary arose from the table, and using "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, . . . anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."—John 12:3

This was a labor of love which was very costly. By it, Mary, as best she could, showed her appreciation to Jesus for the great kindness he had

bestowed upon their family by awakening her brother from the sleep of death. She had doubtless expressed her thanks to the Master before this. However, in many cases words seem inadequate, and this was so in the case of Mary. She wanted to back up her words with a pound of spikenard ointment with which she bathed the Master's feet, and she wanted to use her own hair to wipe his feet.

As is oftentimes the case, there was one at the supper who criticized this labor of love. It was Judas Iscariot, but the record reveals that he was not sincere in his criticism. The lesson is that Jesus appreciated what had been done for him. Replying to Judas, Jesus said, "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this." (John 12:7) Jesus recognized Mary's labor of love as a real service that had been rendered to him. How wonderful that the Lord should cause the record of this to be preserved for us as a beautiful example.

In another account, Jesus said of Mary, "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." (Mark 14:8,9) What a precious example this is—"She hath done what she could!" We today do not have the opportunity of anointing the feet of our Lord, but we do have the privilege, in various ways, of rendering service to the members of his body still in the flesh. Are we doing what we can to render this labor of love on their behalf?

DORCAS

A member of the Early Church who was active in performing loving service for the brethren was Dorcas. Of her, we read, “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” Dorcas became ill, and died, and “they laid her in an upper chamber.”—Acts 9:36,37

The disciples in the area heard that Peter was in the vicinity, so they sent for him. “Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.” Then, having them all leave the room, Peter through prayer restored Dorcas to life. This miracle soon became known throughout the area, and as a result of it many believed.—vss. 38-42

We have only this short account of the zeal of Dorcas in serving the widows by her sewing. Like Mary, she did what she could, and as a result of her labor she brought blessings to many. In addition, through God’s grace in awakening her from the sleep of death, many became believers. Thus, through her labor of love, the Gospel effectively reached others. How encouraging this must have been to Dorcas!

LYDIA

Another of those whose labor of love is noted in Scripture is Lydia, a seller of purple dye, who maintained a home at *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) Philippi. It was in Philippi that the first European ecclesia was established. Lydia had an important part in connection with this—the first meetings of the brethren being held in her home. Paul and his companions were the first to take the Gospel to Philippi, going there in response to the call which he heard in a vision, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”—Acts 16:9

Arriving in Philippi, Luke writes that “on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”—vss. 13-15

Here was a labor of love operating in the form of hospitality to the brethren. Evidently Lydia was not a poor woman. Although she is said to be of Thyatira, evidently she did business in Philippi and maintained a home there for convenience, and she invited Paul and his companions to be guests in her home.

The record states that God had opened Lydia’s heart. Now we see her opened heart reaching out to serve the brethren in the best way she was capable of doing. She was not long enough in the Truth, perhaps, to give a clear witness to the message, but

she could care for the material needs of those faithful servants who had greater ability. Throughout the age, the temporal assistance provided to those active in the service of the Truth has been a very important part of the total efforts of making known the glad tidings of the kingdom. Lydia is in the forefront of this little band of servants whose labors of love have meant so much to the brethren.

EPAPHRODITUS

Epaphroditus was a member of the ecclesia at Philippi. Paul was now a prisoner in Rome, and the brethren in Philippi decided to send him a gift to help supply some of his needs, and to comfort him. Epaphroditus was the brother chosen to take this gift to Rome, and to deliver it to Paul. This was evidently during the two years in which Paul was privileged to live in “his own hired house,” although in the custody of Roman guards.—Acts 28:30

It would seem that in addition to delivering this gift to Paul from the brethren at Philippi, Epaphroditus desired to remain with Paul to serve him in whatever way he could. Paul decided to let him remain for awhile—at least until he found out how things would go with him when his case came up for trial. He was hoping that then he would be set free and could visit the brethren at Philippi himself. Then he adds, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.”—Phil. 2:25,26

It is evident that Epaphroditus had endeared himself to Paul by his faithful labor of love. The record shows also that this service had been rendered at great cost. Through his faithfulness, Epaphroditus had become ill. Paul wrote that “he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.”—Phil. 2:27,28

We can understand Paul’s feelings in this matter. He was being held as prisoner, and while it was for the cause of Christ, it is not an easy matter to be a prisoner, for any reason. This dear brother from Philippi had come with a gift from the brethren, and was serving him and became seriously ill. Had he died, it would have indeed been a crushing blow to Paul—“sorrow upon sorrow.” However, the Lord spared him this sorrow. Epaphroditus had recovered and was now returning to his brethren in Philippi, and Paul wrote, “Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”—vss. 29,30

Notice Paul’s exhortation—“hold such in reputation.” Paul believed in giving honor where such recognition is due, and he was sure it was merited by Epaphroditus. He had gladly risked his life to serve the beloved apostle—a service which Paul describes as “the work of Christ.” We cannot visualize all the details involved in this service. However, we can enter into the spirit which prompted it, and we can understand to some small degree how it must have brought

comfort and joy into those weary days which Paul spent in the custody of Roman guards.

THROUGHOUT THE AGES

Beginning in ancient times, and continuing even to our day, there have been faithful ones who have seen and used their opportunities to bestow labors of love, and thereby helped to lighten the burden of many of God's people. The Heavenly Father has promised to give his people the necessary strength for their every time of need, but often he uses their fellow brethren to render this assistance.

We have noted a few of the instances of this labor of love mentioned in the Bible, but we are sure that there were many other faithful individuals whose labors are not recorded in the sacred Word. In many of our ecclesia gatherings today, we have "comfort" committees to serve and encourage those who are ill, or for other reasons need our help. Indeed, every brother and sister in Christ should think of himself or herself as a member of a comfort committee, made up of all the Lord's people. We all should be on the alert to render help as opportunity and ability affords.

It is not in the big things, as a rule, that we are able to serve, but a cordial greeting at the meeting, a message of love and encouragement to a distant brother or sister which may be dispatched by the ecclesia, and in which we have the privilege of having a part. Sometimes, however, these privileges may come in more definite form. We may learn of a brother or sister who is in need of much help along a specific line. Rendering such assistance may be costly to us. Let us not hold back in these cases either.

The Shunammite woman saw her privilege of building an extra room onto her home so that a prophet of God might enjoy periods of refreshment and rest. Dorcas sewed clothing for the widows in the church at Joppa. Not every woman is able to sew, but Dorcas was, and she used her ability to render a labor of love where it was needed. Epaphroditus did not hesitate to hazard his life in order to minister to the needs of the Apostle Paul.

All of us should emulate these faithful servants of the Lord and of his people to the greatest extent possible. Let us possess their spirit of sacrifice and devotion to God's purposes and plan. This is the true spirit of the Lord, the spirit with which we should seek to be filled as we lay down our lives in his service, developing the "mind of Christ,"—the mind which led our Master to labor and give his all. ■

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“Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”—II Timothy 2:3

The 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. 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. —March 28, *Daily Heavenly Manna*

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

MARCH 6—“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.”—Philippians 4:11,12 (Z. ’03-10 Hymn 110)

MARCH 13—“As many, therefore, as are perfect, should be of this mind; and if in anything you think differently, God will also reveal this to you; But to what we have attained, let us walk by the same line.”—Philippians 3:15-17 (Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott) (Z. ’01-10 Hymn 312A)

MARCH 20—“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—John 8:31,32 (Z. ’03-61 Hymn 260)

MARCH 27—“I pray for them . . . that they all may be one . . . that they may be made perfect in one . . . that the world may know that thou hast . . . loved them as thou hast loved me.”—John 17:9,20-23 (Z. ’03-79 Hymn 165)

“A Corn of Wheat”

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

—*John 12:24* **THE SCRIPTURES HAD** foretold that Jesus would suffer much at the hand of his enemies, eventually being put to death by them. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be “brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” (Isa. 53:7) However, Jesus was not under constant attack by his enemies during the entire period of his ministry. It is true that the religious leaders of Israel as a group were always opposed to the Master, although there were individuals even among these who were inclined to be kindly disposed toward him—Nicodemus, a Pharisee, being one of them.

The rank and file of the people of Israel were favorably impressed by Jesus’ ministry. They heard him gladly, and rejoiced in the many blessings they received at his hands. Indeed, it was this popularity among the common people that stirred up the jealousy of the religious rulers against the Master. This was particularly so toward the close of his ministry,

when Jesus awakened Lazarus from the “sleep of death.” (Ps. 13:3; John 11:11-14) “Behold,” they said, “the world is gone after him.”(John 12:19) This miracle led to a determination on the part of the religious leaders in Israel that Jesus must be put to death.—vss. 9-11

Among those who had heard of Jesus’ miracle in raising Lazarus from the dead were “certain Greeks.” These may have been Jews who lived in Greece, or they could have been proselytes to the Jewish faith. In any event, they asked to see Jesus. (vss. 20,21) These Greeks presented their request to Philip, who in turn spoke to Andrew, and then the two of them spoke to the Master. Jesus then stated, “The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.” To this, he added the words of our opening text, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”—vss. 23,24

This might seem a strange response to those who had requested an audience with Jesus. However, when we keep in mind God’s great plan of salvation, it is quite logical. The Greeks who wished to see him had doubtless been impressed by what they had heard about him, and if they found that the reports concerning Jesus were true, they were willing to give their support to his cause.

However, this was not the sort of “fruit” for which Jesus was looking at the time. Even if he had continued his earthly ministry, implemented by miracles, until the whole world actually did accept him as their honored leader, nothing worthwhile would be accomplished, for the people would continue to die. Jesus came into the world to save

mankind from death—not temporarily, but permanently.

Jesus' miracles brought temporary blessings to some. Mary and Martha must have rejoiced to have their brother restored to them, and Lazarus himself was doubtless glad that he had been awakened from the sleep of death. However, later Lazarus died again. His sisters also died, as did all those whom Jesus had restored to health and life. This was not the great objective of Jesus' ministry. The miracles which brought him so much popularity were designed to show forth his coming kingdom glory, when all who believe and obey will be restored to permanent health and life, so that there "shall be no more death."—John 2:11; Rev. 21:4

In order for permanent salvation from death to reach the people through Jesus, it was necessary that he die, "the just for the unjust." (Acts 24:15; I Pet. 3:18) Even if the whole world had accepted Jesus as their leader and king, he would still have not accomplished the great objective of his ministry, unless he died to redeem the people from death. Jesus loved those Greeks who asked to see him. He loved them so much that he was ready to die for them. Since the due time of his death was indeed near, he took this opportunity of impressing upon the minds of his disciples that at the moment he had something more important to do than to build up a following.

MUCH FRUIT

In parabolic words, Jesus compares his life to a "corn of wheat" which, when it falls into the ground and dies, results in a plant which brings forth

“much fruit.” This is the natural process involved in producing a crop of wheat, and how beautifully it illustrates that which results from the death of Jesus. Think of the worldwide yield of “fruit” that will result from his death, the death which involved the giving of his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) All the “ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:10

The fruitage of Jesus’ death does not appear all at once. His faithful followers of the present age are “a kind of firstfruits” of this provision. (James 1:18; Rev. 14:4) “Afterfruits” will include the “great multitude”; then the Ancient Worthies—faithful ones of old—who will be brought forth in a “better resurrection”; and finally, the whole redeemed world of mankind, Jews and Gentiles. (Rev. 7:9; Heb. 11:35; I Tim. 2:4-6) While Jesus died alone on the cross, forsaken by all those who were for him in his popularity, and misunderstood even by his own disciples, nevertheless his death will lead to an abundant fruitage. Ultimately to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.—Phil. 2:8-11

Jesus drew a considerable crowd of listeners during his earthly ministry, but this was not the important thing, so far as the plan of God for that time was concerned. Speaking of his death from another standpoint, Jesus said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” (John 12:32) John explains that in this statement Jesus was indicating what death he should die—that is, he would be “lifted up” upon a cross.—vs. 33

The people who were then being drawn to him did not comprehend what Jesus really meant. They sensed that he spoke of dying, but this they did not understand. How could Jesus die if he were truly the Christ of promise? To their understanding, the Messiah would never die. (John 12:34) Jesus did not attempt to explain further. He simply encouraged them to follow what light they could discern from his teachings, implying that if faithful to this, they would see greater light later, in God's due time. Then Jesus retired from the crowd, which, although having witnessed many of his miracles, did not actually believe on him with understanding.—vss. 35,36

TRUE BELIEVERS

The prophecies had foretold that the people as a whole would not believe on Jesus in the sense of becoming his true followers. (vss. 38-40) Jesus was not surprised at this, but he took occasion to point out to those who might then have an ear to hear, what would be involved in true discipleship. After explaining that “as a corn of wheat” he must die if fruitage was to result from his ministry, he added, “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me [into death]; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”—vss. 25,26

Multitudes were ready at that time to acclaim Jesus as the miracle-working Messiah, but few indeed were willing to follow him into death—to be “planted together” with him as “wheat” in order

that they might together with him bring forth much fruitage through the blessing of all the families of the earth; yet this is the purpose of true Christian discipleship during the Gospel Age, the age in God's plan which was being introduced by Jesus.

Later, in the "upper room," Jesus explained this point in greater detail. He said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12) Here Jesus compared the permanent blessings which will reach the world through his death with those temporary blessings which then resulted from his miracles. He promised that his faithful followers, who suffer and die with him, will share in bringing forth that future fruitage of blessings to the world of mankind. Even the true disciples of Jesus at that time did not comprehend the fullness of meaning which was attached to these words of the Master. Not until they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost did they truly comprehend the privilege which was theirs of suffering and dying with Jesus, that they might live and reign with him, sharing in the dispensing of blessings of health and life to all the willing and obedient of mankind.

THE "BREAD" AND THE "CUP"

A few days after these circumstances, Jesus met with his disciples in the upper room to partake of the typical Jewish Passover supper. Jesus, knowing that he was about to be put to death as the anti-typical Passover Lamb, realized the solemnity of the occasion. He knew that very soon he would be planted in the ground as that "corn of wheat." He

was aware of the fact that within a few hours he would be “lifted up” on the cross to die for the sins of the whole world, and that this was the only way he could draw all men unto himself as the Redeemer and life-giver of the people.

Jesus knew that as the antitype of the Passover Lamb he was soon to be led to the slaughter, and that in the Father’s due time his blood would provide for mankind’s release from Adamic condemnation. He knew that those to first benefit from this release would be his footstep followers of the Gospel Age, and that later all mankind would be released from sin and death in the Messianic Age. In view of this, he deemed it important, and in harmony with the Father’s will, that he institute a memorial of his own death—a simple ceremony which would help to keep his followers reminded, not only of what he had done for them and for the world, but also of what they would have the privilege of doing together with him, as his partners in God’s plan of salvation.

As they were eating the Passover supper, Jesus took some of the bread, and some of the “fruit of the vine,” and used them to institute the Memorial Supper. We read that he “took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament [Covenant, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*], which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”—Matt. 26:26-29

This was not intended to be a new form of the Passover supper. It was designed to be a memorial of the death of the antitypical Passover Lamb. The

broken bread and the “fruit of the vine”—the product of the crushed grape—denoted suffering and death. The “cup” symbolized Jesus’ poured-out life. In John 6:48-51, Jesus previously had used “bread” to symbolize his flesh—his perfect humanity. By the two-fold symbolism employed in the Memorial Supper, we are reminded not only that a life was poured out for us and for the world, but that it was a perfect human life—a corresponding price for Father Adam.

How appropriate it is that once each year we should be so forcefully reminded of the basis of our reconciliation with God, and of our salvation from death. As we progress in the narrow way which leads to glory, honor, and immortality, we should become more and more aware of our own unworthiness of the grace which is daily bestowed upon us. Every failure in thought, word, and deed should keep us reminded of this. If we take these experiences properly to heart, we might well become discouraged, except as we remember God’s provision through Christ which makes acceptable our imperfect works. One of the reminders of this is the annual commemoration of the Memorial Supper. Surely, this simple service should be a great source of strength to every faithful follower of the Master.

AFTER-SUPPER LESSONS

In John’s Gospel, chapters 13-17, we have recounted for us some of the wonderful things which Jesus brought to the attention of his disciples following that last Passover supper in the upper room. These lessons are good for us today, and might well be

kept in mind in connection with our annual partaking of the Memorial Supper.

First, there was that meaningful lesson which Jesus taught by washing his disciples' feet. After performing this menial service, Jesus said to his disciples, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." (John 13:12-15) All true disciples of Christ should be glad for the opportunity of performing any menial service for their brethren which opportunity might provide. Failure to appreciate this privilege would mean that we have made little progress in the narrow way of sacrifice.

True humility in service has an application in every aspect of our relationship to God. Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5) Then Paul explains what he has in mind. He mentions the high position of Jesus before he came to earth to be man's Redeemer, and that he was willing to humble himself and give up his exalted position and to be "found in fashion as a man." Even after this, Jesus was willing to humble himself still further by being obedient to his Heavenly Father's will even unto death—even the ignominious death of the cross.—vss. 7,8

It was because of this spirit of humility before God, a humility that was reflected in his approach even to the little things of life, that Jesus was worthy of being exalted to the right hand of God and given a name "which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

of things in heaven, and things in earth; . . . And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—vss. 9-11

A NEW COMMANDMENT

It was also in the upper room that night that Jesus gave his disciples that “new commandment, . . . That ye love one another; as I have loved you. . . . By this,” Jesus said, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples.” (John 13:34,35) The “all men” seems to especially refer to all who profess to be followers of the Master. Surely our love for one another should be a strong testimony to these that we are truly earnest in our endeavors to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus loved us to the extent that he laid down his life for us. Do we have this sort of love for our fellow-brethren in Christ? In this context, we might well think of our brethren as not only those who now know the Truth and are walking in the narrow way, but those also whom God may be drawing and calling to this honored position in his plan. These may also become our brethren, and it is our privilege to lay down our lives by taking the Truth to them in any and every way possible. In a word, we are laying down our lives for the brethren when we sacrifice all that we have in the service of the Lord, as directed by the Scriptures. Let us keep this in mind also, as we partake of the Memorial Supper on the evening of April 13th this year.

TAKE HEED

Jesus explained to his disciples that he was going away, and that they could not “follow” him then. (John 13:36) Peter did not understand this,

for he was confident that he was willing to go anywhere with Jesus, and said so: "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." (John 13:37) Peter meant this with all his heart. Under the circumstances, he doubtless sensed that some great trouble lay just ahead for the Master. Peter was willing to be on the scene to make sure that Jesus came through safely, even if it should cost him his life.

Jesus' reply was, "Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." (vs. 38) What a heart-searching lesson this is for each one of us! It is a warning against being too sure of ourselves, and of our own standing before the Lord. It is this lesson that is brought to our attention in the statement, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—I Cor. 10:12

We should have confidence and assurance, but in the Lord, not in ourselves. Of ourselves we would utterly fail. However, the Scriptures remind us: "He is faithful that promised." "What he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Heb. 10:23; Rom. 4:21) Paul wrote to the brethren at Philippi that he was confident that God, who had begun the good work in them, was able to complete it. (Phil. 1:6) The same is true of all the Lord's people, and this—not our own abilities—should be the basis of our confidence as once more we partake of the "bread" and the "cup" of the Memorial Supper.

THE JOY SET BEFORE US

It was the joy set before Jesus that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame. (Heb.

12:2) In the upper room that night, Jesus set a glorious joy before his followers. After cautioning Peter against too much self-assurance, he explained that his going away was to prepare a place for his disciples, and that he would come again to receive them unto himself, that where he was, there they might be also. What a glorious prospect this must have been to them.—John 14:2,3

The disciples, however, did not at that time understand the full import of this promise. Even after Pentecost, John wrote, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (I John 3:2) Today, we still do not have a full comprehension of Jesus’ promise. In general terms, we know that it implies “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) It means that we shall possess the divine nature, and share with Jesus the joy of being in the presence of our Heavenly Father. (II Pet. 1:4) These things we know, and in them we rejoice. Our rejoicing in this hope enables us to endure the cross as we continue to partake of the “bread” and the “cup.”

THE COMFORTER

In making known to his disciples that he was going away from them for a while, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to be their “Comforter” and guide. (John 14:26;16:7,13) The meaning of this promise, like the other things which he had said, was obscure to the disciples that night in the upper room. However, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them on the Day of Pentecost, they then realized what a wonderful provision of divine

grace this Comforter was which he had promised them.

Today we are similarly blessed. By one Spirit we have all been baptized into the body of Christ. By the Holy Spirit we have become the children of God. We are anointed by that Spirit to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom and thereby to bind up the brokenhearted. We have the witness of the Spirit that we are the children of God, and we have been “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”— I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:16; Isa. 61:1; Eph. 1:13

The Holy Spirit is the holy power of God, and we can rely on it to supply all our needs of strength, courage, and guidance as we continue to lay down our lives in sacrifice. Jesus said to Peter that Satan desired him, that he might sift him as wheat. (Luke 22:31) Satan desires all the faithful followers of the Master, and just as much so today as at the beginning of the Gospel Age. Jesus prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail, and, as recorded in the 17th chapter of John, he has prayed for all of us. (Luke 22:32; John 17:9,20,21) Let us rejoice in the assurance that our Heavenly Father is still answering this prayer of his beloved Son, and caring for each one of us, supplying all our needs.

“NOT OF THE WORLD”

“If the world hate you,” Jesus said to his disciples that night before his crucifixion, “ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:18,19) One of the practical lessons

in this is that our true friends are not those of the world, but the Lord's brethren, and ours.

The Memorial season is a good time to renew our love for the brethren, and to resolve that we will appreciate them even more. They are our people, because they are God's people. This does not mean just a few of them, or certain ones whose dispositions are compatible with ours according to the flesh. It means all the brethren. God has called them all out of the world, and to himself. Are we honoring his choice by extending our understanding, love, and service to all whom he has chosen? This is an important question to ponder in our hearts during the Memorial season.

Summing up his admonitions to the disciples the night before he was crucified, Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) Today the hearts of the world are filled with apprehension and with fear, but in Jesus we can have peace—the peace of God which passes all human understanding.—Phil. 4:7

We also can overcome the world by rejoicing in the glorious fact that ultimately all mankind will have an opportunity to live because Jesus died for them. This also we can keep in mind as this year we again partake of the bread and the cup. In a few short weeks, on Memorial evening, we will behold in thought and memory, the Lamb of God—the Lamb that was slain. We will also remember that as a "corn of wheat" he fell into the ground, symbolically speaking, and died, and that therefore, much fruit results—both the firstfruits and the

afterfruits—the “church of the firstborn,” and all humanity.—Heb. 12:23; John 5:28,29, *Revised Version*

We will also keep in mind, as we partake of the Memorial emblems, that we have the privilege of suffering and dying with the Master. If faithful in this, we will share with him in bringing forth the fruits of sacrifice manifested in the blessing of all the families of the earth. May God grant that we shall be faithful! ■

In the Presence of the King

If we could always feel each little thing

We do, each hour we spend

Within the presence of the King,

What dignity 'twould lend!

If we could realize our every thought

Is known to Him, our King,

With how great carefulness would it be fraught,

And what a blessing bring!

If, when some sharp word leaves a cruel sting,

Our faith could know and feel

'Twas heard within the presence of the King,

How soon the wound would heal!

Oh, when the song of life seems hard to sing,

And darker grows the way,—

Draw nearer to the presence of the King,

And night shall turn to day!

—*Poems of Dawn*

General Convention Bulletin

July 19-24, 2014

THE 2014 GENERAL CONVENTION is only a few months away. Now is the time to make your plans to attend and participate in the blessings of this annual gathering of the Lord's people. Once again the convention returns to the facilities of the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Air conditioned hotel-like rooms with private bathrooms in the Living-Learning Center (LLC), family-style apartments (also air conditioned) with private bathrooms (APTS), and housing with two rooms sharing one bathroom (not air conditioned) in other facilities will be available on campus. A child may sleep on a bedroom floor at no charge in his own sleeping bag if both beds are occupied.

All room and meal costs for children 12 years old or younger will be paid by the convention. In addition, 100% of the cost of those from ages 13 through 17 will be refunded if the young person attends at least 75% of the studies for his or her age group. This subsidy does not cover meals paid in cash at the door.

The convention will provide one shuttle bus leaving the Pittsburgh airport in the early evening for the college in Johnstown on Friday, July 18. There will also be a shuttle bus leaving the college in the early morning hours for the Pittsburgh

airport on Friday, July 25. Beginning this year, there will be a \$10 charge per person each way for this service.

Once again there will be special programs at the convention for young people of all ages. Five different age groups, beginning at age 3 up to age 25, will have daily studies, fellowship, recreation and other activities designed especially for them. Well qualified brethren have been selected to coordinate each of these groups.

A complete pricing table and registration form is provided for your convenience immediately following this announcement. ■

Ages	18 & up	***13-17
Breakfast	\$7.00	\$6.00
Lunch	9.00	8.00
Dinner	12.00	11.00
Total, three meals	\$28.00	\$25.00
Lodging (per night)		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$35.00	\$30.00
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$30.00	\$28.00
**single occ (LLC)	\$65.00	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$35.00	n/a
PKG: 7 nights, 18 meals		
**dbl occ (LLC or APTS)	\$360*	\$325*
dbl occ (non-LLC or APTS)	\$230*	\$195*
**single occ (LLC)	\$520*	n/a
single occ (non-LLC)	\$270*	n/a
If no breakfasts, deduct—*\$35 **Air conditioned ***100% of these costs will be refunded if the young person attends 75% of the studies for his/her age group		

General Convention Registration

330 Jasmine Road—Casselberry, FL 32707

E-mail: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com (407) 670-4189

	Brkfst	Lunch	Dinner	Bed
Friday, July 18, 2014				
Saturday, 19th				
Sunday, 20th				
Monday, 21st				
Tuesday, 22nd				
Wednesday, 23rd				
Thursday, 24th				

Check for package: 7 nights, all 18 meals
or 7 nights, 12 meals (no breakfasts)

Check: private bath **or** shared bath
 double occupancy single occupancy
 interested in APTS

Names and ecclesia name (age if under 18)

Address:

ENCOURAGING LETTERS

LOANED BY A FRIEND

DawnBible: A friend of mine let me read one of your books, and I really liked it. God bless you and your staff. Thank you very much.—CA

UPHOLDING TRUTH

DawnBible: It is nice to know about organizations like yours who are upholding biblical truth.

As a Christian writer and speaker it is always good to have information that will help me “fine tune” my knowledge.—WA

SPIRITUAL LIFE GROWING

DawnBible: Thanks to this organization and all the staff members that make my spiritual life grow from your hard work through this website.

God bless you and I encourage you to continue your work for the Lord.—NJ

EDUCATIONAL WEBSITE

DawnBible: Wonderful site! I thank God I found

it. It is so much help and so much education. I want to receive all your publications.

I will pray that God continues to bless your work.—MA

PAUL AT EPHESUS

DawnBible: Stopped by looking for some concise background information on Paul's work at Ephesus.

I found the article you provided insightful; helpful. Thanks for the work you put into your vision.—NC

PEACE OF MIND

DawnBible: I love reading the Dawn books. It gives me hope, and peace of mind.—SC

TAKING CHRISTIANITY SERIOUSLY

DawnBible: I love to be associated with this association, as I take my christian life very seriously.

I enjoyed the article on “the mark forward.”—Nigeria

BOOKLET RECEIVED

DawnBible: I have received the book entitled *The Church*. God bless you.—Malawi

RECEIVING THE DAWN SINCE 1966

DawnBible: I appreciate the Dawn Bible Students so much. "*The Dawn*" has been coming to my door since 1966 and has been a great help and encouragement these many years in understanding and appreciating the TRUTH about the Heavenly Father's great plan of ages.—IL

FAITH BOOSTED

DawnBible: Thank you so very much for the booklets. I received them today.

I feel blessed because you have boosted my faith and love for Jesus, as I was having trouble with my faithfulness. Now its back with me, so thank you.

God bless you all there at DawnBible—love the work you do.—Australia

GRATEFUL

DawnBible: I have been receiving your devotionals

and they have richly blessed me and my family. I am so grateful.—Nigeria

STUDY TOOL

DawnBible: DawnBible is a great study tool and helps me answer hard questions.

Awesome website, a treasure of knowledge of God's Word. God bless you for the great work.—WA

GOD'S PLAN

DawnBible: I love receiving *The Dawn* magazine as well as the many books and booklets that you publish to instruct all that would inquire into God's great "Plan of The Ages."—NY

OUR HOPE IN A LOVING GOD

DawnBible: I thank God for your publications. If it wasn't for the pamphlets/monthly magazine you publish, a lot of us would still be searching for verification that the God we love, trust and maintain our hope in is indeed the loving, decent and sincere God some of us always knew, instinctively, in our hearts.—MI

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

O. B. Elbert

Orlando, FL March 1-3
New York, NY 23

R. Goodman

New Orleans, LA March 8,9
Jacksonville, FL 23

R. Gorecki

Orlando, FL March 1-3

K. Humphreys

New York, NY March 23

B. Montague

New London, CT March 30

H. Montague

Orlando, FL March 1-3

T. Ruggirello

Orlando, FL March 1-3

G. Tabac

Orlando, FL March 1-3

OBITUARIES

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

Brother John Barham, Tulsa, OK—December 22.

Age, 79

Sister Ailene Roach, Blowing Rock, NC—January

13. Age, 86

Brother Walter Wesol, Chicago, IL—January 24.

Age, 95

Brother Bob Knockaert, Fairview, OR—January

26. Age, 88

Brother Jude Onwumere, Agwa, Nigeria—February

3. Age, 45

Brother Tony Tsimonis, Waterbury, CT—February

3. Age, 91

Sister Mary Beth Swigart, Salt Lake City, UT—

February 7. Age, 87

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 Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 1-3—Howard Johnson Hotel, 230 West State Road 436, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714. For room reservations, contact the hotel. Phone: (407) 862-4455. Specify “Florida Bible Students” for special rates, which expire on February 17, 2014. Other information, contact S. Jeuck. Phone: (407) 834-7592 or E-mail: sjeuck@aol.com

NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, March 8,9—Holiday Inn Gulfport/Airport, 9515 Highway 49, Gulfport, MS. Contact M. Costelli. Phone: (228) 861-2822 or E-mail: michael@simpkins-costelli.com

NEW YORK SPRING CONVENTION, March 23—Doubletree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Phone: (201) 529-5880. Contact A. Williams. Phone: (718) 261-3053 or E-mail: austin@osnetinc.com

GREATER NEW LONDON PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, March 30—Bay View Lodge, 32 Society Road, East Lyme, CT. Contact V. Grillo. Phone: (860) 823-7099 or E-mail: millennialview@sbcglobal.net

PHOENIX CONVENTION, March 30—Boys and Girls Club of Scottsdale, 8250 E. Rose Lawn, Scottsdale, AZ. Contact C. Humphreys. Phone: (480) 226-9076 or E-mail: christyscastles@gmail.com

DETROIT PRE-MEMORIAL CONVENTION, April 5,6—Quality Inn-Troy, 2537 Rochester Court, Troy, MI 48083. Hotel Reservation, phone (248) 689-7500. Specify “Detroit Bible Students” for special rate. Contact P. Nemesh. Phone: (248) 649-6588 or E-mail: nemeshfp@aol.com

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, April 18-20—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Blvd. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Group subsidized rate is \$69.00/room per night, up to four people in a room. This rate will apply if reservation is made by the Convention Secretary, S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or E-mail: srbt@juno.com

CHICAGO MEMORIAL DAY CONVENTION, May 24-26—Additional information to follow. Contact: A. Schneider. E-mail: alys1874@sbcglobal.net

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 24,25—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. Contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (818) 982-7253 or E-mail: jrbwojcik@yahoo.com. Special room rate at Ramada Inn by contacting N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248. Deadline for special rate is April 24.

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 8—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Eldridge. Phone: (215) 949-0652 or E-mail: rugeo@comcast.net

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 14,15—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Center, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada V4W 3B8. Contact: B. Smith. Phone: (604) 576-6070 or E-mail: bas@telus.net

PRINCE ALBERT CONVENTION, June 28-30—Siwak Farm. Contact A. Siwak, RR 1 Stn Mpp, Prince Albert, SK, Canada S6V 5P8. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or E-mail: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

PHOENIX CONVENTION, June 29—Boys and Girls Club of Scottsdale, 8250 E. Rose Lawn, Scottsdale, AZ. Contact C. Humphreys. Phone: (480) 226-9076 or E-mail: christyscastles@gmail.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 19-24—See pages 57-59 of this issue.

To us the Scriptures clearly teach:

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Dawn

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