

The DAWN

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The Risen Christ

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”

—*John 16:20*

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 1, MIL-lions in the Christian world will gather in their local churches to give remembrance to the resurrection of Jesus nearly two thousand years ago. For most, however, this will be merely a brief recollection of that momentous event in the midst of a

world of problems, turmoil and uncertainty. To even the most devout believer, the impact of Jesus’ resurrection perhaps seems very distant from the immediate challenges of the present day.

One of the conditions of today’s world which no doubt dilutes the focus which might otherwise be given to the resurrection of Jesus is the incessant bombardment of the human mind with information. Electronic communication of every type imaginable explodes each day to our eyes and ears. For most, it can be accessed quite literally in the palm of our hand. Sorting through this endless stream of information is, of course, impossible. In addition, one of its many negative effects is to divert the minds of mankind further and further away from the “old

paths” of the Bible, including the subject of the resurrection.—Jer. 6:16

Another reason that the all-important doctrine of Jesus’ resurrection does not resonate as it should among the people lies in the fact that it is generally misunderstood. At best, most see it as a one-time event in human history which they have come to believe has a relatively small impact on the future of the earth and its human inhabitants. It is only as we recognize the true significance of the resurrection, however, and additionally how it is linked together with other key elements of God’s overall plan, that we can begin to realize its eventual blessedness toward all mankind.

SORROW TURNED TO JOY

To that small group of people who had become disciples of Jesus, the rumored news that he had been raised from the dead must have rekindled their hopes and provided a joyous prospect. They were at first a little overwhelmed that such a thing could have taken place, but they accepted the evidences presented to them, and rejoiced.

The words of our opening text are part of a touching prophecy, given only hours before his death, in which Jesus forecast the feelings of his disciples over his crucifixion, and also the great joy that would follow when they learned of his resurrection. Continuing his prophecy, Jesus said, “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and

your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”—John 16:21,22

We can well understand the deep anguish of the disciples when Jesus was taken from them and cruelly put to death. They believed with all their hearts that he was Israel’s Messiah of promise, but their understanding of his mission was limited. They did not know that before he would rule the world in righteousness, as the Old Testament had foretold, he first had to die as the Redeemer of the human race. Not understanding this, they doubtless felt that his death might mean that he was not in reality the Messiah. However, they had loved him too much to readily admit this possibility. Thus, confused and sorrowful, they waited and wondered.

HOPEFUL—BUT LACKING UNDERSTANDING

In those critical faith-testing days between Jesus’ crucifixion and his resurrection, his disciples probably remembered certain things he had said concerning the fact that he would be raised from the dead. However, these statements apparently had not been considered too seriously by them. He had also foretold his death, but this they did not wish to believe. To the disciples Jesus was to be a world ruler, and the idea that his enemies would be permitted to put him to death even before there was any evidence of his kingdom being set up, was incredible.

Why, then, should they think of his dying, or try to understand what he meant about being raised from the dead? On one occasion, when Jesus made a plain statement concerning his impending arrest,

trial, death, and resurrection on the third day, the writer, Luke, makes note of the disciples' complete lack of discernment at the time: "They did not understand about these things, and this statement was an insoluble riddle to them; they did not even begin to grasp what He meant."—Luke 18:31-34, *Williams New Testament*

Although bewildered by what had taken place, the disciples' great love for the Master kept alive a flickering hope. Within just a few short days, this hope was quickly fanned into a glowing flame of conviction and rejoicing by the news that the one whom they so dearly loved, and to whom they had devoted their lives, was no longer dead. Mary Magdalene was first at the tomb, even while it was yet dark, on that memorable first day of the week. She noticed that the stone had been taken away from the sepulchre, and she hurried to tell Peter and John.

These two ardent apostles ran to the sepulchre. John, who outran Peter, arrived at the tomb first. He stood at the entrance and looked inside, confirming what Mary had reported, that the body of Jesus was gone. Only the grave clothes and cloth that had been wrapped around his head remained. Peter then arrived, and, being a little more bold, he entered the sepulchre and confirmed what John had seen from the entrance. John then followed Peter into the sepulchre, and after examination, they both "believed" in the fact that Jesus' body was no longer there. However, neither Peter nor John yet realized what had actually happened. "As yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead."—John 20:1-9

GO AND TELL

Peter and John returned to their home, but Mary lingered and Jesus appeared to her as a gardener. Only when he spoke her name did she know who it was. She would have embraced him, but he said to her, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:10-17) An angel also said to the other women who had gathered at the tomb, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him."—Matt. 28:7

There was a sense of urgency in the commission to inform the disciples that Jesus had been raised from the dead. His entire ministry had been very brief, comprising only three and one-half years. Now that he was alive again, however, his stay with his disciples was to last only for a little more than a month. Even during this short time he was to converse with them only on a few brief occasions. One of the chief objects of these appearances was to present them with "infallible proofs" that he was no longer dead.—Acts 1:3

Another object of Jesus' limited appearances to his disciples after his resurrection was to impress upon them the responsibility which was now theirs of being his ambassadors in the world. The first time he met with them was on the evening of that first day he spoke to Mary, and she had taken the news to them of his resurrection. They were assembled behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, when suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you." To allay their doubts he showed them his hands and his side, and

they were “glad, when they saw the Lord.”—John 20:19,20

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” (vs. 21) They were not to suppose that their work as his disciples was finished. Indeed, it had been interrupted, and they were confused and discouraged. However, they were to arise from this situation with the knowledge of the fact that their beloved Master was no longer dead. Soon they would be sent forth to preach the Gospel throughout the earth to all having ears to hear.

Thomas was not present that evening when Jesus first appeared to his apostles. When the others told him about it, he said that he would not believe unless he could see certain evidence for himself. Jesus evidently was aware of this remark, so eight days later he appeared again under similar circumstances, so that Thomas might be convinced. He did not condemn Thomas, but referred to the blessedness of those who would be able to believe without seeing this visible evidence of his resurrection, a reference to the requirement of faith in all those who would truly be followers of the Master.—John 20:24-29

“SIGNS” OF HIS RESURRECTION

As previously noted, Luke spoke of the “infallible” proofs, or signs, by which the disciples had been convinced over a period of forty days that Jesus was no longer dead. John used similar language. Referring to Jesus’ appearance for the purpose of convincing Thomas, John observed, “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are

not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe.”—John 20:30,31

The display of the nail prints and spear wound was a sign. The apostles did not see Jesus’ divine, spirit body. They saw only the bodies in which he appeared to them. Actually, he had given his flesh for the life of the world. (John 6:51) However, as yet, the apostles did not understand this. Until begotten with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they could understand only earthly things, so as signs and proofs he appeared to them in various fleshly bodies, as circumstances indicated the need.

To Mary at the sepulchre Jesus appeared as a gardener. On the shore of Galilee he appeared as a stranger. To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus he appeared as a traveler from another region. (John 20:15; 21:4; Luke 24:13-16) Years later, the Apostle John, who witnessed most of these appearances, made clear to us that they were signs. He wrote, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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 3:1-3) If John believed that the body which they saw in the room when the doors were closed—the body with nail prints in the hands and feet and a spear wound in the side—was Jesus’ real body after his resurrection, he would have had no reason to write, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Rather he would have said, “We know what we will be like, for we will be like him who we have seen with wounds in his hands and in his feet and in his side.”

Later, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul explained the answer to the questions,

“How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (I Cor. 15:35) Using the analogy of a seed being planted, he points out that a seed that is sown in the ground is like a body going into death. The seed decays and dies, just as the natural body goes back to the dust after death. However, in the process of the seed’s death, the sprout of a new plant may emerge. The new plant is not the same organism as the seed that was sown. In fact, Paul says, it cannot have life and emerge from the ground without the former seed having already died. Thus, the new living plant, the apostle further explains, represents, in the resurrection, a new body given by God, as it pleases him.—vss. 36-38

Jesus had been put to death in the flesh. His humanity had been given in sacrifice to redeem the sin-cursed world from death. (I Pet. 3:18; Rom. 5:6-8) Now he had been raised to power and great glory, but appeared to his disciples in the only manner they could as yet comprehend. Indeed, and as we have noted, at this time they did not really understand why he had died. They were overjoyed that he was no longer dead, but must have wondered why the tragedy of his crucifixion had to occur and, to their minds, interrupt his mission.

EXPLANATIONS GIVEN

Although the disciples did not understand fully these matters until the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, Jesus explained several points to two of them in considerable detail. These two were Cleopas and another disciple to whom Jesus appeared while they journeyed to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13-32) As they walked, these disciples “communed together

and reasoned.” How earnest their discussion must have been. They had received the report brought by the women that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but they had not seen him, yet hoped that the news brought to the disciples by the women was true.

Another traveler joined them, whom they did not recognize, and upon inquiry from him, they explained the cause of their sadness and perplexity. The stranger replied, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

These two disciples did not recognize that it was Jesus who was expounding the Scriptures to them. Not until at their journey’s end, when, after inviting him to join them at their evening meal, “he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them,” did they realize that this stranger was none other than their beloved Master! Now they had the answer to two questions. They knew for a surety that Jesus was no longer dead. The good news brought to them by the women early at the tomb was now proven to be true, for they had not only seen Jesus, but had conversed with him at considerable length.

They also now knew, as clearly as they could know prior to the begetting of the Holy Spirit, why it was necessary for Jesus to die. They learned that it was in fulfillment of prophecy, and because it was the plan of God that the Messiah should pour out “his soul unto death” to redeem fallen man from death. Otherwise his rulership would be over a dying race,

and not over those returning over the “highway” to everlasting life.—Isa. 53:12; 35:8

FEED MY SHEEP

Another appearance of the Master to his disciples was on the shore of Galilee. (John 21:1-17) By now they had become convinced of his resurrection, but in his various appearances they became confused as to what to do. They could no longer follow him from place to place and assist in his ministry as they had done before he was crucified. He now could come and go as the wind, unseen by them except when he miraculously appeared in their midst. To them this seemed to mean that they had no leader, and they did not know how to continue in his service.

Consequently, although glad that Jesus was no longer dead, Peter and John, and some of the others, gave thought to the idea that they would go back into the fishing business. They procured equipment, and had spent an entire night on the lake, but had caught no fish. At the break of day a stranger appeared on the shore and inquired how successful they had been. When told that no fish had been caught, he suggested that they cast their nets on the other side of the ship. Reluctantly, probably, they did this, and to their surprise the net was filled with fish.

John, quick of discernment, said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” A similar miracle had been performed when they were first called to be his disciples, and to become “fishers of men.” John deduced that this was the way Jesus now purposed to reveal himself to them. Peter plunged into the water and swam ashore, and “the other disciples came in a little ship.”

Jesus had started a fire, and had fish and bread ready for the disciples, and he said unto them, "Come and dine." After they had eaten, Jesus began to question Peter. "Lovest thou me more than these?" he inquired. Three times Jesus asked Peter this same question, and three times Peter affirmed his love and devotion. Each time Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs, ... Feed my sheep."

This must have been most reassuring and comforting to Peter, for it was only a short time before that he had denied his Lord three times. To those less large in their hearts than Jesus, this denial might well have brought permanent estrangement, or at least a lack of confidence, but not with Jesus. He could read Peter's heart, and he knew that his love was genuine, and that he could be trusted as an ambassador. He knew, indeed, that the very experience which might disqualify Peter in the minds of some, would serve as a valuable background of experience, and enable him the more effectively to feed the Lord's sheep.

In John 21:14 we are informed that this was the third time Jesus had showed himself to his disciples. The reference, apparently, is to the apostles as a whole. He appeared to them in the room with the doors closed, and on a mountain in Galilee. (Matt. 28:16) It was here that Jesus announced to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Here also he commissioned them to go into all the world and "teach all nations," but with only minimal instructions as to just how they were to proceed. He did tell them, however, that he would be with them. How reassuring it must have been for one who had all power in heaven and in

earth to say, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,” or age.—vss. 18-20

DIFFERENCES

The disciples must have had impressed upon them by Jesus’ various appearances that circumstances were now very different from those that existed when they worked with him prior to his death. Indeed, they knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but they did not now enjoy his constant companionship as they had before his death. When he did appear to them, his visits were all too brief, and they had very little time to converse with him.

Finally, the resurrected Jesus appeared for the last time, and the disciples boldly asked a question which was very close to their hearts: “Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) To them, Jesus was still the great Messiah of promise, the one who had come to rule “from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.” (Ps. 72:8) He had come to sit upon the throne of David, to rule over the kingdom of David, which to them meant that he was to reestablish that kingdom.

Before Jesus was taken away from his disciples and crucified, he had related a parable in which he likened himself to a nobleman who would go into a “far country,” receive a kingdom, and return. (Luke 19:12) Since they had seen Jesus only sporadically in the past forty days, the apostles may have concluded that he had been away in that far country, and now had returned to set up his kingdom. The king would, indeed, return in due time to set up his kingdom, but it was not yet that time. Today, we still rejoice in the fact of his resurrection, and are

happy to bear witness to a risen Christ. However, we have the additional blessing of discerning the fulfillment of various signs indicating that Christ has returned, and is even now preparing to establish his kingdom. How this thrills our hearts!

The hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus burned within them when they learned that Jesus' death was not a miscarriage of God's plan. Later, through the Holy Spirit, they learned that the dedicated followers of the Master were to have the privilege of suffering and dying with Christ. (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12) We rejoice that even in this ending Harvest period of the age we also have the opportunity of taking up our cross and following the Master.

By faith, we now enjoy the blessings of being, symbolically speaking, "risen with Christ." (Col. 3:1-3) While none of us knows just when our individual earthly walk will end, we do believe that the work of the Gospel Age is nearing completion, and we are standing near the very threshold of the kingdom. How wonderful it is to be of those who publish peace, who proclaim salvation, and who bear the good tidings of the kingdom to a distraught and dying world!—Isa. 52:7

The message of the risen Christ to us, therefore, even as it was to the women first at the tomb after Jesus was raised from the dead, is to go and tell. Now, however, it is not merely telling of his resurrection, but also of the nearness of his kingdom of blessing. It is telling one another of our privilege of dying with him, and of our hope of being in the likeness of his resurrection. Indeed, our message to one another and to the world embraces God's

entire plan of the ages. It is that glorious plan which is about to reach its consummation in the blessing of all the families of the earth with peace, and joy, and health, and everlasting life.—Gen. 22:18; Isa. 11:6-9; Rev. 21:3-5 ■

*“I will sing of the LORD’S great love forever;
with my mouth I will make your faithfulness
known through all generations.*

*“I will declare that your love stands firm forever,
that you established your faithfulness
in heaven itself.”
—Psalm 89:1,2*

OBITUARIES

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

Sister Elizabeth Kaczmar, Broadview, SK, Canada—
January 23. Age, 95

Sister Joyce Bateman, Jersey City, NJ—January 26.
Age, 88

Brother Henry Greenhalgh, Gympie, QLD, Australia—
February 3. Age, 83

Brother Alex Kwiatkowski, Detroit, MI—February 5.
Age, 93

Brother Barry Kuly, Winnipeg, MB, Canada—February
13. Age, 71

Brother Dave Brown, Wenatchee, WA—February 23.
Age, 67

Sister Hazel McClellan, Clearwater, FL—February 26.
Age, 91

Brother Fred Hrechuk, Winnipeg, MB, Canada—
March 8. Age, 84

He Has Risen

Key Verse: *“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”*
—*Luke 24:34*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 24:1-35

THE RAISING OF JESUS

from the dead is revealed throughout the Scriptures as an assurance of the resurrection hope for all mankind. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” “He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.” (I Cor. 15:22; I John 2:2; Acts 24:15) So important is the doctrine of the resurrection, the Apostle Paul declares that without it our hope and faith is vain.—I Cor. 15:16-18,32

Today’s lesson considers the first essential element of the resurrection doctrine—the fact of Jesus’ resurrection. We note that on several occasions our Lord had declared he would rise from the dead after three days. (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19) We also recall that the chief priests and Pharisees were aware of Jesus’ prediction, and feared some of his disciples might steal his body and claim that he had risen from the dead. To prevent this from happening, an appeal was made to Pilate to seal the tomb with a stone and set a watch until three days had passed.—Matt. 27:62-66

The Scriptures provide several lines of testimony in confirmation of the resurrection of Jesus. One was a “great earthquake.” Some have hypothesized that this was not actually an earthquake, but descriptive of the confusion of the guards at the appearance of an “angel

of the Lord” which descended from heaven. (Matt. 28:1,2) However, the Greek word from which it is translated, *seismos*, is also rendered “earthquake” in the account of Paul and Silas when they were imprisoned in Philippi. (Acts 16:19-28) Both instances resulted in the earth shaking and moving. In the case of Paul and Silas, the prison doors were opened and their bonds were loosed. Here the stone was rolled back from the sealed tomb. Such was a miraculous evidence of God’s mighty power which he exercised in the resurrection of his Son.

Another attestation of Jesus’ resurrection was that to which the angel called attention. On the third day at dawn, women came to see the tomb and found it empty. The angel then announced his resurrection, saying, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”—Matt. 28:5,6; Luke 24:1-6

Jesus himself provided the most convincing proofs his resurrection when he appeared to his followers on several occasions. In the account cited above, the angel continued speaking to the women: “Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead. ... And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.” (Matt. 28:7-10) Note the clarity in the angel’s statement that Jesus had risen, and the comfort given by the risen Lord to these devoted women.

In other appearances Jesus was recognized only by his voice, or by the way he broke bread. He was seen suddenly in a closed room, and on another occasion appeared to his disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee as they were fishing. By personally declaring his resurrection, Jesus gave encouragement to his followers then, as well as throughout the ensuing Gospel Age. ■

The Risen Lord Appears

Key Verse: **A MOST CRITICAL ELEMENT**
“Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand.”
—*I Corinthians 15:1*

Selected Scripture:
I Corinthians 15:3-8
of “the gospel” which Paul declares in our Key Verse is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In the subsequent verses of our lesson the apostle speaks of this as a fulfilment of Scripture. He says, “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; ... After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also.”—*I Cor. 15:3-8*

These appearances of the risen Lord show another important truth—his change of nature from human to spiritual. Although on one occasion he was seen with the prints of nails in his hands and the wound in his side, in all his other appearances Jesus was not known by any physical features. He appeared as a gardener, as an unknown traveler on the road to Emmaus, and as a stranger on the shore of Galilee. On these and other occasions Jesus was recognized by his tone of voice, the

manner in which he prayed and broke bread, and other familiar aspects of his conduct. His words and mannerisms were still fresh in the disciples' minds and precious to them.

Jesus could also enter a room while the doors were shut and disappear just as mysteriously. This was in accordance with his description of the powers of a spirit being, who can come and go like the wind while being unseen. (John 3:8) It also harmonizes with Scriptural accounts of the appearance of angels among men. They came in sudden and unknown ways, and vanished out of sight as mysteriously as they came. They could also assume any appearance or have features as they chose. These things Jesus never did prior to his resurrection. They are all in accord, however, with one of his final statements to the disciples prior to his ascension, when he stated, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."—Matt. 28:18

The purpose of Jesus' appearances subsequent to his resurrection was to provide proof to his followers that he had indeed risen from the dead. The bodies which they saw were not his glorious spirit body, which no human eye could look upon. The Apostle John speaks of the faithful "sons of God" seeing Christ's divine body only when they themselves are raised from the dead. He says, "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

Jesus' appearances after the miraculous removal of his crucified human body from the tomb testified to the fulfillment of the prophecies that he would not experience corruption. (Ps. 16:10) Had his body remained visible in the tomb, it would likely have been an insurmountable barrier to the faith of the disciples in his resurrection change. How thankful we are that the Lord was raised to the divine nature and is now "the express image" of his Father. (Heb. 1:3) The ransom price for Adam has been provided, and the hope of mankind's future resurrection has been assured. Praise the Lord! ■

Feed My Lambs

Key Verse: *“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.”*
—John 21:15

Selected Scripture:
John 21:15-25

devotion to him, so that he might receive assurance of his full reinstatement to divine love and favor.

As stated in our Key Verse, Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me more than these?” By this question, the Lord alluded to Peter’s apparent desire to return to the fishing business. In obedience to the Lord’s call three and a half years earlier, he had left these things to follow the Master. (Luke 5:10,11) Now, Peter’s affirmative answer indicated he was again willing to forsake all, and to boldly proclaim the coming kingdom and risen Lord. He said, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee,” to which Jesus responded, “Feed my lambs.”

ALTHOUGH THE PRIMARY purpose of Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after his resurrection was to convince them of the fact that he had risen from death, he also provided them with certain lessons which would serve them well in their future ministry. In today’s lesson we call attention to the thrice repeated question of the risen Lord to Peter, “Lovest thou me?” (John 21:15-17) Three times Peter had denied the Master, though under most stressful circumstances. Now three times the risen Lord desired that Peter reaffirm his

The doubt which seemed to be implied by the Lord's repetition of the question two more times at first grieved Peter. He was an ardent follower of the Master, having claimed him as the Messiah, and he wanted the Lord to be fully persuaded of his love and zeal. Thus, it grieved him to feel that possibly there was a shadow of doubt, resulting in a cloud between him and Jesus which his repentance had not fully removed. The response, "Feed my lambs, ... feed my sheep," however, enabled Peter to realize his full reinstatement as an accepted and beloved disciple.

The question addressed to Peter in our Key Verse is also asked of every consecrated follower of Christ Jesus. If we have given ourselves unreservedly in consecration, the privileges of the Lord's work are set before us to prove the sincerity and strength of our love. In addition, as with the early disciples, the reproach of the cross has not ceased, and can often be bitter and determined. Do we love the Lord and his work more than business pursuits and prospects, more than social ties and pleasures, more than ease, comfort, friends, fame, wealth, a good name, or any earthly gain?

This is truly a question which no one can sincerely answer in the affirmative who does not have the inspiring incentive of divine love in their heart. Pure, fervent love toward Christ quickens zeal, and enables those who have it to respond gladly and promptly, "Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Such a response sends them forth with joy to prove their love by their works, remembering the many encouragements to faithfulness given by the Master. "If any man will come after me, ... let him take up his cross daily, and follow me." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. ... The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "In me ye ... have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation." (Luke 9:23; John 15:18,20; 16:33) Let us, then, as Peter did, answer affirmatively to the call, "Feed my lambs, ... feed my sheep." ■

Follow Me

Key Verse: “*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*”
—*Revelation 4:11*

Selected Scriptures:
John 21:18-23;
Revelation 4:1-11

New International Version

Peter then asked the Lord about John. “What shall this man do?” Peter asked. “Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” (vss. 21-23) We believe these words refer to the fact that before John died, Jesus would appear to him in vision for the purpose of recording, by use of many symbols, certain future events relative to God’s plan. In the Book of Revelation we have the vision given to John of these things, and which are the last recorded words of the Holy Scriptures.

FOLLOWING THE COMMISSION given to “Feed my lambs, ... feed my sheep,” the risen Lord invited Peter to follow him in a life of sacrifice. “I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glo-

ri-fy God. Then he said to him, Follow me!”—John 21:18,19,

The invitation of our title, “Follow me,” holds special importance to those whose hopes and desires are to become part of the bride of Christ. We are therefore deeply interested in the words of John’s vision. Although he did not understand many of the things which he saw, through the begetting of the Holy Spirit, the members of the body of the Christ have been granted understanding to discern spiritual things. (I Cor. 2:14) We are assured of this when John refers to the Holy Spirit as the “seven spirits of God,” showing its all-encompassing work. (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6) It follows that God’s Holy Spirit would be made manifest through the trumpet voice of the risen Lord, the one chosen to unfold the plan of God in vision to John. (Rev. 1:10; 4:1) Indeed, Jesus was worthy to bring God’s plan to fulfillment through his sacrificial death on the cross as man’s Redeemer.—Rev. 5:5-9

Paul also was shown “visions and revelations” of things to come, most notably being “caught up to the third heaven.” (II Cor. 12:1,2) In Revelation, chapters 21 and 22, John recorded with descriptive words the vision given to him of the conditions which would be in place when the third heaven is established. The Apostle Peter, likewise, noted these things, foretelling the time when not only a new heaven would be established, but also a new earth. (II Pet. 3:13) It is well to note that the progression of these so-called “heavens” and “earth” is according to God’s times and seasons. The first of these was before the flood. The second is the present evil world, in which mankind now dwells. Both of these heavens and earth are under Satan’s rule. The third, however, will be under the rule of Christ and his faithful saints.

We have received the most wonderful invitation ever granted, to walk after the pattern of Christ Jesus. It is through God’s great love that this arrangement has been made possible. (Eph. 1:3-12) Thus, with joy we join the faithful Apostles in giving praise to our loving Heavenly Father, and in following the Master’s footsteps. ■

Blessing, Glory and Honor Forever

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 5:6-14

FROM JOHN'S VANTAGE

point, he was enabled to look both backward and forward over the pages of mankind's history. Thus he could better understand the unfolding of God's plan in its many facets. The events of today's lesson take us back to the beginning of the Christian dispensation.

In his vision, John saw “in the right hand of him that sat on the throne” a book, or scroll, written on the front and back-side. This book is a symbolic reference to the plan of God as written in the Scriptures. As John viewed this book, however, he noted that it was “sealed with seven seals,” and was not open to reveal its contents. A great quandary was posed by a “strong angel,” who asked, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”—Rev. 5:1,2

The answer to this dilemma is found in the doctrine of man's atonement from Adamic sin. According to God's justice, the only remedy for Adam's condemnation to death through disobedience was for a ransom, or corresponding price, to be provided. Such a price had to be in the form of a perfect man, just as Adam was perfect prior to falling into sin. (I Cor. 15:21,22) God's only begotten

Son left his prehuman condition in the heavenly realm and was born of Mary as a human being, and given the name Jesus. This was so that he might accomplish the all-important ransoming work on behalf of Adam and his race.—Ps. 40:7,8; Isa. 6:8

Man's atonement is one of the most essential doctrines taught in the Bible. All other aspects of God's plan radiate from the work of redeeming mankind from Adamic sin and its resulting curse of death. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist declared, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."—John 1:29

Jesus laid down his life in sacrifice for three and a half years, and became the ransom price for Adam when he died on the cross, declaring, "It is finished." (John 19:30) His disciples did not understand what was happening at the time, even though Jesus told them he must die and be raised on the third day. (Luke 18:31-33) Ten days after his ascension to the heavenly realm, on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:1-4) Later, the Apostle Paul explained that the lives of these spirit-begotten followers of Christ had now changed, saying, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. 8:14

Through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, we understand that Jesus was faithful to God's plans and purposes and was raised as a glorious spirit being. Those in John's vision, however, were heavyhearted and wept because no one was found worthy to open and read the book. (Ps. 49:7) "Weep not," proclaimed one of the elders. "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. 5:3-5) Consequently, it was said of Jesus, "Thou art worthy: ... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." (vs. 9) Finally, our Key Verse confirms the atonement, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" ■

Taking Heed Lest We Fall

*“Wherefore let him
that thinketh he
standeth take heed
lest he fall.”*

*—I Corinthians
10:12*

WE BEGIN PART TWO OF our consideration of this important subject by recognizing that, in order to “take heed,” we must examine how we are listening to the Word

of God. We must hear the message of truth with an understanding heart, and with a spirit of appreciation, else it will fail to have the desired effect in our lives. Jesus said, “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” (Luke 8:18) “Whosoever hath,” and “whosoever hath not,” seems to imply there is an important responsibility associated with that which we hear from the Lord. If we take heed how we hear the truth it will mean that we recognize our hearing of it imposes the further need to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”—James 1:22

Hearing the word of truth should, above all things, have an effect upon the growth of our Christian

character. Jesus said that we are to be sanctified by the truth. (John 17:17) This sanctifying work of the truth in our hearts is twofold. Through its precepts, our lives should be more and more conformed to the high standards of righteousness and godliness exemplified in God's law. Then, these transformed lives are to be devoted to the service of God, as directed by the truth. We are in the school of Christ to learn and apply the truth. Thus, we can be equipped to serve as ambassadors of Christ now, and through faithfulness to the divine will, be worthy to serve as joint-heirs with him in the future work of the kingdom.—II Cor. 5:20; Rom. 8:17; James 2:5

If we hear the truth with appreciation, our love for it will be demonstrated by the amount of energy we exert in its service and defense. Our hearing of the truth should so inspire us that we are willing to sacrifice all “for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” (Rev. 20:4) Each day should find us busily engaged in using the truth to glorify God, in proportion to our talents and opportunities. Failing in this full appreciation of the privilege that is ours of hearing the voice of God speak to us through the truth, we become more or less subject to the deceptive influences of the Adversary, by which he is endeavoring to bring about our fall from divine grace and favor.

A proper taking heed to the manner in which we first heard the truth, and continue to hear it, is illustrated in the parable of the sower. (Luke 8:5-8) Some of the seed fell by the wayside. In this case there were no hearing ears at all. Other seed fell among the rocks. Here the message was heard, but

soon forgotten. The hearers did not take heed how they heard or what the hearing really meant, and the heat of opposition and persecution soon stopped their growth. Some of the seeds of truth “fell among thorns.” Here was a class that heard with some appreciation, but the cares of this life, the spirit of the world, and various other adverse influences, eventually choked the growth that should have taken place in their hearts.

The seed which fell on the “good ground” represents the true hearing of appreciation and heart understanding. The good ground hearers are those who take heed what they hear and how they hear, with the result that fruitage is produced to the glory of God. These become sanctified by the truth and serve faithfully as its ambassadors, letting their light shine, rather than keeping it hidden under a bushel.—Luke 11:33

TAKE HEED AGAINST DECEPTION

Deception is the method frequently used by Satan to lead God’s people into his various snares and pitfalls. He usually practices his deceptions through human agencies. Hence, we are warned by Jesus to “take heed that no man deceive you.” (Matt. 24:4) Noting the prophetic context of this chapter, the Lord’s warning seems to be particularly appropriate for the present time—“the end of the age.” (vs. 3, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) We have seen how most professed followers of the Master have been deceived along the lines of God’s times and seasons. If it were possible, Jesus further reminds us, the “very elect” would also be deceived. (vs. 24) However, this is not possible, because they are the faithful

ones who take heed, and are not deluded by the doctrines of men.

The Apostle Paul also reminds us of the necessity of taking heed lest we be deceived. He says, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." (Eph. 5:6) "Vain words" would be those not in harmony with the plan and will of God, especially those words which appeal to human vanity. Flattery is one of the Adversary's chief methods of deceit. If we are properly taking heed, we will stop and exercise great caution when we hear the voice of flattery appealing to us to turn to the right hand or to the left.

Another apostolic warning states that "of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20:30) The deception of human leadership is perhaps one of the most subtle with which the saints of God have to contend. There is the constant temptation, especially upon elders and teachers, to gain a following among the brethren. There can also be the willingness on the part of some of the Lord's people, because of human weakness, to be led. To these, it may seem so much easier to follow the Lamb if they can see him represented in some human head or leader. How flattering it is also to an individual, or group of individuals, to believe that God is leading his people through him, or them. Surely, we need to take great heed along this line!

To the elders at Ephesus, and to those in all ecclesias today, Paul said: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the

church of God.” (Acts 20:28) The Apostle Peter similarly admonished: “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” This is the elders’ privilege and responsibility. However, Peter adds, they are not to be “lords over God’s heritage,” nor assume headship in the church. Rather, they are to be “ensamples to the flock.”—I Pet. 5:2,3

All in the church should take heed how and what they are fed. We should not shift our individual responsibilities upon the elders of the class. How much difficulty could be avoided simply by all the brethren taking heed not to encourage ambition for leadership within the church. Such an ambitious spirit is not necessarily manifested in a desire for a large following. The desire to lead is often satisfied by having a mere handful of followers, perhaps just one or two. However, these small groups may be led to separate themselves from others in an ecclesia simply because they have allowed themselves to be influenced by the enticing words of an ambitious leader. Let us remember however, that “one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.”—Matt. 23:8

TAKE HEED HOW WE BUILD

The Apostle Paul wrote: “We are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones,

wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."—I Cor. 3:9-13

The manner in which a Christian builds for the future, as a coworker with God, is thus clearly outlined. First, there must be the foundation of Jesus Christ, the ransom for all. This means that everything built thereon must square with the ransom. Upon this must be built the solid superstructure of faith and character. If we take heed how we build, and do so as coworkers with God rather than along lines of our own choosing, our building will be capable of withstanding all the storms which are permitted to test us. It will endure the fiery trials too, which shall "try every man's work of what sort it is."

Since the foundation of this building of God is the great doctrinal fact of the ransom and our own acceptance and conformity thereto, the things which are built upon that foundation must be the other doctrines of God's plan, together with the outgrowth of Christian character resulting therefrom. Hence, a proper taking heed as to how we build implies a carefulness in our study of the truth and its proper application in our lives. In other words, we cannot ignore the doctrines of the truth, and expect to build acceptably to God. Together with the ransom, the other doctrines are the framework around which, by God's grace, we must carefully build with personal works of faith and love. If, in this manner, we take heed how we build, we will have a structure that will stand up against all the winds of false doctrine and withstand the fire of this day of special trial.

DEPARTING FROM THE LIVING GOD

In Hebrews 3:12, Apostle Paul mentions another manner in which we should take heed. He says, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The context here refers to the unbelief of Israel in the wilderness. That unbelief was manifested in their tendency to so soon forget the miracles God had wrought on their behalf, and their disposition to turn away from him to the worship of other gods. Thus, through lack of appreciation, they departed from the living God.

We must soberly ask ourselves: Have God's blessings which came to us through the truth become commonplace? Do we still appreciate the miracle of his grace to us as it abounded, and still abounds, through Christ Jesus, or have we permitted the trials of the way to mar the sweetness of God's loving watchcare over us? Do we still hear the voice of God speaking to us through his truth, or are we listening for other voices? Are we desirous of hearing voices which bid us to walk in a way less narrow and in paths more pleasing to our flesh? Let us take heed that we do not depart from the living God through failure to appreciate constantly the miracle of his truth revealed to us. Let us not count as commonplace the fact that he has taken us into his confidence and revealed to us the secrets of his glorious plan.

TAKE HEED TO THE MINISTRY

"Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." (Col. 4:17) In this particular apostolic injunction, taking heed

is enjoined in order that we might fulfill the ministry. The Apostle Paul seemed to have realized that there would be a danger of our neglecting to be ministers, or servants of the truth. How easy it is to fall away from our steadfastness along this line. Satan is always active in his endeavor to draw us away from witnessing to the plan of God. However, if we are properly taking heed, we will recognize his cunning devices, his misleading philosophy, and not be affected thereby.

Jesus, our perfect example, came into the world to serve, to be a minister in the great work of reconciling mankind to God. Our calling is to cooperate with Jesus in this ministry or service. No matter how faithfully we may be meeting all the other requirements of the truth, if we neglect the ministry we fall short of the very purpose of our calling. Let us, indeed, take heed to the ministry, proclaiming the Gospel as far and wide as it is possible for us to do, that we “fulfil it.”

Taking heed to the ministry also includes an important responsibility in connection with the manner in which it is conducted—especially our part in it. Note the apostle’s words: “Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.” (II Cor. 6:3) Paul, throughout this chapter, gives important admonitions along this line, going into detail concerning the things to which we should take heed in order that the ministry be not blamed.

Purity of faith and practice, longsuffering, patience, love, self-sacrifice, and the whole armor of righteousness, are among the things to which we should take heed, according to the apostle, if we are not to bring reproach upon the ministry. (vss. 4-7) Separateness

from temples of idols is another prerequisite which he mentions. There are many so-called creed idols today, as well as character and moral idols of unrighteousness. Our God has bid us to “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.”—II Cor. 6:17; Isa. 52:11

Indeed, this is our ministry, to “bear the vessels of the Lord,” the vessels that contain the pure water of his truth. How vital it is that we keep those vessels clean, so that those who drink therefrom may be truly refreshed with the living waters of divine truth, and refreshed with the glorious knowledge that “God is love.” (I John 4:8) Only as we minister the truth of God’s plan can we hope for his blessing upon our efforts. Only as we keep that truth pure in our own minds and hearts, and give it forth in its purity to others, are we truly taking heed to the ministry.

TAKE HEED TO THYSELF

Paul admonished Timothy, saying, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” (I Tim. 4:16) Here we have a summary of all that is involved in our taking heed lest we fall. It means to take heed to ourselves, in every way, and to take heed to the doctrines of the truth. As indicated by the apostle, we take heed unto ourselves by continuing in the doctrine. However, to do this means much more than to merely give mental assent to them. To continue in the doctrines or teachings of the Gospel means to believe them,

to defend them, and to be guided by them in our daily Christian conduct and ministry.

Failure to do this would mean missing the mark in the development of divine love in our hearts and lives. Even though our ministry might be couched in the pleasing sound of “men and of angels,” it would be, in God’s sight, but as “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” (I Cor. 13:1) Therefore, a proper taking heed to ourselves is possible only as we make certain that the doctrines of truth are taking full control of our lives, and producing in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness. (Heb. 12:11) Only in this way can we fully read in the Scriptures the shining words of God’s love and be inspired with the determination to be like him.

By taking heed unto ourselves and unto the doctrines, we will become equipped with the armor of God, and will be enabled to go forth as valiant soldiers of the cross. (Eph. 6:10-18; II Tim. 2:3) Then we will be able to defend the faith “once delivered unto the saints,” in love. (Jude 3) Our words will minister grace to the hearers, all those who have a hearing ear for the simple truth of the Gospel. (Eph. 4:29) In this way, as we take heed in the divinely prescribed manner, we will buttress and make sure our standing in the Lord. Our ministry of the truth will be continually blessed with the refreshing smile of our Heavenly Father’s approval. ■

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Boldness— Improper and Proper

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”
—Acts 4:13

NUMEROUS DEFINITIONS

are provided in Webster’s Dictionary for the word “boldness.” One is “the trait of being willing to undertake things that involve risk or danger.” Another is “the quality of standing out strongly and distinctly.” A third definition is “impudent aggressiveness,” that is, aggressiveness with contempt and disregard

toward others. It is clear from these definitions that boldness is often a quality which most would no doubt agree should be avoided. Yet, in other ways it is a trait that can be found to be noble and praiseworthy.

In today’s world, there is often much controversy as to proper versus improper boldness. A business may proclaim its success in reaching a certain level

of achievement, and with seemingly proper boldness, state that this was only possible due to the dedication of its workers. On the other hand, the workers may feel that the company was improperly bold during the year in that they did not fairly compensate those who labored to bring the desired success.

An athlete may aggressively train, pushing himself so that he can boldly perform beyond the ordinary on behalf of his team. If he is successful, his boldness is seen not only as admirable, but as an elemental requirement of his team's success. If, however, he is injured during training, or as a result of his bold actions on the field of play, all are left to wonder as to whether a less risky approach would have been wiser.

Perhaps an even more challenging example is the person who believes he must stand up boldly for a certain cause or principle. Some of those who view his actions, and who are in sympathy with his cause, will no doubt praise his boldness. Others, who may vehemently disagree, will ridicule, condemn, or even openly disparage him for what he believes. Still others, who perhaps do not have strong feelings one way or the other on a particular matter, may view the person's boldness as simply a desire to get attention.

Many other examples might be put forth to illustrate the fact that it is often not easy to determine whether boldness is proper or improper, desirable or undesirable. Like so many other challenging questions we may encounter in our lives, we are helped greatly by looking at the Scriptural testimony concerning the subject of boldness—both improper and

proper. As we do so, it becomes clear that both have been part of man's experience down through the ages.

BOLDNESS TO BE LIKE GOD

It should not surprise us that improper boldness began with Lucifer. Although created perfect, and called "the son of the morning," he turned against God, and did so with great boldness. He said in his heart, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." —Isa. 14:12-14

These words concerning the fall of Lucifer into the depths of sin provide us a sure cause for improper boldness. With Satan, it was his desire to be like God. Whether he thought he could "share" in the position of the Almighty, or wrest it from him out rightly, we cannot be sure. With either possibility, however, the great Adversary violated one of the most cardinal qualities of the Creator. He is the one true and living God, and will not share that position with another being.

Note these words: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ... for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God." "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." "The Lord our God is one Lord. ... and there is none other but he." "There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things." (Exod. 20:3,5; Isa. 42:8; Mark 12:29,32; I Cor. 8:6) Thus we see that any thought, desire, or action which attempts to lessen the supreme, singular glory and honor of

God would constitute boldness of a most improper kind.

BOLDNESS TO DENY GOD’S WORD AND LIE

When Satan later presented himself to Eve in the garden, he once again used great boldness. Although acknowledging God’s warning to our first parents as to the one tree of which they were forbidden to eat, he directly contradicted the words, “in the day of thine eating of it—dying thou dost die.” (Gen. 2:17, *Young’s Literal Translation*) Rather, through the serpent, Satan declared, “ye shall not surely die.”—Gen. 3:4

Here, improper boldness was demonstrated in two abominable ways. First, there was the outright contradiction of God’s word to our first parents. Second, there was the replacement of that word with a lie. This combination of methods has been a formidable tool of the Adversary all down through the ages. He boldly denies the sure word of God, and then seeks to replace it with falsehoods and lies.

The Apostle Peter wrote that, in the Bible, we have God’s “sure word of prophecy,” and none of it “is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not ... by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (II Pet. 1:19-21) Any attempt to deny the Word of truth by removing or altering its teachings is a boldness entirely unacceptable in the light of the harmonious and reasonable plans and purposes of God.

TEMPTATIONS TO IMPROPER BOLDNESS

Following Jesus’ baptism, he was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness for a period of forty days. During that time he learned many of the details of

the mission which lay before him. Satan also took advantage of this time and presented various temptations to the Master. In each of these, the Adversary presented the opportunity for Jesus to act boldly, and seemingly in harmony with God's Word.

In the first temptation, Satan suggested that Jesus boldly use his miracle-working power to turn stones into bread. After all, he was hungry, and the strength derived from the bread would serve him well as he began his ministry. Jesus, however, knew it would be wrong to exercise God's power for his own fleshly benefit. He quoted the words of God to Moses, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Matt. 4:2-4; Deut. 8:3

Satan then, perhaps through a mental picture of some kind, proposed that Jesus go to the pinnacle of Israel's Temple, cast himself off, and then rely on God's angelic hosts to save his life. Satan even quoted the Scripture, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, ... lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." (Ps. 91:11,12) What a bold exhibition of Jesus' faith, and of God's power, would be thus demonstrated to all the people of the city! Here again, though, Jesus knew that this kind of boldness was wrong. He responded, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."—Matt. 4:5-7; Deut. 6:16

The third temptation presented to our Lord also was an enticement to boldness of action. Satan showed Jesus, again in mental vision, all the kingdoms of the world, and offered to give dominion over them to him. This would be, Satan no doubt suggested, in full harmony with God's plan to set up a kingdom with Jesus as its ruler. There was just

one catch. Jesus must fall down and worship the devil. This enticement to assume kingdom rulership would have to be based on the unthinkable treachery of bowing down to the arch-enemy of God. Jesus was not tricked into such traitorous boldness. He knew it was not then time for his kingdom to be established, and even more than this, it would never enter his mind to bow down to any being other than his Heavenly Father. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,” was Jesus’ immediate and bold response.—Matt. 4:8-10

PROPER BOLDNESS

The word “bold” is found only once in the *King James Version* of the Old Testament. The wise man Solomon wrote, perhaps noting the example of his father David, “The righteous are bold as a lion.” (Prov. 28:1) The Hebrew word translated “bold” in this verse means to “trust, be confident or sure.” A lion, in his natural habitat, is bold, not because of some inborn desire to hurt or destroy other less formidable animals. Rather, he is bold in the sense that, since birth, he has been taught various techniques and developed certain abilities by which he can survive with confidence in the environment with which he is surrounded. Similarly, the righteous are bold, as the result of proper learning and training in the Lord’s Word, and also by way of experience.

If God speaks in the Old Testament of boldness as a quality possessed by his righteous people, we may be sure the same is true of those in the New Testament. Proper boldness is to be striven for by those who in this age have been drawn by the Father to Jesus as their Redeemer. (John 6:44) Boldness in

righteousness should be a daily goal of those that have consecrated themselves fully to God, who are justified through faith in the ransom, begotten of the Holy Spirit, and have become New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

OUR LORD'S EXAMPLE

Proper boldness must be balanced with meekness, humility of heart, and a resolute desire to submit to the Father's will. All of these were possessed in a superlative degree by Jesus. He did not recklessly endanger his life as he sought to go forward in the work the Father had given him to do. He did not fail to take into consideration the dangers and difficulties of the way, but he rested in full assurance of faith in the Father's wisdom, power and will. We should follow the example of our Master, and lay claim to the many assurances given in the Scriptures of God's providential care over his people. We should be inspired by such words as, "The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them," yet at the same time realize that the promised deliverance may be through difficult circumstances, if that be the Lord's will.—Ps. 34:7

At no time during the three and one-half years of his ministry did Jesus show the least sign of fear, or lack of confidence in what was written concerning him. He was both humble and bold in doing his Father's will, and in bringing to completion the work he had been given to do. We should not consider that there was a lack of boldness or courage when our Lord prayed in Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." (Matt. 26:39) He

knew that his course was very near its end, and that he had but a few hours more to wait before he was to experience the dreadful ordeal of crucifixion.

It seems clear, however, that the cup, or experience, from which Jesus prayed to be spared, was not his crucifixion, since he had come into the world to die as man's Redeemer. He also had to experience the curse of the Law. As Paul points out, crucifixion was a curse: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."—Deut. 21:22,23; Acts 5:30; Gal. 3:13

It has been suggested, that at the time of the Gethsemane experience, Jesus knew that his continued faithfulness, even in the dark hours that were before him, was critical, and he desired some assurance that, up to that point, all had been done according to his Father's will. He knew that if he had come short, even in the smallest particular, he would not be counted faithful as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) This reverential concern and sense of the responsibility resting on him motivated him to pray earnestly that in some way he might be reassured that all was well.

The Scriptures indicate that Jesus' prayer was answered. Luke records, immediately following his petition, "There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." (Luke 22:43) Later, the Apostle Paul wrote, with reference to this experience, that Jesus "offered up prayers and appeals with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his devotion to God." (Heb. 5:7, *International Standard Version*) Thus, Jesus received assurance that up to this time he had done all things faithfully, and the "cup" of uncertainty was removed. With trust and confidence,

he was now prepared to meet his greatest and most crucial experience with humble boldness.

BOLDNESS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

The quality of boldness, or courage, begotten of faithful trust, is repeatedly shown in the New Testament as one of the special characteristics of the Early Church, and especially of the Apostles of Jesus. They were given the privilege of continuing the work the Lord had begun. He said to them: "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."—John 20:21

In the Book of Acts, we are provided a record of the beginning of the great work of taking out "a people for his name" to be the bride of Christ. (Acts 15:14) In these accounts, we are repeatedly told of the boldness the early disciples manifested in their faithful proclamation of this great salvation. (Acts 4:19,20; 14:3-7; 18:24-26; 19:6-8) We note in his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul expresses his earnest desire for more of this special boldness of spirit. He asks them to pray for him with "perseverance and supplication," "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the Gospel."—Eph. 6:18,19

Paul does not intend to convey that this message which he delighted to proclaim with boldness was something very difficult to grasp and understand—a great mystery. The Greek word translated mystery means "secret." It is kept secret or hidden for a time, and then is revealed, made plain, and is therefore no longer a mystery. In the outworking of God's plan throughout the ages, important truths for a time are kept secret. When uncovered they are no longer mysteries, but simple and easy to understand.

We know that the mystery Paul spoke of in his letter to the brethren at Ephesus is that feature of the Gospel message which discloses that the Messiah, the Christ, as God's anointed, is not a single individual, but a company of which Jesus is the Head. "As the body is one, and hath many members, ... so also is Christ." "This is a great mystery: ... I speak concerning Christ and the church." (I Cor. 12:12; Eph. 5:32) This Christ class, for so long a mystery to most, will be revealed to all mankind, and will bless all the families of the earth with salvation from sin and death.

BOLDNESS IN PROCLAIMING THE MESSAGE

Such a wonderful message should be proclaimed boldly to all who have an ear to hear. Paul, as a prisoner in Rome, wrote to his beloved brethren in Philippi along these lines. Years before he had preached the Word to them with blessed results. (Acts 16:10-40) He told them how the same boldness, confidence and love of the Gospel had caused the Lord to bless his message to many in Rome. He writes, "I want you to know ... that what has happened to me has actually caused the gospel to advance. As a result, it has become clear to the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that I am in prison for preaching about the Messiah. Moreover, because of my imprisonment the Lord has caused most of the brothers to become confident to speak God's word more boldly and courageously than ever before."—Phil. 1:12-14, *ISV*

Paul's faithfulness in proclaiming his Master's message, whatever the consequences to himself, had inspired many of the brethren to similar boldness

and faithfulness. Because he continually shed forth the light of truth to others, they also were letting their light shine to the glory of their Master. In this way of mutual boldness and support, the Lord richly blessed the results of their efforts.

BOLDNESS IN PRAYER

The Scriptures exhort, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) We note that in addition to manifesting boldness in proclaiming the Lord’s message, we must be bold—full of humble confidence—to take advantage of all the means of God’s grace. This especially includes that which is here mentioned, that we should have boldness in prayer.

It is possible that, at times, on account of weaknesses or failure, we might hesitate to draw near to God to ask for forgiveness, or to pray for help that weaknesses might be overcome. This is doubtless a condition into which the great Adversary, if possible, would endeavor to lead us. At such times, we need more than ever to go to the throne of grace to obtain the mercy provided in Christ, whose merit “cleanseth us from all sin.”—I John 1:7

BOLDNESS IN THE LIVING WAY

Later in the Book of Hebrews, Paul tells us that we should have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us.” Therefore, he continues, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” (Heb. 10:19-22) We should, indeed, have full assurance of faith regarding the new and living way to life that has been opened up

by our great High Priest, Jesus. It is not a way such as it was under the Law Covenant, which only brought condemnation, but a way made possible by him who “should taste death for every man,” and who has now appeared “in the presence of God for us,” and who “ever liveth to make intercession” for “them which are in Christ Jesus.”—Heb. 2:9; 7:25; 9:24; Rom. 8:1

If at any time we feel we are failing to take advantage of the means and steps of grace, by not coming with boldness, with confidence, to the throne of grace, we should remember that the Lord knows all about us, our weaknesses, our failures, better than we know them ourselves. “He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” (Ps. 103:14) We should remember too, that it was the humble publican, realizing his need for God’s mercy, who was more acceptable than the self-confident Pharisee, who listed for God his righteous acts.—Luke 18:10-14

BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

Finally, the Apostle John speaks of having boldness in the day of judgment. He says, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” (I John 4:16,17) John’s statement reminds us that the Gospel Age is the church’s day of judgment, the time when she is on trial for life. It would be surely true to say that we could not pass our trial successfully, could not be pleasing to the Lord and enjoy his approval, without confidence in his

goodness, and to have “known and believed the love that God hath to us.”

If a child loves his father very much he has confidence in his kindly providences, and even in his disciplinary treatment. These are intended for his good. Thus, John indicates that if the love of God has been perfected, or made complete, in us, we shall have full confidence in the one who has placed us on trial for life, and who is judging us, not according to “man’s judgment,” but according to the “righteous judgment of God.”—I Cor. 4:3; II Thess. 1:5

Let us note one more New Testament example of boldness, which is given in the account of an occurrence only a few days after Pentecost, and is contained in the words of our opening text. The faithful and very forceful witness of the Master was still fresh in the minds of the Jewish leaders, and was emphasized by Peter’s statement in the previous verse, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” As the elders of Israel noted the boldness of the Apostle’s words, they marveled, even acknowledging the fact that these “unlearned and ignorant men” had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:12,13) May it likewise be said of us concerning our words and actions in the cause of Christ, that we too have “been with Jesus,” learned of him, and are keeping near to him with humble boldness, confidence and courage. ■

*“Make me understand the way of Your precepts,
So I will meditate on Your wonders.”*

—Psalm 119:27,

New American Standard Bible

Clean and Unclean

“Depart, depart, go out from ... the lands of exile! Touch no unclean thing! Go out of the midst of her; cleanse yourselves and be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD.”

—Isaiah 52:11, The Amplified Bible

THE MATTER OF BEING considered “clean” or “unclean” is an extremely important one in the Scriptures. These terms, in their various forms, appear more than five hundred times in the Bible, with a majority of them occurring in the Old Testament. Although often-times thought of as mostly applying to animals which either could, or could not, be used for food, the concept of

clean versus unclean is found in many other Scriptural teachings.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God gave the Israelites various rules and regulations concerning clean and unclean animals. For example, concerning four-footed land animals, he said: “Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall ye eat.” Other land animals, the Lord said, they were not to eat or even touch, “they are unclean to you.”—Lev. 11:3,8

Clean animals could become unclean to the children of Israel if they died of natural causes, or were

torn by wild beasts and died, or if they still had the blood within the flesh when prepared for food. The condition of uncleanness also extended to anyone who touched an unclean animal or object. This might even include things such as pots and cooking utensils, if they had not been properly washed prior to use.

From the natural standpoint, there were obviously practical reasons for some things to be considered clean and others unclean. However, God had an even greater purpose in mind with regard to Israel. He wanted his specially chosen people to be different from all other nations. He told them, “Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.” (Deut. 14:2; 6:20-25; 7:6-9) The psalmist later wrote: “For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.”—Ps. 135:4

Wanting to be like the nations around them, Israel often resisted and disobeyed God’s instructions concerning these matters. Though these may have appeared as minor infractions to the people of Israel, God was using these somewhat simple aspects of everyday life as an important illustration. The greater meaning of the Lord’s instructions becomes clearer when we move from the consideration of animals to more important aspects of proper living.

IDOL WORSHIP—A FORM OF UNCLEANNESS

Idol worship is a form of uncleanness which is especially displeasing to God. In the book of Genesis, even before there were Israelites, there is an example of defilement because of idols. God told Jacob to go to Bethel and erect an altar there. However, Jacob

could not immediately go because some in his family had been defiled through idol worship.—Gen. 35:1

“Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garment. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God. ... And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”—vss. 2-4

Later, when giving his law to Israel, God stated clearly the requirement that he alone should be worshipped, and that no manmade idols were to be made or revered. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I [am] the LORD thy God.”—Exod. 20:3-5

LEPROSY—AN ILLUSTRATION

Another kind of uncleanness during Old Testament times was the plague of leprosy. It was considered so serious that one of Israel’s priests was required to examine and diagnose a person who might have it. After following certain procedures, if the priest determined there was leprosy, he would announce it publicly, since it was very contagious: “He is a leprous man, he is unclean: the priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean.”—Lev. 13:44

Leprosy is used in the Bible as a picture of sin. There was very little the Israelite priest could do

about leprosy, except to pass judgment and isolate the leper from the rest of the population. The leper himself was required to announce his unclean condition to anyone who might approach near to him, so that there would be no risk of contact. Only later, where we have recorded certain miraculous healings of those with leprosy, do we begin to see how the cleansing of a leper is a picture of the cleansing of sinful man.

PURIFICATION

Certain stipulations held true in the Old Testament with regard to clean versus unclean conditions. Uncleanliness could be transmitted to others, often merely by a touch. Cleanness, however, could not be given to others in such a way. It was not possible for someone who was clean to put his hands on the unclean and heal them. Rather, purification ceremonies were required. These usually involved three things: a waiting period of some duration, a cleansing agent, and a sacrifice or offering.

The Day of Atonement, one of Israel's annual feasts, was provided by God as a means to convey a special kind of cleansing. It was the annual cleansing from their national sins. In this ceremony, the sacrifice of a bullock and a goat took place, and blood was used as a symbolic cleansing agent. The details of this ceremony are recorded in the book of Leviticus, chapter 16. "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD."—vs. 30

As part of the Day of Atonement, it is interesting to note how another animal, called the "scapegoat,"

or “live goat,” was to be handled. “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat. ... And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.”—vss. 8,21,22

This was not the only time when God instructed Israel to use a living animal to symbolically show the removal of uncleanness. In the ordinance for cleansing a leprous house, after taking two birds, and killing one, the priest was instructed to “let go the living bird out of the city into the open fields, and make an atonement for the house: and it shall be clean.”—Lev. 14:49-53

PURPOSE TO THESE INSTRUCTIONS

Although God gave all these various rules and regulations to the children of Israel, there was nothing to stop the people from doing differently. In fact, their heathen neighbors mostly did everything the Jews were told expressly by God to not do. This caused Israel many problems, because they often looked upon their neighbors, and followed in their ways, rather than heeding the instructions of the Lord.

God repeatedly warned Israel against such waywardness. “Ye shall therefore keep all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: that the land, whither I bring you to dwell therein, spue you not out. And ye shall not walk in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you; for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. ... I am the LORD your God, which have

separated you from other people. ... And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the LORD am holy.”—Lev. 20:22-24,26

The message was very clear. The Israelites needed to understand that they were different. They were to recognize the need to obey God. When, as individuals, they did that which was wrong, there were specific things they had to do to be cleansed. If they did not do them, they would be cut off from the rest of the nation. If, as a nation, Israel became unclean and did nothing about it, God would turn his face away from them. They would be unholy in his sight.

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that all the ordinances God gave to Israel were a picture of something much greater. In them, Paul says, “We see a picture of the present time, in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered and yet are incapable of cleansing the ... worshipper. The ceremonies are concerned with food and drink, various washings and rules for bodily conduct, and were only intended to be valid until the time came when Christ should establish the truth. ... And if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a burnt heifer were, when sprinkled on the unholy, sufficient to make the body pure, then how much more will the blood of Christ himself, ... as the perfect sacrifice, purify your souls from the deeds of death, that you may serve the living God!”—Heb. 9:9,10,13,14, *J. B. Phillips, The New Testament in Modern English*

Elsewhere in the New Testament we are told: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit

the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God.” (I Cor. 6:9-11, *Revised Standard Version*) Examining the sins listed here, we find each one is founded upon weaknesses which favor self, or which seek the pleasure or advantage of our fallen flesh.

To call upon the power of God to purify us through the blood of Jesus is a requirement if we are to be cleansed from sin. However, if we think to somehow take advantage of God’s grace and mercy, while knowingly indulging in sin, hoping for justification “in” sin, instead of “from” sin, we deceive ourselves. Rather, the sentiments of our hearts, and our actions to the greatest possible extent, should continually be in opposition to unrighteousness and sin.

Along these lines, Paul wrote: “Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love. ... But immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among saints. Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ... For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.”—Eph. 5:1-5,8, *RSV*

A CLEANSED CHURCH

Concerning God's call and development of the church during this present Gospel Age, the apostle says: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that the church might be presented before him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."—Eph. 5:25-27, *RSV*

These verses present a word picture as to how the church becomes, and stays, clean in God's sight. Christ gave up his perfect human life, that through his blood we might be cleansed from Adamic sin and rescued from sin and death. In conjunction with this, the sanctifying influence associated with the daily "washing of water with the word," continues to purge and purify our hearts, if we are rightly exercised by the instructions and principles set forth in the Scriptures.

CHANGE MUST OCCUR

It is well to note that the church's cleansing is not a passive exercise. If all the work were God's, then it would be his failure if any did not make their calling and election sure. As we look back at Israel's experiences, God surely did not fail them. They did not achieve that for which they were seeking, but it was not the fault of God. Rather, they constantly fell back into uncleanness and did little about it. Israel's failure to change their ways stands as a warning to us.

The Apostle Paul emphasizes the need for us to change. "I plead with you therefore, brethren, by

the compassions of God, to present all your faculties to Him as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to Him. ... Do not follow the customs of the present age, but be transformed by the entire renewal of your minds, so that you may learn by experience what God's will is—that will which is good and beautiful and perfect.”—Rom. 12:1,2, *Weymouth New Testament*

The Christian's sacrifice is not one of offering a literal dead beast upon an altar. We are to offer ourselves as a “living sacrifice.” In addition to that, there is the necessity for an inward change, a renovation and transformation of our heart and mind. Due to our fleshly imperfections, we often struggle, even in our best efforts. The things we should do, we at times do not do, and those things we should not do, we sometimes do. (Rom. 7:15) Like the ancient Israelites, we are constantly coming into contact with “dead bodies” and becoming unclean.

The proper course to follow at these times is to promptly seek forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings. The Apostle John instructs us: “If we freely admit that we have sinned, we find God utterly reliable and straightforward—he forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil. ... Remember that our advocate before the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous, the one who made personal atonement for our sins (and for those of the rest of the world as well). It is only when we obey God's laws that we can be quite sure that we really know him. The man who claims to know God but does not obey his laws is not only a liar but lives in self-delusion. In practice, the more a man learns to obey God's laws the more truly and

fully does he express his love for him.” (I John 1:9; 2:1-5, *Phillips*) Our lifelong goal must be to keep God’s commandments, applying the principles of the truth to our daily lives.

KEEPING OUR HEART CLEAN

The Jews were taught by the law that there were certain unclean things which were never to enter their mouths. However, Jesus instructed his disciples, saying, “There is nothing outside a man which entering him can make him unclean; but it is the things which come out of a man that make him unclean.” (Mark 7:15, *Weymouth*) This particular teaching was so obscure to the disciples that they thought it was a parable, so they asked Jesus to clarify its meaning.

Jesus explained, saying, “Anything whatever that enters a man from outside cannot make him unclean, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and passes away ejected from him. ... What comes out of a man ... that it is which makes him unclean. For from within, out of men’s hearts, their evil purposes proceed—fornication, theft, murder, adultery, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, reviling, pride, reckless folly: all these wicked things come out from within and make a man unclean.”—vss. 18-23, *Weymouth*

The clear lesson for us is the need to be on guard about the motivations and intents of our heart. Those are the things which could defile us, if they are not pure. The Scriptures give us wise instruction in this regard: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”—Prov. 4:23

A HOLY TEMPLE OF GOD

In his first letter to the Corinthian brethren, Paul wrote: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ... for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (I Cor. 3:16,17) These words hearken back to the commandment given to the Israelites, and which was repeated to them on numerous occasions: “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.”—Lev. 19:2

Paul, when reminding us of “the grace of God that bringeth salvation,” states that such a great favor from the Heavenly Father should teach us that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—Tit. 2:11-14

God, through the Prophet Malachi, provides an interesting word picture depicting the cleansing of his symbolic temple, the church of the Gospel Age. “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, ... behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.” Then the cleansing work is described. “He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”—Mal. 3:1,3

The word “purify” has the same meaning as clean or cleanse, as used in many of the Scriptures quoted earlier in this article. The “sons of Levi,”

who in Israel had no inheritance in the land, well represent those of the Gospel Age who have been called out of the darkness of this world into the marvelous light of truth. (I Pet. 2:9) These have given up their earthly inheritance and seek the kingdom of heaven. However, for this to be accomplished, they must be cleansed, purified, and purged, so that they may come forth as vessels of precious gold and silver, and offer to God “an offering in righteousness.” If we are humbly submissive to the purifying work of the Lord, we have the promise that we will be transformed into “a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”—II Tim. 2:21

GOD’S GRACE

God’s marvelous grace has touched us. He has cleansed us from what we were and is making us into something new—a New Creation. We quote the following passage: “The tears and sorrows and battlings in strife against the world, the flesh, and the devil are all very necessary in the present time; and we should neither hope nor expect to be crowned as victors without passing through such experiences. In the battle we learn not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; we learn of our own weaknesses and imperfections and our need to walk closely with the Lord, if we would keep our garments unspotted from the world. We learn also to trust his grace, and that ‘our sufficiency is of God.’ We learn that ‘greater is he who is on our part than all they that be against us.’ We learn that the victory that overcometh the world is neither the strength and perfection of our flesh,

nor merely the strong resolution of our minds, but the latter helped and strengthened by him who assures us that his strength can be perfected in our weakness.”—*Songs in the Night*, January 10

The cleansing of the spiritual temple is only the start of the work of our Lord and Head, Christ Jesus. Soon, in God’s kingdom to be established upon the earth, the world of mankind will go through a similar process of purification. Of this, we read: “An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” (Isa. 35:8) The unclean will not “pass over” the way of holiness because they will be cleansed as they walk upon it, and as they render heart obedience to the great work being done on their behalf, and for their eternal benefit.

Let us remember that without holiness, which necessitates cleansing, “no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14) Thus, we realize the great importance of being clean in God’s sight. Let us hold firmly our faith, and continue to keep our garments without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” (Eph. 5:27) By so doing, we will receive an abundant entrance into the “everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—II Pet. 1:11 ■

“Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ... Respect what is right in the sight of all men.”

—Romans 12:16,17,

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. N. Alexander

Albuquerque, NM
March 30-April 1

R. Goodman

Albuquerque, NM
March 30-April 1

L. Griehs

Albuquerque, NM
March 30-April 1
Vancouver, BC 14,15

E. Kuenzli

Jacksonville, FL April 8

D. Rice

Albuquerque, NM
March 30-April 1

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 5—"My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches."—Psalm 63:5,6 (Z. '96-161 Hymn 274)

APRIL 12—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the participation of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the participation of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread."—I Corinthians 10:16,17 (Z. 01-76 Hymn 325)

APRIL 19—"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."—Matthew 12:34,35 (Z. '96-30 Hymn 267)

APRIL 26—"He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his."—Hebrews 4:10 (Z. '02-205 Hymn 250)

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.

ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION, March 30-April 1—Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel, 2910 Yale Blvd. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. Contact S. Thomassen. Phone: (505) 268-8170 or Email: srbt@juno.com

NTAK OBIO AKPA, NIGERIA CONVENTION, March 30-April 1—Ntak Obio Akpa, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Convention Theme: II Timothy 2:21

HIGHLAND PARK CONVENTION, April 7—Double-Tree by Hilton, 789 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Contact S. Koterba. Phone: (917) 554-2348 or Email: sandykoterba@gmail.com

METRO DETROIT CONVENTION, May 5,6—Brighton Community Center, 555 Brighton Street, Brighton, MI 48114. Contact J. Kienast. Phone: (248) 496-5611 or Email: jenkienast@gmail.com

HARTFORD CONVENTION, May 6—West Hartford Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT. Contact J. Slivinsky. Phone: (860) 289-0116 or Email: djslivinsky@sbcglobal.net

JACKSONVILLE CONVENTION, May 6—Holiday Inn Hotel, 620 Wells Road, Orange Park, FL 32073. For room reservations, contact the hotel. Phone: (904) 562-7407. Other information, contact C. Hughes. Phone: (904) 781-0506 or Email: clanky3@att.net

WEST NEWTON CONVENTION, May 6—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact L. Mlinek. Email: lmlinek@verizon.net

CHICAGO CONVENTION, May 26,27—Alta Villa Banquet Hall, 430 N Addison Road, Addison, IL 60101.

Contact J. Farrell. Phone: (630) 469-9511 or Email: jean9farrell@gmail.com

LOS ANGELES CONVENTION, May 26,27—Burbank Auditorium, 406 Irving Drive, Burbank, CA 91504. For room reservations (subsidized rate of \$70/night), contact N. Nekora. Phone: (310) 454-5248 or Email: npnekora@aol.com. Other information, contact T. Parkinson. Phone: (818) 247-9800 or Email: ti77park@gmail.com. Please place LABible in subject line of the email.

ONITSHA, NIGERIA CONVENTION, June 2—Plaza Guest, #6 Mbaise Street, Owerri Road Onitsha Anambra State, Nigeria. Contact, J. Ogbunike. Phone: +234803532 8245 or Email: newjolac47@gmail.com

DELAWARE VALLEY CONVENTION, June 3—Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, 400 Oxford Valley Road, Langhorne, PA. Contact R. Griehs. Phone: (267) 456-8889 or Email: rgriehs@gmail.com

VANCOUVER CONVENTION, June 9,10—Aldergrove Kinsmen Community Centre, 26770 29th Avenue, Aldergrove, BC, Canada. Contact B. Smith. Email: bas@telus.net

PORTLAND CONVENTION, June 15-17—Sheraton Portland Airport Hotel, 8235 NE Airport Way, Portland, OR 97220. For convention accommodations, contact J. Wojcik. Phone: (503) 459-2720 or Email: janetlwojcik@gmail.com. Other information, contact B. Hislop. Phone: (503) 351-5551 or Email: bwhislop@aol.com

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 14-19—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. For registration, contact E. Kuenzli, 330 Jasmine Road, Casselberry, FL 32707. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 8-12—Szczyrk, Poland. ul. Wrzosowa 28 A, 43-370 Szczyrk. Website for complete information: www.biblestudents-conventions.com