

# The DAWN

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**ARGENTINA:** A. Lupsor, Calle Almirante Brown 684, Monte Grande C.P, 1842 Buenos Aires

**AUSTRALIA:** Berean Bible Institute, P.O. Box 402, Rosanna, Victoria 3084

**BRAZIL:** A Aurora, Caixa Postal 50088, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, CEP 20050-971

**BRITISH ISLES:** Associated Bible Students, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, HP5 3ED, England

**CANADA:** P.O. Box 1565, Vernon, British Columbia, V1T 8C2

**FRANCE:** L'Aurore, 45, Avenue de Gouvieux, 60260, Lamorlaye

**GERMANY:** Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung, Postfach 11 03, 64368 Ober-Ramstadt

**GREECE:** He Haravgi (The Dawn), 199 Railroad Avenue, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 USA

**INDIA:** The Dawn, Blessington, #34, Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, Bangalore 560025

**SPAIN/ITALY:** El Alba/Aurora, Associazione Studenti Biblici, Via Ferrara 42, 59100 Prato—Italia

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# The Priesthood of All Believers

***“You are  
A CHOSEN  
RACE, A royal  
PRIESTHOOD,  
A HOLY NATION,  
A PEOPLE FOR  
God’s OWN  
POSSESSION, so  
that you may  
proclaim the  
excellencies of  
Him who has  
called you out of  
darkness into His  
marvelous light.”***

***—I Peter 2:9, New  
American Standard  
Bible***

**PETER REVEALS THAT WE,** as Christians, constitute a royal priesthood. He embellishes that description by also identifying us as a “holy priesthood.” (I Pet. 2:5) All true believers constitute this priesthood—as our title states, it is the Priesthood of All Believers. The function of this priesthood is to proclaim the excellency of God, who has called us “out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Our mission in life is clear. We, as a priesthood, are to proclaim the excellence,

beauty and glory of God to all. This should daily fill us with hope, joy, love, faith and zeal.

Our priesthood is one of enlightenment. Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp

and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”—Matt. 5:14-16, *NASB*

Whatever relevance the concept of a priesthood of all believers may have to the modern world, it exercised an enormously potent power for change at the time of the Reformation. As a battle cry at that time, it played a key role in opening the door to the great liberties that we now enjoy. Perhaps we do not adequately appreciate these freedoms. The right to own a Bible did not exist in times past, nor the privilege to base Christian belief and practices solely on the Bible’s testimony. The freedom of exercising individual conscience toward God was denied.

The Christian world of five centuries ago was highly structured and authoritarian. It did not tolerate dissent, nor recognize the individual’s sense of right and wrong. That stands in marked contrast to the Christian liberty that we enjoy today in most of the world. We take for granted the rights of the individual, but the validity of that concept was not acknowledged prior to the Reformation.

## **LOSING THE VISION, FALLING ASLEEP**

The understanding of personal responsibility grew vague as the Early Church settled into the passage of time. Spiritual slumber overtook many, and they fell asleep with regard to their privileges as members of the priesthood of all believers. From today’s perspective, it is easy to see how the personal rights of Christian believers were abrogated. Gradually, from the days of the founding of our faith, the zeal

and conviction of believers was diluted. Christianity eventually became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Everyone had to belong to the church; it was not open to personal choice. Thus the watering down of faith occurred as multitudes joined the Christian church out of compulsion, not desire. Subsequently, many attached themselves to the church which had little zeal, nor real faith. These forced converts soon outnumbered the core of true believers. As such, these non-spiritual, immature Christians let the more advanced ones think, believe and pray on their behalf. A great divide slowly developed between the class of people that soon were marked with the label “laity,” and their spiritual rulers, the “clergy.”

With this development, access to God for the common man was made difficult. Soon the clergy became intermediaries between their flocks and God. This gap was widened still further by introducing the concept that saints of time past were needed as additional intercessors. The unfortunate result of this was that personal access to God was now made to appear impossible.

## **RISE OF THE RULING CLASS**

Those considered the more spiritually advanced believers ascended in influence and power as the ranks of congregants swelled. Their rise fostered the emergence of the clergy class. The remaining congregation, or laity, soon was relegated to being merely the “children” of the church, while the clergy labeled themselves as the church.

In the Apostles’ day, church leaders were elected on a regular basis by their congregations. (Acts 14:23; II Cor. 8:19, *Young’s Literal Translation*) However,

over time, and as these leaders gained power, influence, and control, the practice of recurring elections gradually faded away. Once elected, they became leaders for life. With that grave mistake, the congregation's sovereignty was lost. The leaders, or clergy, became ascendant, and this had unfortunate results.

Edward Gibbon noted this gradual change in his classic work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. "A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honorable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president."

Among these bishops there was vying for power as to who would be the greatest. This was settled over centuries of Christian history. Eventually one bishop stood supreme above all others. He would be designated the father of the church and would wield ultimate authority. At first, motives which sought the common good of the church were possibly behind this rise to power. However, the frailty of humanity soon manifested itself. The corrupting influence of power facilitated the rise of human reasoning and traditions of men over the authority of Scripture and the rights of all believers.

The Book of Revelation provides a prophetic perspective on the eventual rise of the clergy class. Two churches are contrasted in the second chapter, Ephesus and Pergamos. The Ephesian church was praised, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." The church at Pergamos was rebuked, "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." (Rev. 2:6,15) Various opinions have been given as to what constituted the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans," but the best explanation comes from the very name itself. Nicolaitans, in the original Greek, means "victory over the people." The church at Ephesus resisted efforts to empower a superior spiritual ruling class, but Pergamos succumbed. The principle that authority resided within the church congregation was not held with integrity.

### **POWER STRUGGLES VERSUS HUMILITY**

The struggle for power is as old as the human family. The Bible tells us that it began when Satan deceived Eve. "That old serpent" sought to usurp God's earthly dominion to have it for his own, and he would stop at nothing to get it. (Rev. 20:2) Through lies and murder the Devil got what he wanted, but God only permitted it for a specific time and purpose. Through the redemptive work of Christ, the kingdom will be returned to the Heavenly Father. —I Cor. 15:24-26

Similarly, noble men are not immune to the intoxicating lure of power. The apostles enjoyed great intimacy with our Lord Jesus. We recall the scene when Jesus went to Capernaum with his beloved disciples. As on previous occasions, they had argued

with one another as to which of them would the greatest in the Lord's kingdom. In this, the weakness and frailty of their fallen humanity was made evident. They were trying to position themselves to take advantage of this marvelous new opportunity—a chief position in Jesus' administration. They imagined the power and prestige that they soon would have as rulers sitting "on twelve thrones."—Matt. 19:28

Jesus gently corrected them, showing them the flaw in their thinking. "They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, What were you discussing on the way? But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest. Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." (Mark 9:33-35, *NASB*) This lesson is still applicable today. Those who would serve the Lord's people effectively must hold tenaciously to this principle. Any who would be great in God's eyes must become a humble servant. "For God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."—I Pet. 5:5, *NASB*

On his last night on earth, during the solemn occasion of his last supper, Jesus imparted a great lesson on humility. He, the one who had descended from heaven, stooped to wash the disciples' feet. "So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one

another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."—John 13:12-17, *NASB*

Surprisingly, moments after this lesson, the same argument began involving the disciples. "There arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called Benefactors. But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant." (Luke 22:24-26, *NASB*) How comforting to know that as Jesus was patient with them that night, so he is also with us.

## **A WAKE-UP CALL**

After centuries of escalating corruptions, reformers such as Hus, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, and Calvin sounded an alarm in the Christian world. Although not blessed with a full understanding of all the doctrines of Scripture, they nevertheless issued a wake-up call to certain important concepts. In essence they said, "Christians, we have fallen asleep, and have lost sight of who we are in God's eyes. If truly dedicated to God, we are all members of a priesthood just as the Scriptures tell us." The impact of that concept was revolutionary. Christians did not need any earthly intermediary or any in heaven, save for Christ alone, in order to approach God. Sweet are

the words of Apostle Paul in this regard: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”—Rom. 5:1,2

The Apostle John emphatically points out our relationship with God: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” (I John 1:3,4) Indeed, our joy is made full by personal fellowship with our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

## **OUR MINISTRY**

With the wonderful realization that we are part of a priesthood comes the sense of duty and privilege to fulfill that ministry. As noted earlier, our mission is to show forth God’s praises. We have come to know of his great love. We are awed by his wisdom, justice and power. By virtue of our closeness with God we know, more than any others in this world, of his mercy, loving-kindness and patience. Paul provides direction in the performance of our priestly duties, which is to sing of the praises of God. He calls it “the ministry of reconciliation.”

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ... and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf

of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (II Cor. 5:18-20 *NASB*) The last verse of this passage is easily misunderstood due to the phrase, “we beg you ... be reconciled to God.” The word “you” does not occur in the original Greek manuscript. Verse 18 shows that we are already reconciled to God. Thus, in verse 20, we are not the ones who are encouraged to be reconciled to God. Rather, it is all mankind to whom this is addressed. In other words, we, as Christ’s ambassadors, beseech mankind “on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

The *Weymouth New Testament* translation makes the meaning of Paul’s words beautifully clear, “All this is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and has appointed us to serve in the ministry of reconciliation. We are to tell how God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not charging men’s transgressions to their account, and that He has entrusted to us the Message of this reconciliation. On Christ’s behalf therefore we come as ambassadors, God, as it were, making entreaty through our lips: we, on Christ’s behalf, beseech men to be reconciled to God.”

Taking this perspective of our mission as a priesthood is very important and relevant to us. The world is increasingly secular, agnostic, and even atheistic. Many are turning their backs on God and Christianity because they have been taught erroneous ideas. They hear only of a wrathful, vindictive, vain and unapproachable God. In addition, the Christian faith has been politicized and viewed as narrow, bigoted and judgmental. We know that these views are incorrect, however, when seen in the light of the true message and promises of the Scriptures.

The world is hungry for hope. They need the qualities of mercy and love. We know that God excels in these characteristics above all others, and he desires to reconcile with mankind. We have the right message and have been graciously given a mission. As a priesthood of all believers we can encourage others toward peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. We spread the Gospel news as ambassadors of Christ and the coming kingdom, proclaiming, “Be reconciled to God,” knowing that this is his plan and purpose for the human family.

Reconciliation implies peace. Being a peacemaker is a privilege that our Lord associated with a great reward. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matt. 5:9, *NASB*) Being a peacemaker is challenging, but it is also a powerful confirmation of our ministry. As part of this priesthood, we must practice peacemaking, even with our enemies—especially with our enemies. “You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”—vss. 43-48, *NASB*

If we desire to ultimately be sons of God, and his priesthood throughout eternity, we must be peacemakers in the present. This is consistent with

our profession that we have God's spirit of wisdom. "The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." (James 3:17,18, *English Standard Version*) Let us, by God's grace, sow seeds of peace that will yield a fruitful harvest of righteousness.

### **FURTHER EVIDENCE OF OUR PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

Hypocrisy is a charge commonly leveled at Christians. In many cases the accusation is appropriate. If we have true and honest hearts, however, we will not profess to be perfect, but claim only forgiveness by our merciful God. We each make foolish mistakes and find ourselves doing things that we do not intend. Paul confessed this frailty in himself. (Rom. 7:14-25) Despite our weaknesses, we must walk discretely in the world, as "children of light."—Eph. 5:8

We must use the wisdom God has supplied and, being completely selfless, avert giving occasion to find fault with our ministry. "We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness; ... through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not

killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” II Cor. 6:3-10, *ESV*

God has primarily called those who are weak, foolish and base to be his people. Some of the strong, wise and noble are called, but not many. Thus God has ensured that no human being may boast in his sight. (I Cor. 1:26-31) In harmony with the humility of God’s priesthood is their denial of self-sufficiency. “Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ... We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. ... Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s Word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God.” (II Cor. 3:5,6,18; 4:1,2, *ESV*) While denying self-sufficiency is looked upon as a weakness in this world, we recognize it as a strength.

## **ORDER WITHIN THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS**

Though all fully dedicated believers constitute a priesthood, it is not to result in chaos at church meetings. “All things should be done decently and in order.” (I Cor. 14:40, *ESV*) Guidelines were given to the Early Church to establish proper order and

to facilitate spiritual growth and cooperation among Christians. Thus, some amongst the Lord's followers were selected by their various congregations to be "bishops" ["overseers," *Thayer's Greek Definitions*].

The qualifications for such leaders were stringent but necessary for the integrity of the church. "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." (I Tim. 3:2-7) It is a matter of historical record that bishops—overseers—were elected by the vote of the entire congregation annually. Some Christian fellowships still follow this practice and find it a blessing.

## **PRIESTS OF GOD**

In his introduction to the Book of Revelation, we note that John addresses it to the seven churches in Asia, not to the elders or a class of clergy. After his personal salutation to the body of believers in the church congregations, John bids them greetings from "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to him be the glory and the

dominion forever and ever.” (Rev. 1:5,6, *NASB*) We read further in Revelation, “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.” “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; ... they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.”—Rev. 5:10; 20:6, *NASB*

There is to be an earthly kingdom. Jesus and his associated priesthood will reign over earth for a thousand years. Mankind will be blessed in a manner and to a degree that cannot now be imagined. That kingdom will be full of peace, enlightenment, love, joy, security, kindness, and justice. Its rulers will be Jesus and his “royal priesthood” of faithful followers. Their influence will be pervasive in the earth. These, who humbled themselves and made service to others a lifelong commitment, will tenderly restore mankind to their Creator. This will be the pinnacle accomplishment of their “ministry of reconciliation,” the great work of the Priesthood of All Believers. ■

## **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 Mary Beth Schultz, Largo, FL—March 27. Age, 58

Sister Margaret Olsen, Alexandria, VA—April 26. Age, 99

Sister Doris Karutsky, Yorkton, SK—April 27. Age, 94

Brother James Watkins, Dayton, OH—April 29. Age, 81

Sister Shirley Bruce, Portland, OR—May 6. Age, 95

# Justice and Sabbath Laws

**Key Verse:** *“If you had known what these words mean, I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent.”*  
—**Matthew 12:7**,  
*New International  
Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Matthew 12:1-14**

Jesus called to their attention the Bible narrative concerning the time when David and his companions were fleeing from King Saul. David had asked the Jewish priest Ahimelech for “loaves of bread” or whatever the priest could find. Ahimelech told David that he had no ordinary bread, but only the shewbread which had been removed from the Holy of the Tabernacle and replaced with new bread. The shewbread belonged only to the priesthood, who were to eat it in a holy place. However, Ahimelech gave the old shewbread to David and his companions to eat, so that they could sustain themselves.—I Sam. 21:1-6

Jesus then said to the Pharisees, “In this place is one

## **UNDER THE LAW GIVEN TO**

Moses, the Jews were forbidden to do work of an earthly kind on the Sabbath. After seeing Jesus’ disciples pick heads of grain and eat them on the Sabbath, some Pharisees thought they saw an opportunity to call attention to the disciples of Jesus as being lawbreakers.

Jesus did not accept this reproof by the Pharisees, and instead gave a lesson to illustrate the true spirit of the Law.

greater than the temple, ... For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.” (Matt. 12:6-8) Jesus was greater than the Jewish Temple of his day and the Tabernacle of David’s time because he was the Son of God, and his mouthpiece. As the Lord of the Sabbath he was able to set forth the real meaning of the Law for the Sabbath day. Jesus proceeded to quote the testimony of God through the prophet, “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.” (Hos. 6:6) Had the Pharisees given heed to this proper spirit of the Law, their thoughts would have been more merciful, and they would not have condemned Jesus’ disciples.

Jesus then went to the synagogue, where there was a man with a shriveled hand. The Pharisees, “looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, ... asked him, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” Jesus replied: “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” (Matt. 12:10-12, *NIV*) The true spirit of the Law was not to follow fixed rules and regulations, but rather the “more important matters of the law,” which were “justice, mercy and faithfulness.”—Matt. 23:23, *NIV*

“Love is the fulfilling of the law” because “God is love.” (Rom. 13:10; I John 4:16) One of the manifestations of love is the quality of mercy. This includes mercy toward our friends, the brethren, mankind in general, and even our enemies. Indications of a lack of mercy and love in our character are the tendencies to be critical of others, to be fault-finders, and to speak evil.

Our Heavenly Father wishes us to learn, not merely as children, certain fixed rules, but as mature Christians, principles such as love, mercy, justice and humility. God, speaking to us through the Prophet Micah, states: “What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”—Micah 6:8, *NIV* ■

# Parables of God's Just Kingdom

**Key Verse:** “Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”  
—Matthew 13:30

**Selected Scripture:**  
Matthew 13:24-33

Indeed, Jesus has “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (II Tim. 1:10) The “field is the world,” Jesus also says in verse 38. Here the word translated “world” is from the Greek word *kosmos*, and means “an orderly arrangement.” Thus, the field in this parable refers to the present world order, including its imperfect human organizations.

The “tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil.” (vss. 38,39) Here the word “tares” signifies false grain. As a class, those

**AFTER JESUS GAVE THE** parable of the wheat and the tares, recorded in verses 24-30 of our lesson, his disciples asked him to explain it. (vs. 36) From Jesus’ explanation we learn that he was not talking about literal seeds, a literal field, nor a literal burning of tares. Rather, each of these things in the parable were given to teach important lessons symbolizing something else.

Jesus explained: “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man,” and “the good seed are the children of the kingdom,” the truly consecrated. (vss. 37,38)

who may profess Christian belief, attend church services occasionally or even regularly, and who call Jesus Lord but do not follow his example of character, are pictured by the tares. (Luke 6:46) The spirit of the tares is predominantly toward outward show and pride, and sectarian greatness. By contrast, the spirit of the wheat is individual obedience to God, and character likeness to Jesus.

The *King James* translation of a portion of Matthew 13:39 reads: “The harvest is the end of the world.” Here the word “end” is defined by *Strong’s Dictionary* as “entire completion” or “consummation,” and “world” denotes “an age.” Thus, the expression “end of the world” in Jesus explanation of the parable refers to the closing portion of the present Gospel Age, when man-made organizations and arrangements which are not in harmony with God’s plans and principles will be gathered together and subsequently removed. (Heb. 12:26,27) From other promises in the Bible, we know that the literal planet Earth “abideth for ever.”—Eccles. 1:4

Our Key Verse states that in the “time of harvest,” near the end of the Gospel Age, the tares would be gathered “in bundles.” This bundling work has been going on in various ways, such as the promotion of Christian unification by allegiance to man-made doctrines, creeds and organizations at the expense of personal responsibility and Bible study. By contrast, true unity is based upon individual searching, studying and striving to follow the doctrines and principles given in the Bible. (Eph. 4:13-16) Only as each consecrated follower of Christ strives to understand and personally apply the teachings which are found in the Scriptures can true Christian unity be found.

The destruction of the tares in the parable does not refer to people, but rather to the removal of the delusions of false doctrines and organizations, in preparation for God’s kingdom. (II Pet. 3:10-13) “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”—Matt. 13:43 ■

# Jesus Teaches about Justice

**Key Verse:** *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”*  
—*Matthew 15:8*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Matthew 15:1-9*

IN TODAY’S LESSON, CERTAIN of the scribes and Pharisees had come to Jesus and asked why his disciples “transgress the tradition of the elders,” because “they wash not their hands when they eat bread.” (vs. 2) Jesus answered: “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ... Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” (vss. 3-6) Here Jesus made an important distinction between the commandments of God and the traditions of men.

Traditions and commandments of men are neither given, nor authorized, by God. These may include many things such as outward ceremonies or procedures, calling religious leaders “father,” “holy father,” or “rabbi.” On the contrary, Jesus instructed his disciples: “Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”—Matt. 23:8,9

Other traditions of men include false teachings not found in the Bible, such as eternal torment in a fiery hell. On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter explained that King David had prophesied many centuries before of the

“resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:29-31) In other words, when Jesus died on the cross, his soul abode in “hell,” until he was raised from the dead on the third day. Hell is not a place, but rather the condition of death. Death is described elsewhere in the Bible as a “sleep,” or peaceful unconsciousness.—I Kings 2:10; John 11:11-14; I Cor. 15:20

Continuing in our lesson, Jesus then called the multitude, and said unto them, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” (Matt. 15:10,11) Jesus further explained that “those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; ... For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.”—vss. 18-20

In this passage, the word heart is used as a symbol of our affections, will, sentiments, and motives. In the Old Testament we are told: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:23) Our heart condition is like the soil of a garden, and our thoughts are like seeds. Cultivating the soil of our hearts, and then planting the proper seeds of thoughts, so that they are in accord with the will of God, is a necessary, daily task for the Lord’s people.

Our Key Verse shows it is not sufficient that we merely profess to be serving God. Samuel was told, “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” (I Sam. 16:7) Do we sometimes have an unloving or unkind thought? Do we listen to or participate in gossip regarding others? If so, we may be drawing nigh to God outwardly with our lips, but in our hearts departing from him. Let us strive each day to have God’s spirit of grace and truth enter into our hearts and transform them into that which is pleasing and acceptable to him. ■

# Reaping God's Justice

**Key Verse:**  
***“Abraham said—  
Child! remember—  
That thou didst  
duly receive thy  
good things in thy  
life, and, Lazarus,  
in like manner, the  
evil things; but,  
now, here, he is  
comforted, and,  
thou, art in  
anguish.”***  
**—Luke 16:25,**  
*Rotherham  
Emphasized Bible*

**Selected Scripture:**  
***Luke 16:19-31***

and he cried, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” Abraham did not grant this favor, but simply reminded the rich man of his former favorable position, and the previous unfavorable lot of the beggar.—vss. 22-25

In the parable, it does not state that the rich man was wicked, or that the beggar was righteous. When the beggar died he did not go to heaven, but was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. Earlier in his ministry, Jesus had

**IN OUR LESSON, JESUS** gives a parable of a “rich man” who “fared sumptuously every day,” and a “certain beggar named Lazarus,” who was “full of sores.” Each day he laid at the gate of the rich man's house, desiring to be fed with “crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.”—vss. 19-21

Eventually, both the rich man and the beggar died. When the beggar died he was “carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.” When the rich man died, he was buried, and “in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.” He saw Abraham afar off, with Lazarus “in his bosom,”

in fact said: “No man hath ascended up to heaven.” (John 3:13) Therefore, the statements in Jesus’ parable must be symbolically understood, including the declaration that the rich man was “in hell ... being in torments.”

The parable’s interpretation revolves around the nation of Israel. Just as the rich man fared sumptuously every day, so also Israel was blessed bountifully with nourishing symbolic food furnished by God’s Law and his prophets. To them were given “the oracles of God.” (Rom. 3:1,2) Thus, the rich man in the parable well represents the Jewish nation as it existed at the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry.

The rich man of the parable wore a purple robe, a symbol of royalty. God had promised to make Israel a “holy nation” if they would obey him. The rich man’s “fine linen” is a fitting symbol of righteousness. It represented the measure of righteousness which the Israelites had under the Law which had given them a standing before God unlike other nations.

As a nation, however, Israel “died” shortly after Jesus’ First Advent, having not recognized him as their Messiah. The rich man was in “hell” [see Lesson for June 17], the condition of death. The nation of Israel has remained in this state throughout the present Gospel Age—dead as a holy nation. We rejoice, however, that God has promised their restoration.—Rom. 11:1,2,25-27

The beggar in the parable symbolizes the Gentiles who have responded to the heavenly call during the Gospel Age. Concerning God’s promises, they were a poverty-stricken people prior to the First Advent of Jesus. Shortly after Pentecost, however, Gentiles were given the opportunity to hear God’s call. (Acts 15:14) This change of position is represented by the beggar’s being carried into Abraham’s bosom. Thus, in God’s plan, both Jews and Gentiles will be recipients of the promises made to Abraham for “all the nations of the earth.”—Gen. 22:17,18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8,16,28,29

■

# “Love Does Not Envy”

*“Love suffers long  
and is kind. Love  
does not envy. Love  
is not boastful; is  
not puffed up.”*  
—*I Corinthians 13:4,*  
*Wilson’s Emphatic*  
*Diaglott*

**TRUE CHRISTIAN LOVE** embodies the principle of unselfishness. It is not governed by emotion, although those whose hearts are filled and controlled by love are fervently stirred to action on behalf of others. Indeed, God

was moved by his unselfish love to give his Son to be the Redeemer and Savior of the world. Because love is based on the principle of unselfishness, it cannot be envious of others, nor of the good things which they enjoy.

Paul identifies love as a principal “fruit of the Spirit,” whereas envy he describes as one of the “works of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:19-23) He further writes, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” (vss. 25,26) Every follower of the Master should desire to be filled and controlled by the spirit of love, devoid of any reason to be envious of others. However, the human heart is “deceitful”

and “desperately wicked.” (Jer. 17:9) We need to be constantly on the alert lest we be deceived into the belief that it is proper under certain conditions to be envious of the God’s blessings upon others.

Envy and jealousy are very similar to each other, and Solomon wrote that “jealousy is cruel as the grave.” (Song of Sol. 8:6) If we permit its venomous fangs to penetrate our hearts, we are robbed of the peace and joy in the Lord which would otherwise be ours. We should not assume that we are immune from attacks by this cruel poison of jealousy. We not only are to guard our hearts, but through prayer seek God’s help and protection, realizing that in our weakness we cannot always fully understand our own ways and motives. David wrote, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.”—Ps. 19:12

## **CAIN AND ABEL**

The Scriptures present us with a number of examples of individuals who permitted themselves to be swayed by jealousy, and of the evils to which it led. Cain is the first of these. While neither the word envy nor jealousy is used in connection with Cain, it was undoubtedly this particular aspect of sin, stirred by selfishness, which overcame him. The record states that he was “very wroth” over the fact that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and rejected his. (Gen. 4:5) The Apostle John warns that we should, instead, “love one another,” and be “not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother.”—I John 3:11,12

In the case of Cain, as also with the other examples of the sin of envy and jealousy we find in the Bible,

the individuals involved ignored God and his part in their experiences. Actually, Abel had nothing to do with the rejection of Cain's offering. Proper humble reasoning would have sent Cain to God to find out why his offering had not been "excellent" as Abel's. (Heb. 11:4) However, he did not do so, but instead slew the one upon whom God had manifested his blessing. How unwise it would be for us to harbor even the slightest suspicion of envy toward those whom God is blessing. To do so would indicate that we ourselves are unworthy of the good things which he bestows upon those whom we envy.

### **AARON, MIRIAM AND MOSES**

Aaron and Miriam, the brother and sister of Moses, were guilty on one occasion of allowing the spirit of jealousy to motivate their attitude toward their brother. The account indicates that these two servants of God trumped up a charge against Moses to conceal what they really had in mind. We read, "Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it." —Num. 12:1,2

We are to be always conscious of the fact that the Lord hears what we say, and that he knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. (Ps. 94:11; 139:23) Paul wrote: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13) This was true in the case of Aaron and Miriam. God knew their complaint that Moses

had married an Ethiopian woman was merely a ruse. What was really festering in their hearts was the spirit of envy over the fact that their brother Moses was being so abundantly used as God's mouthpiece when they felt that they were just as qualified as he.

Being able to read their hearts, the Lord knew that Aaron and Miriam had been temporarily overcome by the great Adversary, so he dealt with the situation in a way to recover them from this "snare of the fowler." (Ps. 91:3) As for Moses, he apparently made no effort to defend himself against the charge, although it must have been a difficult experience to find himself attacked by members of his own family. However, the Lord vindicated Moses, and after severely punishing Miriam, restored her and Aaron back into his favor and service.—Num. 12:5-14

## **SAUL AND DAVID**

In King Saul of Israel we have another example of the cruelty wrought by envy and jealousy when these are permitted to take root in the heart. Saul was a man who, in physical stature, stood head and shoulders above his fellow Israelites. (I Sam. 9:2) Apparently, though, he had never been impressed with the idea that this made him any more important than others. Thus, when he was chosen to be Israel's first king he said, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin?"—vs. 21

Saul, though, did not maintain this humble estimate of himself. He became so important in his own eyes that he presumptuously disobeyed the instructions of the Lord. Samuel reminded Saul that it was when he was "little" in his own sight that he had

been made king over Israel. However, once Saul sensed that he had power in his hands he forgot that he was “little,” and did not hesitate to go contrary to the Lord’s instructions. Accused of this, he blamed the sin on the people, but God held Saul responsible, and rejected him.—I Sam. 13:8-14; 15:17-23

As always happens when self-interest takes control over the life of one of God’s servants, Saul sought to conduct his rulership upon the basis of what would be best for him. God had rejected him but allowed his reign to continue for a period of time. Rather than make any attempt to change his heart attitude, Saul began to rule Israel as though God had nothing to say in the affairs of the nation. This was sure to lead to his further undoing, and in this retreat from God the ugly spirit of envy and jealousy took hold upon him.

Saul was renowned among the Israelites as a brave and efficient warrior. However, beginning with the slaying of the giant, Goliath, David’s reputation as a warrior increased and eclipsed Saul’s. The account states: “It came to pass, . . . when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.”—I Sam. 18:6-9

Saul “eyed David” from then on, and in his jealousy sought to kill him. David was forced to flee from his wrath, while Saul hunted him as he would an animal. By contrast, David manifested no inclination to seek revenge against his persecutor. On one occasion, while hunting the object of his uncontrollable envy and jealousy, Saul inadvertently exposed himself to capture and death at the hands of David. One of David’s friends said to him, “God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once.”—I Sam. 26:8

This was a persuasive argument—God had delivered David’s enemy into his hand. If David had the slightest trace of hatred toward Saul, this line of reasoning would have been convincing, and he would have permitted him to be slain. Here is a heart-searching point for our consideration. Is there any possibility that we may rest contentedly in the idea that the envious action we might take, or permit against others, is acceptable to the Lord? David had a different and better view, which was based on the divine will. He answered, “Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD’S anointed, and be guiltless? ... As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD’S anointed.”—vss. 9-11

How wonderfully did David thus display his faith in the overruling providences of God! While Samuel had anointed him as God’s choice to be the eventual new king of Israel, David was quite willing to await the Lord’s own due time to take over the reins

of government. He apparently held no resentment against Saul, even though he had been treated so unjustly by him.

In this experience of Saul and David there are valuable lessons for us. Most of God's people no doubt feel quite "little" at the time of their consecration. How important it is that this attitude of meekness and humility be maintained. The Lord may bless us in his service. He may even permit some of his people to attain a certain degree of prominence among the brethren. This is a real test. It could be that those who, to begin with, are "little" in their own eyes, may become proud, and in their pride become envious of others whom the Lord may likewise richly bless in his service.

David's generous and forgiving spirit was further demonstrated in the case of his son Absalom, who rebelled against his father and attempted to seize the throne from him. When Absalom finally lost his life, David wept in sorrow. We read, "The king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, ... would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"—II Sam. 18:33

Under such circumstances many would have expressed delight that a rival, even within one's own family, had been destroyed, rejoicing that God's judgments had surely fallen upon him. David, though, was not of that disposition. He was a man after God's own heart, and the qualities of his character included largeness, mercy, and the spirit of forgiveness. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) There is no room for envy and jealousy in a heart that is thus filled with the spirit of the Lord.

## JESUS' PERFECT EXAMPLE

Jesus is our crowning example along these lines. Prior to Pentecost, Jesus' disciples were too often concerned about who should have the preeminence among them. On one such occasion it is recorded, "there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great."—Luke 9:46-48

The reply given by the disciples to Jesus' lesson is most unusual. "John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us." (vss. 49,50) The connection here is interesting. The disciples had just been told that the important ideal for which to strive was not being great, but "least" within their own circle. Here, however, was a man outside their circle of fellowship, and surely Jesus would approve their show of authority toward him. It seems that the fallen flesh is prone, at times, to be self-important and intrusive.

Again Jesus told his disciples they were wrong. He had not especially invited this worker to serve him, but Jesus was not at all envious of what he was doing. Indeed, Jesus did not instruct his disciples to go out and cooperate with this individual, nor to try and bring him into their fellowship. The point to be stressed here, however, is that Jesus was in no way envious of this man who was serving

independently of him and of his disciples. "Forbid him not"—that is, leave him alone—the Master instructed. This is also a good lesson for us. The Lord of the harvest is so great and all-powerful that he is able to manage his affairs without our interfering with those who may not be serving just as we are, or with those brethren most closely in association with us.

To follow this example and instruction of Jesus does not imply that in any manner we are to compromise the Truth. It simply means that we are to go forward in the Lord's service as he has given us the opportunity, and not to be too concerned over the course adopted by others. The temptation to interfere, as the disciples did, does not necessarily imply an envious spirit. It could be, and perhaps most often is, merely the result of a misdirected zeal. Whatever the motive may be, however, Jesus said, "Forbid him not."

### **PAUL—ANOTHER EXAMPLE**

In the Apostle Paul we have another wonderful example of the largeness of heart for which we should strive. In the church at Corinth there was much rivalry, which Paul said resulted from carnal, or fleshly, thinking. In writing to these brethren he pointed out the error of their position. Some in Corinth claimed that they were devoted to Paul, and others that they followed Apollos. However, Paul wrote, "Who ... is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but

God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.”

—I Cor. 3:5-8

It should be observed that the issue here discussed by Paul is not related to false doctrine. He does not say that those who preach the Truth and those who preach error “are one.” The issue, rather, was rivalry over who was to be recognized as a servant of the Lord. In this he comes directly to the point by saying that the “Lord gave to every man” this ministry of the Truth—that is, every man in Christ Jesus. Thus, those who are motivated by the Holy Spirit to exercise their privileges as ministers of the Gospel, “are all one” in Christ Jesus, as it relates to that joyous opportunity of service.—Gal. 3:28

Paul’s largeness of heart and attitude are again brought to our attention in his letter to the brethren at Philippi. Writing from prison in Rome, he said to these beloved saints: “I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”—Phil. 1:12-18

What a marvelous testimony is here given! Many in Paul's difficult circumstances would have lost much of their interest in the service of the Lord, feeling that they had been "put on the shelf," so to speak, and therefore they had no further responsibility in connection with his service. Paul, however, though chained to a Roman guard, continued to bear witness to the Truth, and rejoiced to learn that others were becoming more active in the Lord's service.— Acts 28:16,20

Paul had learned of some who were preaching the Gospel "even of envy and strife, ... not sincerely." His power and authority as one of the inspired apostles enabled him to know the motives of those who were endeavoring, by their preaching, "to add affliction" to his bonds. Yet, he did nothing to hinder these in their ungodly efforts, leaving the judgment of their hearts in the Lord's hands. Paul simply said he rejoiced that, "whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached." How we should strive for such an attainment of love.

The situation was more difficult for Paul than it is for us. He knew of the insincerity of those who endeavored to injure him. We, however, cannot read the hearts of others, and should never try. We can only assume that all efforts to serve the Lord by proclaiming the Gospel are sincere. Viewing the matter in this way, we should rejoice in those efforts. Let us again emphasize that this point is not concerned with preaching error. No true child of God should, or can, rejoice in the preaching of error, for certainly Paul did not. Paul did rejoice, though, and so should we, to realize that the glorious Gospel of the kingdom is being preached, even though in some

cases those who proclaim it may not be properly motivated. As our opening text states, “Love does not envy.”

Paul’s attitude reminds us of an experience in which Moses likewise displayed a similar largeness of outlook. Seventy elders of Israel were gathered around the Tabernacle by Moses, and God’s spirit came upon them and they began to prophesy. However, two of the elders remained in the camp, “and the spirit rested upon them; ... and they prophesied in the camp.” Joshua, later Moses’ successor, called his attention to this and asked him to forbid these two from prophesying improperly. Moses replied, “Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!”—Num. 11:25-29

The point of this lesson is that Moses was not envious. Had he gone into detail he might have explained to Joshua that it really would have been better for those two elders to gather around the Tabernacle as the others had done in obedience to his instructions. However, since they did not do this, and God still saw fit to put his spirit upon them, Moses would not bemoan the fact that they had been more or less disobedient to him. So far as he was concerned, he would be happy if God placed his spirit upon all the Israelites and made them prophets.

In his second letter to the brethren at Corinth, Paul wrote, “O Corinthians, our lips are unsealed to you: our heart is expanded. There is no narrowness in our love to you: the narrowness is in your own feelings. ... I speak as to my children—let your hearts expand also.”—II Cor. 6:11-13, *Weymouth New Testament*

Certainly Paul was far beyond the Corinthian brethren as a whole in his largeness of heart. Since only some of them had initially claimed to be his followers, others must have been, at least for a time, opposed to him in some degree. This did not matter to Paul. His heart was enlarged to take them all in, and to build them up in the most holy faith. He recognized, even as we should, that in the church of Christ all are at different stages of Christian development. It would perhaps be ideal if all had attained the same degree of spiritual growth which we hope is true of us. However, this will not be so while the church is in the flesh. If some seem to exceed us in growth, and God blesses them more than ourselves, we are not to be envious. If others try our patience because they seem to lag behind in grace and knowledge, our hearts should be enlarged toward them.

Now, more than ever before, we need each other. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked."—I Cor. 12:21-24

Let us endeavor, through prayer and a zealous application of the principle of love, not to harbor the spirit of envy. Instead, as Paul wrote, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness

of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” (Phil. 2:3,4) If we recognize that in some or many respects our brethren in Christ are better than ourselves, and we are able to rejoice in their superior qualities, there will be no room in our hearts for envy. May the Lord help us attain this high and blessed standard of love in our viewpoint toward, and in our dealings with, one another. ■

*How blessed, how glorious, how joyful to feel, the  
love everlasting of sonship a seal,*

*The love that is perfect, the love that is pure, that we  
may with patience all things well endure.*

*I want to feel humble, more simple, more mild, more  
like by blest Master and more like a child;*

*More trustful, more thankful, more lovely in mind,  
more watchful, more prayerful, more loving and kind.*

—*Hymns of Dawn*

## WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**JUNE 7**—“The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”—I Peter 5:10 (Z. ’95-202 Hymn 266)

**JUNE 14**—“God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”—I Peter 5:5 (Z. ’96-19 Hymn 312A)

**JUNE 21**—“Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart.”—Matthew 11:29 (Z. ’96-79 Hymn 110)

**JUNE 28**—“Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”—Proverbs 3:7 (Z. ’96-263 Hymn 198)

# The Voice of God— Past, Present and Future

*“Listen closely to the thunder of His voice, And the rumbling that goes out from His mouth. ... God thunders with His voice wondrously, Doing great things which we cannot comprehend.”*

*—Job 37:2,5, New American Standard Bible*

**THE EARTH TODAY IS** filled with the sounds of innumerable voices. There are voices of the leaders of nations, religions and businesses. There are voices of the rich, the poor, and the general masses of society. There are voices of the old, the young, the physically infirmed, and the mentally distraught. There are voices of political persuasions, of lifestyle preferences, of dis-

sent and even hatred.

We are witnesses each day to the resulting cacophony of these and many other voices which enter our ears and fill our minds. The resulting message to most is that of chaos, perplexity and often anger, as they attempt to make sense of the countless voices which continually inundate their

lives. Contributing to this state of confusion is the fact that these countless voices are, for the most part, in utter conflict and opposition to each other, though they all claim to speak truthfully.

To compound these matters, it seems today that few feel the need to be accountable for the words and messages emanating from their voices. Thus, mankind is left with the futile task of attempting to sort through all of these sounds and determine which are true and which are untrue. This confusion of noise so unique to our day is aptly described by the Prophet Isaiah: “The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.” (Isa. 13:4) Most assuredly, therefore, the “tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations” accurately presents a foreboding portrait of the world in which we now live.

## **VOICE OF GOD’S ETERNAL PURPOSE**

Lost to most, in the din of all the sounds just described, is the one voice which should be heard and given earnest attention to above all others—the voice of God. The voice of our Creator is singular, truthful, harmonious, and never-changing. His voice is spoken through the Bible, the Word of God. In our opening text, we are told to “listen closely” to him, and though God “thunders with His voice,” he speaks “wondrously, Doing great things.” As further stated in our text, the “great things” God is doing are not comprehended by most of mankind. Yet it is for their ultimate eternal benefit that such great things are being done by the power inherent in the voice of God.

As the world becomes increasingly involved in the daily life and death struggles of what men have called civilization, the exact order and nature of events yet to come is difficult to determine. However, the Scriptures are clear concerning the ultimate outcome, which is the establishment of God's kingdom, under the righteous rule of Christ. The Scriptures also make it clear that God is speaking to the various elements of present society through the distresses in which they are all involved. Most do not yet hear his "voice," but those who are taking heed to the "sure word of prophecy" do hear it and rejoice. (II Pet. 1:19) They understand that the time is soon coming when the Lord, in his own way, will cause the conflicting voices of humanity to cease their strife and acknowledge his voice: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."—Ps. 46:10, *Revised Version*

It would seem that the present struggle of society's conflicting voices is mostly for the purpose of being in a position to gain advantage over, dominate and ultimately render powerless opposing sounds. What none of these opposing factions know as yet, however, is that by their own actions, they are accomplishing God's purpose—that of bringing to an end earth's present sinful order. Under God's arrangement, Christ will be the sole ruler of the world of tomorrow, during which the earth will not be under the domination of any of the kingdoms or "voices" of this world. The present "melting," or leveling processes so plainly visible within the nations are said, prophetically, to be due to the fact that God is speaking to the nations: "He uttered his voice, the earth melted."—Ps. 46:6

## **NOT YET HEARD**

While many nations have, down through the centuries, claimed to be guided and blessed of the Lord, the Scriptures show that this has not actually been the case. These nations have frequently claimed that God's voice was expressed through their military might, but in this they have been wrong. It is difficult for the world's leaders, as well as mankind in general, to reconcile this claim of the past with what is now happening. The result is that many question whether there truly is a God who is paying attention to what is transpiring in the world. It is not surprising, therefore, that God's voice is not yet heard above the noise of earth's conflicting cries.

The truth is that God has not, in the past, been speaking to the nations, but has permitted them to go on in their selfish way until various features of his plan had transpired. Bible prophecy indicates that this long period of God's relative silence in the affairs of mankind ended at the time of the First World War in 1914. For many centuries prior to that, the Lord declared that he would hold his peace and would not speak to the nations. As noted by the Prophet Isaiah, God also explains how, when the time should come for him to break his long silence, his voice could be identified. He says that he would "cry," and "roar," and that he would go forth as a "man of war," and "stir up jealousy" among the nations. Finally, the Lord explains, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not."—Isa. 42:13-16

This last expression is most meaningful. The poor, blinded world must first be spoken to in very drastic ways before their attention can be gained to listen

to the voice which later will lead them in ways of peace and happiness. Thus, the Lord first speaks to the nations in the only language they can understand. It is the language with which they have spoken to each other throughout the centuries, that of conflict, war and destruction. A further hint of the Lord's method of speaking to rebellious people is found in the words of another of God's prophets: "In the fire of my wrath have I spoken, ... saith the Lord GOD ... And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood."—Ezek. 38:19-22

Note also the expression of Isaiah 42:14, "Now will I cry like a travailing woman." In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul similarly explains that the "sudden destruction" which comes upon the world in the "day of the Lord" is "as travail upon a woman with child." (I Thess. 5:2,3) Travail on a woman with child comes in spasms. Thus we might say that the Lord has been speaking to the nations in all the spasms of destructive trouble that have come upon them during the past century. As yet, however, they do not heed, although occasionally we hear an expression indicating that some are beginning to realize the significance of what is transpiring.

The first step in mankind's ability to hear the voice of the Lord in earth's present troubled state is the necessity of being awakened to a sense of the selfishness and pride which has long-ruled man's thoughts, words and actions. When the people of all nations begin to think along this line, and when, through the further melting processes they see their idols of silver and gold and their false gods of torment and war destroyed, they will be ready to hear the Lord speak to them. Then, his voice will

resonate with the softer and more joyful tones of the Messianic kingdom's arrangements.

Until then, however, God is still speaking to the nations "in his wrath," and still vexing them "in his sore displeasure." (Ps. 2:5,6) How sorely vexed they are today. The "distress of nations, with perplexity," is great and is increasing. (Luke 21:25) How glad we should be that, through the sure word of prophecy, we know that God has set his king upon his "holy hill of Zion." Soon his rulership over the nations will become manifest to all, and as a result they will learn and practice war no more.—Mic. 4:3

### **GOD'S VOICE TO ISRAEL**

God spoke to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, also called Horeb, with respect to the institution of the Law Covenant. (Deut. 5:22-28) In verse 22, it is stated that the words of the Lord were heard "out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness." That is, these constituted God's method of dramatically calling attention to his voice with regard to this vitally important event.

When God spoke to Israel out of the fire, the message was of a twofold nature. First, it contained the divine law for the people. Secondly, it revealed the glory and character of God. The latter is found in the statement, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." (Deut. 5:9,10) This is an important point to keep in mind, for it is not just through the trouble alone that God desires to be heard. He also wants to gain the

attention of the nations through the revealing of his glory, in order that they might listen intently to his voice as he speaks to them out of the trouble.

It is true, certainly, that there is a message for the people in the trouble itself. It is telling them of the futility of human selfishness, and reveals the awful consequences of a program of hate and war. Getting mankind's attention, and speaking to them through the trouble, prepares the way for hearing the Lord's voice outlining his law, the law of the New Covenant. In all of these aspects of hearing the Lord's voice, the length, breadth, height and depth of his glorious character is revealed to all people. This relationship of the trouble to the voice of the Lord that speaks through the trouble, is aptly shown in Zephaniah's prophecy. First, we are told that God destroys the symbolic earth with the fire of his jealousy, emphasizing that he will not forever permit selfishness and injustice to dominate in world affairs. Then he turns to the people a "pure language," that they may learn to "call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."—Zeph. 3:8,9

### **ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE FUTURE**

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul refers to the experiences of Israel in connection with the giving of the Law Covenant. He indicates that they point forward to a great shaking time just preceding the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, and the inauguration of the New Covenant. (Heb. 12:18,22-28) Verse 24 of this passage provides an important truth, namely, that Christ will be mankind's mediator under the New Covenant arrangement. Just as Moses was Israel's mediator when the Law Covenant

was instituted, so in the fulfillment of that picture the Scriptures show that Christ will mediate the New Covenant “between God and men.” (I Tim. 2:5) This is one reason why the dramatic time just preceding Messiah’s kingdom is described in the Bible as the “day of the Lord.” (I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10) It is the day when Christ is invisibly present, preparing the people by speaking to them out of the symbolic fire of the “time of trouble,” that they might be ready to accept the divine law of the New Covenant.—Dan. 12:1

The Apostle Paul indicates that symbolic Mount Zion was pictured by Mount Sinai. (Heb. 12:18,22) Several prophetic utterances thus fall into place. From Joel 3:16, we quote: “The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake.” In Haggai 2:6, another of God’s prophets tells us of this shaking of the heavens and earth. Finally, in Hebrews 12:26,27, the apostle quotes Haggai and applies it to the events associated with the establishment of the New Covenant. It should be noted that in all of these prophecies, the shaking occurs as a result of the Lord’s “voice.”

The shaking prophesied by Haggai is followed by the “desire of all nations” being realized, showing that the shaking is related to the establishment of God’s kingdom. (Hag. 2:7) This, in turn, was illustrated at Sinai by the people’s desire for the blessings of life which they hoped to gain by keeping that Law. It is also said that at Sinai the people saw the glory of the Lord, and that he spoke to them “face to face.” (Deut. 5:4,24) Following the present shaking, the glory of God will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the tabernacle of God

will be with men. He will dwell with them and he shall be their God, and they shall be his people.— Hab. 2:14; Rev. 21:3

### **THE DAY OF THE LORD IN PROPHECY**

Let us note further Scriptural testimony concerning the events associated with the day of the Lord. “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness.” (Joel 2:1,2) Here we have the symbolic “trumpet” of the divine message and voice, “thick darkness,” and “clouds,” all of which were realities at Sinai, and pictorial of events associated with the day of the Lord, just preceding the inauguration of the New Covenant. We believe the events of the past century give strong evidence that we are now witnessing these symbolic conditions.

Another prophecy of the day of the Lord that is strikingly similar in its language to those already examined is that which is found in these words: “The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as

dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."—Zeph. 1:14-18

In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter employs some of these same symbolisms in his graphic description of the day of the Lord. In his second epistle, Peter connects these events with the second coming [Greek: *parousia*, or presence] of Jesus, and the ushering in of the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. 3:1-13) Thus again, does the inspired record indicate the time application of the wonderfully harmonious prophecies of the day of the Lord.

## **JESUS' SECOND PRESENCE**

The present time of trouble, with its symbolic darkness, clouds, and fires of destruction, is not a sign of the nearness of Jesus' second coming, but rather of his actual presence. This is shown by the prophecy of Isaiah 63:1-6, where we are told that the day of the Lord's vengeance is precipitated by one that "cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, ... travelling in the greatness of his strength." In the prophecy the question is raised as to who this is, and the reply is, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

In this prophecy, the one "mighty to save" is pictured as, first of all, treading the winepress of God's wrath. In the New Testament, he who "treadeth the winepress" is identified as Christ Jesus during the time of his second presence. (Rev. 19:11-16) In

this same chapter are also depicted the final scenes of the great time of trouble which make way for the establishment of Messiah's thousand-year kingdom of blessing.

## **BLESSED RESULTS**

Another prophecy relating to the day of the Lord, and one which reveals its outcome in the blessing of the people, is that found in Psalm 97:1-7. "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods."

When the present "heavens," the religious powers of today, are shaken out of their place, and the "new heavens" under Messiah's rule become operative, how wonderfully this will "declare his righteousness," and how clearly all the people will "see his glory." Then it will be recognized that the collapse of the present systems, which now seems to be such a calamity, was but the overthrow of "graven images" and false gods. Then, too, it will be seen that the present shaking of earth's society, portrayed as "hills melted like wax," was occasioned by God uttering his voice, that all would hear and recognize his rightful sovereignty over man's affairs.

Let us, then, watch the progress of world events with the view of identifying the voices of our God, and that of his Son, Christ Jesus our Lord. If we do this sincerely, and with the aid of the inspired prophecies, it will be true for us as promised to Israel of old, that we will know his name. Especially in this day of the Lord will we rejoice in the fulfillment of the divine promise which states, "Therefore, they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I." (Isa. 52:6) Having this promise fulfilled in us, we will recognize that, in turn, we have the privilege of proclaiming these glad tidings to others. As indicated in the next verse, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"—vs. 7

Though the blessings of God's kingdom have not yet begun, we see that even now his Son, earth's rightful king, is overruling in the affairs of this world, to bring this present order to an end. Soon, the kingdoms of this world will be leveled and humbled, and the Heavenly Father's loving and reassuring voice will be heard by the people, saying, "Be still, and know that I am God: ... I will be exalted in the earth." (Ps. 46:10) When the coming righteous kingdom is established, and its work fully accomplished, all shall know God "from the least even unto the greatest." Until then, while the voice of the Lord is recognizable in the world's affairs only in the fire, clouds, and thick darkness of present trouble, it is our blessed privilege to join in the proclamation of the "good tidings" that soon God's new world of peace, happiness, health, and everlasting life will be established in the earth. ■

# Faithful in a Few Things

*“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*  
—*Matthew 25:21*

**THE WORDS OF OUR** opening text, spoken by Jesus in his parable of the talents, indicate that God has not made the requirements for our faithfulness unreasonable nor unattainable. He has asked that we be faithful in “a few things.” Yet, in these few things, he expects our utmost diligence and zeal,

even unto death.

We have chosen for consideration four instances in the Scriptures where the importance of “one thing” is stressed as essential to a walk of full devotion to God. Certainly all of these are important to us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, and constitute a portion of the “few things” in which the Heavenly Father requires our faithfulness.

(1) In Psalm 27:4 David wrote, “One thing have I desired.” This one thing was to dwell in the house of the Lord and to “enquire in his temple.” Here we have the thought of meditation, as in the case of

an Israelite approaching the tabernacle and high priest for cleansing.

(2) Jesus said to the rich young man, “One thing thou lackest.” (Mark 10:21) The man with riches found renunciation of them too difficult, fitly representing those who discern what is required in full devotion to God, but who fail to take action and enter into God’s tabernacle.

(3) To Martha, Jesus said, “One thing is needful.” (Luke 10:42) Mary chose that one thing, which was to become better acquainted with her Lord and his teachings. This aptly corresponds to those who dwell inside the holy of the tabernacle, feasting upon the shewbread, enjoying the light from the golden candlestick, and offering incense of devotion and prayer upon the golden altar.

(4) Paul wrote, “This one thing I do.” (Phil. 3:13,14) Paul was determined that nothing would deter him from his course of faithfulness, and thereby attaining the “mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” and of symbolically entering beyond the veil into the most holy.

In David we see the desire to meditate upon God and know of his plans and purposes. In the case of the wealthy young man who inquired of Jesus concerning eternal life, there was the lack of consecration. With Mary, there was contentment and satisfaction in continually learning from the Master, and in the Apostle Paul, we find full determination and endurance in the work of the Lord. Thus, four important steps in our walk of faith are revealed.

In each instance the “one thing” requires singleness of purpose and full attention. Such diligence provides a solid foundation for success, because one’s

energies are thus centered on a specific objective, affording a clear vision of the particular goal in view, and the requirements and process for attaining that goal.

In the Christian's life, where the goal is centered in following after Jesus, its fruitage is born in clearness of truth and holiness of life and walk. The Scriptures thus testify: "If any man will do [God's] will, he shall know of the doctrine." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."—John 7:17; 8:32; I John 3:3

God's Word is life-giving and powerful, "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) To read the Scriptures and seek to understand the principles of truth contained therein provides invaluable guidance to the human heart, and thus assists the reasoning faculties in arriving at a correct understanding of one's relationship to God.

The all-encompassing nature of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus is the "wheel-hub" from which all the other spokes of Bible teachings originate. (I Tim. 2:3-6) All who truly appreciate this revelation from God's Word will adjust their habits and way of life thereto. By its influence in the mind and heart, all such will be drawn ever closer in character to that of the Master, who said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."—John 6:63

The Word of God and the Spirit of truth will always be the sources of light and life to mankind, and the

natural inclination of thought of perfected man in ages to come. The Scriptures testify: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” “The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”—Ps. 119:105; Prov. 4:18

## **DAVID’S DESIRE**

This was David’s longing aspiration and goal. “One thing, have I asked of Jehovah, That, will I seek to secure,—That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah, all the days of my life, To view the delightfulness of Jehovah, And to contemplate in his temple.” (Ps. 27:4, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) To contemplate is to consider studiously, to meditate, and to give time and attention. It also is forward-looking, with an urgency of heart for some desired objective.

Surely David’s longing should also be our desire. It should be constantly with us, as an urgent yearning to know God more fully, and to enjoy his favor and blessing in unbroken communion. To realize such closeness to our Creator is an honored privilege, but it is not without responsibility on our part. Jesus said, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”—John 14:23

Our spiritual life has first to do with our heart and faith, our inner desires and affections. We note these words from the psalmist, the Apostle Paul, and our Lord Jesus: “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD.” “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”—Ps. 84:2; Rom. 10:10; Matt. 5:6

## DAVID'S OBJECTIVE

Let us notice the great objective of the “one thing” David desired. It was to “behold the beauty of the LORD,” or “the delightfulness of Jehovah,” as *Rotherham* translates it. God’s dealings with David hitherto had revealed in measure his divine attributes of wisdom, justice, love and power. These drew from David adoration, worship, and praise. He desired to inquire and contemplate further concerning these things, so that he might gain a fuller understanding of God’s requirements from man in worship, obedience, and heart submission.

Likewise, we are privileged to inquire of God and contemplate him through his Word. By the revealing power of his Holy Spirit we meditate upon and cultivate the thoughts and purposes of God toward us and all mankind. How wonderful is the power of thought and meditation. All things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy, Paul says, we may gladly think and meditate upon, “and the God of peace shall be with you.”—Phil. 4:8,9

We read in Malachi 3:16,17, “They that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, ... and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” To think “upon his name” and thus behold the delightfulness of Jehovah is most assuredly a lofty aspiration and a worthy quest.

With Israel the Tabernacle was the meeting place between themselves and God. A devout Israelite would

always be in contemplation of his God. The Law of God would be his constant meditation. It was to be as “frontlets” between his eyes. He was to talk of it by the wayside, and in the house, and to his children, when lying down and rising up, lest he forget the Lord.—Deut. 6:6-9,12

For the child of God, any location, at any time, and under any circumstance, can be an occasion for meditation and contemplation of the beauty of God. Quoting again from the Psalms: “I will meditate on thy precepts, and fix my eyes on thy ways. I will delight in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word.” “I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in thy words. My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate upon thy promise.”—Ps. 119:15,16,147,148, *Revised Standard Version*

### **“ONE THING” LACKING**

“One thing thou lackest,” Jesus said to the rich young man. (Mark 10:21) This encounter took place after the incident of Jesus blessing the children. He had gone on his way, when “there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (vs. 17) Doubtless the young man came with an earnest desire to inherit life, but, as we will note, he had certain reservations.

How often it is the holding to some cherished desire which prevents one from enjoying the sweetness and restfulness of a decision to fully dedicate himself to do the Lord’s will. This young man’s question, “What shall I do?” was natural. It is the first thought, and a proper one, that occurs to most people when the mind and heart turn to the Lord and righteousness.

To the young man, Jesus quoted from the commandments, "Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother." The young man answered, "All these have I observed from my youth." Jesus looked upon him and in love said, "One thing thou lackest." Then, providing a test, he instructed the young man, "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me."—vss. 19-21

When the young man heard this he "went away grieved for he had great possessions." (vs. 22) The one thing he lacked was a full resignation of himself, and all that he had, to engage in the Lord's service and the doing of his will. Jesus could not call him a disciple until he had secured from the young man his full devotion. Thus, the result of the test was evident. The young man left in sorrow. How true it is that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."—Rom. 14:17

It might have been hoped that Jesus' lofty counsel would have aroused the young man to devotion and sacrifice, but the test required more than he was prepared to give. To the young man, it was not what he expected, and a thousand times harder than keeping the commandments of the Mosaic Law as he had been careful to observe and do.

The rich young man had a desire to "inherit eternal life," but thought he could do so while still maintaining control over his possessions. Full consecration to God of one's will, heart, mind, along with all earthly hopes and possessions, is the only acceptable method

by which anyone can attain eternal life. Jesus said in another place, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.” It remains what it was, just a corn of wheat, “but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.”—John 12:24-26

This “one thing,” wholeheartedness in consecration, will, in the age to come, also need to be taken into account with all who anticipate everlasting life. It will always be the first rule of life. “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. ... this do, and thou shalt live.”—Luke 10:27,28

### **“THAT GOOD PART”**

“One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42) Whatever may be said of the contrast between these two women, Martha certainly shared the virtue of her sister Mary, as evidenced by the fact of her loving desire to serve even the temporal needs and refreshments of her Master. It was merely that she failed, perhaps only momentarily, to rise to such a high appreciation of the nature and dignity of their illustrious friend. Instead, she busied herself with the practical cares of life to such an extent that Jesus considered it excessive.

Martha, anxious for the comfort of her guest, was absorbed in every detail of hospitality to please, while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus to listen to his words

of counsel and love. She had made the better choice, evidently appreciating the meaning of the Scripture: "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD."  
—Deut. 8:3

The busy Martha, seeing Mary thus seemingly careless, felt an annoyance, uncharacteristic of her normal demeanor. A mere word to her sister would probably have been sufficient to secure her interest and help. Instead, Martha came rather impatiently with a complaint to the Lord. "Dost thou not care?" she said, as though Jesus had encouraged Mary to neglect duty.—Luke 10:40

Jesus replied wisely and lovingly, no doubt, indicating to Martha that his temporal needs were easily satisfied. It was better, like Mary, to choose the "one thing" needful first—supreme concern for the things of God. These things alone could not be taken away, being eternal. Mary had made this her choice. She had "chosen that good part," which could not be taken away from her.

Let us learn this lesson. Making provision for the cares of this life, though needful and commendable, comes with a test. That test is the extent to which these things become all-encompassing to us. Too much time, too much effort, to the point of anxious thoughts, might be given to these things than would please the Lord. In his sermon on the mount, the Master taught: "Do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear? ... Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."—Matt. 6:31-33, *RSV*

The instructions of the Lord will be of eternal value. If our hearing and consideration of them be constrained or omitted at various times due to our being overburdened with the cares of this life, we may lose a long-lasting benefit and blessing. In the case of Mary, if she had neglected listening to Jesus just at that moment, she may never again have heard the same words of counsel and life.

Mary's attitude well represents those dwelling in the "secret place of the most High." (Ps. 91:1) This secret place is beautifully represented by the holy of the Tabernacle. Those who dwell there are pictured as feasting upon the shewbread, the Word of God and the sustaining power of life, and enjoying also the illumination from the golden candlestick, the light of the glory of God. Thus, they are enabled to offer the fragrant incense of prayer and devotion as a sweet-smelling savor to the Heavenly Father.—John 6:48,51; II Cor. 4:6; Ps. 141:2; Phil. 4:18

### **PAUL'S "ONE THING"**

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13,14) In these words, we see that one of the predominating characteristics of the Apostle Paul was determination. He was firm, resolute, and decisive. Whatever decision he made, all his energies were directed to achieve the end in view.

He explained to King Agrippa that before his conversion, as Saul of Tarsus, he persecuted the church of Christ and "punished them oft in every synagogue, ... being exceedingly mad against them." He added,

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” (Acts 26:9-11) Thus did Paul witness against himself and his misdirected zeal and determination prior to his conversion.

Near the end of his third missionary journey, when he had planned to be at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, Paul found that in every city he visited the Holy Spirit testified that bonds and imprisonment would await him when he arrived. Yet he was determined to go, and said, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus.”—Acts 20:16,22-24

The Apostle Paul, like the rich young man, enjoyed certain possessions. Obstacles that were insurmountable for the young man were, in Paul’s case, put aside and removed for Christ. “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but [refuse], that I may win Christ, and be found in him.”—Phil. 3:8,9

Paul knew well of those things that could have been hindrances to him in the Christian way and life, but they were all disregarded for Christ. His talents, fame, possessions, social rank, and worldly reputation, had all been put away years before writing this letter to the church at Philippi. Paul had determined to do just one thing, and he was triumphant.

The Apostle’s sentiment was, “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” (vs. 11) What a wonderful example Paul has been to all those called of God to that high, holy and heavenly

calling in Christ Jesus. It is these whose longing of soul has likewise been, and still is, in zealous contemplation, resignation, satisfaction and loving devotion, with full and complete submission to do God's will as revealed in his Word.

In consecration of himself and of all human aspirations, Paul gave evidence of being completely satisfied with Jesus and his teaching. So was Mary with her Lord and Master. He is the same to all who are content with the sweet and unbroken fellowship of Christ Jesus, even though often deprived of many material comforts which might otherwise have been possessed.

Let us, brethren, be resolute and determined, steadfast and unmovable with sobriety and watchfulness, and abounding in the work of the Lord. (I Cor. 15:58) Let us be established in the faith, and in our daily walk before the Lord, maintain to the end an increasing contemplation of God, his will and his kingdom. Let us complete our submission to the divine will for us, fulfilling our renunciation of self and consecration to our Heavenly Father.

Hence, we will be completely satisfied in all things under the providence of God, making our response to his High Calling the most cherished delight of our life. May we then hear the words of our opening text: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." ■

*"Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,  
that they may dwell with me."*

—*Psalm 101:6*

# SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

## **M. Costelli**

Portland, OR June 15-17

## **O. B. Elbert**

Vancouver, BC June 9,10

## **R. Goodman**

Louisville, AL June 10

## **R. Gorecki**

Detroit, MI June 10

## **K. Humphreys**

Vancouver, BC June 9,10

## **T. Krupa**

Prince Albert, SK  
June 30-July 2

## **H. Montague**

Delaware Valley, PA June 3

## **R. Niemczyk**

Prince Albert, SK  
June 30-July 2

## **J. Parkinson**

Vancouver, BC June 9,10

## **D. Rice**

Portland, OR June 15-17  
Prince Albert, SK 30-July 2

## **B. Siwak**

Vancouver, BC June 9,10

## **T. Thomassen**

Delaware Valley, PA June 3

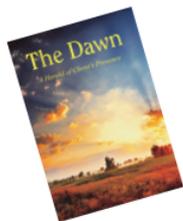
## **A. Williams**

Vancouver, BC June 9,10

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The future is as bright as the promises of God!

## 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.*

**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

**PRINCE ALBERT/SASKATOON CONVENTION, June 30-July 1,2**—Siwak Farm, RR 1, Prince Albert, SK S6V 5P8. Contact A. Siwak. Phone: (306) 764-7692 or Email: ahsiwak@inet2000.com

**OKANAGAN CONVENTION, July 6-8**—Schubert Centre, 3505-30th Avenue, Vernon, BC, Canada. Contact T. Fernets. Phone: (250) 558-3055 or Email: afernets@telus.net

**BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 14-19**—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

**BENIN REPUBLIC CONVENTION, July 27-29**—Seme Agori Plateau Calavi, Benin. Phone: +22965505568 or Email: bbseclesias@yahoo.com

**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 8-12**—Szczyrk, Poland. ul. Wrzosowa 28 A, 43-370 Szczyrk. Website for complete information: [www.biblestudents-conventions.com](http://www.biblestudents-conventions.com)

**OHOBA CONVENTION, August 25**—Ohoba place of fellowship, Adapalm Road, Alaka Ohaji, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact M. Uzor. Phone: +2348097161428 or Email: mauriceuzor@yahoo.com

**JACKSON CONVENTION, September 1,2**—FaHoLo Camp and Conference Center, 3000 Mt. Hope Road, Grass Lake, MI 49240. Contact M. Davis. Phone: (517) 414-4509 or Email: harb37@gmail.com

**NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 1,2**—Double-Tree Hotel Mahwah, 180 Route 17 South, Mahwah, NJ. Contact G. Passios. Phone: (201) 939-3196 or Email: gpassios11@verizon.net

**SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 1-3**—*New Location*—Seattle Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd Street, Shoreline, WA 98033. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

**ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 27,28**—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 831-2098 or Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

**MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 3,4**—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email: debfarchione@aol.com

*“They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”*  
—Acts 2:42