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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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Will Man Reach the “Promised Land”?

“By faith Abraham ... made his home in the promised land like a stranger, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who also inherited the same promise, because he was waiting for the city with permanent foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”
—*Hebrews 11:8-10,*
International Standard Version

FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN April, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave a speech in Memphis, Tennessee, towards the end of which he spoke these words: “I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. ... Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

This speech was to be Dr. King’s last. The next day, as he stood outside his motel room in Memphis,

he was killed by an assassin's bullet. It was later noted by the doctor who performed his autopsy that although he was only 39 years of age, his heart was in the condition of a 60-year-old man. Many attributed this to the extensive stress of his many years of involvement in the Civil Rights movement. Surely, it stands as evidence of his tireless commitment to the cause of equality, peace, and brotherhood among all people.

The spirit of Martin Luther King's desire, both for himself and for the many people he represented, to enter the Promised Land, has undoubtedly echoed in the minds and hearts of much of mankind. Humanity, in general, has long sought for a time and place in which exists an idyllic utopia of peace, security, health, respect and love among earth's inhabitants. Sincere men and women throughout the world continue to hope, and even pray, for an affirmative answer to the question of our title—the desire so vividly expressed by Dr. King half a century ago.

BIBLICAL ORIGIN

The term “Promised Land” has its origins in the Bible, specifically denoting the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as declared in our opening Scripture. These verses further state that the faithful patriarchs only lived as strangers in this land. They patiently waited for the time when God would prepare it as a permanent dwelling place for their descendants, including the establishment of cities with “permanent foundations.”

With the passage of time, the offspring of Jacob's twelve sons became numerous, and God began to call them by the name “Israel.” (Gen. 35:9-12)

Because it was still not yet God's due time for the Israelites to possess the land promised to their forefathers, he overruled that they lived in Egypt for a lengthy period. In Egypt, they "increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty." (Exod. 1:1-7) Finally, the time came when God's purpose of having the Israelites live permanently in the land promised to their father Abraham was to begin its fulfillment. "God remembered his covenant with Abraham."—Exod. 2:24

Under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, having been appointed by God for this great purpose, the Israelites left Egypt. It would be another forty years before the monumental event took place of entering the promised land, and approximately six more years to conquer and divide it among the various tribes. (Josh. 14:7,10) Although we will not consider them at this time, the Scriptures record many significant events which took place during this period. There were the ten plagues in Egypt; the institution of Israel's Passover; the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea; the spying out of the land of promise, and the resulting evil reports; the wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years; the provisions of food and water made by God for the people; and the establishment of Israel's covenant with God, with its laws and religious services. The Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy contain much detail about these and many other experiences of the Israelites as they journeyed.

GREAT ANTICIPATION

The narrative concerning the children of Israel entering the land of promise is recorded in the Book

of Joshua. As we view this momentous episode in their history, we can sense an air of excitement in the camp of Israel. The fulfillment of the promise made to their father, Abraham, nearly five centuries earlier, was about to be realized. God had said he would give the land, called Canaan, to Abraham's posterity forever. (Gen. 12:1-7; 13:15) Before Moses' death, as he stood at the top of Mount Pisgah looking over into Canaan, God outlined the extent of the land that was to belong to Israel. (Deut. 34:1-4) Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan, but now, under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites were camped at the border of that very land.

Forty years earlier, the Israelites had stood in the same position, on the verge of entering the land. At that time, only a few months after they had left Egypt with a "high hand" ["boldly," *New American Standard Bible*] and with triumphant songs of praise to God upon their lips, they reached the border of Canaan. (Exod. 14:8; 15:1-21; 19:1; Deut. 1:2,19,21) Yet, when Moses had sent the twelve spies for reconnaissance into the land, only two came back with positive reports. Joshua and Caleb said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." "Surely it floweth with milk and honey." The other ten spies, however, "brought up an evil report of the land." "It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; ... and there we saw the giants." "And the people wept that night." (Num. 13:25-33; 14:1) Their anticipation turned to fear, so great it drove the people to consider stoning Caleb and Joshua. (Num. 14:10) Their faith in God was not strong enough to follow his leadings.

Now, though, after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, this unbelieving generation of Israelites had died, as God had promised. (Num. 14:22,23) Even their staunch leader, Moses, was now dead. Only the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, remained of the adult generation that came out of Egypt. (Num. 32:11-13) They were still convinced that Jehovah was a mighty God who could give them the promised land of Canaan, which flowed with milk and honey.

After the death of Moses, Joshua was the logical choice of God to lead the children of Israel into Canaan. He had been Moses' faithful right-hand man, having already demonstrated great leadership abilities. It was he who had led Israel in their fierce battle against the Amalekites, and, with the Lord's help, had gained a great victory. (Exod. 17:8-14) Now the people turned to Joshua, confidently placing their trust in him, knowing that he had been specially appointed by God.

Joshua, like Moses, was a meek man who did not grasp responsibility and authority as he could have done. However, when God charged him with the function which had been Moses', he immediately accepted the privilege and took action. The Lord said, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. ... Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."—Josh. 1:5,9

JOSHUA BEGINS HIS LEADERSHIP

Joshua instructed his officers, "Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over

this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.” (Josh. 1:11) The people replied, “All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.” (vs. 16) Times had changed, and the people with them. This generation was far more confident than their fathers had been. They longed for an end to their desert wanderings, and to enter the land.

Two of his trusted men were chosen by Joshua to secretly survey the city of Jericho. The spies were directed to seek out a woman named Rahab, who quickly took them into her home and hid them. From Rahab’s words we know that the townspeople were frightened, and the city leaders were watching for Hebrew spies. (Josh. 2:1-7) Her expression of faith is shown in these words: “For the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.” (vs. 11) Although Rahab did not have a good reputation, she was commended by the Apostle Paul for her conviction. “By faith ... she had received the spies with peace.” (Heb. 11:31) Her assurance was so strong that she was willing to place herself in jeopardy by hiding them, and then helping them to escape by a rope through the window of her home, which was built into the wall of the city.

After following Rahab’s advice to hide in the nearby mountains for three days to avoid their pursuers, the spies crossed over Jordan and returned to Joshua. Their report was most positive. “Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.” (Josh. 2:16,22-24) With this affirmative information, Joshua set in motion the plans to cross the Jordan River. After giving all the needed

instructions, he spoke to the people, saying, “Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”—Josh. 3:5

CROSSING THE JORDAN

From a military standpoint, it was a very unfavorable time of the year to cross the Jordan River, since it was at spring flood stage and was overflowing its banks. Normally it was less than one hundred feet across at this point, but now its span had increased to many times that width. The current also had become dangerously swift and deep. This did not deter the eagerness of the Israelites. As they made camp that night on the banks of the river and went over the plan for the coming day, not one word of protest was made. Their faith in God’s power and wisdom was strong.

Through Joshua, the Lord instructed the people that on the following day they were to watch the Levitical priests who would precede them, carrying the Ark of the Covenant from the Tabernacle. From a position approximately one-half to three-quarters of a mile behind, the whole company of Israel was to follow. God would then perform a miracle. As soon as the soles of the priests’ feet rested in the water, the river would stop flowing, and the waters would “stand upon an heap.” (Josh. 3:3-13) The priests, carrying the Ark, were to stop and stand in the center of the river, until all Israel had passed safely over.

Thus it came to pass, just as God had described to Joshua, that “all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” This included “about forty thousand

prepared for war [who] passed over before the Lord unto battle.” (Josh. 3:17; 4:13) Whatever method he used to stop the flow of the dangerous Jordan River, we know that it was the mighty hand of God that was exercised on behalf of his chosen people.

MEMORIAL STONES

The Lord instructed Joshua to select one man from each of the twelve tribes and command them to each carry out a stone from the middle of Jordan, where the priests stood holding the Ark, and to leave the twelve stones “in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night,” which was Gilgal. “These stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. ... And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, ... that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.” (Josh. 4:2-7,20-24) Before the priests left their position in the river, Joshua placed another “twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests ... stood: and they are there unto this day.”—vs. 9

“When the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.” (vs. 18) The kings of the Amorites and Canaanites learned that God had “dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of

Israel.” Because the flooded river was no longer a measure of safety to them, “their hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them any more.”—Josh. 5:1

At Gilgal, where the memorial stones had been placed according to God’s instructions, Israel for the first time pitched camp in the promised land. Four days after crossing the Jordan, they “kept the passover ... in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan.”—Josh. 5:10-12

PICTURES OF THINGS TO COME

There are many valuable pictures and lessons to be found in this thrilling account of entering the land of Canaan. We learn that faith is rewarded, when we observe the case of Rahab. We see how God championed Israel when they trusted in him, and gave them strength to overcome the great obstacles which they encountered in entering and conquering the land.

Paul draws striking lessons from the fact that the unfaithful Israelites who originally left Egypt were not permitted to enter the land. He states it in this context: “I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. ... For who was it who heard the Word of God and yet provoked his indignation? Was it not all who were rescued from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses? And who was it with whom God was displeased for forty long years? Was it not

those who ... fell into sin, and left their bones in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they should never enter his rest? Was it not these very men who refused to trust him? Yes, it is all too plain that it was refusal to trust God that prevented these men from entering his rest.” (Heb. 3:11,16-19, *J. B. Phillips New Testament*) These words admonish us to place our reliance upon our strong and faithful God who will never desert those who put their trust in him.

The Scriptures also portray this experience of Israel in another pictorial way. We are told that God rested on the seventh creative day from that phase of his work. It was a day which was to see the final steps toward the completion of his purposes for the earth, and for mankind. (Gen. 2:1-3) Man in his original perfection was commissioned to assist in this work. “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion ... over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Gen. 1:28) After Adam’s fall, however, man lost his dominion. He was not able to subdue the earth, and was incapable of filling it with a race that possessed life. The terrible “wilderness” experience of man began when he displayed his lack of faith in God, and instead believed Satan’s lie.

Joshua is the Hebrew equivalent of the name “Jesus,” and means “Jehovah is salvation.” With this in mind, the nation of Israel well represents the world of mankind, lost and wandering in the desert of sin, sickness and death. “We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.” (Rom. 8:22) It is impossible for the people, waiting in pain and longing for six thousand years, to cross

the Jordan River without God's mighty hand to help. The name, Jordan, means "to go downwards," and is an apt picture of divine condemnation, the sentence of death pronounced upon Adam and passed through inheritance to his posterity. However, God's plan of salvation, centered in his Son Jesus, has provided the means by which mankind will, in due time, cross this symbolic river, and enter the promised land of rest.—Rom. 5:17-19; I Cor. 15:21,22

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

The Ark of the Covenant, which stood in the midst of the river as the Israelites crossed over, was a symbol of God's favor toward them. In its fuller significance, it aptly represents God's future favor over the entire world through Christ. The waters of the Jordan, picturing the sentence of death, dried up when the Ark, carried by the priests, entered the river. The Ark represents both the death and the resurrection of Jesus, by which come a cancellation of the sentence of death in order that the promised land of blessings and rest can be reached by mankind. God's word states that "all nations" will be blessed through Abraham's "seed, which is Christ."—Gal. 3:8,16

It is also significant that the Ark was carried by the priests, and that these first passed into the Jordan before any of the people could cross over. Standing in the midst of the river illustrated the essential part played by the great high priest and his associate priests in freeing the people from condemnation. Jesus died for the world's sins, stopping symbolically in the midst of Jordan, that the world might have the opportunity of passing over. (John

1:29) The underpriests, Christ's footstep followers, also stop there. They lay down their lives sacrificially, that in the next age they might share in the work of helping to lift up the world to pass out from under this terrible curse of death.

It was not necessary that the priests remain in the river Jordan in order to complete the picture. Twelve stones were taken and placed exactly where the priests had stood. These stones well illustrate the "little flock" of faithful ones who have been called out of every "people, and nation," and prepared for use as "kings and priests." They, with Christ their Head, will reign over the earth as God's "royal priesthood" in his coming kingdom. (Luke 12:32; Rev. 5:9,10; I Pet. 2:9) These followers of the Master become "dead with Christ" according to the flesh. (Rom. 6:8) They do not cross over the Jordan, but remain in the midst, like the stones that "are there unto this day." (Josh. 4:9) They give up their inheritance in earthly Canaan to seek the high calling to the divine nature, so that they may be part of the priestly class in the coming age of blessing for mankind.

DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO

Upon Israel's crossing the Jordan, a formidable obstacle still lay before them. It was the fortified city of Jericho. With its high walls, it loomed as a mighty fortress that blocked their way to possession of the land. Joshua contemplated the situation, perhaps looking to find some weakness which he could use to his advantage as a means of acquiring access into the city and doing battle against it. The narrative states that as Joshua beheld Jericho, "he

lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place wherein thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."—Josh. 5:13-15

This mighty angel then told Joshua that God was going to give them the victory over Jericho by an unusual means, not by any ordinary military strategy. It was to be a method that would test the faith of everyone in the camp of Israel. Instead of using their armies to breach and destroy the wall, the angel said that they would again use the Ark of the Covenant. Israel's army was to march around the city once each day for six days, with seven priests carrying the Ark and blowing trumpets. The army was to pass in front of the priests, after which the Ark would proceed from behind, with the priests continuing to blow on their trumpets. This was the only sound to be heard until the seventh day, when Joshua would signal for the people to shout.—Josh. 6:1-10

How improbable the effectiveness of this must have seemed. From a human point of view, it was very doubtful that this approach would be successful. Yet, who could disbelieve the mighty power that had turned back the treacherous power of the Jordan? The Israelites were ready to listen to God and follow his instructions. At dawn on the seventh

day, they were instructed to circle around the city as before, but on this day they were to pass around it seven times. “At the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.” When they did this, “the wall fell down flat.”—Josh. 6:15-20

FINAL VICTORY OVER SIN AND SATAN

The destruction of the city of Jericho is a remarkable illustration of the final victory over sin and Satan. The entire world of mankind, by reason of their being raised from the sleep of death, will have been delivered from the legal sentence of death. They will have crossed the Jordan. They will even have their feet planted in the land of promise. They will no longer be wandering aimlessly in the wilderness of sin and death, under the rule of Satan.

However, standing before mankind will be their Jericho, rising up like a mighty barrier to their eternal habitation and enjoyment of the land. It is the great stronghold of sin which must be overcome. The many vestiges of imperfection in man’s character acquired during the present reign of sin and death, will need to be warred against and vanquished. As the mighty power of God was available to the Israelites as they, in faith, battled against the foe, so, through faith, all the assistance needed will be at hand for each individual in the kingdom. It will be in God’s strength that they also gain the victory.—Rev. 21:3-7

The Apostle Paul says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.” (Heb. 11:30) The world of mankind will be ready to follow the instructions of the

deliverer, their Joshua, Christ and his church. The people will surround their Jericho and destroy it with a glad shout, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. 5:13) How wholeheartedly and enthusiastically the Israelites under Joshua entered into God's plan, despite the fact that it seemed a strange, even foolish, method to conquer a city. So eagerly, too, when the "mountain of the LORD's house" is established, "all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, ... and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."—Isa. 2:2-5

The people will recognize and follow the presence of God as represented in the Ark of the Covenant, in the Christ, which will govern them in righteousness. The trumpet of truth will be heralded forth by the priesthood of that age, and mankind in their desire to fully enter into the land will shout for joy. No trace of sin will remain when the kingdom work is ended, for the willing and obedient of the people will have destroyed every remnant of it in their characters. (Rev. 21:24-27) The high fortress wall of sin and evil will crumble away under this onslaught. It had been kept secure by Satan for over six thousand years, yet in a comparatively short time—just one thousand years—God will cause it to be utterly destroyed, never to rise again. The combined cooperation of God, Christ and his church, and mankind will make that kingdom of righteousness an eternal success.

Let us, by growing in faith and trust, keeping our hope bright, and continuing steadfastly in our striving

to learn righteousness and subdue sin in our circumcised hearts, be prepared to march around Jericho as the future priestly trumpeters. We will carry the Ark of the Covenant, and the walls of Jericho will tumble down. All mankind will then render honor, praise, and glory to God. The answer of our title will be a resounding, “Yes!” Man will, indeed, not only reach, but will also live eternally, in the Promised Land of a perfect earth. Thus, the desires and hopes so well expressed by Martin Luther King, Jr., fifty years ago, and echoing in the hearts of millions before and since, will be fulfilled, to the honor and glory of God, our Heavenly Father.—I Tim. 1:17 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JULY 5—“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth, ... and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Chris.”—II Corinthians 10:4,5 (Z. ’99-11 Hymn 44)

JULY 12—“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”—John 8:36 (Z. ’99-57 Hymn 297)

JULY 19—“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—John 18:11 (Z. ’99-118; ’01-91 Hymn 299)

JULY 26—“To him that overcometh will I give ... a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”—Revelation 2:17 (Z. ’99-140 Hymn 32)

Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Key Verse:
“Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?”
—*Matthew 18:33*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 18:21-35
times?”—Matt. 18:21

IN THIS PORTION OF Jesus’ discourse concerning sins and offenses, he turns his attention to our responsibility of forgiving others of wrongs committed against us, in particular those done by our brethren. Peter asks a question concerning this matter: “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven

Peter appears to have understood that he must forgive. Jesus had previously taught his disciples concerning this in conjunction with the giving of the model prayer, and they evidently had not forgotten. (Matt. 6:14,15) Peter knew also, from the meaning of the word, as well as from the daily example he saw in the Master, that true forgiveness meant not bearing a grudge against another, nor looking for revenge. Rather, it implied only doing good and forgetting the offense.

Peter, however, had only a limited appreciation of the full scope of forgiveness. From his question, he seemed to believe that one who sinned against him would only be forgiven a certain number of times, suggesting seven as an appropriate number. He supposed that if a brother had wronged him more than seven times, he would not

be worthy of forgiveness. He might then justifiably abandon his fellowship, and have no more to do with him. Perhaps Peter thought of Proverbs 24:16, which states: "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again."

Jesus answered Peter's question, saying, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Here the Master expressed an extravagant number to imply an indefinite one, for no one would literally keep track of 490 [70 times 7] sins committed against him by a brother. It is, in fact, not proper that we keep any count of offenses done against us by others. God is the judge, and any retribution or punishment is his, not ours, to give. (Deut. 32:35,36) More importantly, however, is the fact that God is very merciful. He multiplies his pardons, and is full of compassion. (Ps. 78:38,39) Thus, we are taught to make it our constant practice to forgive, that it might become our habitual response, as it is God's.

Following his answer to Peter, Jesus gave a parable to show the necessity of forgiving the wrongs that are done against us. In the parable, a servant is forgiven a large debt owed to his lord. However, the same servant is unwilling to forgive a very small amount owed to him by a fellow servant. When the lord finds this out, he is very angry with his servant and demands that he make full payment of his large debt, because he did not show compassion on his fellow servant who owed him only a small sum.—Matt. 18:23-34

For the followers of Jesus, the lesson of the parable is clear. God has forgiven us our Adamic sins through the redemptive work of Christ. (Eph. 1:3,7) We have been forgiven much. Thus, sins committed against us by our brethren, who have likewise been forgiven by God, must stir within us a similar response of compassion and mercy. Only in this way can we fulfill that which we are told is required of us, "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly" with our God.—Mic. 6:8 ■

Jesus Criticizes Unjust Leaders

Key Verses: *“Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.”*
—*Matthew 23:1-3*

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 23:1-4, 23-26

JESUS RECOGNIZED THAT the scribes and Pharisees of his day held the position of religious instructors of the Jews, though he often rebuked them as hypocrites who deceived the people. The Pharisees were the principal teachers and interpreters of the Mosaic Law, while the scribes were the writers, or recorders, of its many details. As such, these two groups were viewed as the primary expositors of God’s commands and instructions. Jesus himself stated that “the scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.”—Matt. 23:2

As writers, public teachers and expounders of the Mosaic Law, the scribes and Pharisees were required to have knowledge of its many principles and requirements, in order that they might properly fulfill their special responsibilities towards the people. They were, in a sense, to serve as caretakers of the Law and of the Lord’s vineyard, Israel. In his day, Moses had fulfilled the role as the mediator of the covenant between God and Israel. The scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ day,

in many ways, were considered in a similar position of privilege and responsibility.

It is important to note from history that honorable positions can be filled by dishonorable individuals. In this case, it was no new thing for those of vile character to be exalted to high positions in Israel. (Ps. 12:8) Among their kings, priests and other leaders in Old Testament times, many were unrighteous and did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, rather than follow the example of meekness and faithfulness demonstrated by Moses. Now Israel's leaders had become so corrupt and degenerate that it was time for another great prophet to arise, like unto Moses, who would begin to set in motion the steps necessary to erect another "seat" to administer God's law in righteousness. This "great prophet" was Christ Jesus, who, at his First Advent, began this all-important work as God's chosen representative.—Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22,23

Jesus had told the Pharisees that the Law was summed up in two commandments: first, to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and mind, and second, to love their neighbor as themselves. (Matt. 22:37-40; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) In the verses of our lesson, Jesus tells the Pharisees they had omitted these "weightier matters of the law." Instead, they were great sticklers for minute details which were, comparatively speaking, of much less importance. As an example of this, Jesus pointed out that they faithfully paid tithes of the smallest of seeds, "of mint and anise and cummin," for an outward show to the people.—Matt. 23:23

As footstep followers of Christ, we must daily seek to put into practice these vital lessons from the Master. Let us remember that supreme love for God and for our "neighbor" is much more important than the giving of tithes. Let us also fully understand that the cleansing of our hearts and minds is a far more essential work than the cleansing of our flesh.—Rom. 2:28,29; Phil. 2:5; 4:8,9■

The Widow and the Unjust Judge

Key Verse: “*Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?*”
—*Luke 18:7*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 18:1-8

IN TODAY’S LESSON, WE find Jesus giving another parable, in which he spoke of a widow who had suffered certain things of an “adversary.” She went to a judge in her city and pleaded with him to serve justice upon the one who had caused her suffering. Since she was not wealthy and could not bribe him, her repeated appeals to the judge were ignored. (Luke 18:2-4) It is not surprising that the Lord called him an “unjust judge.”—vs. 6

Because the unjust judge “feared not God, neither regarded man,” he paid little attention to the principles of righteousness, nor did he show consideration for his fellow man’s difficulties. Thus, he was unmoved by the complaint of the widow. Being careful regarding his own convenience, however, the judge finally meted out the justice she had requested, since by her constant coming to him she was becoming an annoyance. (vss. 4,5) Though he cared little for the woman’s plight, her persistence illustrated what Jesus wished to emphasize by the parable.

As we look at the lesson of the parable, Jesus did not wish to compare the unjust judge to God, but rather to contrast the two. If an unjust judge can be moved to action because of persistence by an individual in asking

for justice to be served, how much more will a righteous judge. God is a righteous and loving Heavenly Father. If, in our lives, a matter of concern comes to us that in our judgment requires earnest and repeated prayers, and if the answer is not quickly given, we should never think that God is ignoring us. As a loving God, we can firmly trust to his wisdom and power with respect to our petitions, and to his guidance in all our ways.—Prov. 2:6-8; 3:6

In the opening verse of our lesson, Jesus says, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Luke 18:1) This means that the abiding presence of the Heavenly Father and his Son is continually available to us. Their care and interest is constantly upon our behalf, and at any instant we may engage their special attention by means of prayer.

Proper prayer requires giving careful heed to the Lord’s Word. By asking according to that Word, by faith, we can have confidence in the results. We are to watch, pray, wait with patience, and watch still further for the answers from our Heavenly Father. By following these steps with regard to prayer, we will not only be heard, but the Lord’s answers will never be a disappointment to us, because we will count them as an indication of his will.

We are to recognize a distinct difference between coming repeatedly to God in earnest prayer and the “vain repetitions” of some. Jesus condemned such prayers, because they are not given out of the humility and meekness of a properly motivated heart.—Matt. 6:7

As stated in our Key Verse, when his “elect” cry to him in faith, our Heavenly Father is sure to hear and answer their prayers. Although he has permitted them at times to be maligned, slandered and misrepresented, he will bestow upon them, if faithful, “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) Mankind, too, will soon have their oft-repeated prayer answered: “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth.” (Matt. 6:10) For all of these answers to prayer, we render praise and honor to our loving Heavenly Father. ■

Entering God's Kingdom

Key Verse: *“Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”*
—*Luke 13:24*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 13:22-30

IN THE KEY VERSE OF OUR lesson, the word “strive” means to endeavor or struggle with great effort. A path of life based on morality, temperance and responsibility is quite commendable. However, the way in which a Christian is invited to walk during the present Gospel Age entails much greater striving and diligence. This invitation is to follow in the footsteps of our Lord, to seek for “glory and honour and immortality.”—Rom. 2:7

The entrance into this special relationship with God is described as a “strait,” or narrow, gate. The pathway which follows is similarly called a “narrow” way. (Matt. 7:14) It is a way of complete consecration to God, of self-denial, and of sacrifice on behalf of others. (Matt. 16:24; Rom. 12:1) Those who walk in this narrow way do so in response to the calling, or invitation, of God to be joint-heirs with Christ as his bride. (Eph. 1:18; Rom. 8:16,17; II Cor. 11:2) Paul, in speaking of his own life of consecration, said, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:14

How different is the strait gate and narrow way compared to the path of many who claim the name of Christ, and whose conduct often seems little removed from the

spirit of the world. Indeed, most view the zeal which strives, fights, runs and watches as extreme and foolish. The rich, the popular, and those absorbed in the ambitions of this world, are content with the material rewards of this life, and are not likely to leave them for things which do not satisfy these earthly desires. Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, ... because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."—Matt. 11:25

God is in the process of completing a "marvelous work" with regard to the calling and selection of a bride for his Son. This work is not according to the spirit of the world, "the wisdom of their wise men," nor "the understanding of their prudent men." (Isa. 29:14) The Apostle James speaks of God's purpose to take out from among the world "a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) These seek to "enter in" to the heavenly kingdom. Their way, however, is made narrow by the circumstances of the present time and by the opposition of the worldly spirit to truth and righteousness. Thus, the exhortation to these is to "give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—II Pet. 1:10

As disciples striving to walk in the narrow way, through God's Holy Spirit we are privileged to know the "mystery of his will." (Eph. 1:9) The Heavenly Father's plans and purposes are opened up to our minds, and we thus are able to have joy in laying down our lives in sacrifice and in service to the Lord and his cause.—John 15:12,13; I John 3:16; 4:7-11

The strait gate and narrow way of the present time are only for those whom God has called. However, when this "little flock" is complete, and made "joint-heirs" with Christ in the millennial kingdom, another way will be opened for all mankind. It will not be a narrow way, that few can find, but a "way of holiness," with the stumbling stones of sin and temptation removed. All people, "the ransomed of the LORD," will be invited to walk therein, and "obtain joy and gladness."—Isa. 35:8-10 ■

Parable of the Great Dinner

Key Verse: “*The lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*”
—*Luke 14:23*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 14:16-24

servant out again with the commission to invite others to the feast. Having done this, the servant returned and said, “Sir I have done what thou didst command, and yet there is room.”—vss. 22,23, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

The feast described by Jesus in this parable denotes the spiritual feast of the present Gospel Age. It is not for all people, because “many are called,” or invited, but “few are chosen.” That is, few accept the terms of God’s call and fully dedicate their life to do his will, and to follow in Jesus’ footsteps of sacrifice and service. Thus, they withdraw themselves from feasting at the Lord’s spiritual table. (Matt. 22:14) Those first invited to this spiritual feast were the Jewish nation and, in particular, their religious leaders—those who sat in “Moses’ seat.” (Matt. 23:2) However,

IN THIS PARABLE OF

Jesus, a householder had prepared a great feast and invited many people to partake of the bounties which he had so graciously provided. Once the feast was ready, he sent his servant to gather the guests. However, all who had been invited found some excuse to cancel their attendance. (Luke 14:16-20) When the servant related this to his master, he became angry, and sent his

instead of accepting Jesus' call to come out from Moses into Christ, the greater prophet than Moses, we are told that the religious leaders "derided him," and the nation as a whole rejected him.—Luke 16:14; 20:17; Isa. 53:3

In our Key Verse, the servant of the parable is told to go out and "compel" those whom he would call from the "highways and hedges" to come to his lord's feast. The word translated "compel" more accurately means to constrain, entreat, or urge. The Lord never compels, with the thought of forcing the acceptance of his favors. However, he does constrain by his love, his grace, and the promises held out to those who love righteousness. (II Cor. 5:14,15) It was God's will that his spiritual "house may be filled." Thus, after giving the Jews sufficient opportunity, the Lord's apostles were commissioned to turn to the Gentiles, beginning with the conversion of Cornelius. Since that time the invitation to the Gospel feast has been open to all without distinction. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, ... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—Gal. 3:28

The spiritual table spread before us when we accept God's invitation is bountiful. There is food to satisfy every spiritual longing and hunger, more than we can ask or think. It is a feast of joys and pleasures in the presence of the Lord, and in the outworking of his plan to bless all mankind. To come to this feast involves leaving worldly hopes, aims and pursuits. In proportion as earthly things are abandoned, and according to our hunger for righteousness, we may feast heartily. (Ps. 147:14; Matt. 5:6) "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him."—Ps. 34:8

God, in his foreknowledge, has determined a fixed number to constitute the church of Christ, those whose names will be "written in heaven." (Rev. 7:4; Luke 10:20) When the number of the elect is complete, the Lord's spiritual house will at last be filled. Then the remainder of mankind shall be uplifted and blessed, that they might fill God's earthly house. ■

Crises in the Life of Peter

“Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”
—John 6:68,69

THE APOSTLE PETER IS one of the most colorful and engaging characters in the New Testament. He was among the earliest to become one of the Lord’s disciples. It was Andrew, the brother of Peter, who first introduced him to Jesus. This was shortly following Jesus’ return from his forty days of meditation in the wilderness, during which he also had been tempted by the devil.—John 1:35-42; Matt. 4:1-11

To consider all of the experiences of Peter in his association with Jesus during the following three and one-half years would be to trace most of the recorded history of our Lord during that period. Peter was not only one of the first called, but he also became one of the three special associates of Jesus, sharing that honor and privilege with James and John, who were brothers in the flesh as well as in the spirit.

These three, together with Peter's brother Andrew, were fishermen and engaged in business at the Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Tiberias. (John 6:1) It is supposed that these four continued in their fishing business for some period after they became Jesus' disciples. They likely also spent a considerable portion of this time with Jesus, becoming more closely associated with his ministry.

END OF THE FISHING BUSINESS

It was in connection with Peter and the other three disciples' fishing that the first experience we will consider occurred. The account is given in Luke 5:1-11 and Matthew 4:18-22. It is the story of Jesus' preaching to the multitude on the shore of the sea. Desiring a suitable place from which to give his message, he entered the ship of Simon Peter, which he asked to have moved out a little distance from the shore. There he "taught the people out of the ship."—Luke 5:3

When he had finished his sermon to the multitude, Jesus turned to his disciples to give them some special and deeper instruction. He suggested to Peter that he move out into deep water and let down his net. Peter replied that they had toiled all night and taken nothing, but nevertheless at Jesus' word he agreed to let down the net once again. The result was astonishing. They now caught so great a multitude of fish that their net broke, and they sought the assistance of their partners, James and John. Both ships were filled so full that they began to sink.—vss. 4-7

This miraculous demonstration of Jesus' power, coupled with the glorious message of the kingdom to which they had just listened, was too much for

Peter. The account tells us that he cast himself down before Jesus, and made a most surprising request, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."—Luke 5:8

Here was one very conscious of his own imperfections and deeply impressed with the perfections of the Master. Peter was so doubtful of his own ability to measure up to the standards of a disciple of Jesus that he felt unworthy to be associated with him. However, this was just the attitude of honesty and humility that was necessary for Peter, as well as for all who would be disciples of Jesus, to attain before the Lord could safely and effectively use them in his work. Seeing this, Jesus reassured Peter and his associates saying, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."—vs. 10

How sweet those words must have sounded to impetuous Peter! How greatly did they affect this disciple who had asked the Lord to depart. In his heart, Peter no doubt felt a deeper devotion to the Master than ever before, and a more earnest longing to be associated with him. Most assuredly, Peter would call this important experience to mind on many subsequent occasions.

That seems to have been the end of the fishing business for those four disciples, until a time several years afterward which we will consider later in our study of the experiences of Peter. For now, however, we are told that "when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him." (vs. 11) Hereafter it would be no longer part-time association with the Master and his work, but such complete devotion that Peter could later say, "We have forsaken all, and followed thee."—Matt. 19:27

LESSONS FROM THESE EARLY EXPERIENCES

We find lessons for ourselves in this incident in the lives of those early disciples. Like them, there may have been a period in our lives, when, after becoming the Lord's disciples, we were still divided in our attention to this new vocation. Perhaps we were not fully setting our minds on things above, but still pursuing to some extent selfish and spiritually profitless worldly aims and ambitions.—Matt. 6:19,20; Col. 3:1,2

We might wonder how, after his initial introduction to Jesus and acceptance as a follower, it was possible for Peter to continue his fishing business. Why had he not, before this miraculous demonstration, felt the Master's presence and his service to be so marvelous a privilege as to have "forsaken all" and followed him at the very first?

We may turn this question upon ourselves, and recall if a period of time went by after we had made a full consecration to God before we truly began to understand and put into practice a life of full devotion that such an agreement requires. Going still further in our introspection, we may ask whether we have even now mastered the lesson that Peter and his companions learned that day in the boat with Jesus, and whether, in our hearts and as fully as possible in our lives, we are really "All for Jesus! all for Jesus! All my days and all my hours."—*Hymns of Dawn*, #8

Another suggestion which comes through consideration of this introduction to a "full-time" ministry is that Peter had to become fully "caught" himself before he could be a successful fisher of men. The sharp points of

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(Continued from page 31) truth must first reach his heart, revealing his helplessness and unworthiness. He must become truly "poor in spirit" before he could safely be used. He must "mourn" before he could be "comforted," and, as one of the Lord's special representatives, share in the work of comforting others.—Matt. 5:3,4

It is no less true today. The one who would be used of the Lord must first have opened his own heart and mind fully to the Master's instruction. Paul indicated this in his letter to Timothy, saying that one who labors in a vineyard "must be first partaker of the fruits." (II Tim. 2:6) To those who have responded as did Peter, our gracious Lord offers the same comforting reassurance that he gave to Peter, and the promise that we may share in his ministry both now and in the future.

"THOU ART THE CHRIST"

The next event under consideration which was of major importance in the life of Peter is recorded in Matthew 16:13-23. This account records a conversation between Jesus and his disciples when, in their journeying, they were in the northern part of Palestine, at "Caesarea Philippi." Jesus' ministry had now been in progress for more than two years, and he asked his disciples concerning what the results had been: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

Their reply was not encouraging: "Some say thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." (vs. 14) How remarkable that the disciples could not recall anyone among the multitudes to whom Jesus had

preached who discerned the fact that he was far greater than any of these noted servants of God.

To instill a new idea in the mind of fallen, imperfect man has always been a difficult task. It is well for us to recall the meager results evidenced in the disciples' statement. Thus we will not be discouraged when our glorious message of the nearness of God's kingdom seems to fall on heedless ears, or excite but a temporary response tempered with incredulity. Rather, let us be encouraged, for we are still in the age when we must "walk by faith, not by sight," and at the present time "all men have not faith." (II Cor. 5:7; II Thess. 3:2) We are in the company of the Master and his disciples. As such, we are to emulate their zeal, obedience, and faithfulness by proclaiming the Gospel in the end of the age as they did in its beginning.

In our narrative Jesus then made his inquiry more personal, asking the disciples whom they recognized him to be. This was the occasion for the great confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ [Hebrew: *Messiah*], the Son of the living God." The commendation Peter received from Jesus in response to his declaration is familiar to all Bible students: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Jesus was not merely a perfect man, but was the long-promised Messiah, the Son of God. The disciples were now convinced of his true origin and office. They were prepared to witness to these tremendously important facts.—Matt. 16:15-17

MUST FIRST SUFFER AND DIE

This insight into the true character of their Master was only part of the instructions he had yet

to give in the short time that remained for him to be with his disciples in the flesh. Thus we read that “from that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”—Matt. 16:21

It is not surprising that Jesus’ statement did not coincide with the idea that Peter had as to the destiny marked out in the Scriptures for Christ, the Messiah. Never hesitant to express himself, we read that Peter immediately confronted Jesus, and “began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”—vs. 22

This was a well-intentioned effort of the devoted Peter to dissuade Jesus from the course he knew had been foretold by the Old Testament prophets, and which was of vital importance in the accomplishment of the plan of God. Jesus’ reaction was instantaneous and emphatic. “He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence [Greek: trap or snare] unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”—vs. 23

What a trial those severe words of reproof must have been to Peter, testing greatly his humility as a disciple—now merely a student of the Master. Only a short time earlier he received one of the highest commendations of the New Testament in the assurance that God had revealed the identity of Jesus to him. Now, however, he was personified as Satan, the enemy of God.

We may wonder why Jesus gave such a stern reproof. As we ponder the circumstances and the

conversation, we see that Peter's well-meant remark was in effect the same as Satan's effort in the wilderness. Namely, it was an effort to dissuade Jesus from his course of loyalty to God's plans, which involved his surrender of human life as a voluntary sacrifice.

No progress could be made in Peter's understanding as long as he believed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and at the same time supposed that he should avoid persecution, suffering, and death. This fundamental error, that to be the Christ, or a true follower of Christ, was possible without sacrifice unto death, had to be refuted by the Master in the most positive terms. This was not only for Peter's benefit, but for the protection and guidance of the Lord's followers ever since.

Later, when Jesus again told the disciples of his impending death, they were "amazed" and "exceeding sorrowful." "They understood none of these things," as to the reasons for Jesus' determination to go among his enemies. (Mark 10:32; Matt. 26:22; Luke 18:34) It was from Jesus' explanations during his post-resurrection appearances and by the eventual enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, given on the Day of Pentecost, that the proper understanding of these events was made known to the disciples. (Luke 24:25-27,44-46; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4) Subsequently, we see abundant evidence in Peter that he had humbly absorbed the sobering lesson given by his Master months earlier at Caesarea Philippi.

GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE TEST

We find Peter, only hours before Jesus' betrayal, objecting to the Lord's saying that they would all "be offended" that night because of him. Boastfully,

Peter assured Jesus, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." (Matt. 26:31-35) These dear followers of Christ were learning a great lesson, even though not yet able to put it into practice until "endued with power from on high" through the begetting of the Holy Spirit. (Luke 24:49) Nevertheless, they had determined to profess loyalty to their Master, even unto death.

Another event on that fateful night, which was among the important experiences of Peter, took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. In Luke 22:35-38, we are told of Jesus' instructions to the disciples as they left the upper room. Among other things they were to provide themselves with swords. He said, "This that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." The disciples replied that there were two swords among the company, "And he said unto them, It is enough."

We pause to consider the remarkable statement of the Lord that he had now reached the climax of his earthly experience, and that the prophecy would soon be fulfilled which stated that he was to be counted among the transgressors. (Isa. 53:12) What a glorious testimony of a life of perfect devotion and of faithfulness to every detail of the divine will for him as he had discerned it in the Scriptures. It was for grace and strength to meet this final test that the Master agonized in prayer that night in Gethsemane.—Luke 22:41-44

After being strengthened by the ministry of an angelic messenger, the Jewish multitude, led by Judas, approached to apprehend Jesus. Peter no

doubt had in mind the Lord's instructions regarding the swords. He asked, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Not waiting for a reply, the impetuous disciple "smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear."—vss. 49,50

Now Peter and his companions were to be given another important lesson of far-reaching significance to them, to all the Lord's disciples down through the age, and to us in the end of the age. They might have the means to avoid suffering, to resist injustice and persecution, but they were not to use them. It was God's will that they suffer. It was the Father who poured the cup for Jesus that night and gave it to him to drink. Accordingly, we read in John's account, "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11) Jesus then healed the wound made by Peter's sword, with the observation, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."—Matt. 26:52

We have no record of Peter's response to the Lord's reproof, but we have the evidence of his later hearty acceptance of this new idea. After Pentecost, when Peter and the other apostles were arrested, imprisoned, and beaten by order of the Sanhedrin, they "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame" for the name of Christ. (Acts 5:29,40,41) Later, we read Peter's clear statement to follow the non-resisting Master and to heed the instructions which he gave and exemplified that night in the Garden. Peter's exhortation to the brethren is to "arm yourselves," not with swords, but "with the same mind" found in Jesus.—I Pet. 2:19-24; 4:1

PETER'S MOST HEART-SEARCHING TEST

We now come to what are perhaps the most sorrowful hours in the history of the human race. The Son of God, the one fully controlled by, and perfectly manifesting the spirit of humility, simplicity, grace and love, is on trial before members of the human family whom he helped create. There, the representatives of our race, motivated by pride, jealousy and hatred, brought false witness against him and condemned him to death. Furthermore, those who were guilty of that unmatched wrong were not the ignorant and godless elements of society, but the most enlightened group among the chosen nation of Israel—their religious leaders.

Peter was there in the high priest's palace that night. His love for his Master gave him the courage to follow him into the presence of his enemies. He was pointed out as a member of Jesus' company. Then, in the very presence of the Master he loved, Peter denied that he even knew him. How astonishing a combination of qualities we find in Peter. Here love and courage had brought him into danger. Yet, whatever the reason, he denied with an oath the one whom but a few hours before he had assured that "though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended ... Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."—Matt. 26:33-35

Jesus came into view, under guard of soldiers, and he looked at Peter. (Luke 22:61) How that look must have cut him to the heart. It doubtless was the most critical moment in all of his experiences with the Master thus far. Would he repent, or would he, like Judas, make repudiation of his Master final? If we

were there, how breathlessly we would have waited to see the reaction of Peter. Jesus' look was no doubt full of yearning for his sorely pressed disciple, who was in danger of being sifted "as wheat," as Jesus had forewarned the previous evening in the upper room.—vs. 31

As the cock crowed, Peter remembered that Jesus had warned him that "before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter went out of the palace. Thankfully, he did not go out as Judas did, to hang himself. He also did not go out to console himself with the thought that he had been under great strain, and thus make excuses for his denial of the Master. Rather, Peter "went out, and wept bitterly." (Matt. 26:75) Peter had passed this great climactic test successfully! The humbling process had truly begun, a vital step in preparation for the great apostolic work that was soon to begin when the disciples would be endued with God's Holy Spirit.

LOVEST THOU ME?

This humbling process was continued a short time later, following Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Not yet fully aware of the course they should pursue, Peter and others of the disciples again engaged in the fishing business. As had happened three years before, they toiled all night and caught nothing. Then the stranger on the shore advised them to cast their net on the right side, assuring them that they would find fish there. Again a miraculous abundance of fish was taken. Convinced that it was the Lord on the shore, Peter could not wait but cast himself into the sea to swim to him.—John 21:1-7

Later, after the meal at which the risen Lord was the host, he had an intimate conversation with Peter. "Lovest thou me?" Jesus asked Peter three times. "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee," Peter replied, to which Jesus instructed him, "Feed my lambs. ... Feed my sheep." The risen Lord then reminded Peter that though he was used to taking care of himself and going where he wanted to go, the time would come when "another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." The record further states that Jesus indicated to Peter the manner of his death—by crucifixion, it is supposed—by which "he should glorify God." Peter's devotion was in no wise daunted now. God could begin to honor and use him as an apostle, since the humbling had been accomplished.—vss. 15-19

FULLY PREPARED

Years afterward Peter alludes to this conversation at the seaside. He says the time is near when "I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me." He was now fully prepared for that final test. In fact, the account seems to indicate that it weighed little upon him, and his greater concern was to faithfully complete his ministry among the Lord's followers to whom he wrote. He would "not be negligent," but keep them reminded of the Gospel and the course which would insure that they make their "calling and election sure," though they knew the things of which he wrote and were "established in the present truth."—II Pet. 1:10-14

Indeed, Peter felt it necessary to continue to stir up the brethren by reminding them of these things,

“as long as I am in this tabernacle.” Looking even beyond his ministry in the flesh, he writes, “Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”
—vs. 15

AN INSPIRATION TO US

Cephas, or Peter—meaning a rock—was the name Jesus gave Simon when he was first brought to him. (John 1:42) How little he seemed to deserve that name in some of the tests the Lord applied. However, Jesus saw in him the animating principle of reverence for God. He loved Peter, and Peter loved his Master. Jesus could wait for Peter’s development with patience, hope and helpfulness. He views and treats us likewise, and he gives us opportunities to similarly discern the gold in the character of our brethren. He desires that we share in their encouragement as he brings them through life’s critical experiences until their characters are fully developed.

At the beginning, Peter’s character was one made up of complex and sometimes contradictory human impulses and dispositions. However, the Lord led him in such a way, overruling his experiences, and instructing him through his Word and his providences, that he fully overcame those conflicting dispositions as far as his heart was concerned. The new impulses and Godlike qualities were gradually crystallized into a rock-like, immovable and unchangeable character, prepared as a “living stone” for the temple of God.—I Pet. 2:4,5, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*

How glorious to consider Peter’s growth in grace and his final success! We rejoice also, to think of the saints down through the age—only a “little

flock”—who have likewise, through the infinite love and grace of God, “bought” of him the divine character, “gold tried in the fire.” (Luke 12:32; Rev. 3:18) As Jesus clearly indicated, the cost of such character is sacrifice, tribulation, death to the flesh and to its desires and ambitions. Yet, the most splendid thought is that it is still possible for us to “purchase” this gold of such immeasurably high value. May our consideration of these incidents in the life of Peter inspire and encourage us to press on in the same way until we too have made our “calling and election sure.” ■

*“I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”—
Psalm 16:8*

He who has buried his own will completely in the will of the Lord can know no disappointment; but in every affair of his life he sees by faith divine appointment or supervision, and hears the Word of the Lord in all of life’s affairs assuring him, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” It is one of the evidences of reaching the graduating condition of heart, when we are able to take the oppositions of the great Adversary and of the world and of our own flesh patiently, uncomplainingly, uncomplainingly, “joyfully”—as a part of the disciplinary experience meted out to us by our all-wise and all-loving Lord.

—*Daily Heavenly Manna*, July 3

“Seek Me That You May Live”

*“For thus says the
LORD to the house
of Israel, Seek Me
that you may live.”*

—*Amos 5:4, New
American Standard
Bible*

FROM THE OPENING VERSE

of his book, we understand that Amos was a herdsman in Tekoa, a small town about six miles south of Bethlehem. There the terrain was rugged, and one might barely make a living in such circumstances. Amos described himself, saying, “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ... and the LORD said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” (Amos 7:14,15, *Revised Standard Version*) From these words, we see that Amos was very humble.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY

Humility has always been an important characteristic of those seeking to please God. For example, many years before the time of Amos, Solomon was king over all twelve tribes of Israel. At first, King Solomon was humble, greatly desiring to serve and please God. Therefore, “God gave Solomon wisdom

and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart.” (I Kings 3:5-14; 4:1,29) However, when Solomon became old, he “did evil in the sight of the LORD, ... because his heart was turned from the LORD,” and he had not kept the covenant and statutes which God had commanded him to follow.—I Kings 11:1-13

During his reign, Solomon had put in charge of the house of Joseph a young “mighty man of valour,” named Jeroboam. (vs. 28) One day, as Jeroboam was going out from Jerusalem wearing a “new garment,” the Prophet Ahijah took hold of his garment and cut it into twelve pieces, and said to Jeroboam, “Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee.” The prophet explained that this would take place because Israel, under Solomon’s rule, had forsaken God and no longer walked in his ways, nor did they do what was right in God’s eyes. (vss. 29-33) The division of Israel into two kingdoms, one made up of ten tribes and the other consisting of two tribes—often referred to as the kingdom of Judah—continued until both kingdoms were later taken captive by Gentile nations.

The Prophet Ahijah then gave this message from God to Jeroboam: “If thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and commandments, ... I will be with thee.” (vss. 37,38) These accounts of both Solomon and Jeroboam teach us an important lesson concerning one of God’s principles. We must remain humble and faithful to God throughout our entire life in all

that we say, do, and think, or we will be rejected. The Apostle Peter wrote: “Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” (I Pet. 5:5,6) Indeed, the promise given to those who have answered the heavenly call is, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

SERIOUS TRANSGRESSIONS

The words of God, spoken by the Prophet Amos to the Israelites, were critical of three other serious transgressions: wealth derived through deceit, idol worship, and immoral behavior. “Thus says the LORD: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes—they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and turn aside the way of the afflicted.”—Amos 2:6,7, *RSV*

The expression “for three transgressions” seems to refer to completeness or fullness. The words “and for four,” added to the three transgressions, suggests that the ultimate effects of sin had been reached and would no longer be tolerated by God. Therefore, God would “not revoke the punishment.”

WEALTH DERIVED THROUGH DECEIT

In the days of the prophet Amos, many merchants in Israel measured out grain with containers that shortchanged the poor. They adjusted their scales so that, unknown to the buyer, the required payment was greater than it should have been for the amount of grain measured out. God had seen this sin, and

in one of Amos' prophecies he said, "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, ... making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit." (Amos 8:4,5) Consequently, it was a time when the rich got richer, and the poor became poorer.

A similar condition existed with the nation as a whole. Israel had enjoyed a period of rest from their surrounding enemies. This led to ease and luxury, and the deceitful results of such outwardly pleasant circumstances upon fallen human hearts and minds. Many thought the nation's enjoyable state would continue indefinitely, but it lasted only until Israel was conquered and taken captive by Babylon.

IDOL WORSHIP AND IMMORALITY

After Jeroboam was made king of the northern ten tribes, he became afraid that when the people would go down to do sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem, they might be tempted to revolt and join forces with Rehoboam, king of Judah, the two-tribe kingdom. Jeroboam made two calves of gold, placing one in Bethel and the other in Dan. He told the people that it was too difficult for them to go to Jerusalem to worship, and falsely claimed that the golden calves he had made were the same as the gods which had brought their forefathers out of the land of Egypt.—I Kings 12:25-33

Jeroboam had set up an alternative place for the people to worship and offer sacrifice. However, God was greatly angered by this and spoke strong words against the Israelites through the prophet Amos. "Come to Bethel, and transgress; ... multiply

transgressions; bring your sacrifices every morning, ... offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel!”—Amos 4:4,5, *RSV*

Immorality also became a problem in both the ten-tribe and two-tribe kingdoms. Israel was surrounded by heathen nations which practiced immoral and godless behavior. Many in Israel began to do similar things. “Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. They despised his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and the warnings which he gave them. They ... used divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD.” “A man and his father go in to the same maiden, ... they lay themselves down beside every altar upon garments taken in pledge; and in the house of God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.”—II Kings 17:13-17; Amos 2:7,8, *RSV*

Despite these terrible sins, many in Israel evidently thought that God was still pleased with them, since they were observing some aspects of the Law, such as feast days, solemn assemblies, and various offerings. However, God gave this message to Israel, through the Prophet Amos: “I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your

solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen.”—Amos 5:21-23, *RSV*

JUDGMENT OF SINS

Amos was then given four visions from God describing Israel’s shameful condition, and why action should be taken against them. In the first vision, Amos describes what he sees with these words: “The Lord GOD showed me: behold, he was forming locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth. ... When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee! How can Jacob stand? He is so small!” (Amos 7:1,2, *RSV*) In his own eyes, Jacob—Israel as a nation—saw himself as self-sufficient and proud. However, Amos saw Israel as it really was, and pleaded for God’s mercy. Because of this, God promised that he would withhold the punishment he was going to send.—vs. 3

In the second vision, Amos sees God calling for “a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land.” Once more, Amos pleads for mercy upon Israel, and God again holds back the punishment and ends the plague.—vss. 4-6

The third vision concerns a plumb line. The prophet writes: “Behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. And the LORD said to me, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A plumb line. Then the Lord said, Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of

my people Israel; I will never again pass by them; the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”—vss. 7-9

God had directed the people of Israel in the way they should go by his commandments contained in the Law, and by the many warnings given by his prophets. These constituted the “plumb line,” or requirements of righteousness, which Israel was to follow. God’s standards were clear and precise. However, the measurement of the wall showed how “out of plumb” Israel had become from what was righteous. Even the “high places” and “sanctuaries” were being used for unrighteous purposes.

In the fourth vision, it was harvest time. “The Lord GOD showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what do you see? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then the LORD said to me, The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass by them.” (Amos 8:1,2, *RSV*) Here is the final scene. The fruit of Israel’s waywardness is fully ripe, and it is now time for judgment and punishment. One can almost visualize a basket of ripe fruit turning to rot in the harvest-time sun, illustrating how the nation of Israel had decayed and spoiled in God’s sight.

God repeats his judgment against Israel, saying “I will spare them no longer.” (vs. 2, *New American Standard Bible*) Amos recognizes the justice of God’s pronouncement and does not seek to overturn his verdict, as he had done with the earlier visions. God’s word was sure, and the sentence would be carried out.

It seems that the people of Israel believed along the lines of the oft-repeated phrase: “once in grace, always in grace.” God had highly favored them as his chosen people. Therefore, they falsely reasoned that he was obligated to feed them, give them water, and protect them forever, no matter what they did. However, God was under no such obligation, neither before, during, nor subsequent to the time of the Prophet Amos.

The Israelites also thought that in order to please God it was sufficient to merely follow rituals and traditions. The ten-tribe kingdom went to Bethel to sacrifice and bring tithes. Their empty rituals meant nothing to the Lord, though, because he was looking for the proper fruits of whole-hearted obedience to him. This he did not find. Like a basket of summer fruit rotting in the sun, the nation of Israel had corrupted. God informed Israel that he was about to take action specifically directed against them. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”—Amos 3:2

NATURAL ISRAEL TYPICAL

Although the Israelites were God’s chosen people and were given many promises from him, they were not willing to reform their hearts. Consequently, they were taken captive by Babylon. In the New Testament, we are warned that the experiences of Israel are an example to us. The Apostle Paul wrote: “These things occurred to them typically, and were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Wherefore, let him who is thinking that he has stood, take care

lest he fall.”—I Cor. 10:11,12, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

In the Bible it is stated that “Zion” is the “city of David.” (II Sam. 5:7; I Kings 8:1) Literal Zion was a high plateau, referred to as a mountain, located in the city of Jerusalem. In the Scriptures, mountains are frequently referred to symbolically as representing kingdoms. In the book of Amos God said, “Woe to them that are at ease in Zion.” (Amos 6:1) In other words, woe to those in Israel at that time who felt at ease with God’s blessings, as embodied in the beautiful temple at Jerusalem which they so revered. Woe also to us, spiritual Israelites, if ease turns us away from God.

Moreover, in the New Testament “mount Sion” is used with reference to the spiritual or heavenly phase of the kingdom of God. (Heb. 12:22; I Pet. 2:6; Rev. 14:1) Can it be said that spiritual Zion, those now running for the mark of the prize of the heavenly call, are “at ease?” Could we be guilty of the same sins as was natural Israel, earthly Zion, in Amos’ day?

Towards the end of his sermon on the mount, Jesus said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:20,21) The “fruits” which God desires in his people are termed by the Apostle Paul as the “fruit of the Spirit.” This fruitage consists of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” and is to be exercised toward others as a reflection of God’s character in us.—Gal. 5:22-25

THE TRIAL OF PROSPERITY

The Apostle Peter wrote: “The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 1:7) In this verse the word “trial” means “test.” In the early years of the Gospel Age, a difficult trial or test for the followers of Christ was frequently that of physical persecution. However, at the present time, this is rare for most of the Lord’s people.

In a significant portion of the world today, prosperity is more or less abundant, compared to living standards of the 19th century and earlier. Prosperity, though, can be a hindrance to pleasing the Lord, as we are told in the book of Job: “So, full of ease, their life passes and they go down at last without a struggle to the grave. And these are the men who bade God keep his distance from them, refused to learn his will; what right had he, the Omnipotent, to their obedience, what advantage would they gain by offering prayer to him?”—Job 21:13-15, *The Knox Bible*

Prosperity was a severe trial for the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Materially, things had probably never been better for them. They worshipped when and where they pleased, and many believed what they wished. This tainted sense of “rightness” they perceived as warranted, and the prosperity they enjoyed was, in their eyes, evidence of God’s approval.

However, there might be no greater trial than in the moment of exceeding great fortune. When reading about the summer and winter “houses” and

the “houses of ivory” in Israel at the time of Amos, the arrogance of Uzziah, and the failure of Solomon once he was rich, it is evident that prosperity can indeed be a trial for the Lord’s followers.—Amos 3:15; II Chron. 26:16-21; I Kings 11:4-10

Another kind of prosperity could be that of having abundantly available to us at the present time the message of truth. We may claim to have been “in the truth” for many years, reading and studying the Word of God and the additional Bible helps available. However, we must inquire: Is “the truth” genuinely in us? Is it continuing to have a sanctifying effect on us, and helping us in the work of transforming our heart and mind?—John 17:17; Rom. 12:2; I Thess. 4:1-4

In the book of Revelation there is a description of some among the professed Gospel Age followers of Christ who, in their own eyes, feel they are rich and prosperous, but whom God judges to be something else. “Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; ... thou art lukewarm, ... Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” (Rev. 3:14-17) The message to the church of Laodicea is the seventh and final one noted in John the Revelator’s vision, and which we believe refers to the present Harvest period at the end of the Gospel Age.—Matt. 13:39, *Diaglott*

IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY TODAY

At the present time there are probably not as many literal idols, made of wood or stone, which

are bowed down to and worshipped, as in the days of Amos. Modern day idols are generally much more subtle and might include such things as: popularity, wealth, fame, prestige, and self. In today's society, to be proud of our own accomplishments and success, and to tell others what we have done or achieved, and the recognition we have received from others, is well regarded. This could lead us to start spending more and more time informing others of the interesting things happening in our personal life, as well as reading about what everyone else has been doing. All of this, however, is at the expense of using our time to meditate and study upon the Word of God, and to reflect on how we can apply the lessons contained therein. If we are not careful, these general attitudes, so prevalent in today's society, could gradually lead us astray and take us away from the paths of the Lord.

Likewise, as in Amos' time, immorality is rampant today. In the media, many immoral and ungodly practices are repeatedly shown as acceptable conduct. In addition, governments throughout the world have passed laws in recent years legalizing certain of these kinds of behavior. We are sorry to witness these things, realizing that they are additional results of man's fall, and which many will need to overcome and rid themselves of during Christ's earthly kingdom. (Isa. 35:8; Rev. 21:27) For the followers of Christ at the present time, proper and improper moral behaviors are clearly laid out for us in the Scriptures.—Rom. 1:21-28; I Cor. 6:9,10,19,20; Eph. 5:1-9, *New International Version*

THE ANTIDOTE: SEEKING THE LORD

God said to the house of Israel, “Seek ye me, and ye shall live.” (Amos 5:4) Through the prophet, the Lord further explained that seeking him was not a question of journeying to Bethel, or even to Jerusalem. Rather, it was to “seek good, and not evil,” and to “hate the evil, and love the good.”—vss. 14,15

The Prophet Micah wondered how he should approach unto the Lord. He asked, “Shall I come before him with burnt offerings? ... Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” Micah then records the answer God gave to him: “What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” (Mic. 6:6-8) Similarly, Moses wrote: “What doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear [reverence] the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”—Deut. 10:12

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Amos saw through the pomp and prosperity present in his day. Let us also be aware of the spectacle, idol worship, and immorality present today. We realize that the iniquity in this present evil world is reaching its fullness and is ripe for God’s judgment. (Rev. 14:14-19) However, let us also recognize our own personal responsibility with regard to God’s requirements for spiritual Israel.

Jesus warned that during the harvest of the Gospel Age, “because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold.” (Matt. 24:12,

Revised Version) Let us not allow the iniquity around us in the world to cause our hearts to grow cold or lukewarm. Let us likewise not be led away from God by seeking after prosperity, love of ease, or popularity among others. We cannot claim the promises related to the high calling which are set before us, while at the same time doing as the world does. Rather, our desire should be to seek God, striving more and more to “do justly,” to “love mercy,” and to “walk humbly.”

The principles of God do not change. In Amos’ day, God judged the nation of Israel as unworthy of his continued favor at that time. We believe these prophecies also have an application to the present Gospel Age. The Apostle Peter wrote, “The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” (I Pet. 4:17) Let us give close attention to God’s Word, that we may become more and more like our Father in Heaven, the one whom we are to please. Let us love the things which are true, right, noble and godly, regardless of what others around us may say or do. Thus, soon we shall hear his sweet, “Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”—Matt. 25:23 ■

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DawnBible: The Brazilian Bible Students really appreciate *The Dawn Magazine* in Portuguese. We often times consider its articles in our online and presential meetings. It is such a blessing! May the Lord continue to bless your efforts to translate this magazine to other languages.—Brazil

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

G. Balko	Vernon, BC	July 6-8	T. Krupa	Prince Albert, SK	
R. Charlton	Portland, OR	July 11			June 30-July 2
	San Diego, CA	29		Delaware Valley, PA	22
O. B. Elbert	Vernon, BC	July 6-8	R. Niemczyk	Prince Albert, SK	
M. Ensley	Vernon, BC	July 6-8			June 30-July 2
K. Humphreys	Vernon, BC	July 6-8	A. Oystryk	Vernon, BC	July 6-8
B. Jakubowski	Vernon, BC	July 6-8	D. Rice	Prince Albert, SK	
B. Keith	Vernon, BC	July 6-8			June 30-July 2
			B. Sweeney	Vernon, BC	July 6-8

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 Harriete Yates, La Grange, WY—May 9. Age, 100

Sister Dolores Seremak, Detroit, MI—May 20. Age, 89

Brother Roman Kuzma, Detroit, MI—June 2. Age, 91

Sister Adela Allard, San Luis Obispo, CA—June 10. Age, 94

Brother Eugenio Roque, Buena Vista, Philippines—June 13. Age, 65

Sister Bonnie Ann Interisano, Bend, OR—June 14. Age, 68

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.

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. Email: bbsecclesias@yahoo.com

RED DEER ALBERTA CONVENTION, August 10-12—Pioneer Lodge, 4324 47th Avenue, Red Deer, AB, Canada. Contact J. Neumeier. Phone: (403) 746-5052 or Email: jbneumeier@live.com

OKPU ALA NGWA CONVENTION, August 11—Class Meeting Hall, Okpuala Ngwa, Abia State, Nigeria. Contact C. Godwin. Email: nyerugo@yahoo.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 8-12—Szczyrk, Poland. ul. Wrzosowa 28 A, 43-370 Szczyrk. Website: www.biblestudentsconventions.com

OHOPA CONVENTION, August 25—Ohoba place of fellowship, Adapalm Road, Alaka Ohaji, Imo State, Nigeria. Contact M. Uzor. 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 98133. Contact L. Flinn. Phone: (206) 518-2678 or Email: laurie@flinn.us

HUNTSVILLE CONVENTION, September 8,9—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive, Huntsville, AL 35806 Contact T. Allen. Phone: (360) 910-4451 or Email: timallen6768@gmail.com

QUEENSLAND CONVENTION, October 5-7—Alexandra Park Conference Centre, 13 Mari Street, Alexandra Headland, QLD 4572. Contact D. Greenhalgh. Phone: 617-5483-1946 or Email: darryngreenhalgh@hotmail.com

LAGOS CONVENTION, October 6—Sure Foundation Schools, #16 Akintojoye Street, Orioke Bus stop, Ejigbo, Lagos State, Nigeria. Contact C. Oledibe. Phone: +2347033693841 or Email: oledibe@yahoo.com

PITTSBURGH AREA CONVENTION, October 6,7—Sewickley Grange Hall, Route 136, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact L. Mlinek. lmlinek@verizon.net

COLORADO CONVENTION, October 6-8—Holiday Inn Express & Suites, 17140 West Colfax Avenue, Golden, CO 80401. Phone: (303) 278-2388. Contact D. Moss. Email: deb.moss@comcast.net

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, October 13,14—Kenowa Hills Middle School, 3950 Hendershot Avenue NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544. Contact T. Malinowski. Email: malinowski.tim@gmail.com

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 27,28—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com