

# The DAWN

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# Our Lord's Return

## The Kingdom and Its Blessings

*“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. ...*

*The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”*

*—Isaiah 9:6,7*

### **THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE**

of our Lord's return is the establishment of a worldwide kingdom which will assure the people of peace and the opportunity to enjoy health and everlasting life. What will this new government be like? Will it be merely a holy influence that sweeps over the earth? It will indeed be such an influence, but in addition it will have a definite system of government and administration. Christ will be the king, the invisible ruler, whose position in that kingdom is beautifully described

by the Prophet Isaiah in our opening text. The

church will be associated with Christ in the spiritual, or invisible, phase of that kingdom. These, throughout the age now closing, have faithfully followed in his steps, and the promise has been that if they suffer with Christ they shall also reign with him.—II Tim. 2:12

God's promises to the faithful followers of the Master are spiritual, or heavenly. Jesus said to his disciples, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3) Misunderstanding the intent of these promises, many have concluded that it has been God's purpose to take as many of earth's inhabitants to heaven as believe on Christ in this life, and that all those who do not believe would be forever lost. However, now it is seen that in preparing the followers of Jesus to reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom, God has actually been preparing to save and bless mankind in general and to restore all the willing and obedient to perfect human life here on earth.

The Scriptures reveal that while Christ and his church, exalted to heavenly glory, will be the invisible rulers of the world in the coming new social order, there will be present on the earth human, or visible, representatives of this heavenly government. Just as Satan, the invisible prince of the present evil world, has operated chiefly through visible agencies, so Christ and his exalted followers who are brought forth to live and reign with him, will have visible representatives.

The Bible tells us who these will be. Jesus explained that in the kingdom, men will "come from the east, and from the west, and from the north,

and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God” with “Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets.” (Luke 13:28,29) In Psalm 45:16, those of this same class are described as “fathers,” and the prophecy states that they will become the “children” of the Christ, and will be made “princes in all the earth.” This class will be made up of all the worthy ones of past ages who lived prior to the first coming of Jesus. In Isaiah 32:1 both the heavenly and earthly phases of the Messianic kingdom are identified. The prophecy reads, “Behold, a king [Jesus and his church] shall reign in righteousness, and princes [the Ancient Worthies] shall rule in judgment.”

## **POSSIBLE WITH GOD**

Let us not hastily conclude that the establishment of such a kingdom is impossible. For the worthy servants of God of past ages to become the visible phase of the millennial kingdom means that they will have to be raised from the dead. Is it too much to believe that God is able to do this? Is it not fundamental to Christian teaching that there is to be a resurrection of the dead? Surely if we are looking to the Bible for a solution to the world’s problems, we should be prepared to believe that God is able to do all that he has promised to do, and he has promised to restore his ancient servants to life in what is described in the Bible as a “better resurrection.”—Heb. 11:35

The resurrection of the Ancient Worthies awaits the completion of the church class, made up of the Master’s faithful followers. Paul explains that these faithful ones of old will not “be made perfect”—

restored to perfection of life as humans—“without” the church having first been resurrected. (Heb. 11:40) As for the faithful followers of Jesus being raised to spiritual life with him, surely we should have no difficulty in believing this. Most Christians believe in a spiritual existence after death and that those possessing it are invisible to human eyes.

However, some have erroneously supposed the spiritual existence described in the Bible to be a natural extension of the present cycle of life. On the contrary, we are told, “The wages of sin is death,” and “the dead know not any thing.” (Rom. 6:23; Eccl. 9:5) The Bible teaches that the hope of life after death for both the church and the world depends upon a resurrection of the dead. (I Cor. 15:13-23) The Scriptures also point out that in the resurrection some are given spiritual bodies. (vss. 38-44) Thus Christ was exalted, and the same is true of his faithful followers. Together, these powerful spirit beings and their human representatives, the Ancient Worthies, will exercise righteous authority over mankind throughout the thousand years of the Messianic kingdom.

Of that kingdom we read, “The law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” (Mic. 4:2) Here the heavenly phase of the kingdom is symbolized as “Zion.” In ancient Israel, literal Mount Zion was denoted as representing God’s authority over his chosen people. In Revelation 14:1, the faithful followers of Jesus, the Lamb, are pictured as being with him on Mount Zion. Thus, Zion is an apt symbol of the spiritual rulership of the Messianic kingdom.

While the law of the Messianic kingdom will “go forth of Zion,” the “word of the LORD” will proceed from Jerusalem, Micah declares. When Jesus said that in the kingdom the people would “sit down” with the Ancient Worthies, the thought is of pupils sitting at the feet of their teachers, or masters. These teachers will communicate the “word of the LORD” as they receive it from the exalted Zion class. This is evidently what is meant by the word of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem. Hence, we believe it quite probable that the visible phase of the Messianic kingdom will have its headquarters in the ancient city of Jerusalem.

## **NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH**

The two phases of the coming kingdom are also pictured in the prophecies of the Bible as a “new heavens and a new earth.” Through the Prophet Isaiah God said, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. ... Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days.”—Isa. 65:17-20

In vision the Apostle John saw the fulfillment of this wonderful prophecy. The “Jerusalem” which is identified in Isaiah’s prophecy with the new heavens and new earth is seen by John to be the exalted church class, described as “a bride adorned for her husband,” and “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” (Rev. 21:2,9,10) The former heaven and earth, symbolic

of Satan's world order, is seen to pass away, and then "a new heaven and a new earth" appear, symbolic of the heavenly and earthly phases of the Messianic kingdom.—vs. 1

With the new heaven and new earth functioning, and the "new Jerusalem" established, God's favor will be manifested toward the people through this governmental arrangement. The result will be that "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."—vss. 3,4

The symbolisms of the Bible are always appropriate and fitting. The literal heavens and earth bear a certain relationship to each other which well illustrates the operation of the spiritual and the earthly phases of the kingdom. The heavens, for example, control earth's tides, atmospheric conditions, and seasons. Similarly, the arrangements of earth's new order will be under the direct influence and control of the heavenly phase of that government.

This is true also of the present symbolic heavens and earth. The affairs of men have always been more or less under the influence of powers over which Satan has been the prince. (Eph. 2:2) These have frequently exercised their influence through false religious systems. Indeed, it has often been through the religious emotions of men and women that Satan has held control over the world. Throughout the centuries, various so-called religions have been the connecting link between "the god of this world" and the social and governmental affairs of the people. Many wars have been fought, and much persecution has come about, in the name of religion.

The Apostle Peter, writing of events which would occur as a result of Christ's return, tells us that "the heavens and the earth, which are now, ... are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment." (II Pet. 3:7) Earlier in this same prophecy Peter speaks of the heavens and earth which were before the Flood as passing away. (vss. 5,6) Thus we know that he is not referring to the literal heavens and earth, for these have never passed away, and never will. The Bible states that "the earth abideth for ever" and that God "created it not in vain," but "formed it to be inhabited."—Eccles. 1:4; Isa. 45:18

In Peter's prophecy, speaking again of the destruction of Satan's evil order, he says that we should be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Then he adds, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (II Pet. 3:12,13) This coming "new heavens and new earth" will be established in fulfillment of the promises of God. When the work of this new kingdom is completed, and Satan and the willfully disobedient are destroyed, then shall come to pass the promise that "there shall be no more death." (Rev. 21:4) This is a glorious outlook and will be the final result of our Lord's return—his second presence concerning the affairs of earth.

## **THE RIVER OF LIFE**

In Revelation 22:1-3, we are presented with another meaningful symbol of the Messianic kingdom and the blessings which, through its beneficent

rule, will flow out to the people. John wrote, “He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Here the kingdom is symbolically described as “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” The Lamb symbolizes the sacrificial aspect of Jesus’ ministry, and the fact that he offered up his flesh for the life of the world of mankind. It is this sacrifice, providing the redeeming blood of the Lamb, which makes available the blessings symbolized by the “river of water of life.”

In vision, John sees the “tree of life” growing by the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, and yielding its fruit every month. This is a meaningful symbol of the fact that through the two phases of the kingdom health and life will be provided for all the willing and obedient of mankind. John further wrote that the leaves of the symbolic tree of life will be “for the healing of the nations.” How sorely in need of healing are the people of all nations today. We rejoice that the loving God of heaven, through the returned Christ, has made such a meaningful provision for mankind.

In verse 17, John again mentions the “water” of this river of life, giving us another wonderful assurance: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Here again the “bride” refers collectively to the faithful followers of the Master throughout the present age in God’s plan. Revelation 19:7 speaks of the marriage of the Lamb that takes place after his “wife hath made herself ready.” The making ready of the bride class is still in progress,

although we believe it will soon be completed. Then, being united with the Lord, their bridegroom, the bride will announce the invitation to all to come and “take the water of life freely.” What an incentive this is for every follower of Christ to “give diligence” to make his “calling and election sure.”—II Pet. 1:10,11

## **SOLVING WORLD PROBLEMS**

With such a kingdom arrangement in force, supported by righteous, divine power, how wonderfully one after another of earth’s problems will be solved. Take the problem of war. When the kingdom begins to function, it will no doubt find mankind devastated by the ravages of various types of warfare. The “time of trouble” and “great tribulation” foretold in the Bible will have resulted in chaotic conditions throughout much of the world. (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) The people, at the point of exhaustion from the results of Armageddon, with their governments for the most part overthrown, will, in this wilderness of despair, finally turn to God and his divine power.

Man will say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain [kingdom] of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—Mic. 4:2,3

How wonderfully simple is God's solution to the problem of war. It reverses the age-old axiom that in order to keep the peace, nations must be prepared for war. It also casts aside the wisdom of fallen man which has devised the theory that through a "balance of power" war can be averted. It starts, instead, at the very foundation of the problem, with a program of education in the blessings and advantages of peace, and thus a genuine and permanent disarmament program will be put into effect. Nations and people will "learn war" no more. The promises of God pertaining to Jesus as the "Prince of Peace" will be fulfilled, and the angelic message, "on earth peace, good will toward men," will become a reality.—Isa. 9:6; Luke 2:10

## **ECONOMIC AND POPULATION PROBLEMS**

According to statistics from 2016, it is estimated that nearly one billion people in the world suffer from chronic undernourishment. The vast majority of these live in low-income countries. This problem will be solved in the kingdom. Then "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it." Mankind will "eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD."—Mic. 4:4; Joel 2:26

The problem of poverty is, and always has been, one which affects large segments of earth's population. However, in the kingdom the poor and underprivileged will no longer be an army of the hungry and unsheltered, but will be richly blessed in that new righteous order to come. Concerning this the psalmist wrote, prophetically, of Christ: "He shall

judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. ... For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.”—Ps. 72:4,12

Another of the serious problems facing the world today is population growth, particularly in less developed countries and in areas where arable land is scarce. Such conditions are, in fact, one of the contributing causes of war and conflict, as governments seek more useful territory for their expanding populations. The Lord has provided a solution for this problem also. First, we have the promise that all the waste places of earth will become habitable and productive. “The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose,” we are told. (Isa. 35:1,2) Think of all the unused lands on the continents of earth. With these made habitable, productive and available for the people, surely there will be no need to shed blood in order to acquire sufficient land for all people.

There is another way, however, in which the world’s population problem will be permanently resolved. That is by the removal of man’s power of procreation. When our first parents were created, they were told to multiply and fill the earth. (Gen. 1:28) It should be observed that once a sufficient number of humans have been born to fill the earth, the purpose of God’s command will have been attained. Hence, the provision by which it was implemented will be withdrawn.

Jesus gave a hint along this line when answering a question concerning the resurrection. He said that in the resurrection the people “neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” (Matt. 22:30) In other

words, the populating of the earth was arranged by God's decree, and the process will be halted when divine wisdom determines that the earth has been sufficiently filled. Thus there will be no need for concern along this line, for the matter will be adjusted to the entire satisfaction of all, and to the glory of God.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION**

Closely associated with the population explosion is the increasing menace of environmental pollution. Naturally, the greater the number of people who live in an area, the greater is the threat of pollution in the air, the water, and on the land. Governments are doing what they can about this problem, but human selfishness is hindering the effort so that progress in solving it is painfully slow. Additionally, conservation efforts are most often restricted to countries with more advanced technology. However, the Lord, through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom, will know how to solve this problem also.

Human selfishness has always been a contributing cause to nearly all the problems of fallen mankind. There can never be genuine peace and good will in the earth as long as selfishness plays such an important role in the affairs of men. We thank God that under the rulership of earth's new government the people will learn the value of love as opposed to selfishness. The Prophet Jeremiah assures us that during the glad day of the Lord's kingdom the law of God, which is the law of love, will be written in the hearts of the people. Eventually, all are to become so well acquainted with the Lord and his ways of love that no one will need to say to his

neighbor, “Know the LORD,” for all shall know him “from the least of them unto the greatest of them.”  
—Jer. 31:31-34

## **DEATH TO BE DESTROYED**

Finally there is man’s worst problem of all—sickness and death. Unless this problem is solved, people will continue to travel through “the valley of the shadow of death.” (Ps. 23:4) In such an event there could be no lasting peace and happiness anywhere. Every peaceful and happy home would intermittently be blighted by the dread enemy, Death, which now counts its victims at a rate of over 60 million per year.

Christ, the great solver of human problems, will eliminate this one also, for during his reign sickness and death will be destroyed. Paul affirms that Christ “must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” (I Cor. 15:25,26) The Prophet Isaiah declares that the Lord will “swallow up death in victory.”—Isa. 25:8

In solving the problem of death, no one will be overlooked. Even those who have fallen asleep in death throughout the ages will hear the “voice of the Son of God,” and “shall come forth” from the tomb. (John 5:25-29) There will be an abundance of habitable land to provide for all—both the living and those who will be raised from the dead. This means that no one will need to lament the fact that Christ’s kingdom did not come sooner—before father or mother or other dear ones died, because these will be restored to life. The power of Christ Jesus, which at the time of his First Advent was exercised to

restore the dead to life, will again be exercised, not on behalf of a limited few, but for the restoration and blessing of all mankind.

This does not imply universal salvation, for in order to continue living and to be restored to human perfection it will be necessary to obey the laws of the Messianic kingdom and to accept the provision of life through the redeeming blood of Christ. Christ in his kingdom role is referred to in the Scriptures as “that prophet,” and Peter said, “It shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear [obey] that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” —Acts 3:23

## **SUNSHINE OVER ALL**

Thus it will be that the various problems now plaguing fallen man will be solved. This will come about as the increasing light of the Master’s second presence permeates one after another of the dark places of earth. One of the prophecies pertaining to the time of Christ’s rulership over the earth refers to him as “the Sun of righteousness.” (Mal. 4:2) Jesus likewise said that his faithful followers would “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Matt. 13:43) The healing rays of the Sun of righteousness will continually pour into the sin-sick and wounded hearts and lives of all mankind. From one end of earth to the other, that Sun will shine, and upon every continent and the isles of the sea the soothing, life-giving powers of that divine light of the Lifegiver will be felt.

The enlightening rays of Christ’s presence will fill the earth with a knowledge of the glory of God. This means that all false doctrines, all superstitions,

all human creeds, all precepts of men by which people are taught to dread God rather than love him, all political intrigues, as well as the myriad other evils that have plagued a dying world, are to be swept away and replaced by a true knowledge of God and of his love.

There will not be a nook or corner anywhere in the earth where the light from that glorious Sun will not penetrate. The warmth of its healing rays will assure a blessed reign of righteousness. Through that rulership of love and healing light all sin, unrighteousness, sickness, death, and all sorrow will finally pass away. Such is the ultimate divine objective to be accomplished as a result of our Lord's return. May we rejoice in this purpose and continue to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. 6:10 ■

## WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

**OCTOBER 4**—"Jesus saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."—Matthew 4:19 (Z. '04-26,27 Hymn 275)

**OCTOBER 11**—"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD."—Isaiah 52:11 (Z. '04-28 Hymn 130)

**OCTOBER 18**—"He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster."—Proverbs 18:9 (Z. '04-77 Hymn 116)

**OCTOBER 25**—"Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good."—II Chronicles 19:11 (Z. '04-207,205 Hymn 12)

*God's ways are equal: storm or calm,  
Seasons of peril and of rest,  
The hurtling dart, the healing balm,  
Are all apportioned as is best.  
In judgments oft misunderstood,  
In ways mysterious and obscure,  
He brings from evil lasting good,  
And makes the final gladness sure.  
While Justice takes its course with strength,  
Love bids our faith and hope increase:  
He'll give the chastened world at length  
His afterward of peace.*

*When the dread forces of the gale  
His sterner purposes perform,  
And human skill can naught avail,  
Against the fury of the storm,  
Let loving hearts trust in Him still,  
Through all the dark and devious way;  
For who would thwart His blessed will,  
Which leads through night to joyous day?  
Be still beneath His tender care;  
For he will make the tempest cease,  
And bring from out the anguish here  
An afterward of peace.*

*Look up, O Earth; no storm can last  
Beyond the limits God hath set;  
When its appointed work is past,  
In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.  
Where sorrow's plowshare hath swept through,  
The fairest flowers of life shall spring,  
For God shall grant thee life anew,  
And all thy wastes shall laugh and sing.  
Hope thou in Him; His plan for thee  
Shall end in triumph and release;  
Fear not, for thou shalt surely see  
His afterward of peace.*

*—Poems of Dawn*

# The Righteousness of Noah

**Key Verse:** “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.”  
—**Genesis 6:22**,  
*English Standard Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Genesis 6:9-22**

OUR KEY VERSE, IN FEW words, identifies the one characteristic God found most desirable in Noah. Noah did all that God commanded him as an outworking of his faith. The Scriptures put a high value on following God’s commands. Consider Samuel’s statement to King Saul in this regard, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.” (I Sam. 15:22, *ESV*) For the Christian, as well, John’s first epistle has these words of wisdom, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ... And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”—I John 5:2-4, *ESV*

Noah’s great faith is lauded in the favorable account of him in the Book of Hebrews. “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.” (Heb. 11:7, *ESV*) This may not seem remarkable on the surface, but probing

deeper, we perceive the great trust and reverence that Noah had toward God. Genesis 2:6 suggests that earth's climatic conditions were such that it was watered by mists that arose from the ground. Thus, apparently, up to the time of the flood, it had not yet rained. Imagine being in Noah's place as he heard of a great coming deluge—which had never been seen before—and being instructed to build an enormous ship in an apparently land-locked area.

Great ridicule must have been heaped upon Noah. As he laid down the first mighty beam of the ark's keel, the people likely howled with laughter, being heedless of their coming doom. It was a day of small beginnings, and Noah was determined to do all that God commanded. There is a lesson from this to be applied in our Christian lives. "Who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth." (Zech. 4:10) Let us not despise the small beginnings that lead to greater outcomes. The seemingly paltry newly laid foundation of the second temple, the insignificant first beam of the ark, and the improbable growth of a Christian from their first expression of faith in Christ, all lead to great victories of faith.

The Apostle Peter tells us that Noah actively engaged in public confession of his faith as a "preacher of righteousness," even as he was engaged in building the ark. (II Pet. 2:5) He likely told his wicked neighbors that mankind must seek to obey and please God. For a hundred and twenty years he persisted in this work. In so doing, he reminded the people of their duty to God, his laws, and to each other. He warned of the coming judgment and the flood of waters. Noah had no converts to show for his many years of witnessing. We ask ourselves, "Would I persevere for so long, with such ridicule and persecution, and no evident success?" By God's grace, we trust that we would, and be obedient to all that he has commanded. ■

# The Call of Abram

**Key Verse:** *“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

—*Genesis 12:2,3,  
English Standard  
Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Genesis 11:27-32;  
12:1-8*

## **THE KEY VERSE CONTAINS**

the first clear declaration of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul makes the case, saying, “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed.” (Gal. 3:8, *ESV*) Thus, the concise essence of the Gospel message is that in Abraham and his seed, all mankind will be blessed.

Abram, whose name was later changed to Abraham, dwelled in Ur of the Chaldeans. Archeological evidence suggests that it was an advanced and cosmopolitan city. Abram had a comfortable life, a beautiful wife, and no apparent need to leave that area. In that setting, God called Abram

to abandon all that was familiar to him and, by faith, to move to a distant alien land. We are told, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the

same promise. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” —Heb. 11:8-10, *ESV*

On first reading one may suppose that Abram went to a distant land for the wealth and fame promised him. Actually, he did it for another and higher reason. He was looking for “the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.” Students of the Bible have come to understand that Abram was looking forward to the eternal city of God. We find that city described by the Apostle John, “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new. Also he said, Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”—Rev. 21:2-5, *ESV*

The city where God dwells with man on earth is where all tears are dried, every pain is relieved, and death is no more. We believe, as the revelator bears record, that these things are trustworthy and true. That is what Abraham was looking forward to, and as evidence that this was his understanding, we turn to the words of Jesus. Speaking to the Jews who confronted him, he said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” (John 8:56) Jesus, the Lamb of God, the promised seed of Abraham, will rule and bless the earth from the “new Jerusalem.”

Abraham acted upon God’s instructions. Let us follow his example that we, too, may be blessed. “So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”—Gal. 3:9, *ESV* ■

# The Birth of the Promised Son

**Key Verse:** “*The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised.*”

—**Genesis 21:1,**  
*English Standard Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
**Genesis 18:1,10-15;**  
**21:1-7**

would have her servant Hagar be the surrogate mother of Abraham’s promised heir.

That idea, however, was not God’s plan. Hagar, now carrying Abraham’s son, turned contemptuous towards her mistress. As a result, Sarah began to treat Hagar harshly, leading her to run away. The child, Ishmael, was apparently unruly, fulfilling God’s prophecy regarding him that, “He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.” (Gen. 16:12, *ESV*) We take instruction from the moral of this story. No matter how good our human reasoning may be, it is always flawed. The divine will is always best and perfect.

Sarah was God’s choice to bear the promised seed. Lest

## **THE BIRTH OF ABRAHAM’S**

long-awaited heir was fraught with challenges of faith. Nevertheless, in due time, the seed of promise was born, marvelously prefiguring the coming of our Lord Jesus. We sympathize with Sarah as her heart ached with the desire to bear Abraham his promised son. With the reality of advancing age facing her, she devised what seemed to be a practical optional plan. Sarah

any suppose that it was by human strength that the seed would come, God permitted Sarah to advance well into old age. “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.” (Gen. 18:11, *ESV*) It would take a miracle for this couple of advanced years to have a child. That is exactly what happened. In due time Isaac was born, just as God had planned. The heir of Abraham was finally delivered, even though through a very aged woman.—Gen. 21:2-7

Hope encircled Isaac’s birth. Was he the one referred to in Eden as the “seed” who would crush the serpent’s head? (Gen. 3:15) Would he be the one to lead the human family out of the degradation of sin and death? Would all the families of the earth be blessed in him? In part, yes, and in part, no. Yes, in that he was Abraham’s heir and a great patriarch in the lineage and genealogy of our Lord Jesus. No, in that he was only a picture of the great Redeemer. It is in Jesus that the prophecies, made two millennia prior, realized their fulfillment. As Isaac came at God’s due time, so did Jesus. “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father! So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”—Gal. 4:4-7, *ESV*

Paul further states, “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” “Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.” (Gal. 3:29; 4:28, *ESV*) The powerful meaning of these words must not be lost on us. The promise to Abraham that his seed would bless all the families of the earth is our Christian inheritance. To be associated with Jesus in the great work of restoring humanity, healing man’s physical and moral diseases, and helping them to reconcile with God, is an inheritance of priceless value. Thank God for his plan through the promised Son! ■

# The Marriage of Isaac

**Key Verse:** *“Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”*  
—*Genesis 24:67,*  
*English Standard Version*

**Selected Scripture:**  
*Genesis 24:1-20,*  
*58-67*

## **THE BOND BETWEEN**

Sarah and her beloved son Isaac must have been very deep. Isaac’s name means laughter, and doubtless he brought Sarah much joy, laughter, and satisfaction in her old age. The loss of loved ones is difficult for all of us; sometimes the grief is especially intense. That must have been the case with Isaac when his mother died. Sarah had been his arch-defender against the intimidations and mocking threats of Ishmael. (Gen. 21:9,10) For thirty-six years he had the sweet fellow-

ship and guidance of his mother.

Our Key Verse alludes to the depth of Isaac’s sorrow. He grieved for nearly four years. It was only upon the arrival of his wife Rebekah from Mesopotamia, that he was comforted from his loss. In their marriage, God made a picture of the coming marriage of Christ and his church. As the Apostle Paul noted, “I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.” (II Cor. 11:2, *ESV*) In another place, Paul identifies one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. The union in marriage of a man and woman—in our lesson’s context, Isaac and

Rebekah—is a figure of the coming marriage of Christ and his church.

“The husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. . . . Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. . . . This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”—Eph. 5:23-32, *ESV*

The marriage of Christ, the Lamb, and his Bride, the church, is highly anticipated. It will be a joyous occasion. “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God.”—Rev. 19:7-9, *ESV*

Marvelous blessings will flow out from this holy union. It is customary for a groom and his bride to give away some small favor as a memento of their wedding. Christ, the spiritual Bridegroom, and his Bride will give an exceedingly valuable gift to all in remembrance of the purpose of their union. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let the one who hears say, Come. And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” (Rev. 22:17, *ESV*) This gift will be the offer of the water of life—eternal life—freely to all mankind. ■

# Not Letting Slip the Things We Have Heard

*“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”*  
—*Hebrews 2:1*

**MANY ADMONITIONS ARE** given in the Bible to encourage continued zeal and patient endurance on the part of the Lord’s dedicated people. Our first love, or initial enthusiasm when first beginning our Christian way, needs to be maintained. This is not to be merely for a few months or years, but to the end of our earthly sojourn. It is only those who endure to the end of life’s way, those who are “faithful unto death,” who will receive the “crown of life,” and will be “priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”—Rev. 2:10; 20:6

Our opening text indicates that holding fast consists in not letting “slip” the things we have heard. It is God’s Word of truth that is being referred to, the purpose of which is to guide us into knowing

and doing God's will. (John 17:17; I Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 2:15) Only through studying the instructions clearly outlined in the Scriptures do we know what our Heavenly Father wants us to do and to be. To let the things we have heard and learned from God's Word "slip," would be like a builder neglecting to consult his blueprints. As he continued to build, he could not be sure that the building erected would be at all in harmony with the architect's plans.

Our text opens with a word which has a deep meaning to us—"Therefore." This signals us that the preceding context has an important bearing on what is to follow. When we turn back to the first chapter of Hebrews, the connection at once becomes apparent. "The things which we have heard," spoken of in our text, are of vital importance because of their source. That source is mentioned in the very first verse of the epistle. It is God, our Heavenly Father. Here Paul reminds us that God had previously spoken to his people through his holy prophets, but that now he was speaking through his Son.—Heb. 1:1,2

What a high position of authority the Heavenly Father had given to his Son! He appointed him "heir of all things," exalted him to the "express image" of his own person, and seated him "on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Jesus was made "so much better than the angels," and "by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." He had perfectly "loved righteousness and hated iniquity," therefore God anointed him with the "oil of gladness" above all others.—vss. 3-9

It is through this divinely appointed channel, his "only begotten son," that our Heavenly Father spoke

to his called-out ones at the beginning of the Christian age, and has continued to speak to them for the past two thousand years. In a very special sense this is true during the present time in which we are living, Jesus' second presence, during which he promised to appoint a "faithful and wise servant." This servant would be used, Jesus prophesied, to give spiritual "meat in due season" to those "whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."—Matt. 24:45,46; Luke 12:37; Rev. 3:20

"Therefore," as Paul said, it is important that we take earnest heed to "the things which we have heard," for they have not reached us by any ordinary means, but have come from the glorified Jesus, who has been exalted to the right hand of God. This means that every aspect of God's plans and purposes are of vital concern to each dedicated follower of the Master. To let any part of these things "slip" through lack of interest or zeal would be as though we refused him who has spoken to us.—Heb. 12:25

### **LAXNESS IN SACRIFICE**

The epistle to the Hebrews indicates that it was written to a group of Jewish believers in Christ who were not fully living up to their privileges as followers of the Master. They had not given heed to all the things which they had heard, being "dull of hearing," and thus were unable to properly apply the message of truth in their lives as they should have done. For this reason they needed to be taught again the "first principles" of the Word of God.—Heb. 5:11-14

The lack of a clear understanding of the Truth subjected the Hebrews, as well as all others who

would fall into this category, to discouragement. This, in turn, would lead to a lack of patient endurance and perseverance in meeting the experiences which inevitably would be theirs as Christ's disciples. In Hebrews 2:9-12, we are told of Jesus' death as man's Redeemer, and of the fact that his brethren had the privilege of being associated with him as a "sanctified," or holy, class, just as he was holy. Additionally, as the "captain of their salvation" was made "perfect through sufferings"—that is, complete, consummate in character—they also should expect to suffer. Thus, by both sanctification and suffering, they "are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

In the life of a Christian, sanctification and suffering are vitally connected. True holiness of character, which sanctification denotes, will lead one to sacrifice his own will in the interest of God's plans and purposes, thus producing suffering in various ways. Suffering is not pleasant to the flesh, and ordinarily it tends to discourage those who are subject to it. In the early days of their Christian walk, the Hebrew brethren to whom this epistle was addressed, did not become disheartened due to their sacrifice and suffering. Paul explains that they had taken "joyfully the spoiling" of their goods, and had "endured a great fight of afflictions." Sometimes they were made a "gazing-stock ... by reproaches and afflictions," and other times they were the "companions of them that were so used." (Heb. 10:32-34) Apparently, however, this had been their attitude only in the beginning, in the "former days." Now they were admonished to call that time to remembrance, with the implication that they were to return

to their former position of zeal and joy, which they had evidently lost in the face of persecution.

It could be that their laxity in holding fast to the Word of truth which they had heard resulted in their overlooking the real purpose of Christian suffering. Perhaps they were now looking upon their sufferings as evidences that God's blessing was no longer with them. If they were failing to correctly understand the Word of truth, they may have wondered why the Lord did not take away the "rebuke of his people," as he had promised to do.—Isa. 25:8

Whatever the reason, they were not living up to their privileges of sacrifice and suffering with Christ as courageously as they had in the beginning. To remind these brethren afresh of their privilege of suffering with Jesus, Paul admonished them to look unto Jesus as their example, explaining that they had not yet resisted "unto blood, striving against sin." (Heb. 12:2-4) To resist "unto blood" does not necessarily mean that a follower of Christ must literally suffer and die as a martyr, shedding actual blood. Rather, it denotes a life of sacrifice, in which day by day earthly desires and ambitions are given up in the service of Christ and his cause, regardless of when and how death may come.

The Hebrew brethren had suffered much in the past. Their goods had been spoiled, and they had endured a great fight of afflictions, but they had not as yet fully sacrificed their lives as Jesus had done. They had not been faithful even unto death. Though they had done the will of God in consecrating themselves to him and to the divine cause, they had "need of patience" that would enable them to endure unto the end. (Heb. 10:36) The word "patience" as

translated from the Greek in this passage goes beyond mere forbearance or longsuffering in its meaning. In addition, it signifies cheerful endurance, perseverance and steadfastness.

In order to persevere and cheerfully endure in tribulation, it is essential to be keenly aware that the trials which come to us are a vitally important facet of the divine will. The reason for Christian suffering is clearly revealed in the Book of Hebrews, and elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is the divine purpose to develop a merciful and sympathetic spiritual priesthood, which will reconcile mankind back into harmony with God in the coming Messianic kingdom. (Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 5:1,2; II Cor. 5:18,19) If, through neglect, worldliness, or lack of faith we let our appreciation of this great privilege “slip,” we will become discouraged by our difficult experiences. Thus, we may lose our steadfastness and the ability to endure unto the end of the way. Paul, however, encourages us along this line, saying, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.”—Heb. 10:35

## **INCENTIVE TO FAITHFULNESS**

Hebrews 3:1,2 reads, “Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.” Here we are reminded that the consecrated followers of the Master in the present age are partakers of the same heavenly calling to which Jesus was called. Much is implied by this. In another place, Paul referred to the “mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ

Jesus.” (Phil. 3:14) A prize is something for which a person is willing to strive, and to make sacrifices to attain. This is especially true of the prize of the high or heavenly calling. The apostle indicates that we should never lose sight of the “mark,” or goal, set before us to attain. Rather, it should be an incentive to daily faithfulness, so that we might be victorious and, by God’s grace, receive the glorious “prize of the high calling.”

As noted in the foregoing paragraphs, Paul associates the heavenly calling with the fact that the called ones of this age are a priestly class over which Jesus is the Head—our High Priest. The Apostle Peter likewise wrote of this “holy” and “royal” priesthood, pointing out that its present mission is to offer sacrifices, “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,” and to show forth “the praises of him who hath called” us to this marvelous privilege.—I Pet. 2:5,9

Members of this higher priesthood do not offer animals in sacrifice. Instead they offer their own bodies, or their lives. (Rom. 12:1) Paul explains that Jesus was “faithful to him that appointed him.” He was faithful in offering himself in sacrifice for the “sin of the world.” (John 1:29) We, too, must be faithful in the offering of our sacrifice to God if we are to remain a part of this priesthood. Though our sacrificial offering does not have any redemptive merit, as Jesus’ did, we are, nevertheless, invited to be “planted together” in the likeness of Jesus’ sacrificial death.—Rom. 6:3-5

To endure the shame, ignominy and suffering which came to him as he was laying down his life, Jesus had the “joy that was set before him,” which

motivated him to endure the cross and to despise the shame. Because Jesus was faithful, he is now “set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) The Apostle Peter explained a prophecy in which Jesus is represented as saying, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Ps. 16:10,11; Acts 2:25-28) Clearly the great joy which was set before Jesus of returning to the presence of his Heavenly Father was one of his great incentives to faithfulness.

In addition to the great joy of returning to his Heavenly Father’s personal presence, Jesus was also inspired by the hope of accomplishing the divine purpose of restoring mankind to life. This is referred to by Isaiah in these prophetic words: “It pleased the LORD to bruise him [Jesus]; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”—Isa. 53:10,11

### **HIS BRETHREN ALSO**

The brethren of Christ, his dedicated followers, have these same joys set before them as an encouragement to faithfulness. In Hebrews 12:22-24, some of the details of these joys are beautifully set forth in symbolic language. By faith we have come to “mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God.” Thus the hope of rulership with Christ in his kingdom is set before us.—Rev. 14:1,4; 20:6

By faith we also approach unto “an innumerable company of angels.” These are described as “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,” and they “always behold the face” of our Father in heaven. (Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10) While these angels are invisible to us now, we know of their interest in us, and of how, as the servants of our Heavenly Father, they watch over all our affairs. One of the joys set before us will be the great blessing of meeting and knowing these honored servants of our Heavenly Father. How very sweet and wonderful that will be!

By faith we are also looking forward to “the general assembly” of the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” Even now, it is a joy to assemble with our brethren in local gatherings and in conventions, but how much greater will be the joy of assembling with the entire church of the firstborn beyond the veil! This blessed future assembly will never end. In that gathering will be Jesus, Peter, Paul, John and all the apostles, the faithful all down through the entire Gospel Age, including those with whom we have been personally acquainted and have loved, but lost for a while through death.

As with Paul, so with us, we are looking forward to meeting and being with “God the Judge of all.” It is impossible even to approximate what a great joy this will be. In the case of Jesus it is described as fullness of joy, meaning that there could be no greater joy than that experienced by those whose inestimable privilege it will be to abide in the presence of our loving Heavenly Father as members of his immediate and divine family.

We are also looking forward to association with those described by Paul as “just men made perfect.” These are the heroes of faith who lived prior to our Lord’s death as man’s Redeemer, some of whom Paul mentions in Hebrews chapter 11. These “Ancient Worthies” will be restored to life as the human representatives of the divine, invisible Christ. Though they will be on the human plane of life, and the Christ class will be on the divine plane, there will be, in ways now unknown to us, a close association. It will be a great joy indeed to work together in the kingdom with these who were willing to suffer and die in their loyalty to God and to his Messianic cause.

One of the superlative joys to which we look forward is to meet and forever be associated with Jesus, “the mediator of the new covenant.” Throughout our earthly sojourn Jesus has ministered to us as our advocate, brother, and friend. (I John 2:1; Matt. 12:50; John 15:15) His example of faithfulness is a constant inspiration as we endeavor to walk in his steps of sacrifice. However, in heavenly “mount Sion” we will meet him face to face, and as “ministers of the new covenant” we will be associated with him in reconciling the world back to harmony with our Heavenly Father.—II Cor. 3:6

This will be made possible through the merit of the blood which will then speak “better things than that of Abel.” Abel’s blood cried out to God to accuse Cain of the sin of taking a human life, and thus a curse was placed upon him. (Gen. 4:10-12) The blood of Jesus, however, does not cry out for punishment, but for the deliverance of the condemned world from sin and death. (I Pet. 1:18,19; Col. 1:19,20; Rev. 5:9,12) What a joyful experience

it will be to participate in the work of extending to the people the life which has been provided by the blood of the “Lamb that was slain.”

### **DO NOT LET THEM SLIP**

These glorious prospects of future joys in the kingdom are promised to us if we give “earnest heed to the things which we have heard.” If, on the other hand, we let these truths “slip” from us for any reason, the inspiration to patient continuance in the way of sacrifice and suffering will also be lost.

To the Hebrew brethren Paul wrote that it would be only a “little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. 10:37) Today the fulfillment of many prophetic signs indicate that Christ Jesus has returned, and therefore the fruition of all our hopes is very near at hand. Nothing in God’s loving plan has tarried. Every detail is being carried out exactly in accord with his “due time.” (Rom. 5:6; Eph. 1:10; I Tim. 2:5,6) The Word of truth which we have heard, and its “vision,” which we have seen written “upon tables,” may seem to tarry long, but “it will surely come, it will not tarry.” (Hab. 2:2,3) Thus, we are assured that God’s “plan of the ages” will be completed and have a most glorious outcome.—Eph. 3:9-11, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

Let us “hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not.” (Heb. 10:23, *Revised Version*) We know that God has been faithful to his people in every age, and that now he will give us strength for our every time of need. Through his beloved Son he has fed us at his bountiful table of spiritual food, and in this

glorious feast of truth we have rejoiced and will continue to be glad.

The only way we can attain the heavenly goal set before us is by faithfulness in laying down our lives sacrificially as Jesus did. (Matt. 16:24) To only half-heartedly do this is a clear danger sign to the Christian, and would be one of the first indicators of letting slip the things which we have heard. Let us, rather, continue to press on, faithful even unto death, knowing that only in this way will we receive “the crown of life.” (Rev. 2:10) Let us hold fast to the Lord, to his promises, and to his people, as together we press toward the mark of the glorious prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. ■

*Live for others while on earth you live,  
Give for others what you have to give,  
Flowers do not hoard their sweet perfume,  
Nor withhold the glory of their bloom.  
Sunshine helps to melt the winter's snow,  
Timely rain compels the grain to grow;  
So a smile can banish grief and care,  
And a kindly word encourage prayer.  
—Songs of the Nightingale*

## **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 Esther Moore, Salem, OR—August 29. Age, 92  
Brother Paul Bruce, Sarasota, FL—September 8.  
Age, 77

# The Harvest and the Reapers

*“He that reapeth  
receiveth wages,  
and gathereth fruit  
unto life eternal.”*  
—John 4:36

**FULL CONSECRATION TO**  
God and to the doing of his  
will implies an appreciation  
of the privilege of laying down  
one’s life in his service quite

separate from the consideration of reward. On the other hand, the Scriptures make it clear that every servant of the Lord is richly rewarded for all he does, and the “wages” are always far and beyond anything which he could ask or think. Jesus, the greatest of all servants of God, indicated that he did not seek a special reward, for he asked only to be restored to the position he had with the Father in his pre-human existence. (John 17:5) Yet it was the joy which was set before him by God’s promises that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame. (Heb. 12:2) By enduring faithfully, he was rewarded with exaltation to the right hand of the throne of God. Surely, then, he who reapeth receiveth wages!

Entrance into the heavenly kingdom, which first was spoken by Jesus, is not something that we can earn. It can be ours only because provision was made

for it through the blood of Christ, and we are to rest in his finished work for us. Nevertheless, Jesus and the apostles made it very clear that there was much work for the church to do, and beginning with Pentecost, the disciples were to embark on a worldwide mission. They were to be sowers of seed; they were to be reapers of wheat; they were to be fishers of men; they were to be the light of the world. (John 4:36-38; Matt. 4:19; 5:14) These various expressions indicate that the church was to be an active body of people in carrying out God's plan for the Gospel age. By so doing they would also be prepared for, and worthy to engage in, the great work of God in the age to come.

One of the illustrations of the church's work throughout the present age is that of "sowing"—that is, sowing seeds of truth, the glorious Gospel of Christ which is "the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1:16) All the faithful disciples of Christ since Pentecost have been sowers. The Scriptures instruct us: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that." (Eccles. 11:6) This indicates that daily, whether in season or out of season to us, we are to be on the alert for opportunities to give witness to the Gospel message.

Much of our seed sowing may seem like wasted effort except for the blessing we receive from our labors. These, however, are the wages of joy which come as we endeavor to show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Pet. 2:9) Jesus, in the parable of the sower, indicated that this would be so. (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23) He said that some of the seed sown would fall by the wayside and would be snatched away by

the “fowls” before it had a chance to grow. Other seed, he said, would fall on the rocks where the soil had no depth, and while it would try to grow, the heat of tribulations would cause it to wither and die.

Some of the seed, Jesus further explained, would fall among thorns, which he said represented the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. These influences would hinder the plants from properly maturing and bringing forth fruit. Only the seed which falls on “good ground” would produce results for which the sower seeks. In view of the situation clearly set forth in this parable, none should be discouraged and refrain from the work of sowing simply because great results are not obtained. Our responsibility is to sow, leaving the results with the Lord.

### **WHEAT AND TARES PARABLE**

Jesus’ parable of the wheat and tares, recorded in Matthew 13:24-30,36-43, also indicates activity for his church, and is an illustration of what occurs progressively throughout the Christian age. In this lesson the sowing is done at the beginning of the age, and the work at the end of the age is represented as harvesting. Another difference between this parable and that of the sower is that the “good seed” sown at the beginning of the age was not the word of the Gospel, but “the children of the kingdom.” In this parable, the sower is “the Son of man,” not the whole church.

It is important to recognize these differences if we are to understand the parable correctly. In addition to being a parable, it is also a prophecy of what would occur throughout the age. It shows that a great counterfeit of God’s plan would develop, and

not until the end of the age would this system be destroyed. Then the “children of the kingdom,” the “righteous” of the parable, would “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

As Jesus explained, the “children of the kingdom” constitute the “good seed.” God, through his holy prophets, had many times promised to establish a kingdom of righteousness in the earth. Jesus had now come to begin the process by which that kingdom would be established. John the Baptist announced to his disciples, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand,” and Jesus reiterated this same glorious truth. (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7) The future king had come, and starting with the call of his twelve disciples, he had begun to select those who would, in due time, be his co-rulers in the kingdom. Hence, while the kingdom was not then established, preparation for it began.

At Pentecost, as a direct result of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring in fulfillment of the Master’s promise, as well as by the apostles’ preaching of the kingdom hope, the number making up the “children of the kingdom” was greatly increased. Thus was the original sowing, or planting, of the heavenly kingdom “seed” accomplished. From this point forward throughout the centuries, the “children of the kingdom” have been called and developed. They have occupied the “field,” which is “the world,” and this work is said to continue until the end of the age.

The parable states that “while men slept” an enemy sowed “tares.” This is an evident reference to what occurred after the apostles—the watchmen of the Early Church—died. The tares are described, not as false doctrines, but as “children of the wicked one.” History indicates that false teachers did enter

in among the true, and on such a large scale that eventually the original wheat field took on the appearance of a tare field.

Tares bear a resemblance to wheat when young, but are only a valueless imitation and thus considered weeds. Since the wheat are said by Jesus to be the children of the kingdom, we should expect to find in history something which would indicate an attempt to set up an imitation, or substitute, kingdom arrangement in the name of Christ. Underlying all of God's kingdom promises is the blessed assurance that their fulfillment does not depend upon human efforts. The "government shall be upon his shoulder," states the prophet, and "the zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this," we are assured.—Isa. 9:6,7

However, the sowing of tares by the great enemy of God, Satan, changed this viewpoint among many. There was a uniting of the church with earthly governments, by which a substitute kingdom was set up. The corrupting influence of this work of the "enemy" is still blinding much of professed Christianity to the real hope of the kingdom. Even when some vehemently condemn church-state unionism, they are still inclined to labor under the false idea that God wants them to bring in his kingdom by converting the world now.

### **"LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER"**

As shown in the parable, it was not the divine will that anything be done to remove the tares from the field until the end of the age. "Let both," the wheat and the tares, "grow together until the harvest," are the instructions given. This also became

historically true. Although the tares, soon after their sowing, began to dominate the field, some wheat continued to grow. In every century since Pentecost there have been some who have held to the real hope of the kingdom, who knew that God's kingdom promises could not be fulfilled until the king returned at the end of the age, and that if faithful, they would then be resurrected to live and reign with him.

At the end of the age—the harvest time spoken of in the parable—the wheat and tares would be separated. The tares would be bundled and then burned in the great “time of trouble” such as never was since there was a nation. (Dan. 12:1) The wheat would be gathered into the barn, representing, as Jesus explained, their shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The remarkable manner in which we now see this feature of the parable being fulfilled is convincing evidence that we are living in the closing period of the age, when the harvesting work is being accomplished.

The parable indicates that this work was to be done by the “angels.” This is a translation of the Greek word *aggelos*, meaning “messengers.” Often this word is applied to the heavenly messengers of God whom we commonly speak of as angels, but it is also employed in the Scriptures to describe other messengers, both animate and inanimate. For example, Paul refers to his partial blindness as a “messenger” [*aggelos*] of Satan to buffet him.—II Cor. 12:7

The angels of the parable are all those agencies which the Heavenly Father deems necessary to use in order to accomplish the work of bundling and burning the tares, as well as for gathering the wheat into the “barn.” The Lord's own people, the “children

of the kingdom,” are primarily the messengers used to accomplish the harvesting of the wheat. Some have asked if wheat can harvest wheat, but we should remember that these terms are merely illustrations. In this case, the testimony of the Scriptures is that the individual members of the body of Christ, the church, do work together to gather and prepare each other as wheat for their ultimate position in the kingdom.

It was during the harvest at the end of the Jewish age that Jesus said to his disciples, “The fields ... are white already to harvest,” and then commissioned them to enter into the harvest work. (John 4:35,38) The disciples themselves were among the ripe wheat at that time, yet Jesus sent them out to reap other wheat. It is that same situation we have pictured for us in the parable pertaining to the harvest time of the present Gospel age.

In God’s arrangement, under the direction of Christ, the chief reaper of the harvest, other agencies serve as messengers in accomplishing the bundling and burning of the tares. To note what has been done along this line, we see that more than ever before, Christendom is bound in many denominational groups, “bundled” according to their various creeds and practices of worship.

The subsequent burning of the bundled tares during the time of harvest is not to be thought of as the destruction of individuals. Rather, it is merely the destroying of their status as tares, and of the false kingdom systems to which they have been bound. This is a critical point to be noted, for it is God’s purpose that in his promised earthly kingdom, under the rulership of Christ, all people will be given the opportunity to be restored to perfection of life

and to live in harmony with their Creator and with one another. (Isa. 2:2,3; 25:6-9; Rev. 21:1-4) No religious “kingdom” under the direction of fallen man, past or present, Christian or otherwise, can in any way make this claim.

## **SENT FORTH TO REAP**

The parable of the wheat and tares is also a commission of service and activity. By it the Lord is inviting us to join in the reaping work during the present harvest time at the end of the Gospel age. Primarily Jesus himself did the sowing work of the parable in the beginning of the age, and these disciples passed on the kingdom message to other “faithful men, ... to teach others also,” as explained by Paul. (II Tim. 2:2) Then, however, the wheat and the tares were to grow together until the end of the age, when the harvest work was to be done. Thus is indicated that the beginning and the end of the age were to be periods of intense activity. What a privilege is ours of living in the harvest time of the parable, and of joining in this work!

The complete picture of the harvest includes the glorification of the church, but there is also a gathering and preparation for this which is accomplished by the power of God’s Word. It is the dissemination of this Word of truth that we are commissioned to do. The kingdom message of resurrection and restitution is being proclaimed now, during the harvest, as it originally was preached in the beginning of the age. (Acts 24:14,15; 3:20,21,24,25) Without these truths there is no kingdom message, and no genuine Gospel within the meaning of these terms as they are employed in the Word of God.

With the proclamation of this glorious Gospel message during the harvest, the renewed hope of God's kingdom has made it possible to identify the wheat as a group. They have been brought together and, in addition, been inspired to continue laboring one with another in the dissemination of the kingdom message. This phase of the harvest work which is accomplished by the proclamation of the Word of truth has been under way for well over a century, and is continuing. In the Lord's providence, the kingdom message is still sent forth, and individual grains of wheat are still being developed. Together, the wheat class rejoices in the glorious fact that God's promised kingdom of peace on earth does not depend upon the frail, imperfect efforts of men.

## **RECEIVING WAGES**

Our opening text declares, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." These words of encouragement were first spoken to Jesus' disciples during his earthly ministry, whom he invited to participate in the work of spreading the Gospel message. These words of the Master are just as true of those who labor in the present harvest work. The "wages" might well represent both the present and future rewards of service. How rich and satisfying are the wages which we receive in doing what we can to proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom. The Truth itself becomes more sweet and precious as we tell it to others, and a greater inspiration of joy in our own lives.

It is a joy that fills our hearts when, as a result of our efforts, we learn that others appreciate the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, and they too

are beginning to rejoice therein. This joyous message reveals God's ultimate purpose to enlighten all mankind, to fill the earth with a knowledge of his character and his glory. If we rejoice in this purpose of God, we will delight indeed in the fact that even now one here and one there is being enlightened, and especially so if we realize that we have been used, even if only in some small way, to bring the joyful message to others.

When the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome, he wrote to the Philippian brethren saying, "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." (Phil. 1:12) Paul wrote thus because he realized that it would be a great encouragement to the brethren to learn that his imprisonment had not resulted in hindering the spread of the glorious Gospel of Christ. He knew that the brethren at Philippi would rejoice, that it would be "wages" to them to learn that their support of Paul by their prayers and in other ways was contributing to the general effort of the church to carry the kingdom message to all mankind.

Are we today receiving our share of the "wages" which the Lord is granting to all who are faithfully laboring? If we are working for the Lord only because we feel it is our duty, then it is possible that we are not receiving the joy which might be ours. However, if we are so imbued with the kingdom message that we are doing all we can to tell others about it, whether individually or in cooperation with our brethren in a general proclamation of the message, then our cup of joy is sure to be overflowing. Such joy will come not only because of the blessed privilege we have of

showing forth the praises of the Lord, but also in the fact that others are having an opportunity to become better acquainted with our loving Heavenly Father.

If we have the proper viewpoint of our relationship to the Lord as his servants, we realize that we will always be indebted to him for the mercies and blessings which he bestows upon us. We have been bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ. (I Cor. 6:20; Acts 20:28) Realizing this, we know that we do not belong to ourselves. We owe everything we have, even life itself, to him who loved us and died for us. Because of this, we present our all to the Heavenly Father, and endeavor to serve him as faithfully as possible. However, instead of this in any way canceling the gratitude we owe him, we become more than ever his debtor. Indeed, the wages he pays are of far greater value than anything we can possibly do for him. How wonderful is our God!

### **“AS THE SUN”**

Over and above the wages which we receive daily as we lay down our lives in God’s service, is the glorious future reward which he has promised, for we are gathering “fruit unto life eternal.” To the rich young ruler Jesus spoke of this as laying up treasures in heaven. (Luke 18:22) It is described by Paul as “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom. 2:7) It is also presented as the glorious privilege of living and reigning with Christ, as partaking of the divine nature, and as an abundant entrance into the “everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”—Rev. 20:6; II Pet. 1:4,11

In the parable, this glorious future reward is described as shining “forth as the sun in the

kingdom of their Father.” (Matt. 13:43) This reminds us of the Old Testament promise concerning the “Sun of righteousness” which will arise with healing in his wings. (Mal. 4:2) We can look forward to being a part of that “Sun,” to shine forth with him. Thus will the “children of the kingdom” fulfill the purpose of their calling.

As we have seen, this preparatory work began with Jesus’ earthly ministry. There the children of the kingdom began to be developed for their future shining forth as the sun. Being planted as wheat in the field, which is the world, the embryo kingdom has remained. Temporarily, the tares may have seemed to displace the wheat, but not so. By divine permission they grew together in the field for a time. The parable shows, however, that at the end of the age there is a clear separation. The tares, sown by the enemy, are rooted out, bundled and destroyed, while the wheat remains, and in resurrected glory shines forth with Jesus for the enlightenment and blessing of all mankind.

There are many evidences that we have reached the ending period of the age, and that the harvest of both the wheat and the tares is progressing and rapidly reaching a consummation. Let us look up and lift up our heads in joyful realization of the fact that the time to shine forth as the sun is near. Our rejoicing in this fact should be reflected in redoubling our efforts to be faithful reapers, to thrust in the sickle of truth more energetically than ever, rejoicing in our daily wages now. May we thus be strengthened to continue in the narrow way of sacrifice by the joy set before us of sharing with Jesus in the work of blessing all the families of the earth. ■

# Spiritual Balance

*“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”*  
—II Timothy 1:7

**NEITHER RADICALISM** nor fanaticism are component elements of true Christian character. It is never necessary to be a fanatic in order to be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord and his

Word of truth. The Apostle Paul said, “This one thing I do,” but this one thing included all which is embraced in the will of God for the Christian. (Phil. 3:13) The follower of Christ may, indeed, appear to be one-sided as viewed from the worldly perspective, but not so from God’s standpoint, if he gives heed to all that the Lord would have him do and be. Paul was not radical in the sense of being an extremist along one particular line of Christian endeavor. Yet he was uncompromising in his full loyalty to God and to his will.

In our text the apostle reveals that it is the influence of the Holy Spirit of God in the Christian’s life that gives him strength to perform the divine will. It is the Spirit of God that creates the desire to sacrifice for others, which is godlike love in action. It is the Spirit of God also that gives the Christian soundness of mind. The spirit of power and love

and a sound mind is contrasted by Paul with the spirit of fear. One who is filled with fear, and controlled more or less by it, cannot, at the same time, exercise balanced judgment.

One of the most essential prerequisites to the exercise of the spirit of a sound mind is, therefore, to slay the monster fear by the exercise of faith and confidence in the promises of God. We are assured through his Word that irrespective of how formidable our enemies may be, he will help us to overcome them. No matter how weak we are, his grace will be sufficient. No matter how much we lack wisdom, he will give us liberally of his wisdom. God has promised, in fact, to supply all our needs.—I John 5:4; II Cor. 12:9; James 1:5; Phil. 4:19

By relying upon these promises, none of which has ever failed, the Christian is able to approach the study of the divine will with full assurance. No matter what may be involved, no contingency can ever arise in the doing of that will which has not been foreseen and provided for by our all-wise Heavenly Father. This means that we need never hesitate in undertaking any course in life which God indicates to be his will for us. No part of the divine will has to be omitted or only partially obeyed because of human limitations. Our obedience to all that God requires will most assuredly result in what our text describes as the spirit of a sound mind.

Acceptable spiritual balance is obtained through a study of the Word of God and the application of its precepts in our daily lives. However, it is necessary that we properly interpret the Word of truth and yield ourselves fully to its influence. As the apostle indicates, our “rightly dividing of the word of truth”

is to be for the sole purpose of showing ourselves “approved unto God.” (II Tim. 2:15) This means that the slightest degree of selfishness or insincerity in our study of the Bible will prevent our understanding it properly. Unwillingness to apply the Word, and to be “doers” of it in practice, perhaps more than any other one thing, accounts for much misinterpretation of the Bible’s teachings.—James 1:22-25

### **GOD TESTS OUR SINCERITY**

God is dealing with the Christian according to his faith and the sincerity of his consecration. For this reason he has permitted his Word to be written in such a way as to serve as a practical test of our real desire to know and do his will. The well-worn statement that “the Bible is like an old fiddle on which any tune can be played,” is true if, in our study of it, we seek merely to find justification for the manner in which our fallen flesh desires to gain control over our Christian life.

Practical application of Christian principles is presented in the Bible in such a way that if we have any degree of self-will, we can justify almost any extreme position which may meet the approval of our selfish fancy. An example of how we may misuse the Bible in this way is illustrated by the contrasting presentations of the Apostles Paul and James relative to the importance of faith without works, and faith supported by works, in the Christian life.

Paul says we are “justified by faith,” and in setting forth the importance of faith he cites the example of Abraham. (Rom. 4:1-4; 5:1) Paul also says, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” To emphasize this

thought, he adds, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph. 2:8,9) James, on the other hand, shows that if Abraham had not acted on his faith, wherein would be the evidence or proof of his loyalty to God and his will.—James 2:21-24

Certainly these texts make it plain that salvation is not obtainable upon the basis of our own works, but rather upon the proof, or demonstration, of our faith. However, this does not justify any misuse or distortion of the Scriptures to substantiate the erroneous thought that being inactive in the service of the Lord is part of the divine will. Yet, if we are looking for an opportunity to avoid the privilege of sacrifice, we could mistakenly find in the words of Paul a comfortable resting place on the couch of inactivity.

In reality, while Paul states that faith, not works, is the basis of our relationship with God, he affirms in numerous places James’ teaching concerning the need for works to prove our faith. Faith “worketh by love,” Paul says, and he commends the brethren at Thessalonica for their “work of faith, and labour of love,” and prays that the “work of faith with power” might be completed in them. (Gal. 5:6; I Thess. 1:3; II Thess. 1:11) Thus, if our mind is properly balanced by the full testimony of the Scriptures, we will take into consideration that while salvation is of faith and grace, yet God expects those who obtain it upon this basis to show forth his praises by laying down their lives in his service.

## **ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE SERVICE**

Concerning the matter of “works,” the Scriptures show it is possible that we might claim to be busily engaged working for the Lord and yet not have his

approval. Jesus, telling of some who would come to him and claim his friendship on the basis of the “many wonderful works” they had done in his name, indicates his response to be, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt. 7:21-23) This text should surely have an influence in helping us to maintain spiritual balance, by seeking to know and do only those works which are acceptable in God’s sight.

Unquestionably, it is pleasing to God for a Christian to be actively engaged in his service. In fact, the ideal Christian life is one that is wholly and directly spent for God, even as was that of the Master’s. However, few are in a position to render such direct and full-time service. The Bible itself delineates the energies of the Christian by pointing out the earthly obligations, especially toward one’s family, that must be met before any may properly feel free to devote time and strength in the direct service of God. —I Tim. 5:8

The sincere Christian will find no great difficulty in conforming himself to these various Scriptural requirements. However, if we are not sincere, it will be possible to find in them an excuse to shirk the responsibilities of our consecration vow which calls for the presenting of our bodies “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,” our “reasonable service.” —Rom. 12:1

The divine commission given to the church unmistakably implies self-sacrificing activity in proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom. The examples of the apostles in this respect indicate clearly what they understood this commission to mean. Their instructions repeatedly emphasize the

importance of faithfulness in the Lord's service. However, this does not mean that the only requirement of a Christian is that he be endlessly active in a feverish campaign of great works.

Indeed, the Bible says a great deal about working for the Lord. If one wishes to believe that he can simply "work" his way into the kingdom, he can perhaps justify himself in such a course, and ignore all the other important instructions for growth in Christian character. In so doing, however, he will not be exercising proper balance in his spiritual affairs. Let us rather, be on guard against this one-sided viewpoint of the Christian life, and avoid being of those who claim the Master's favor upon the basis of the "wonderful works" which they have performed.

The true balance between faith and works is to realize that our standing of justification before God is based entirely upon our faith in the merit of Christ's shed blood, and that this blessing is nothing we have merited ourselves, but is the "gift of God." Beyond that, and out of utmost appreciation to God for his bountiful provisions for us, our hearts should spontaneously respond to God's goodness, as did Saul of Tarsus, asking, "What wilt thou have me to do?"—Acts 9:6

Diligently searching the Scriptures for an answer to this question, we find instructions to the effect that we are to be "ministers of reconciliation," that as such we are to be faithful "ambassadors" of the truth, and that we are to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season." All this, however, is to be based on our continual appreciation of the fact that we ourselves were first "reconciled" to God "by Jesus Christ."—II Cor. 5:18-20; II Tim. 4:2

Acceptable service is that kind which results because the love of God has so touched our hearts that we simply cannot refrain from showing forth his praises at every opportunity. The evidence of such self-sacrificing love and devotion will ascend as “an odour of sweet smell” to him. (Phil. 4:18) Thus by our works is our faith made manifest, even as James suggests.

### **NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW**

Another illustration of how the Lord tests the sincerity of our consecration is the manner in which he deals with us in respect to our earthly needs. Jesus reminded his disciples of the Heavenly Father’s care over those who serve him, using the sparrows, ravens and lilies as illustrations of his loving care. (Luke 12:6,7,22-31) He assured his disciples that they are worth more than “many sparrows,” and can trust God fully with respect to all their material needs. Jesus further urged them to such whole-hearted devotion, service and singleness of purpose with respect to their spiritual interests, that their earthly affairs would not cause them worry and anxiety. He said, “Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.”—vs. 22, *English Standard Version*

This is a very heart-searching command, and very few have been able to fully apply the great principle here laid down for the guidance of the Christian life. Some, however, have taken these words too literally, and as a result, have ignored temporal responsibilities. Surely this is not what Jesus meant, nor did the apostles get this thought from his instructions to them. Later, we find the Apostle

Paul giving specific instructions to the church that its members were expected to give proper thought to material needs. He tells us that each should “provide ... for his own, and specially for those of his own house.” If one does not do this, Paul continues, “he hath denied the faith.”—I Tim. 5:8

To be spiritually balanced, we must take this and other passages of similar import, and line them up against the words of Jesus, such as found in Luke 12, seeking to know and practice the harmony of thought between them. Jesus’ instructions undoubtedly mean that the consecrated believer is to regard his whole life as devoted to the service of God and to seeking first his kingdom. He is to do this in full confidence that the Heavenly Father will oversee his earthly interests.

On the other hand, while one can consecrate himself personally to the Lord, he cannot consecrate his family in the sense that they must become a part of the sacrifice he is making. Thus, the practical carrying out of one’s consecration vows cannot preclude obligations to those dependent upon his care and support, to the extent which the Scriptures instruct.

We can lose our spiritual balance in another way, by misinterpreting the instructions to provide needful things for ourselves and for those of our household as justification for sacrificing very little on God’s altar. In other words, it is possible to wrongly consider providing for our own as meaning luxurious things, or the storing up of treasures on earth, concerning which Jesus warns us against.—Matt. 6:19

If spiritually balanced, we will realize that God would have us use the necessary time and energy to

provide and care for those who are properly dependent upon us. However, even these necessary obligations, by divine grace, we will discharge as unto the Lord, and to his glory, while redeeming as much of our time and substance as possible to be used directly in the divine service.

## **WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION**

The Apostle Paul admonishes us, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” assuring us that it is “God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12,13) These words emphasize that in the final analysis no one can work out our salvation for us, that it is a personal matter between us and the Lord. This means that we are individually responsible for what we believe and the things we do. As individuals, we are to “prove all things,” not accepting anything as true simply because it reaches us through some trusted friend, or leader, no matter how much confidence we may have in them.—I Thess. 5:21

To work out our own salvation means also that we will have a love for Christian liberty, not permitting ourselves to be bound by earthly sects and creeds. In the exercise of true liberty in Christ, we will lay claim to the promises of God as individuals and realize that they apply to us, irrespective of the opinions of men. Holding these divine promises as our own, we will rejoice in the Lord no matter what our experiences may be. If we have privileges of service for the Truth, we will rejoice. If at times God’s providences dictate otherwise, we can also rejoice knowing it is his will.

While exercising our individual privileges as Christians, we are not to ignore the fact that we also have a responsibility toward others. Indeed, the Lord in his wisdom has arranged that many of the blessings which we receive as individuals come to us through fellow Christians. Working out our own salvation does not imply that we can be successful while ignoring fellowship with others of “like precious faith,” or neglect the assembling of ourselves together “as the manner of some is.”—II Pet. 1:1; Heb. 10:25

The Scriptures remind us that God works in his people, not only through the prophets and the apostles, but also through various other servants—“evangelists, ... pastors and teachers.” (Eph. 4:11,12) This means that in order to be properly balanced as to our individual standing before God, we must also cooperate with others whom he may choose for “the work of the ministry.” Surely we cannot be individualists to the extent of ignoring the messages of the prophets and apostles, nor can we safely be “independent” Christians in the sense of disregarding the help that may come to us through the elders of the ecclesia, or others whom the Lord may use to work alongside us.

It would also be a mistake to follow the line of Christian individualism to the point of disobeying the Lord’s instructions relative to proper order and decorum in the church. Rather, each member of the body of Christ should be in full harmony with the scriptural instructions concerning organization and cooperation within the local ecclesia arrangement. “Let all things be done decently and in order.”—I Cor. 14:40

## **“CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER”**

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to “consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” (Heb. 10:24,25) These arrangements by which we can mutually uplift and help one another are important aspects of how God works in us “to will and to do of his good pleasure.” This means that each of us, as an individual Christian, should be of service and support to others in the narrow way. This does not in any sense suggest that we should be “busybodies,” or be “lords over” each other. (I Pet. 4:15; 5:3) Rather, it places before us our privilege to “consider one another” to encourage love and good works.

It is not the eloquent sermon that always proves the greatest blessing. Sometimes a few words of comfort spoken privately, even by a brother or sister who may not possess talents for expression, may prove to be a divine message of consolation to one in need of encouragement, and may be more effective than a hundred eloquent sermons. Thus, let us be watchful for every opportunity we see to lay down our lives for each other as we journey together in the narrow way.

As individual Christians, we enjoy the blessings of personal relationship and communion with the Lord. Additionally, we are to be on the alert to avail ourselves of every opportunity to associate with our brethren in Christ, as well as to encourage them. At the same time, both individually and collectively, we must ever be on guard against any subtleties of the Adversary, lest he “get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”—II Cor. 2:11

Let us sincerely and humbly seek the Lord's guidance in all of life's matters, trusting fully in his ability to overrule for our good every issue of our consecrated lives. (Rom. 8:28) Such assurance is ours if we wholeheartedly submit to his will and endeavor diligently to carry it out in our lives. Let us also seek to avoid interpreting the Scriptures in a way to favor the selfish desires of the flesh. As followers in the Master's footsteps, God's will for us is to sacrifice, and he has promised to give us the strength to carry us through, and to be "faithful unto death."—Rev. 2:10

Absolute honesty at all times with one's self and with the Lord is most difficult for any Christian. It can only be manifest in a truthful interpretation of God's Word, no matter what the cost may be, and a zealous, faithful performance of the divine will. For the consecrated believer to keep his life sincerely devoted to God requires a constant battle against the tendencies of the fallen flesh, which are augmented by the spirit of selfishness in the world around us, and that emanate from our Adversary, Satan.

These words of David are appropriate for every consecrated Christian to take well to heart: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults." (Ps. 19:12) The method by which we understand our errors lies largely in our willingness to have the Lord cleanse us from them by "the washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:26) Indeed, we should be glad to have our errors, our secret faults, and any spiritual imbalance in our lives, cleansed away by the Word of truth. If this be true, then we may enjoy the spiritual advantages of those to whom God, through his Word, gives the spirit of a sound mind. ■

# SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

## **O. B. Elbert**

Toronto, ON     October 13,14

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

## **M. Balko**

Pittsburgh, PA     October 6,7

## **O. B. Elbert**

Pittsburgh, PA     October 6,7

## **M. Ensley**

Orlando, FL     October 27,28

## **R. Gorecki**

Agawam, MA     October 7

## **L. Griehs**

Orlando, FL     October 27,28

## **B. Keith**

Pittsburgh, PA     October 6,7

## **H. Montague**

Agawam, MA     October 7

## **J. Mottie**

Pittsburgh, PA     October 6,7

## **D. Rice**

Agawam, MA     October 7

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# 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.*

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

**AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 7**—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA. Contact F. Sansom. Phone: (860) 861-6881.

**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

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

**NEW HAVEN CONVENTION, November 4**—Westwoods Italian-American Club, 85 Chase Lane, West Haven, CT. Contact A. Suraci. Phone: (203) 248-3793 or Email: annasuraci@comcast.net

**SAN DIEGO CONVENTION, November 23-25**—Alpine Community Center, 1830 Alpine Boulevard, Alpine, CA 91901. For reservations, contact B. Bach. Phone: (619) 249-5238 or Email: bbach619@gmail.com

**IBADAN THANKSGIVING CONVENTION, December 1**—Ibadan Ecclesia place of worship, #24 Bola Faremi Street Coca Cola Mokola, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. Contact C. Egbu. Phone: +2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

**SOUTHWEST CONVENTION, December 7-10**—ECCO Conference Center, 43803 Highway 41, Oakhurst, CA 93644. Contact D. Rawson. Phone: (408) 997-6736 or Email: rawsondr@yahoo.com

**CHICAGO CONVENTION, December 29,30**—Alta Villa Banquets, 430 N Addison Road, Addison, IL 60101. Contact J. Farrell. Phone: (630) 469-9511

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*I come to thee, I come to thee,  
Thou precious Lamb who died for me:  
I rest confiding in thy Word,  
And cast my burden on the Lord.*

*I come to thee, whose sov'reign pow'r  
Can cheer me in the darkest hour;  
I come to thee thru storm and shade,  
Since thou hast said, "Be not afraid."*

*O wondrous love! what joy is mine,  
To feel that I am truly thine.  
Thou precious Lamb who died for me,  
I come to thee, I come to thee.*

—Hymns of Dawn