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Reflections on the Resurrection of the Dead

“This I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, ... that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”

*—Acts 24:14,15,
English Standard
Version*

clarity on the subject.

THE RESURRECTION OF the dead, as taught in the Scriptures, is a powerful vision of immense significance to the Christian, and to all mankind. What does it entail? Who is it for? What guarantee do we have that it will happen? The answers to all these questions are found in the Bible. Though the resurrection doctrine is central to the Christian faith, many have only a vague conception of what it is. Misunderstanding abounds regarding the resurrection, yet the Bible speaks with

PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE RESURRECTION

“Now when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. It is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.” (Acts 23:6, *ESV*) Thus Paul called out loudly in defending himself before the council of the Sanhedrin. They were seeking to ruin him, to stop his ministry and end his influence. Some may view his declaration with cynicism, that it was merely a ploy to cause division between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who together comprised the Sanhedrin. It was with great sincerity and passion, however, that Paul brought up the issue of the resurrection, though as a result, “dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.” (vss. 7,8, *ESV*) Regardless of the division between these two Jewish sects, Paul’s statement was clearly intended to focus on the resurrection as a central doctrine of our faith.

The profound implications of the doctrine of the resurrection are laid down by Paul with great logic and force. “Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He

raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”—I Cor. 15:12-17, *New American Standard Bible*

Thus Paul reasoned, without Jesus’ resurrection, our Christian faith would be empty. It is his resurrection that opened the way for eternal life to all mankind. Jesus was “delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” (Rom. 4:25) Without the means of obtaining justification, we would have no basis for being at one with our Creator, and we would have no hope for eternal life. The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead is fundamental to Christianity. No human ideology nor good works can form the basis of our return to God’s favor. “No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” —I Cor. 3:11, *ESV*

THE RESURRECTION DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the resurrection encompasses the raising from the dead of every human being that has ever lived, with the intent of restoring them to the image and likeness of God. Those who attain such God-likeness of character will inherit life eternal. It is a universal desire of humanity to live forever—never to die. Solomon wisely noted that God “has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (Eccles. 3:11, *New International Version*) God placed the desire for eternal life in

man's heart, and to that end billions of dollars are spent each year on healthcare, vitamin and nutritional supplements, health spas, and life extension programs. These are all beneficial to one degree or another, but none have yielded more than a brief, albeit healthier, extension of life. Some people have even opted for being cryogenically frozen when they die in the hope that medical and scientific advances will someday provide a means of reanimating them. The thought of ceasing to exist is fraught with anxiety.

Jesus' sermon on the mount proposed a healthy approach to our anxieties. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" (Matt. 6:25-27, *ESV*) Anxious fretting and worry about temporal matters is futile, Jesus says. It adds nothing positive to our life.

"Therefore," Jesus continues, "do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or What shall we wear?" Though not part of Jesus' words, we might be inclined to add, "How long will we live?" Rather, the Lord further states, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (vss. 31-34, *ESV*) Acknowledging that each

day has enough difficulties of its own, the Master's admonition is exceedingly wise that we not "borrow troubles" from tomorrow.

God has provided access to eternal life through the atoning work of his Son. Moreover, he has "fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man [Christ Jesus] whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31, *ESV*) Jesus affirmed this in his prayer offered the night before his crucifixion. "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him." (John 17:1,2, *ESV*) Jesus was given "authority over all flesh" with the intent to give all the opportunity for eternal life.

The resurrection includes the restoration of an individual's conscious identity, or sense of self, and the providing of a body as God chooses. (I Cor. 15:38, *ESV*) For the vast majority of the human family, this will bring them back to the habitat of earth in fleshly bodies, although the ravages of sin, disease, and old age will no longer be present. This is in harmony with what Peter declared shortly after Pentecost, when he spoke of the coming "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21) *Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary* defines the root word from which "restitution" is translated as: "to reconstitute (in health, home or organization)." *Thayer's Greek Definitions* further delineates the root word as meaning: "to restore to its former state." Mankind

will be reconstituted—restored—through God’s arrangement whereby he will roll back the curse of death, return the earth to Edenic conditions, and lovingly bring mankind into his eternal kingdom, through the righteous rule of his Son, Christ Jesus.

While it is God’s purpose that the vast majority of humanity will be raised to lives of fleshly perfection on a restored planet, an elect “little flock” will attain to a glorious spiritual resurrection and a heavenly home. (Luke 12:32) Jesus spoke of the heavenly home saying, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”—John 14:2,3, *ESV*

Paul spoke of this with great longing: “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ... One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:10-14, *ESV*) The “upward call” is to a heavenly home, for those who are “faithful unto death” in seeking for “glory, honor, and immortality.”—Rev. 2:10; Rom. 2:7

For those few who live devoted Christian lives in the service of the Lord, the resurrection will provide them with glorious spirit bodies. “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound,

and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.”—I Cor. 15:51-53, *ESV*

THE TIME OF RESURRECTION

One of the most common misconceptions pertaining to the resurrection is that it occurs immediately upon each one’s death. We often hear at a funeral that the deceased is now in heaven looking down upon us. This is the widespread concept of the resurrection, but it is not what the Scriptures teach. We learn much regarding the timing of the resurrection from the account of Jesus’ raising Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:1-44) Lazarus had become quite ill. A messenger was sent by his family to alert Jesus to the gravity of the situation. In order that he might teach a powerful lesson, Jesus did not act immediately. Lazarus’ disease continued to progress, and he died. Four more days passed until the Lord arrived to comfort Lazarus’ family. His sister Martha met Jesus when he arrived, and their conversation was recorded for us.

“Martha said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you. Jesus said to her, Your brother will rise again. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ,

the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”—
vss. 21-27, *ESV*

Martha’s words are very pertinent as to when the resurrection occurs. Upon being told that Lazarus would rise again she said, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” She did not say that her brother was in heaven, nor that he had already been resurrected. She affirmed the belief that the resurrection occurs “on the last day.” Jesus, earlier in his ministry, had clearly identified the “last day” as the time when he would return to raise the dead and resurrect them. (John 6:39,40,44,54) Consider some other scriptures regarding this point.

The Apostle Paul addresses the timing of the resurrection, noting that it occurs when Jesus would come again. “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (I Thess. 4:13-16, *ESV*) Here Paul clearly refers to the dead as being in a condition likened to sleep, and that their awakening and resurrection occur at the time when Christ would come again.

Further to this point is Paul’s reaction to those who opposed his teachings. Some, actively contradicting

him, promoted strange new ideas. His response to their challenge is clear. To Timothy he sent this wise advice, “Avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some.” (II Tim. 2:16-18) The great swerving from “the truth” was the error of saying that the resurrection had already taken place. Clearly the resurrection occurs in conjunction with Christ’s return, and not before.

RAISING THE DEAD VERSUS RESURRECTION

There is a distinction to be made between “raising” the dead and the “resurrection.” For example, the incidents of Elijah raising the widow of Zarephath’s son, Jesus’ raising the daughter of Jairus and also the widow of Nain’s son, as well as Lazarus, are often given as examples of the resurrection. While they may picture the resurrection, it is more scripturally accurate to refer to these events as raisings, or awakenings, from the dead. In the original Greek text of the New Testament two distinct words are translated into our English words “resurrection” and “raising.”

“Resurrection” is the English word used for the Greek *anastasis* and means “a standing up again.” By contrast, “raised” is the English translation for the Greek *egeiro*, meaning “to waken or rouse.” It is critical to note that the widow of Zarephath’s son, the daughter of Jairus, the widow of Nain’s son, and Lazarus all eventually died again. “Raising” the

dead means to rouse from the sleep of death. It may, or may not, be permanent depending on the timing of the awakening. To state the matter simply, raising the dead is merely the first step in their resurrection.

To this point we note the implications of Jesus' lesson to the Sadducees regarding the resurrection. "Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke 20:35,36, *ESV*) Two points in our Lord's words are particularly striking. First, one must be "worthy" to attain to the resurrection. That is quite distinct from the general awakening that all in their graves will experience—worthy or not. (John 5:25-29) Second, those who attain to the resurrection—that is, a full standing up again from the fall in Adam by willing obedience to God's righteous laws—will gain eternal life. These, Jesus says, "cannot die anymore." Thus, resurrection in its fullest sense is seen to be everlasting, while a mere raising from the dead may be only temporary.

This being the case, the first true and full resurrection from the dead was when Jesus was raised on the third day after his crucifixion. The Scriptures plainly state this. "Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you. ... For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is

the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” (I Cor. 15:1-4; Col. 1:18, *ESV*) Lastly, we note John the Revelator’s greeting from “Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.”—Rev. 1:5, *ESV*

WHO WILL BE RESURRECTED?

Jesus stated that the Father had committed all judgment to him. We are greatly encouraged to know that he who will judge mankind is the same one who gave his life for them. Jesus declared, “As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:26-29, *ESV*) Paul spoke in harmony with Jesus’ words when defending himself before Felix, “This I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.”—Acts 24:14,15, *ESV*

Paul stated clearly, “As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (I Cor. 15:21,22, *ESV*) All die “in Adam”

—due to inherited sin, none escape the penalty of death. All will also be made alive “in Christ,” or “in union with Christ,” according to *Williams New Testament*. This glorious opportunity for “all” mankind is guaranteed by the fact that Jesus gave himself as a “ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”
—I Tim. 2:6

The “due time” for the benefit of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice to be received is shown in the succeeding verses of I Corinthians 15 as having two parts. “Each in his own order,” Paul says. “Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming [Greek: *parousia*, meaning ‘presence’] those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” (vss. 23-26, *ESV*) The “firstfruits” are Christ’s church, his symbolic body of “many members.” (I Cor. 12:12; James 1:18) Those who are second, in order of time, to share in the resurrection are the remainder of mankind, whom he will call from their graves, after the “firstfruits” class is completed.

Some dispute the all-encompassing quality of Jesus’ atonement. Two Scriptures are cited in proof of its limited scope. “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” “By the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:19, *ESV*) The argument made is that Jesus died for “many,” but not “all,” the distinction often being that he died for the righteous

and not sinners, who are sometimes referred to scornfully as the “unwashed masses.” We reject both the argument and the shameful attitude of heart associated with it.

The term “many” is the crucial word upon which this argument hinges. It is identified with the Greek expression *hoi polloi*, which means “the masses of society”—that is, the people, the many. It does not denote any specific or limited number, but is open-ended. Most importantly, however, the context in Romans chapter 5 clearly shows that Jesus died for all because all were sinners, and thus the benefit of the ransom will be to all. “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.” (Rom. 5:8,18) Peter adds, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”—I Pet. 3:18

POWERFUL PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION

Lest we doubt that the resurrection will occur, we turn to the words of the Master. Jesus taught with great power and authority. Recalling again the scene of his confrontation with the Sadducees, we are awed by the simplicity and stunning truth of his doctrine. As noted earlier, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. Jesus’ response silenced them immediately. Quoting from the Matthew account of the same encounter, we read: “As for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. And when the crowd heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.” (Matt. 22:31-33, *ESV*) The words Jesus said that the Jews had read, and had properly claimed concerning their God, were that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These words, in fact, had been spoken many centuries earlier by God to Moses at the burning bush. Moses was so awestruck by the fact that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was now speaking to him, he “hid his face.”—Exod. 3:3-6

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long been dead by the time of Moses’ encounter, and even longer by the time of Jesus’ day. Yet the Jews, including the Sadducees, still rightly claimed that their God was the same as that of their forefathers. Jesus thus clinched the matter: “He is not God of the dead, but of the living.” On this undeniable basis, these patriarchs will be raised from the grave and resurrected to life eternal, no longer “dead,” but “living” once again under God’s favor.

A FINAL THOUGHT

We love the working definition of eternal life that Jesus gave. “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3, *ESV*) The infinite mind of our God, Father, and Creator will open to us the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, of love and light, in the endless ages of glory soon to come. (Eph. 2:7) At the present time, Paul testified, “We see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”—I Cor. 13:12 ■

Jacob and Esau

Key Verse: *“The LORD said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”*
—**Genesis 25:23**,
New International Version

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 25:19-34

prayed to God, and he answered her, saying, “Two nations are in your womb.” (vss. 22,23, *NIV*) In Old Testament times the firstborn son was given certain privileges and responsibilities, referred to as the “birthright,” and normally received a double portion of the inheritance. (Gen. 43:33; Deut. 21:15-17) However, God’s answer to Rebekah’s prayer was that “the older will serve the younger.”

The Apostle Paul referred to this incident. Concerning the twins which were in Rebekah’s womb, he said, “Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not

ISAAC’S WIFE REBEKAH

remained childless for many years, and this concerned him. God’s promise to Isaac’s father Abraham was, “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22:15-18) Isaac prayed to God concerning his lack of having a “seed,” or son. God heard Isaac’s prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived twins.—Gen. 25:21

During Rebekah’s pregnancy, “the babies jostled each other within her, and she said, Why is this happening to me?” She

by works but by him who calls—she was told, The older will serve the younger. ... What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!”—Rom. 9:10-14, *NIV*

Here Paul alludes to the fact that Jacob and Esau were a picture or illustration. The nation of Israel was in essence a “firstborn,” as Esau was. God had first given to Israel his promises, through the Law Covenant which he had made with them and, later on, by sending his only begotten son Jesus to them as their Messiah. In general, the Jewish nation had been disobedient to God, and only a few, at the time of Jesus’ First Advent, accepted him as their Messiah and Deliverer.—John 1:11,12

Paul explains that the Gentiles, like Jacob, were not a “firstborn.” “The Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith.” As a result of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice at Calvary, the Gospel Age heavenly call has been made open to all, both Jews and Gentiles. However, as a nation, “Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.”—Rom. 9:30-32, *NIV*

Throughout Romans chapter 11, Paul explains that although God has rejected natural Israel, it has been for only a limited time, while the church class is being called and proven faithful unto death. Paul warns us not to be arrogant, nor think too highly of ourselves because we have heard and accepted the heavenly call while many others, including natural Israel, are blind to this wonderful privilege.

When the bride of Christ is complete, then, through God’s mercy, natural Israel will be restored to full favor, and will be an example of a blessing to all people. Mankind will say, “Come ye, and let us go up to the ... house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” To the Jews the people will say, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”—Isa. 2:1-3; Zech. 8:23 ■

Jacob's Deception

Key Verses: *“Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.*

He did not recognise him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him.”

—**Genesis 27:22,23,**
*New International
Version*

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 27:1-29

him, selling his birthright to Jacob.”—vss. 29-33, *NIV*

The thought has been suggested that in ancient times it was a custom that the eldest son of the family would celebrate the anniversary of the birth of a celebrated ancestor by fasting. For the firstborn to break the fast on this special day would effectively mean the renouncement of his firstborn privileges. If such a custom was followed at this time, it might suggest that when Jacob said to Esau, “Swear to me first,” he was in fact warning

THE SONS OF ISAAC AND

Rebekah “grew up, and Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.”—Gen. 25:27,28, *NIV*

One day, as Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came back from hunting. He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished! Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau then hastily answered, “Look, I am about to die. ... What good is the birthright to me? But Jacob said, Swear to me first. So he swore an oath to

Esau about breaking his fast and giving up his firstborn privileges. In spite of Jacob's warning, Esau swore, and gave up his birthright.

It seems that Esau never told his father, Isaac, about having given up his firstborn rights. Years later, "when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see," he called his older son Esau. Isaac asked him to hunt some wild game, then prepare it and bring it to him to eat. His plan was to give Esau the special firstborn blessing before he died.—Gen. 27:1-4

Rebekah overheard this conversation and took matters into her own hands. She conspired to deceive Isaac by having Jacob impersonate Esau. Although this deception was created by Rebekah, Jacob went along with it and only worried about whether he would get caught. The ruse was successful, and Jacob obtained the blessing Isaac intended for Esau.—vss. 5-29

When God said to Rebekah before the twins were born, "The elder shall serve the younger," he meant it. (Gen. 25:23) He did not need her deceptions, nor Jacob's lies to his father. Thinking that "the ends justify the means" has been a trap since the beginning of time. Let us not fall into it. The Lord is in control. He will not bless our misguided efforts to lie, cheat, or steal to get what we believe is rightly ours. Both Rebekah and Jacob paid a high price for their actions. She would not see Jacob for the next twenty years, and Jacob would later be deceived by Laban, his uncle and future father-in-law.

We need to develop trust in God in all situations, even if it means the loss of earthly advantages or our reputation amongst others. The Apostle Paul learned that God's grace was sufficient for him, thus he wrote, "That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties." (II Cor. 12:9,10, *NIV*) May we likewise let God equip us "with everything good for doing his will," so that he may "work in us what is pleasing to him."—Heb. 13:21, *NIV* ■

Jacob's Dream

Key Verse: “*When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.*”
—**Genesis 28:16,**
New International Version

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 28:10-22

AFTER ISAAC GAVE HIS blessing to Jacob, Esau became angry and said that after their father died, he would kill his brother. (Gen. 27:41) When their mother Rebekah found this out, she instructed Jacob to flee to her brother Laban and stay there. Later, when Esau's anger would hopefully subside, she would send word to Jacob to return.—vss. 42-45

During Jacob's journey to his uncle Laban, he stopped one evening in a certain place, using some stones as a pillow, and went to sleep. While asleep Jacob had a “dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”—Gen. 28:12, *NIV*

God was at the top of the ladder. He said to Jacob, “I am ... the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth. ... All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”—vss. 13-15

At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus referred

to this dream of Jacob. After Nathanael declared Jesus to be the “Son of God” and the “King of Israel,” the Lord replied, saying, “You shall see greater things than that. ... You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”—John 1:47-51, *NIV*

According to these words of Jesus, the “ladder” in Jacob’s dream was a picture of Jesus, “the Son of Man.” (John 8:28) Because Jesus “gave himself a ransom for all,” all mankind will have an opportunity to “learn righteousness,” and come back into harmony with God. (I Tim. 2:5,6; Heb. 2:9; Isa. 26:9) In Jacob’s dream, the bottom of the ladder pictures the earthly phase of God’s kingdom, the top of the ladder the heavenly phase.

In the books of Isaiah and Micah it is said, “In the last days, ... the mountain [kingdom] of the LORD’S house shall be established; ... and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, ... let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; ... for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”—Isa. 2:2,3; Mic. 4:1,2

“Zion” pictures the spiritual phase of God’s kingdom—the glorified Christ, head and body. (Ps. 48:2; Rev. 14:1) “Jerusalem” pictures the earthly phase of the kingdom. The chief representatives of this phase will be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, along with many other men and women who demonstrated a life of faith in God prior to Jesus’ ransom sacrifice.—Ps. 45:16; Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28,29; Heb. 11:1-40

The angels ascending and descending the ladder in Jacob’s dream might symbolize the fact that there will be some type of communication between leaders of the heavenly and earthly phases of the kingdom. In some manner, the specifics of which we presently do not know, the heavenly “Zion” class will provide all the necessary instructions and encouragement for mankind, so that they may “learn righteousness” and come to “know the LORD.”—Isa. 26:9; Jer. 31:34 ■

Jacob's Prosperity

Key Verse: *"In this way the man [Jacob] grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys."*

—**Genesis 30:43**,
New International Version

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 30:25-34,43

AFTER HIS SPECIAL DREAM, Jacob continued on his journey and stopped at a well where shepherds from Laban's town were gathered to water their flocks. Laban's daughter, Rachel, arrived at the well with her father's sheep. When Jacob saw her, he rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well and watered Laban's sheep. Then, Jacob kissed Rachel and explained to her that he was her father's nephew.—Gen. 29:1-12

When Laban heard the news about his nephew arriving, he hurried to meet Jacob, embraced and kissed him. Afterward, he brought Jacob to his home, where he stayed for one month, working for Laban. Laban told Jacob, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."—vss. 13-15, *NIV*

Laban had two daughters, the older one was Leah and the younger one was Rachel. Because he already loved Rachel, Jacob said to Laban, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." Seven years seems like a long time, but to Jacob it was not so. "Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him

because of his love for her.”—vss. 16-20, *NIV*

After seven years passed Laban held a feast. Although not stated explicitly, it appears that during the course of the feast Jacob became intoxicated, because when he went into the tent on his wedding night, he evidently did not know who was with him. In the morning Laban’s deception was revealed. Jacob was lying in bed with Leah, not the greatly beloved Rachel. Jacob asked Laban, “Why have you deceived me?”—vss. 21-25, *NIV*

Thus we see that the earlier deception practiced by Rebekah and Jacob was returned to him by Laban. A vital lesson for us is that we reap what we sow. (Gal. 6:7,8; Job 4:8; Hos. 10:12,13) Laban knew that if he is to retain Jacob, he needed to give him Rachel, which he did a week later in return for another seven years of service, to which Jacob agreed.—Gen. 29:26-30

Jacob became very prosperous, as shown in our Key Verse. In harmony with this, God’s promises to him were of an earthly nature, and mention “the land” he dwelt in, and likened his seed to the “dust of the earth.” (Gen. 28:13,14) Thus, Jacob well represents natural Israel. Laban, who was blessed by Jacob’s service, might picture the rest of the world mankind. All, Jew and Gentile, will receive the blessings of God’s earthly kingdom.—Isa. 2:2,3; Ezek. 37:22-28; Zech. 8:22,23

Concerning natural Israel, the Apostle Paul states: “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.” (Rom. 11:26,27) In contrast to Jacob, God’s promises to his father Isaac were heavenly, “I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven.” (Gen. 26:4) Paul explains that Isaac, Abraham’s seed, represents the spiritual or heavenly seed—that is, Jesus and his faithful footstep followers of the present Gospel Age. (Gal. 3:16,26,29; 4:28) Thus we see the beautiful truth that God’s promised kingdom will encompass both heaven and earth! ■

The Eyes of the LORD

“The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”

—II Chronicles 16:9

cause us to doubt the Heavenly Father’s care. Thus, we must continually remind ourselves, “The LORD is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King.” “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”—Jer. 10:10; Ps. 136:1, *New American Standard Bible*

Our faith in God must include the assurance of his tender mercies, as well as implicit trust in his plans and purposes. Doing so, and appreciating his wonderful attributes of character, truly defines a God that is the source of all hope, both for ourselves and for the world, even as it races ever faster toward

IN THE DAYS IN WHICH

we are now living, it is needful for all true Christians to think, to live, and to strive to perfect their faith in the true and living God. There are many conditions in the world around us which, without sufficient faith, might

chaos. More and more, mankind worships the false gods of fleshly aspirations and pride, seeks imagined rights of every kind, engages in all manner of lifestyles now being deemed acceptable, and practices sin in every form, even among those in high places and trusted positions. Truly, “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”—Ps. 118:8

If we have had the privilege of being a parent, we became aware of the great responsibility we had of teaching our children to have proper respect for themselves, for others, and especially for the Heavenly Father. As spiritual children of God, we must be developing these same qualities in ourselves as well. Jesus summed up each one’s obligation: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”—Mark 12:30,31

Our Heavenly Father is watching over us, teaching us the lessons that we need to learn as his children, and showering us with his love and tender mercies. As we strive to submit to his will in these matters, we come to know the goodness of the Lord, and that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) It is thus our privilege to rejoice at all times and under all circumstances, and to give thanks to God in all experiences. The trials and difficulties of life develop in us strength of character, that we might be shaped and fitted for future service in God’s kingdom for the recovery of the sin-sick and dying world.

GOD'S EYE

In Psalm 33:18, we read, “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.” Here we are reminded that the “eye of the LORD” is upon us for a purpose, that he might see in us the development of a character which demonstrates that we fear, or reverence him, and that our hope is made possible by his mercy and love. Such reverence for God is “the beginning of wisdom,” and “the knowledge of the Holy, is understanding;” (Prov. 9:10, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) “The knowledge of the Holy” has to do with the understanding of God’s plan, now revealed to all those who have entered into a covenant relationship with him.—I Cor. 2:9,10; I Pet. 1:12

Our opening text is part of an account in which the Prophet Hanani confronted Asa, king of Judah, saying he had done foolishly by soliciting the help of a neighboring heathen nation in battle, rather than relying on the Lord. Hanani reminded Asa that the “eyes of the LORD” see everything and would have overruled a much more complete victory if the king had put his faith and trust in him, rather than in a human leader of a Gentile nation. God’s infinite capability to “see” is beyond human comprehension, but in order to help us understand it, the eye is employed as an illustration. The human eye is an extraordinary organ, capable of seeing with accuracy and perspective very small and intricate objects. Indeed, we often do not appreciate our eyesight until something happens to adversely affect it.

When God is described as having eyes, we are not to think of him merely along the lines of human capabilities. No one can make a likeness or image

of God, nor can they truly know fully his ability to “see.” In man’s use of a camera, pictures are taken of various objects, people or scenes. They are captured as images, either digitally or on paper, and can be viewed at any time and as often as desired. Similarly, our eyes take pictures constantly, storing them as images, either for immediate use, or to be recalled from memory at some future time. God’s sight in this respect is unparalleled. He sees and notes everything that is happening in every corner of his vast universe, and has done so from the beginning of creation. These images of every moment, of every object, animate and inanimate, in every place, are stored, in perfect order, in the infinite mind of our God.

With such eyesight, no wonder David was moved to say: “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. ... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.”—Ps. 139:1-6

HIS EYES ARE OVER THE RIGHTEOUS

Although God sees all things, his eyes are especially upon the righteous. The Apostle Peter affirms this when he says, quoting from the Psalms, “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers” (I Pet. 3:12; Ps. 34:15) In reality, we know that none of fallen Adam’s progeny are by nature righteous. “There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:10; Ps. 14:1-3)

However, by his abundant grace God has been drawing certain ones to him. Through faith in the redemptive work of Jesus, and the making of a full consecration to do God's will, he is developing a special class to be members of his spiritual family. These are referred to as "a people for his [God's] name." (Acts 15:14) Having the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, God reckons them as "righteous," or "justified" in his sight.—Rom. 4:7,8,24,25

As God's eyes are over the righteous, he also opens their eyes. Jesus said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." (Matt. 13:16) Our eyes of faith and of understanding must be opened before we can fully appreciate spiritual things. The opening of our eyes is a gradual work and is for the purpose of helping us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (II Pet. 3:18) Our eyes also become more and more open to see the blessings we receive at God's hand, and the peace and joy they bring to us. With such spiritually directed vision, we see all the promises of God in their exquisite beauty, and seek communion with him through prayer in every experience.

Growing in "grace" and in "knowledge" entails the putting on of the fruits and graces of the spirit described by Paul and Peter. In Galatians 5:22,23 and II Peter 1:5-7, a listing of many of these qualities is given us, including such things as: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, virtue, knowledge, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity [love]. God's eyes are upon us to see the development of these character qualities, which give witness to his

spirit dwelling and working in us as we learn in the school of Christ.

EYES EXPRESSIVE OF MANY FEELINGS

Eyes can be very expressive of many emotions, whether pain, pleasure, sadness or joy. We especially notice this in the eyes of a child. If the child is happy, their eyes seem to light up and move with joy. On the other hand, if the child is sad, the sparkle is missing from their eyes, and they become still, or even tearful. The eyes can also express approval, or disapproval, oftentimes even before words are spoken.

The expressions of the eyes can likewise denote favor or disfavor. Surely this is true with respect to our relationship with God as his children. He “sees” us in a favorable way, and we focus our eyes upon him as our loving Heavenly Father. Such a favorable viewpoint from God should instill within us the same desire as our Lord had: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Ps. 40:8) God’s eye of favor toward us should encourage the daily petition, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits to me?” Our answer—“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD.” (Ps. 116:12-14) It is but a reasonable service that we should pay our vows of consecration to God, and present to him all that we possess in this present life, since it is only by his grace and favor that his eyes are upon us.—Rom. 12:1

GOD KNOWS ALL THINGS

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” (Ps 147:5) Here we see that our loving God is able to give each of us needed

counsel in all of life's affairs, whether spiritual or temporal, because he has infinite understanding. His "eyesight," therefore, is unerring as he watches over his people and their affairs. Nothing can escape his attention. God says, through the prophet, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done."—Isa. 46:9,10

Most assuredly, God knows everything about us. He knows our heart and our spirit. He knows our frame, and that we are but dust. He knows that we are imperfect in many ways, and often cannot do what we would like to do. He knows the things that delight us, and those that may annoy us. He knows what draws us to the throne of heavenly grace in prayer. (Ps. 34:18; 103:14; Rom. 7:15; Matt. 11:28) Though we are weak, nothing can separate us from the "love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:35-39) By reason of our Heavenly Father's assistance, we are made much stronger in the "power of his might" than we could ever be in our own strength. Therefore, we can say with Paul, "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."—Eph. 6:10; II Cor. 12:10

Our loving God desires that we bring our lives into harmony with his principles of truth and righteousness, and thus "bear much fruit." His infinite wisdom knows when and how each of us needs "pruning" in order to accomplish this purpose. Without pruning, the farmer would harvest little fruitage, for pruning promotes new growth and, hence, more

fruit production. Similarly with spiritual fruitage, our Heavenly Father prunes us through the experiences of life, teaching and guiding us each step of the way, so that we might bear fruit in abundance, and of the highest quality.—John 15:1-8

The wisdom of God unerringly provides each experience that we need, whether it be the sunshine of blessings, or the storms of trial and adversity. It is especially these seasons of trial and testing that will help to prove our faith, our love and our growth. Such experiences may not seem “joyous, but grievous,” but if we are properly exercised by them, they will yield “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” in the eyes of God. (Heb. 12:11) We will learn to “glory in tribulations,” knowing that they are working in us “patience, experience; and ... hope.”—Rom. 5:3,4

Realizing that God knows both the intents of our hearts, as well as the motive of our words, we should strive for that lofty goal expressed by David, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” (Ps. 19:14) The desire that the sum of all our words and meditations be acceptable to the Lord is based, the psalmist says, upon that fact that it is only in him that we have spiritual strength and redemption.

EYES OF FAITH AND LOVE

In the Scriptures, faith is frequently associated in a metaphorical way with sight. For example, Jesus said, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” (John 8:56) We understand this to mean that, by faith, Abraham looked forward to the day when a seed would *(Continued on page 36)*

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(Continued from page 31) come to be used in bringing blessings to all the families of the earth, in fulfillment of the promise God had made to him. Abraham, and other faithful ones of old, “all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, ... were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” (Heb. 11:13) These heroes of faith all “saw,” not with the natural eye, but with the eye of faith. With limited knowledge, but much faith, they saw God’s plan working out in accord with his eternal purposes, and which would be centered in a promised seed.

Christ Jesus is the focus of our eyes of faith, for he is the long-promised seed of blessing. (Gal. 3:16) We, too, have been invited to be part of that seed. If we belong to Christ, then we are Abraham’s seed, Paul says, “and heirs according to the promise.” (vs. 29) To be “heirs” with Christ of the Abrahamic promise, we must follow in the Master’s footsteps. We recall Jesus’ words, “He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) The Apostle Paul counsels us to continually have our eyes on Jesus, “the leader and perfecter of the faith, ... who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, disregarded the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*) Jesus is our leader, our teacher, our pattern, and the one through whom we are privileged to enter into sonship with God.

There is also an important connection between spiritual eyesight and love. Paul indicates that it is only to those who love God supremely that he reveals his truth “by his Spirit.” (I Cor. 2:9,10) The apostle

further says, when speaking of the various gifts of the Spirit that have been available to the consecrated followers of the Lord, that love is “a more excellent way.” (I Cor. 12:31) It seems impossible to describe love itself, and the best that we can do is describe its conduct. If we possess unswerving faith in God and his purposes, it will be so because we have such a deep love for him and his will that no experience we encounter will be able to shake us as New Creatures. All of the gifts of God’s Holy Spirit are important and have merit, but love should be the controlling principle of our hearts and minds at all times. “Let all that you do be done in love,” Paul concluded.—I Cor. 16:14, *NASB*

In describing love, the apostle tells us what its conduct should be, and what it should not be. Paraphrasing, he says that love suffers long; it is kind; it does not envy; it does not boast nor get puffed up with pride; it does not behave in an unbecoming way; it does not seek glory for self; it is not easily provoked nor does it think evil of others; it does not rejoice in iniquity, but in the truth; it bears all things; it believes the best of others and hopes for good things for them; it endures all things. (I Cor. 13:4-7) Daily, we should ask ourselves, Do I have this kind of love?

Having eyes of faith and love is very important for us during this time of our present earthly sojourn. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:26) Yet, it is love, Paul says, that is the greatest of all character qualities. “Now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (I Cor. 13:13, *NASB*) To those who make their “calling and election sure,” and are given

the divine nature, faith will be exceeded by full and complete knowledge, and all the hopes related to their calling will be realized by their entering into the heavenly kingdom. However, Paul says, "Love never ends." (I Cor. 13:8, *English Standard Version*) This is because "God is love," and abides forever. (I John 4:8) Our Lord Jesus, and his glorified church, will also be the embodiment of divine love throughout all the ages to come.

Having such a prospect in view, let us daily strive to lay up this wonderful treasure of love. Indeed, it will be forever part of our being, if faithful, and we will have the added opportunity of ministering it unto the world of mankind in the kingdom, both as a blessing to them, and also as a mark of divine approval, that they might attain to everlasting life on earth. Love is the standard for all whom God will acknowledge as his children on either the heavenly or the earthly plane of existence.

The Apostle Paul says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Eph. 1:18) *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott* renders the wording as having "the eyes of the heart" of us enlightened. Since we are told to keep our hearts "with all diligence," having the eyes of our heart enlightened is most surely a necessary requisite to faithfulness. Out of our hearts, the verse continues, "are the issues of life."—Prov. 4:23

THE APPLE OF GOD'S EYE

In prayer, David requested of the Lord, "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow

of thy wings.” (Ps. 17:8) The phrase, “apple of the eye,” is most unusual, but full of meaning. *Strong’s Hebrew Definitions* denotes it as signifying “little man of the eye,” literally, the pupil of the eye. When one looks closely into another person’s eye, he sees himself reflected in their pupil, as a “little man.” Certainly, when we look into the eyes of God, we see ourselves as very little in his sight, yet we have the promise of his watch-care and protection. In this analogy, there is also the fact that our eyes, especially the pupils, are a very important part of the body. It is through the small aperture in the pupil that rays of light pass to form an image on the retina, by which we are able to see. Because of this, we protect our eyes by blinking or turning away when something potentially harmful approaches. In this, too, we see a lesson of God’s promised keeping power on our behalf.

We note that David made this request of God even though he had committed serious sins in his life. We, too, were born in sin and “shapen in iniquity.” (Ps. 51:5) If, however, we have accepted by faith the merit of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice and have made an unreserved consecration of ourselves to do God’s will, he is pleased to count us as united with Christ, the greater David, the apple of his Father’s eye. What a glorious privilege is ours of thus being viewed by God!

Jesus was the apple of God’s eye throughout his earthly ministry. On at least two occasions, a voice from heaven was heard saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5) Jesus did not turn away from the dangers and suffering that came to him, but instead “endured the

cross.” He was “tempted [Greek meaning: tested] in all points, ... yet without sin.” (Heb. 12:2,3; 4:15) By his death and resurrection Jesus made it possible for mankind to be released from the bondage of sin and death.—Phil. 2:5-11, *Diaglott*

Let us, then, be continually mindful of the wonderful privilege of being considered the apple of God’s eye, remembering that with this privilege also comes great responsibility. Even as we look into the eyes of God for guidance and instruction, he has his eyes on us. May we be faithful, even unto death, so that we might have a part in fulfilling his promise made so long ago, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”—Gen. 22:18 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

NOVEMBER 1—“Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”—Psalm 141:3 (Z. ’04-23 Hymn 95)

NOVEMBER 8—“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.”—Exodus 20:7 (Z. ’04-73 Hymn 196)

NOVEMBER 15—“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”—I John 2:6 (Z. ’03-345 Hymn 57A)

NOVEMBER 22—“The zeal of thine house hath consumed me.”—Psalm 69:9 (Z. ’98-112 Hymn 164)

NOVEMBER 29—“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised.)” —Hebrews 10:23 (Z. ’01-119 Hymn 93)

Thanksgiving to God for His Gifts

*“Every good gift
and every perfect
gift is from above,
and cometh down
from the Father of
lights, with whom
is no variableness,
neither shadow
of turning.”
—James 1:17*

THERE IS NOTHING WHICH man possesses that did not originally come from God as a gift of his bountiful love. This is especially true of the Christian, who, in addition to the spiritual gifts with which he is blessed, may properly think even of the material things of life as being gifts of

God. Ecclesiastes 5:19 reads, “God hath given riches and wealth [to every man], and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

Here we are reminded of how good God’s gifts really are. The food we eat is a gift of God, but those who have imperfect health and cannot properly digest their food do not, of course, rejoice so much in this particular gift. This reminds us that even our health is a gift of God. If we properly appreciate what God is doing for us along these material lines, we will find daily cause for rejoicing, for every

function of a healthy body gives pleasure and cause for thanksgiving.

When God created our first parents he planted a garden for them “eastward in Eden,” in which was placed “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.” (Gen. 2:8,9) It is significant, we think, that the beauty of the Garden of Eden is placed ahead of its food-sustaining qualities. God wanted his human creation not only to live, but to live in surroundings which were in themselves conducive to happiness and well-being. The Scriptures tell us that the earth was created to be man’s home. “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.”—Ps. 115:16

So far as the earth and its blessings are concerned, God has been impartial in the distribution of these blessings to all mankind. Jesus explained that God “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt. 5:45) This means that God’s earthly gifts of sunshine and rain are oftentimes distributed to those who do not appreciate them and, indeed, might well be resented in cases where human plans may be disturbed by the elements of the weather.

The followers of Jesus should be and are the most appreciative of God’s material gifts. The Apostle Paul, writing about this, said, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ... to be full and to be hungry.” (Phil. 4:11,12) Here is the case of a faithful servant of God whom he permitted at times to go hungry. But to the Christian even an experience of this kind could well

be considered a gift from God, because it is an experience from which he learns the more fully to put his trust in God and in his overruling providences. Along this same line Paul wrote, “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”—I Tim. 6:6,7

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

While a Christian sees all about him the gifts of God which without partiality are distributed to all men, he treasures especially God’s spiritual gifts, of which there are so many. In Ephesians 2:8 the Apostle Paul writes, “By grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Many students of the Bible have been uncertain in reading this text whether it is grace that is referred to as the gift of God, or faith. Actually, the apostle is saying that our salvation—being saved through our Lord Jesus Christ—is the gift of God. (Rom. 5:15) This is the gift of God’s grace, and it reaches us on the basis of our faith and of meeting the conditions of the gift, which is the full dedication of ourselves to do the Lord’s will.

Romans 6:23 reads, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The word “wages” indicates something that is earned. But he did not say that the wages of righteousness is eternal life. There is nothing that anyone can do to earn eternal life. So he stated it correctly when he said that eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is very much in harmony with that precious text which reads, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

DISCERNMENT

Psalm 119:144 reads, “The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.” One of the very precious gifts of God to every faithful follower of the Master is the gift of discernment with respect to his plans and purposes as revealed in his Word. And it is only through this gift of discernment that we can understand God’s plan of the ages. The Apostle Peter confessed to Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And to this Jesus replied, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 16:15-17) In other words, the great truth expressed by Peter concerning Jesus’ being the Christ was not based upon the discernment of the human mind but had been revealed to Peter by his Father in heaven. What a wonderful example this is of the gift of discernment! Jesus said to his disciples, “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 13:11

The gift of discernment is given to God’s people through the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is one of the outstanding gifts of God. Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil [or sinful by nature], know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13) Every true follower of the Master knows the value of God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. We are begotten by the Holy Spirit; we are anointed by the Holy Spirit; we are

baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit; we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we will finally be born of the Spirit.

A SOUND MIND

In II Timothy 1:7 Paul, writing to Timothy, explained that God had given him the spirit “of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” The context of this statement is very revealing. Toward the end of this final letter of Paul’s to Timothy he invites his beloved spiritual son to visit him in his prison cell in Rome. Paul knew that this would involve a certain amount of risk and danger; so he explains to Timothy that God had not given him the spirit of fear. If he felt fearful over this request by Paul to visit him in Rome, he could be sure that that spirit of fear did not come from God, but that God had given him the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

It would take courage to respond to Paul’s invitation, and also great love on Timothy’s part for Paul and for the Lord, to expose himself to the danger that was involved. However, this, Paul assured Timothy, would be the manifestation of the spirit of a “sound mind.” How correct Paul was! Actually, every Christian has dedicated himself to lay down his life for his brethren. (I John 3:16) The Holy Spirit would be guiding Timothy in making the proper decision to accept Paul’s invitation, even though it might cost him his life. Coming through the inspired Apostle Paul, Timothy could consider it as spoken directly by the Lord and as giving him an opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of his consecration.

THE SCRIPTURES

Another precious gift of God to his people is the Holy Scriptures, and these Scriptures are provided through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, “All Scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”—II Tim. 3:16,17, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

Further detail is given as to how the Holy Spirit ministers the Word of God to us. In Ephesians 4:7-13 the Apostle Paul explains, “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led a multitude of captives [marginal translation], and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

The function of apostles, prophets, pastors, etc., is to expound the Word of God. The apostles are the inspired expositors of God’s plan, and the other servants mentioned are the uninspired ones, but they all function to illuminate the body of Christ as

a whole that they might know more perfectly the will of God and be brought together in the unity of the faith. What a marvelous gift, then, is the gift of the Holy Scriptures through the power of God's Holy Spirit!

ALL THINGS

The Apostle Paul wrote, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) How comprehensive, indeed, are the gifts of God, beginning with the gift of his dear Son to be our Savior and Redeemer! Through him we have the gift of justification, the gift of fellowship with the Heavenly Father and with one another, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and many other gifts which are given to us to be freely used to the glory of God.

We even have the privilege of suffering with Christ. Paul mentioned this. He said, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29) The value of this gift lies in the fact that if we are faithful in suffering with Christ we shall, in God's due time, have the privilege of living and reigning with him.—Rom. 8:16,17

There are many gifts of God to his people of the Gospel Age which are referred to in the Scriptures. There are, for example, those wonderful gifts mentioned in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. In these chapters we are promised that, if we are faithful unto death, we will be given "a crown of life." Then there is that wonderful promise—again depending upon our faithfulness—that in due time we will be given to eat of the hidden manna.

Also, there is the promised gift of “power over the nations,” and the gift of the “morning star.” If faithful, we will be clothed in “white raiment” and made “a pillar in the temple of our God.” Jesus also said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21) What a marvelous prospect is thus held out to us, and what an encouragement to faithfulness it should be!

In Luke 12:32 Jesus gives us a summary of what is implied in all of these wonderful gifts of the future when he said to his disciples, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” The crown of glory, the hidden manna, power over the nations, the morning star, white raiment, being a pillar in the temple, and sitting with Jesus in his throne, are all aspects of participation with Jesus as joint-heirs in his kingdom—the kingdom which has been promised by the Heavenly Father and assured to us through Jesus and the merit of his redemptive sacrifice.

We cannot purchase such gifts, and there is nothing which we possess that we could give up which would merit our receiving all these blessings of God, except our appreciation and our devotion to the great Giver. So he invites us to give him our hearts, and to have our eyes observe and obey his ways. (Prov. 23:26) We do this through obedience to all the conditions attached to God’s gifts, and it is through our obedience that ultimately we will hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”—Matt. 25:21 ■

Tongues and Healing

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
—Acts 2:1-4

FOR MANY CENTURIES leaders and members of various Christian church denominations have claimed the ability to “speak with other tongues,” even as did those at Pentecost and afterward in the Early Church. Their claim has been that speaking in tongues is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to believers. Further, the assertion is made that this gift, together with the gift of healing, has been available all down through the centuries since Pentecost, just as it was in apostolic times.

In 2014, the National Congregations Study, created by Duke University professor Mark Chaves, released data covering a period of fifteen years, from 1998 to 2012, which showed an increase in the

practice of speaking in tongues in the United States. The data gathered was based on interviews conducted with church leaders of more than one thousand representative congregations throughout the country, and among numerous denominations. In 1998, 19% of those surveyed claimed the practice of speaking in tongues existed within their congregations. By 2006 that percentage had grown to 21%, and by 2012 it stood at 24%. As to the reason for these increases, Professor Chaves noted that there seems to be a growing trend in American religion towards “a certain kind of experience for people, away from just religious teachings—to make it more emotionally engaging, not just intellectually engaging.”

It is important to note that the practice of speaking in tongues today, and as it has been followed since the death of the twelve apostles, involves the utterance of words, or sounds, which are not understandable by the one speaking, nor by their hearers. In other words, it is speech in an “unknown language” to any human being and has generally been identified with the term “glossolalia.” Glossolalia is defined as “speech in languages or tongues.” However, in the case of the present practice of speaking in tongues, since there is no understandable language spoken, no meaning can be given to the words uttered. It is this fact that helps to reveal the unscriptural basis of modern “speaking with tongues.”—I Cor. 14:6,9

THE ORIGINAL NEED

The ability of those in the Early Church to “speak in other tongues” had nothing to do with utterances

which could not be understood—“unknown tongues.” Rather, in order to more effectively spread the Gospel message, the ability to speak, or to be understood, in languages other than their own native tongues filled a real need at that time. Take, for example, the situation which existed at Pentecost when the gift of the Holy Spirit was first given to and employed by those upon whom it was endowed. Each year at the time of Pentecost thousands of Jews made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to keep the “feast of weeks,” as had been commanded in the Mosaic Law. (Lev. 23:15,16; Deut. 16:10) These came from all parts of the known world to which they had been scattered over the course of the prior six centuries, since first being conquered and taken captive by the Babylonian empire. During the first century, most of them knew only the language of their adopted country.

Those who heard the disciples testify on the day of Pentecost concerning the resurrection of Jesus, and the Gospel centered in him, “were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes [Gentile converts to Judaism], Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.”—Acts 2:7-11

From this it is clear that the original speaking in tongues through the power of the Holy Spirit was not the uttering of unknown words having no meaning

to the speaker or the hearer. It was, rather, a speaking and hearing of real languages, for the benefit of those to whom the witness of the Gospel could not have otherwise been given in such an efficient manner. Under the circumstances, a critical need existed. Here were Israelites, born in foreign lands, who did not know the language of their home country. God desired that a testimony concerning the Gospel of Christ be presented to these while gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. The most effective way of doing this was through the miracle of speaking with "tongues" of other known languages. Thus a real purpose was accomplished.

This Pentecostal experience of the disciples' speaking with tongues was the most outstanding one of which we have record in the Early Church. Yet this "gift" of the Spirit remained with many for a considerable time during the first century, for the reason that the need which existed at Pentecost continued, although not likely manifest on such a large scale. Not all in the Early Church had this gift. Referring to this, together with other special gifts enjoyed by some of the brethren at that time, the Apostle Paul wrote, "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."—I Cor. 12:28-31

Here the thought is clear, that just as not all in the Early Church were apostles, or prophets, so all

had not been given the gift of speaking with tongues. In Acts 19:6 we are informed that the Apostle Paul laid his hands on certain ones, and they received the Holy Spirit and began to speak with tongues, and prophesied. This seems to imply that this gift was one which could be secured only through one of the apostles. It then would reasonably follow that when the Lord's specially chosen apostles fell asleep in death, and those upon whom they conferred the gift of speaking with tongues died, this miraculous gift would cease.—I Cor. 13:8

Paul emphasizes that speaking in an unknown tongue is of no profit to the hearer unless what is said is understood and interpreted. (I Cor. 14:1-33) In the modern practice of speaking with tongues, little thought is given to the apostle's admonitions along this line. However, the interpretation of tongues was very important in the Early Church. In comparing the value of speaking in tongues with talking plainly in the language of the audience—which he refers to as prophesying—Paul said, “He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. ... Greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.”—vss. 4,5

In this statement Paul reveals an interesting fact concerning speaking with tongues as it was practiced by certain believers in his day. Those who thus spoke could also interpret what they said if they wished, because part of this gift was to know the meaning of what they were saying as it would be spoken in other languages. However, the apostle's words indicate that not all who spoke in other

tongues were giving the interpretation, which made such speaking of no value to their hearers. All of this emphasizes the fact that the various tongues of that time were real languages. They were “unknown” only to those who did not speak that language, and who had not received the gift of speaking and interpreting such tongues.

As we have noted, the greatest need for the use of this gift was at Pentecost. However, we also understand that as the apostles carried the Gospel to as many places as they were directed by the Lord, they would often come in contact with those who could not understand their native language. Under such circumstances, the special gift they had received would be a great help in their witness work. Additionally, new believers would be reached who spoke a different language than that of the majority in a given congregation. When these all would meet together, they could be mutually edified through one or more of the number who could speak or interpret those languages. As Paul explains, though, a message delivered thus would not be understood by the congregation as a whole unless it was interpreted.

As time went on, the faithful ones in the Early Church carried the Gospel of Christ into one country after another. Believers arose in all the various nations who were able to continue the work of proclaiming the message among their own people in their native language. Thus, the need for speaking with foreign tongues diminished. In addition, while at Pentecost and for a while thereafter there would be no opportunity of interpreting from one language to another in written form, this possibility also

developed later, doing away with the need of speaking with tongues.

It is rather interesting to realize how relatively little is said in the Bible about speaking with tongues, even during the period when it was one of the divinely authorized gifts of the Holy Spirit. We are informed of what occurred along this line at Pentecost. When the first Gentiles, Cornelius and his family, accepted the Gospel, they enjoyed a similar experience as did those at Pentecost. (Acts 10:45,46) On another occasion, Paul laid his hands on certain believers and they received the gift of tongues.—Acts 19:6

Nothing else is said in the New Testament concerning speaking with tongues except Paul's observations in I Corinthians chapters 12, 13 and 14. In these chapters, as we have seen, he reveals that in any event only certain ones had been given the gift of tongues, and that this gift would cease. (I Cor. 13:8) As we have noted, in the 14th chapter the apostle minimizes the importance of this gift unless, through proper interpretation, it could be used for the edification of those who heard. Summing up this thought, Paul says, "Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air."—I Cor. 14:9

Paul further writes, "I speak with tongues more than ye all: Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." (vss. 18,19) Notice additionally the apostle's implication that speaking with tongues was for the benefit of unbelievers, not the church. "Wherefore," he says, "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe

not.” (vs. 22) For this sign to mean anything to an unbeliever he would need to understand what was being said. The suggestion here is that an individual, hearing the message in his own language from one whom he knew could not ordinarily speak that language, would be tremendously moved by the power demonstrated by means of such a gift.

On the other hand, Paul indicates that if an entire congregation of believers comes together, all speaking in various tongues to each other, and a newly interested unbeliever joins their fellowship for the first time, he will be greatly confused by the cacophony of voices and likely conclude that they are all mad. (vs. 23) We gather from these various observations by the Apostle Paul that some even in his day were beginning to lose sight of the real purpose of the gift of tongues, even as those do today who believe that speaking with tongues is the uttering of sounds which no one, not even they themselves, can understand or interpret.

DIVINE HEALING

Many who speak in tongues also claim the ability to heal the sick through the use of miracle-working power. Indeed, Jesus performed miracles of healing, and the apostles were also given that ability. Jesus raised the dead, as did the Apostles Peter and Paul. (John 11:41-44; Acts 9:36-42; 20:8-10) These special gifts also passed away after they had served their purpose. It is well to remember that neither in the case of Jesus nor of the apostles were all the sick healed, or all the dead raised, as the plan of God calls for in the period described by Peter as the “times of restitution of all things.” (Acts 3:20,21)

Jesus' miracles of healing and raising the dead, as well as those performed by the apostles in the days of the Early Church, were as signs to help convince the unbelieving world of the authenticity and assurance of the promises pertaining to the future which were being presented as part of the Gospel message.

This was very appropriate in connection with the Jewish people. Throughout Old Testament times God's chosen people were accustomed to miracles. There were the miracles in conjunction with the exodus from Egypt, and under the leadership of Moses in the wilderness. There were miraculous demonstrations of God's power when Joshua was the leader of God's people, such as the crossing of Jordan, and the overthrow of Jericho.

There were miracles in connection with David's rulership, and later, when other faithful kings ruled over Israel. We are reminded of outstanding miracles in Elijah's day, when fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice which he had offered to God, and the awakening of the widow's son from death. Then followed Elisha, whom God similarly used to raise the son of the Shunammite woman from death. There was the deliverance of the three young Hebrew men in the fiery furnace, and of Daniel from the mouths of the lions.

Throughout this era of miracles God's prophets foretold the coming of Israel's Messiah, who would establish a world government in which the faithful Israelites would have a prominent part. Thus, it was natural for the people of this nation to expect that such a great one would be able to perform miracles, even as the lesser servants of God did in the past. Moreover, had not the prophets foretold that the

Messiah, the anointed Son of God, in addition to establishing a world government, would heal the sick and raise the dead?—Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:17,18; Hos. 13:14

While Jesus did not give any demonstrations of power along the line of establishing a new government in the earth, he did heal the sick and raise the dead. These miracles, together with his wonderful teachings, were sufficient to convince the honest-hearted of Israel that he was indeed the promised Messiah, and that their God was with him, blessing his ministry. John wrote of Jesus' miracles, saying concerning the turning of water into wine, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory." (John 2:11) We understand that Jesus' kingdom glory is referred to in this text, and that his miracles during his earthly ministry foreshadowed the greater, world-wide program of miracles which will be performed through the agencies of the Messianic kingdom.

THE DISCIPLES' POSITION

The position of the disciples among the unbelieving majority of Israelites as well as throughout the world in general was a difficult one. Indeed, they had been convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead, that he had returned to heaven, and would come again to take them unto himself and to establish the long-promised Messianic kingdom. To unbelievers, however, the claim that Jesus had been raised from the dead must have seemed fanciful, especially since he was nowhere to be seen. To the Jewish religious leaders, and those under their

influence who had been responsible for Jesus' death, the claim of his resurrection stirred much opposition and bitterness.

Under these circumstances, the fact that the apostles in the Early Church were endowed with the gift of performing miracles on appropriate occasions would do much to help establish Christianity in the hearts of the sincere. They made good use of it to this end. We think of the time shortly after Pentecost when Peter and John healed the lame man at the gate of the temple called "Beautiful." We read that "as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering."—Acts 3:1-11

Immediately these two apostles had an audience which had been greatly impressed. When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things,

which God before hath shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.”—vss. 12-18

After stating that the miracle was based on faith in Jesus of Nazareth, Peter explained that Jesus would come again, that when he did, as God’s anointed representative, there would be a time of restitution, or restoration. The apostle states: “He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”—Acts 3:20,21

GIFT OF HEALING CEASED

With the death of the apostles and those upon whom they conferred miraculous power, the gifts of healing and raising the dead ceased, for their purpose during the present age was accomplished. Throughout the period since, however, there have been those who claimed that they could perform miracles of healing, even up to the present time. Indeed, these claims are not limited to the professed Christian world. There are many among non-Christian religions who profess to be “healers.” In the Christian world, those who practice what they call “divine healing” claim to be following the example of Jesus and his apostles. What they seem to overlook, however, is that Jesus and the apostles additionally raised the dead. Since the days of the apostles, there is no record of any individual being raised from the dead, and so far as we know, no one has ever credibly claimed to have that ability.

We rejoice, however, that in “the times of restitution of all things” the dead will be awakened and given an opportunity to live forever on condition of obedience to the righteous laws of the Messianic kingdom which will then be ruling in the affairs of men. Those who have suffered and died following in the footsteps of Christ Jesus are brought forth in the “first resurrection,” to live and reign with him. (Rev. 20:6) These will be exalted to heavenly glory to be with the Lord. Mankind in general will be restored to life on the earth as humans. It will be then that “the ransomed of the LORD [all mankind, redeemed by the blood of Christ] shall return ... with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:10; 51:10,11; Matt. 20:28; I Tim. 2:3-6

The people will then be enlightened, for the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth “as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) Instead of non-understandable “glossolalia” that is heard today when people attempt to speak with tongues, the Lord will “turn to the people a pure language,” or speech, which can be understood by all. (Zeph. 3:9) Healing will be permanent, and will include all diseases—physical, mental and moral. Finally, the Lord will “swallow up death in victory,” and mankind’s greatest and “last enemy” will be destroyed. (Isa. 25:8; 33:24; 35:5,6; I Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 21:4) How thankful we should be that our Heavenly Father has such a wonderful plan for the salvation, enlightenment and eternal healing of the fallen and dying race. Let us be faithful in telling the whole world these blessed tidings. ■

SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

O. B. Elbert

New Haven, CT November 4

S. Jeuck

New York, NY November 11

E. Kuenzli

New York, NY November 11

H. Montague

New Haven, CT November 4

Louisville, KY 23,24

P. Mora

Delaware Valley, PA

November 11

D. Rice

Milwaukee, WI November 3,4

*“If we love one another, God dwelleth in us,
and his love is perfected in us.”*

—I John 4:12

OBITUARIES

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

Brother Stephen Obayagbona, Ibadan, Nigeria—
September 19. Age, 63

Brother Jack Ensley, Spokane, WA—September 25.
Age, 94

Sister Rebecca Blicharz, Kalispell, MT—September 30.
Age, 93

Sister Dolores Hartley, Albuquerque, NM—October 8.
Age, 94

Sister Peg Kindig, Louisville, KY—October 12. Age,
94

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.

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

AUSTRALIA CONVENTION, January 25-28—Camp Wilkin, Anglesea, Victoria, Australia. Contact R. Charlton. Email: australianbiblestudents@gmail.com

NIGERIA CONVENTION, February 22-24—Uzi Obudi Agwa Owerri Imo State, Nigeria. Contact C. Egbu. Phone: 2348033339949 or Email: egbucaje@gmail.com

FLORIDA CONVENTION, March 2-4—Holiday Inn Orlando International, 5750 T. G. Lee Blvd., Orlando, FL 32822. Contact hotel for room reservations. Phone: (407) 851-6400. Specify “Orlando Bible Students” to receive special rate of \$131.00. Online booking code: SBO. For other information, contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

*Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart a song to raise,
Streams of favor, never ceasing,
Call for notes of heartfelt praise,
Teach me some melodious sonnet
Grace to gratitude doth move.
Praise thy grace, I glory in it!
Grace so full of matchless love.*

*Not alone hath grace redeemed me,
Bought me with Christ's precious blood,
Sought me out when I, a stranger,
Wandered from the fold of God;
But beyond this great salvation
God hath shown me wondrous grace
Called me with a heavenly calling,
Ever to behold his face.*

*O! to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Lord, thy goodness, like a fetter,
Binds my grateful heart to thee.
I will tread the way appointed,
Rough and thorny though it be;
In the steps of thine Anointed;
'Tis my privilege, I see.*

—*Hymns of Dawn*