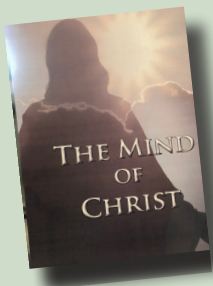




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FRANCE: L'Aurore, 39A rue des Bois, 68540 Feldkirch

GERMANY: Tagesanbruch Bibelstudien-Vereinigung e. V., Postfach 3, 64396 Modautal

GREECE: He Haravgi (The Dawn), PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167 USA

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

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Mine Eyes Are Upon All Their Ways

“I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, ... and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill. ... For mine eyes are upon all their ways.”

—*Jeremiah 16:15-17*

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 75th anniversary of the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. In our opening passage of prophetic Scripture, the Lord explains that he would send “fishers” to entice, and then “hunters” to compel the people of Israel to return to the land given “unto their fathers.” He also explains that, in sending the fishers and hunters among his people, it would be because his eyes were “upon all their ways.”

The implication of this prophecy is that God would permit many experiences to come upon his people during the end of

the present Gospel Age, including much trouble. This trouble would not be an evidence of his disfavor, but rather as evidence of his favor in shaping their circumstances in such a manner as to turn their faces toward the land of promise. History thus shows us that this “hunting” was accomplished by the persecutions under Nazi Germany, by which the Jews were driven out of Europe during World War II.

Some may ask, if God’s favor was to be the result of the events that eventually brought them back to their land, why did the Jews experience one of the most severe periods of persecution in their long history? We read, “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.”—Ezek. 20:33-37

According to this prophecy, the Israelites were to be brought out from the countries where they had been residing by what is described as the Lord’s “fury.” Furthermore, Ezekiel’s prophecy declares that in doing this he would be ruling over his people. These were to be signs that divine favor was now gradually returning to them. The illustration used in this prophecy gives us the proper understanding.

He says, "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people," and again, "Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you."

God's favor was upon his people when, in the person of Moses, he visited them and delivered them from their slavery. Even so, it was a trying time for the Israelites in times of old. It was necessary for them to experience some of the plagues which came upon the Egyptians in order to encourage them to follow Moses out of bondage. In leaving Egypt, they did not move directly from Egypt to Canaan, the land of promise, but shortly found themselves in the wilderness where their circumstances were most difficult.

The prophecy foretold a similar experience when he would bring them out from among the nations wherever they had been scattered. Their uprooting from the Gentile nations would not immediately result in a peaceful and secure settlement in their land. Instead, there was to be a long wilderness experience, a time of uncertainty and insecurity such as we have witnessed, particularly in the events of the past one hundred years.

After much in the way of severe trouble, by the ruling of the United Nations on November 29, 1947, the land of Palestine was apportioned, partly to the Arabs and partly to the Jews. Later, on May 14, 1948, the Jewish provisional government proclaimed a new State of Israel. It is perhaps this situation that is referred to by the Prophet Joel in reference to the time when the Lord would be restoring his people to their land. The prophecy reads, "In those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and

Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”—Joel 3:1,2

THE BOND OF THE COVENANT

From this and other relative prophecies, as well as the passage of 75 years since their rebirth as a nation, it is evident that God’s full purpose in the restoration of Israel to the land of promise is not yet accomplished. Considering further the prophecy of Ezekiel, it is noted that God’s intent in uprooting the Israelites from among the nations in which they were living has been that they should ultimately be brought “into the bond of the covenant.”

This is similar to the sequence of events experienced by ancient Israel when delivered from slavery in Egypt. At that time, they were first brought into the wilderness and then into the bond of the Law Covenant, mediated by Moses at Mount Sinai. (Exod. 24:3-8) The bringing of the Israelites into the bond of the promised “New Covenant” is the ultimate design of the Lord in the experiences through which he has been presently leading them.—Jer. 31:31-34

In fulfillment of this purpose, Israel’s bitter experiences during the past century have served merely to point to a beginning, a key element of which we have seen to be the granting of Israel the right to return to the land of their forefathers and to establish a national home. Thus, it is evident that God’s dealings with his ancient people are being accomplished according to his own purpose and in his own due time.

FOR GOD'S GLORY

Beginning with Ezekiel 36:16, and continuing through chapters 37, 38 and 39, various aspects of God's dealings with Israel at the time of their restoration are presented. In these chapters, God's Word declares his purpose in restoring them to the land of promise. We read, "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went." (Ezek. 36:22) In the previous verse, the Lord tells us, "I had pity for mine holy name."

In this we are reminded of an interesting facet of God's dealings with his people. The thought is first introduced in a prayer by Moses, in which he reveals his concern for the glory of God's name. The Lord had told him that, because of the Israelites' transgressions, he proposed to destroy them all, and build a new nation with Moses.—Exod. 32:9,10

In prayer, Moses replied to this, "Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever."—Exod. 32:11-13

In response to Moses' prayer, God determined not to destroy Israel. In another account of this episode, we learn that Moses asked the Lord to pardon his people Israel, and he responded by saying, "I have pardoned according to thy word: But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers."—Num. 14:20-23

Concerning the time that God, by his great power, delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, we read, "So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day." (Neh. 9:10) Moses emphasized the point at issue in connection with the glory of God's name by referring to the oath-bound promise that had been made to Abraham concerning the land of Canaan as being an everlasting possession for this people. Moses was concerned as to how this promise could be fulfilled if God were to destroy the Israelites and then establish a new nation.

Moses felt that if God were to thus allow this people to die in the wilderness, it would prove either his unwillingness to fulfill his promises, or his inability to do so. However, to him to whom a thousand years are "but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night," the ability to pardon and to save his people in the wilderness was only a temporary consideration. (Ps. 90:4) If God was to maintain the glory of his name and the integrity of his promises by keeping this people alive and eventually giving them the land of promise as an everlasting

possession, it would have to be accomplished through long centuries of time and in full harmony with all of his divine purposes.

The Jewish people have always been a persecuted minority. Almost any other people under similar circumstances would have given up the determination to continue their identity as a people, and would have been assimilated by the larger, and more favored, nationalities and races. God's protection has kept them intact as a people by restoring them to their land when his due time came, and he has thus continued to magnify the glory of his name in them.

THE RESURRECTION

The glory of God's name in connection with the restoration of the Jews to the land of promise involves much more than the returning of a certain percentage of recent generations to the region of Palestine. However, this is an important piece in the fulfillment of his promises. Those Jews dwelling in the land of Israel will be among the first to begin receiving the blessings of God's promised kingdom. (Matt. 6:10) This will be at the time when the whole earth is under the righteous rule of Christ. (Heb. 1:1-3; 12:2) Furthermore, the work of restoration will continue even on behalf of all those who have died in past generations.

We will fail to appreciate the full significance of God's promises if we overlook the resurrection feature of his plan of the ages. As we have seen, the Israelites were uprooted from the many countries in Europe, and elsewhere in which they were dwelling, just as he brought up the ancient people of

Israel from Egyptian bondage. Thus far, as then, his people have entered merely into a “wilderness” condition. However, God’s grand objective is to bring them into the bond of the New Covenant, in fulfillment of the words of the Prophet Ezekiel.

This will be true of those who have died, as well as those who are living at the time when the Messianic kingdom begins. The resurrection of the Israelites is described as bringing them back from captivity, not merely from bondage to other nations, but from the captivity of death. In this connection, the Lord further promises, “I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.”—Ezek. 16:62

Of the Israelites who are restored at that time, God said, “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.” (Ezek. 36:31) This will be true, not only of the then living generation, but also of those who are raised from the dead thereafter.

Returning again to Ezekiel chapter 16, we read, “I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them; that thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be ashamed because of all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.”—vss. 53,54, *American Standard Version*

ALL HAVE SINNED

The Israelites as a people, or nation, have perhaps been neither more nor less righteous than any

other race or nation. As members of the fallen race, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) In this and other respects, God has been pleased to use the Jews as symbolic of the whole world of mankind, among which only a few individuals—one here and one there—have been fully faithful to the Lord.

The prophecy of Ezekiel 16:53-63 reveals that when the Israelites are brought forth from the captivity of death, they will at first be ashamed and confounded. The Prophet Daniel reveals that this will occur following the great time of trouble with which the present Gospel Age comes to an end.

Through Daniel, the Lord said, “At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”—Dan. 12:1-3

Daniel’s people who were promised deliverance from death, are God’s people—his human creation. All are “written in the book” in the sense that they are assured an awakening, in due time, from the sleep of death. Many of them will come forth to shame as the prophet points out. This will not be unending shame, however, for the word here translated “everlasting” denotes “age-abiding.” (*Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) When the Israelites’ shame has accomplished its purpose in humbling them, it will pass away, as will also be true of all nations and people.

God's promise to Abraham concerning the land was unconditional. (Gen. 12:7; 13:15) Later, however, he placed a condition upon the high honor of being his representative in the teaching and blessing of the world. This condition was obedience to the covenant of statutes and laws he had given them. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exod. 19:5,6) In the original setting forth of these conditions, no mention is made that later a spiritual seed of Abraham was to be developed, also based upon the conditions of faith and obedience as explained in the New Testament by the Apostle Paul.—Gal. 3:27-29

Throughout the ages of the past, prior to the time of Jesus' First Advent, many were faithful to God's Law, and thus qualified to be his special servants under the terms set forth in Exodus 19:5,6. Many who preceded the Law given to Israel were likewise faithful to God. All of these were thus proven worthy of that "better resurrection" outlined by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 11:35.

A SPIRITUAL CLASS

Beginning with Jesus, and subsequently since the Day of Pentecost, a spiritual class began to be developed under the terms of faith and obedience. The first of this class was selected exclusively from the natural seed of Abraham. However, because of Israel's disobedience, the invitation was extended

to Gentiles to make up the foreordained number of the spiritual seed. Throughout the present Gospel Age those of the Lord's people who have faithfully met the proper conditions of consecration and continue to be submissive to the will of God, will thus participate in the future work of blessing both Israel and the whole world of mankind.

God, through the Prophet Isaiah, speaks symbolically of two classes that will assist fallen mankind in the ways of righteousness under the administration of Christ's kingdom. He says, "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."—Isa. 2:2,3

TWO PHASES OF THE KINGDOM

In the concluding portion of this wonderful prophecy, we note that Isaiah specifically mentions two separate groups, one spiritual and the other earthly, who will carry out the will of God during Christ's kingdom, "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Zion represents the glorified spiritual class, with Christ as its Head, who will function as the Mediator of the New Covenant, in the administration of righteousness over the affairs of mankind. John the Revelator also speaks of this faithful class, "I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on

Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”—Rev. 14:1, *New American Standard Bible*

The earthly representatives of Christ’s kingdom will share in dispensing, as Isaiah states, “The word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” These worthies of old lived prior to the time of our Lord’s earthly ministry, and Apostle Paul explains, “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the [heavenly] promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”—Matt. 11:11; Heb. 11:39,40

Under these two faithful groups—the spiritual class and the earthly class—the rest of mankind will learn to know, love and serve the Lord. What a glorious prospect for the poor groaning creation of the present time. Let us rejoice in God’s past and present dealings with his people, Israel, and realize that their experiences are merely a foretaste of God’s ultimate plan to restore and bless all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17 ■

“The LORD gives his people strength. He is a safe fortress for his anointed king. Save your people! Bless Israel, your special possession. Lead them like a shepherd, and carry them in your arms forever.”

Psalms 28:8,9 New Living Translation

Hypocrisy Condemned

Key Verse: “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.*”
—*Luke 11:44*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 11:37-44

THE PHARISEES WERE THE ultimate religious people among the Jews during Christ’s life on earth. In their supposed righteous zeal, over time they had devised an intricate system of oral tradition to keep them from breaking the Mosaic Law. One might suppose that with such a desire to obey God, they would have recognized the perfect obedience of Jesus and affirmed and followed him. Yet they constantly

proved to be his most bitter and relentless opponents.

In today’s lesson we find Jesus accepting an invitation to dine in the home of a Pharisee. (Luke 11:37) Jesus had just declared the Jews a wicked generation for asking once again for a sign to prove his claims about being the son of God. He said the only sign they needed was that of Jonah.—vss. 29,30,32; Matt. 12:40

We quote the narrative of what follows from today’s Selected Scripture: “The Pharisee noticed with some surprise that he did not wash before the meal. But the Lord said to him, You Pharisees are fond of cleaning the outside of your cups and dishes, but inside yourselves you are full of greed and wickedness!” (Luke 11:38,39, *J.B. Phillips New Testament*) When it came to following the rules, the Pharisees excelled, but they ignored the greater importance of demonstrating mercy, seeking justice, and practicing faithfulness. They sought the chief seats in

the synagogue and salutations in the marketplaces, but lacked benevolence toward those they served.—vs. 43

Later in Luke's Gospel Jesus identifies another of the failings of the Pharisees as that of covetousness—that is, according to the Greek, they were “money-lovers.” (Luke 16:14) Near the end of his earthly ministry, the Lord similarly told the scribes that their love of money led them to disregard the property rights of others. “Ye devour widows' houses,” meaning that they would take advantage of widows to accumulate property for themselves.—Matt. 23:14; Mark 12:40

Today's Key Verse is a condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, but also a warning to believers. Jesus spoke similar words in Matthew 23:27: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.” Here the graves become invisible, and the risk is that of being in the presence of what is corrupt without knowing. As one might unconsciously walk over a grave concealed from view, and thus be a victim of ceremonial defilement, so the righteous-looking exterior of the religious leaders of Jesus' day kept people from perceiving the evil influences they contracted from encountering such corruption.

Attitudes and practices such as those of the scribes and Pharisees still exist today, even among professed Christians. Many believe that simply showing up for Sunday services makes you right with God, yet in daily life they largely ignore important scriptural principles such as doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. (Mic. 6:8) Others read the Bible only to justify certain pre-conceived convictions, rather than to be conformed to the will of God. (Rom. 12:2) Let us not be deceived by such practices, for “God is not mocked. ... He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”—Gal. 6:7,8 ■

Healing on the Sabbath Day

Key Verse: “[Jesus] answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?”
—Luke 14:5

Selected Scripture:
Luke 14:1-6

JESUS NEVER REFUSED AN invitation to present the Truth. In today’s Selected Scripture we are told that the Pharisees “watched him.” (Luke 14:1) They were evidently hoping to catch the Lord breaking one of the Law’s prohibitions, especially that of working on the Sabbath. The Law read, “The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.”—Exod. 20:10

Part of the Law’s requirement was that food was prohibited from being gathered and otherwise specially prepared on the Sabbath. The scriptural account of collecting manna in the wilderness included instructions from Jehovah that a double portion must be gathered on the sixth day of the week. No manna would appear on the seventh day, for it was to be a Sabbath day of rest. (Exod. 16:13-26) Additionally, the Law even prohibited the lighting of fire in their homes on the Sabbath. (Exod. 35:3) Therefore, the Israelites prepared a double portion of meals on the sixth day.

Returning to our lesson, as Jesus entered the house of one of the Pharisees there appeared before him a man with the dropsy, an incurable disease at that time. (Luke

14:2) We are not told if the Pharisees positioned the man before Jesus, or if he had entered this semi-public feast on his own in the hope that the Lord would cure him. Nevertheless, here stood a man with a life-threatening disease. Would Jesus heal on the Sabbath or not?

Clearly understanding the Pharisees' motive, Jesus disarmed them by asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" (vs. 3) The Jewish religious leaders were expected to be able and willing to answer such questions asked by the people at any time. Yet in the presence of the great Master they held their peace, eager to see what course he would take. Hearing no objection to healing on the Sabbath day being cited from the Law, our Lord performed the miracle. "He took him, and healed him, and let him go." (vs. 4) The implication is that perhaps Jesus merely touched the afflicted one, so it might be more manifest that the miracle was of divine power through him.

Our Lord answered his own question by the miracle, and thus proved that nothing in the Law forbade the healing of the sick on the Sabbath. He then justified his course before the company by his further question found in the words of our Key Verse. The Pharisees were again silent before Jesus, knowing that where their personal interests and property were involved, they would decide that there was nothing in the Law to hinder extending such assistance on the Sabbath. Thus, our Lord removed the notion that the healing of someone on the Sabbath was a violation of God's Law.

Jesus had a proper reverence and respect for the Jewish Sabbath. Similarly, our celebration of the first day of the week as a Christian day of rest and worship should not be with the thought that we are in bondage to it as a law. Furthermore, let us treat with great appreciation the privilege we have of being able to leave one day behind—resting from—the affairs of this life, that we may focus on the hope of helping to bless all the families of the earth in the next age.—Heb. 4:9-11; Gen.22:18; Acts 3:24,25 ■

Righteous Judgment

Key Verse: “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*”
—*John 7:24*

Selected Scripture:
John 7:1-24

BY OUTWARD APPEARANCES, Jesus’ ministry seemed to be in serious jeopardy. Many of his followers had abandoned him after he told them they needed to eat his flesh and drink his blood if they were to have eternal life. (John 6:53-58,66) As today’s lesson begins, we learn additionally that the Jewish leaders in Judea were seeking to kill him. (John 7:1) As the Feast of Booths approached, however, Jesus faced the threat before him of returning to Jerusalem according to Jewish Law.—Deut. 16:16

The Lord’s brethren urged him to leave Galilee and go to Judea for the feast and give a demonstration of his powers for all to see. (John 7:3-5) Jesus’ response no doubt surprised them, for he told them to go to Jerusalem without him. His absence caused a great debate among the crowds as to what kind of man he was, while the Jewish leaders sought his whereabouts. As all of this was going on, Jesus secretly came to Jerusalem.—vss. 8-13

In the middle of the feast, Jesus appeared in the Temple and began to teach. The people were amazed, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” Jesus answered, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ... Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?”—vss. 15-19, *English Standard Version*

The Master then turned their attention to the matter of judging righteously. “Jesus answered them, I did one work, and you all are astounded. Now Moses established circumcision among you—though it did not originate with Moses but with the previous patriarchs—and you circumcise a person even on the Sabbath day. If, to avoid breaking the Law of Moses, a person undergoes circumcision on the Sabbath day, have you any cause to be angry with (indignant with, bitter against) Me for making a man’s whole body well on the Sabbath? Be honest in your judgment and do not decide at a glance (superficially and by appearances); but judge fairly and righteously.”—vss. 21-24, *Amplified Bible*

The question arises, what is “righteous judgment” spoken of in our Key Verse? We answer that a righteous judgment is an equitable or right decision. However, as fallen human beings we cannot read the heart, so how can we render a right decision? The Apostle Paul provides this sobering answer concerning judging at the present time: “Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.” (I Cor. 4:5) Thus, we should not attempt to render positive and final judgment toward anyone at the present time, especially if our judgment is disposed to be rendered in the form of criticism. If faithful to our vow of consecration, we will be given the opportunity and have the wisdom necessary in the next age to assist in the work of judging the world “in righteousness.”—Acts 17:31

The Apostle James speaks of our present responsibility concerning judgment. “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.”—James 4:10-12

David Sins against God

Key Verse: *“David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”*
—II Samuel 12:13

Selected Scripture:
II Samuel 12:1-10,13

He did not recognize himself in the picture the prophet had drawn and expressed great indignation against the sinner therein portrayed.

How stunned David must have been when Nathan said to him, “Thou art the man.” Then, speaking for the Lord, Nathan reminded David of the bountiful provision which had been made for him. God had delivered him from the envious clutches of Saul, and “I [God] gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to

DAVID IS SPOKEN OF IN the Bible as a man after God’s own heart. (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22) This does not mean that he had no faults, but it does mean that his heart was right before God. However, he committed a gross sin in arranging for the death of Uriah and taking his wife to be his own wife. (II Sam. 11:1-27) When this matter was called forcibly to David’s attention by the Prophet Nathan, he

do evil in his sight?”—II Sam. 12:7-9

As part of David's punishment for this great sin, he was told that his reign as king of Israel would be characterized by war. This prophecy came tragically true. In addition, his first son by Bathsheba, Uriah's former wife, sickened and died. This was further punishment upon David for his great sin. (vss. 10-14) Nevertheless, God's tender mercy was also displayed toward David in that he spared his life. Under the Jewish Law, David's sin called for the death sentence, but he was not destroyed. This was due to the fact that he was so quick to acknowledge his sin when it was pointed out to him.

The first five verses of Psalm 32 seem to be an expression of David's feelings toward the Lord in connection with his sin and its forgiveness. He wrote, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

In David's life we have a good example of how God deals with repentant sinners. We are constantly reminded of the law of heredity which is operating in human experience because of sin. By heredity Adam's transgression brought death to all his children, and all, by nature, are looked upon as sinners.—Rom. 3:10,23; 5:12

However, God appreciates those who at heart endeavor to keep his commandments. This is why he loved David, and showed mercy toward him when he was quick to repent and to acknowledge his sin. God does not deal with any of his people upon the basis of their actual accomplishments, but according to the desires of their hearts.—Matt. 6:21; 12:35 ■

Christian Citizenship

“God has rescued us from the power of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of the Son whom he loves.”

—*Colossians 1:13,*

International

Standard Version

SCRIPTURALLY SPEAKING,

all footstep followers of the Master are citizens of Christ’s kingdom. (Phil 3:20, ISV) That kingdom has not been reigning over the earth throughout the centuries of the Christian age. Nevertheless, it is recognized by God

as a kingdom, and those who have sworn allegiance to him and to his Son, Christ Jesus, are recognized as citizens of it. This means that all true Christians are, in reality, “strangers and pilgrims [Greek: resident foreigners]” here upon the earth, and that their allegiance is to a government that is not recognized by the kingdoms of this world. —I Pet. 2:9-11

Obviously, to be in a position of this kind, calls for a careful scrutiny of God’s Word. Its commands governing the situation must be taken fully into consideration as a guide for the conduct of such “strangers and pilgrims” in a foreign land.

Another element that enters into our study of God's Word bearing on this subject is the fact that as citizens of Christ's kingdom we are expected by God to serve as ambassadors, and thus to represent him in an unfriendly world. (II Cor. 5:20) This, too, calls for a careful study of the divine rules governing God's ambassadors, in order that the kingdom interests of earth's new ruler may be properly represented.

In the study of this subject it is important first of all to consider the great principles underlying the issue. We believe that the most important fundamental is the manner in which it involves one's worship of Jehovah, the true God. While the Christian of this age is not directly under the law that was given to Israel, nevertheless the principles of that law are applicable to the Lord's people at any time. One of those commandments says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exod. 20:3) The intent of this and associated commands is summed up in the New Testament by Jesus when he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."—Matt. 22:37

Surely we must concede that God could not be satisfied with any less degree of loyalty to him than that which is expressed by these words of the Master. It will be seen, therefore, that there may be a possible conflict between this requirement of the Almighty God of the universe and the requirements of obedience exacted by one or another of the governments of this world.

Does this mean, then, that in order to be truly loyal to God we must be disloyal to earthly governments?

Does it mean that there must necessarily be an open conflict between a Christian whose citizenship is in heaven and the civil authorities of this world who do not recognize the king to whom we have sworn allegiance?

These are questions which every consecrated Christian, especially in days like the present, must sooner or later face with conviction and fortitude. They are questions, moreover, which each individual must have satisfactorily answered in his own mind and heart. One Christian cannot decide for another what he or she should do under the circumstances with which they are surrounded. Like all other issues of the Christian life, it becomes a matter for individual decision; and those who are wholly sincere will endeavor to have their decision based upon that which they believe God's Word teaches. The most that any Christian can do for another in the settling of these important issues is to call attention to what the Bible says, and then it remains for each individual to note the proper personal application of the commands of God and obey them.

THE POWERS THAT BE

In Romans 13:1-7 we are given inspired instructions bearing upon the Christian's proper attitude toward the "powers that be." Some may be inclined to argue that the powers here referred to are the spiritual rulers whom God has ordained to care for, instruct and bless his consecrated people. However, this thought is hardly plausible if we take into consideration the entire lesson, for in outlining the details of what is implied in being subject to the powers that be, the apostle explains that it has to

do with such things as paying “taxes to whom taxes are due, tolls to whom tolls are due, fear to whom fear is due, honor to whom honor is due.”—vs. 7, *ISV*

Furthermore, in verse 4, the apostle refers to those who have power over us as bearing swords. We quote, “But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for it is not without reason that they bear the sword. Indeed, they are God’s servants to administer punishment to anyone who does wrong.” (*ISV*) Without question this is a reference to earthly rulers who in the enforcement of their laws sometimes consider it necessary to resort to the force of arms.

When the apostle speaks of paying “taxes” and “tolls,” it is clearly a reference to paying that which is due representatives of earthly governments under the laws of the land. The apostle also affirms that we are to render “fear,” or respect, and “honor” to whom they are due. The thought here is that of respect which the Christian, though a pilgrim and stranger, is expected by God to render unto those who are permitted to exercise rulership prior to the time of the establishment of his kingdom in the earth.

In the third verse of this passage, the apostle says, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” The thought evidently is, that if we obey these rulers we will not need to be in terror of them. However, the apostle shows that our obedience to these earthly rulers should be more than one produced by a terror of what will happen to us if we disobey, for he further explains in verse 5, “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath [because of what they may do to you], but also for conscience sake.”

The apostle here is not suggesting that there are never occasions when a consecrated Christian, a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, may have scripturally sound reasons to conscientiously object to obeying laws laid down by earthly governments. The point Paul is emphasizing is that we as Christians should recognize that wholehearted devotion to God calls for obedience to the instructions which he has given. This means that if he has instructed us to render a certain obedience and respect to earthly governments, we may properly be guided by conscience to obey such a divine injunction.

ORDAINED OF GOD

The apostle further explains that the powers that be are “ordained of God.” (Rom. 13:1) The Greek word here translated “ordained” means to arrange, or “set in array.” Evidently the apostle was well acquainted with the manner in which Gentile rulership over the earth was first outlined by God through Daniel, when the prophet explained to Nebuchadnezzar that wherever the children of men dwelt God had given him dominion over them. (Dan. 2:37,38) This divine authorization was prophesied by Daniel as passing on from Babylon to Medo-Persia, then to Greece, and then to Rome. It was in the days of Rome that Paul wrote these words of Romans 13, in which he explains that the powers that be are ordained, or set in array, by God.

According to the time prophecies of the Bible, this period of divine authorization for Gentile rule over Israel, as well as the whole world, was to be a limited one. We believe there is substantial evidence,

both scripturally and historically, that this period, set in array by God, expired at the time of the First World War, which began in 1914. (Lev. 26:17-28; Luke 21:24) Subsequent to the ending of this divine lease of power to the Gentiles, we have seen and continue to see the kingdoms of this world falling into increasing trouble, disarray, and perplexity. However, this does not change the principle of the apostle's instructions relative to our being subject to earthly powers.

It is still true that the followers of Christ are pilgrims and strangers in this world, and that they are ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom soon to be established on earth in place of this old, sinful, and confused order of things. It is also still true that as ambassadors, commissioned to bear witness to the Gospel message, devoted Christians are to deport themselves before these earthly governments in such a way as not to unnecessarily antagonize them and thus prevent their service as representatives of the Lord.

The kingdom of Christ, in which faithful Christians eventually are to be an exalted part, will exercise its divine power in the final dissolution of earthly governments. (Ps. 149:5-9) Yet, the Scriptures make it very clear that the Church in the flesh is not to take part in any anti-government campaign. Rather, it is to continue to be a sacrificing and suffering Church. The honors and glories of the kingdom, and the divine power which is to be given to the Church for use as part of the glorified Christ class, are not to be ours until we have finished our course by being faithful, even unto death. —II Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:10,26,27

There are no scriptural instructions which change this fundamental principle of the Christian life. As such, we cannot be suffering as an ambassador of Christ and yet reign as kings at the same time. (I Cor. 4:8) This is just as true today, even while we are witnessing great trouble in the earth among peoples and nations, as it was back in the apostle's day. It must necessarily be, therefore, that the rules of Christian citizenship will continue to apply to the consecrated people of God as long as they are in the flesh.

PRAYING FOR PEACE

In I Timothy 2:1,2, the apostle says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Here is another inspired instruction which those who "have no other gods" before them are to obey. The apostle does not say that we should pray for God's approval of present earthly leaders, nor does he say we should pray for divine blessing upon their unrighteousness. What he does say is the objective of our prayers for kings should be that we lead as quiet and peaceable life as possible in "godliness and honesty."

The intent of such a prayer is obvious. It is a proper follow-up of our obedience to the inspired commands relative to giving proper respect to earthly governments. The purpose of it is that we, as ambassadors of the Lord, may have an opportunity, in a peaceable, dignified way, to bear witness concerning the King of kings and Lord of lords.—Rev. 19:16

If it be proper that we render obedience to earthly governments with this objective in view, certainly it is also proper that we make this part of our Christian life a matter of prayer. Furthermore, inasmuch as these instructions come to us from the Lord, to whom we have vowed full allegiance, it means that in no sense of the word can it be construed as a compromise when we endeavor to so conduct ourselves in the world in order that we will have the largest possible opportunity to bear witness to the kingdom message.

To “live peaceably,” however, is not the single objective of the Christian life. James says that the “wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.” (James 3:17) We are to live peaceably with all men insofar as possible, the apostle tells us, but this cannot be a peace at any price. (Rom. 12:18) When the laws of God are in direct conflict with the laws of men the obedient Christian has no alternative but to obey God, irrespective of what the consequences may be. Often such obedience to God will lead to suffering and persecution, and, at times during the Christian age, has led even to death.

HONOR THE KING

In I Peter 2:17-19, we have further enlightening instructions concerning proper deportment for citizens of the heavenly kingdom. Here the apostle says, “Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”

Some interesting points appear here. For example, we are to honor all men, but we are to love the brotherhood. We are to honor kings, but we are to fear, or reverence God. Another point worthy of note is that servants are to be subject to their masters whether the masters be kind and gentle to them or not. Explaining the reason for this the apostle says, that if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully, it is thankworthy.

Still another of the inspired commands of God's Word is that of Titus 3:1-4. "Be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared."

Here we are told to "speak evil of no man." As the apostle is writing of earthly powers, evidently the "no man," in this instance, refers specially to these. This, of course, does not mean that the rulers of this present evil world are so righteous that they are above reproach. What the apostle evidently means is that inasmuch as the Lord permits these rulers to exercise authority in the world, it is not for us to oppose them. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," and this being true, he has made it plain that it is not our business as Christians to regulate the affairs of earthly governments of which we are not a part.—Rom. 12:19

Returning to his words to Titus, Paul says that we are not to be brawlers, but are, rather, to be gentle and meek to all men. How much better all Christians can serve as ambassadors of Christ when they obey these instructions. In verse 3 Paul indicates that if we are brawlers, living in malice and envy, and hating others, it means that we have not yet been separated from the spirit of the world. Let the world and its rulers do their own evil speaking—let them rail out against each other if they will. It is our business to be gentle and meek, and thereby to reflect the kindness and love of our Heavenly Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, who manifested his love to the entire sinful world through the great sacrifice that was made on their behalf.

READY FOR GOOD WORKS

The apostle tells Titus, and us, that we are to be “ready to every good work.” (Tit. 3:1) Obedience to many of the laws of the land comes within this category of good works. At times earthly governments may demand that which Christians could not properly consider good works, and it is in such cases that each one will find it important to be able to decide as to that which belongs to Caesar and that which belongs to God.—Matt. 22:21

Over the past century, one of the major issues that has confronted many of the consecrated children of God is that which has to do with obedience to earthly governments in matters pertaining to military service. This issue must of necessity be given prayerful consideration inasmuch as the instruction of God’s Word is “Thou shalt not kill.”—Exod. 20:13; Matt. 5:21,22

(Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) In the United States, even this uncompromising command of God need not necessarily lead a Christian to be disobedient to the government. Indeed, the government of the United States recognizes that some have conscientious objections to combative military service for religious reasons, and recognizing this, provision is made for their exemption. For anyone to claim the provisions of this clause, it is not an act of disobedience to the government, but rather the accepting of a provision which the government itself has made.

The laws of the United States provide the conscientious objector with the privilege of accepting non-combatant service should a draft, or conscription, be instituted. This is a service which does not involve the actual taking of human life. It is a service, on the other hand, which frequently provides opportunity of actually doing good to others, such as hospital work and other areas of service for the benefit of the country's citizens.

This type of service can doubtless be considered as coming under the heading of "good works" mentioned by the apostle. As we expressed at the outset of this discussion, no Christian can lay down rules for the governing of other Christians. Therefore, the exact manner in which each individual applies the instructions of God's Word in his or her own case is something which must be decided by each individual alone. Neither should we criticize or condemn those who may not decide these questions exactly as we may do.

Of this we can be reasonably certain, that those who are in harmony with the apostle's instructions, "gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men,"

will find that gentleness and meekness will, in most cases, appeal to those who are in charge of the administration of the laws of the land. On account of this whatever stand a follower of Christ takes will be more likely to be respected and they themselves treated accordingly, than if they should rail against the government and all things else concerned, in order to show loyalty to God.

BE SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD

Christians are instructed to remain separate from the world. Yet, the Apostle Paul states, “I wrote to you ... that you were not to associate with fornicators; not that in this world you are to keep wholly aloof from such as they, any more than from people who are avaricious and greedy of gain, or from worshippers of idols. For that would mean that you would be compelled to go out of the world altogether.” (I Cor. 5:9,10, *Weymouth New Testament*) Here is a wise saying, full of sound judgment. It shows that as long as Christians are in the flesh and living in a world of sin which is ruled by those who are imperfect, they will find it necessary to be in association somewhat with the ways and methods of the world.

As but one example, the principle of this text may be very readily applied to the matter of military service. Reasoning from the standpoint of the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” some will feel they have been obedient if they refrain from the actual taking of another’s life. Others, equally sincere, will reason that to have any part whatsoever in military affairs would be a violation of this command. Some may even conclude that to handle freight or goods that may be destined for military use, would be displeasing to God.

Our thought is that the apostle's instruction noted above might well apply here. If we carry this point to too great an extreme we would need to "go out of the world," for today there is very little happening in the commercial world that is not directly or indirectly associated with militarism, to say nothing of immoral conduct, greediness, avarice, and other behavior not sanctioned in the Bible.

THE APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE

Studying the example of the apostles we find that they were indeed obedient to the governments of their day. When through no fault of their own, they were arraigned before earthly courts, they were very respectful to those who tried them. When the Jewish religionists forbade them to preach the Gospel, they ignored the command, and continued the ministry, for these were not the powers that were ordained of God. (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28,29) However, when the civil authorities requested them to leave the city they did so without protest. (Acts 16:39,40) On another occasion, when severely persecuted, they "shook off the dust of their feet," as Jesus had instructed, and moved to other fields.—Acts 13:49-51; Matt. 10:14

The Apostle Paul, for example, addressed one of the rulers as "Most noble Festus." (Acts 26:25) Paul did not mean that he was in harmony with everything that Festus did. He did not mean that he was willing to cooperate in the government of which Festus was a part. Paul's attitude was simply an example of how he understood the divine will in the matter of being subject to the powers that be, hence, was giving honor and respect to whom it was due.

Paul was a Roman citizen, and for a very good reason he made use of his Roman citizenship in order to forward the interests of the kingdom of heaven, to which his allegiance had been sworn. By claiming the advantages of his Roman citizenship Paul was not renouncing his citizenship in the heavenly kingdom. On the contrary, he was being subject to the powers that be and using the laws of those powers the best way he knew how in order to make his ambassadorship for the heavenly King a more effective one.

To summarize, it seems that the reasonable course for the Christian is to be respectful of earthly governments and to obey them in all matters that do not conflict directly with counter-commands of God. To the extent that we live in a land in which we enjoy many blessings—especially the privilege of meeting together as Christians—let us be thankful to the Heavenly Father for such a condition. Just as importantly, let us pray for those of the Lord’s people who do not enjoy such freedoms as we do, that divine care and providence will overrule on their behalf in whatever their experiences in this world might be.

Finally, let all true Christians be thankful to the Lord for the privileges and blessings which they enjoy in each and every different circumstance of life. As we do so, let us also remember, as Paul said: “Our citizenship, ... is in heaven, and it is from there that we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. He will change our unassuming bodies and make them like his glorious body through the power that enables him to bring everything under his authority.”—Phil. 3:20,21, *ISV* ■

The Philippian Mission

“They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.”

—*Acts 16:6, Revised Standard Version*

IN OUR OPENING VERSE

we are told the Apostle Paul had been prohibited from taking the word of Christ further east into Asia. Instead, the Lord commissioned him to introduce the Gospel to Macedonia. “A vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”—Acts 16:9

The region of Asia that the Lord would not allow Paul to enter was, at that time, the westernmost province of what is now known as the Asian continent. Macedonia, on the other hand, was the easternmost province of Europe. It was at Philippi, Macedonia’s capital city, where the different forms of eastern and western paganism met. Hence, Philippi was ripe for the introduction of the Gospel message. In Paul’s day, it was the fulcrum upon which was balanced Eastern and Western thought.

Though missionary work would subsequently continue in the East, the introduction of the Gospel message into Macedonia by Paul and his brethren would ultimately tip the balance toward the West. The Gospel would thereafter begin to spread throughout Europe, affecting religious perceptions everywhere, thereby completely reshaping Western thought and practice.

The Apostle, understanding the strategic potential of his commission, responded without hesitation. “After he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.” (vs. 10) Paul took with him Silas, a Jew; Luke, a Gentile; and, quite probably, Timothy, a son of mixed Gentile and Jewish parentage.

It is Luke who chronicles the main experiences of this little missionary band. He recorded that Philippi “is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.” (vs. 12) Philippi was a colony whose intended purpose was to expand and perpetuate the Roman presence in that area and thereby maintain the peace. Rome’s looming presence influenced almost everything that occurred in Luke’s account.

In their colonized circumstance, the Jewish custom was to gather on the Sabbath in a public place to pray. Upon arriving in Philippi, Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy did likewise, seeking an opportunity to preach the Gospel. “On the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made.”—vs. 13

A PAGAN SPIRIT

Satan, no doubt, also keenly aware of the strategic potential of Paul's missionary journey to Philippi, and ever eager to thwart the spread of the Gospel, set an obstacle in the path of the missionaries. "It came to pass, as we were on our way unto the place of prayer, a certain damsel, having a spirit of Python, met us." (Acts 16:16, *Rotherham Emphasized Bible*) The woman was a demon-possessed slave for whose prophecies and pronouncements her masters charged money. According to Greek historians, "the spirit of Python" with which the woman was possessed was a spirit ascribed to the ancient Greek pagan god, Apollo. She and her masters followed Paul and those with him who were preaching the Gospel. As she did, the evil spirit caused her to shout, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." Luke tells us, "this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."—vss. 17,18

Paul demonstrated that he wanted no affiliation with the slave masters' moneymaking schemes, nor did he wish to attract the attention of the Roman authorities by having his presence and mission announced. Thus, he sent the "Python spirit" from the woman.irate at losing their lucrative source of income, her masters reported Paul and Silas to the local magistrates. Though they had hypocritically aided and abetted Paul and his friends for days in the same endeavor, allowing their slave to proclaim them men of God, now the masters accused Paul and Silas, both Jews, of the very serious crime of

introducing a new religion. That was forbidden in Philippi. Rome did not tolerate civil contention over religious issues, especially among the Jews. Religious strife made governing more difficult and could lead to insurrection. Unrest was bad for the Roman economy.

A FORESEEN ADVANTAGE

Luke and Timothy, being non-Jews, escaped the following brutal scenario. “When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.” (vss. 19-23) Exceeding their authority on this occasion, the local magistrates caused a serious breach of the Roman legal process. This would be to Paul and Silas’ advantage later. No doubt, it was all foreseen and arranged by the Lord.

Both Paul and Silas possessed Roman citizenship, a valuable possession in their day, subject to special consideration under the laws of the empire. As Roman citizens, they should have been remanded to the Roman authorities. Instead, they were beaten by the local authorities before they had a trial, another breach of Roman law. Paul and Silas could have claimed their rights as Roman citizens, and

everyone involved in the cruel and illegal brutality perpetrated against them would have suffered a severe, perhaps fatal, response from the strict Roman system. However, they told no one of their Roman citizenship at that time. As a result, they experienced much pain, abuse and eventual incarceration. They withheld that information and endured the unjust cruelty for the love of their newly emerging brethren in Philippi.

MISSIONARY OPPORTUNITY

After having beaten Paul and Silas to appease the crowd, the magistrates ordered the jailer to hold them until their fate was decided. Roman law stipulated that a jailer could be made to serve the sentence of any prisoner who escaped during his watch. If the prisoner was serving time, the jailer could be made to serve the remainder of the prisoner's sentence. If the prisoner was awaiting death, the jailer could be put to death in his stead. Paul and Silas' jailer took the matter very seriously. The jailer, "having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison."—Acts 16:24

In Roman times, prisons were appalling, squalid places. Dank, unlit, and usually infested, inner prisons were maximum-security areas. Only the worst prisoners were put there. Paul and Silas' jailer imposed upon them a further punitive measure. He "made their feet fast in the stocks." (vs. 24) Stocks were usually ironbound wood with several holes in a row. The prisoner's feet were put into those holes. The amount of discomfort the jailer could inflict upon the prisoner was determined by the distance he put between their two feet. If he

placed Paul and Silas' feet quite far apart, it would have caused a quite painful effect on their hips and backs, especially since they had earlier experienced a severe beating. Their prospects seemed dismal indeed.

SINGING THE GOSPEL

Covered with welts from the rod or the lash, joints aching because their feet were in stocks, Paul and Silas “prayed, and sang praises unto God” from the innermost recesses of the damp and dark prison. They did not merely sing and pray quietly to encourage themselves in their extremity. Luke records that they were praying and singing with such volume that all “the prisoners heard them.” (vs. 25) They had courage in abundance fostered by their unshakable faith. Theirs was a mission for God.

Paul and Silas had been commissioned to preach at a strategic location from which the Gospel would spread westward toward Rome. Not allowed to openly speak the Gospel message, these faithful ministers of Christ sang it to the others in prison and were heard. The disciples of Christ alive in the present day would likewise surely sing the Gospel story if they were not permitted to preach it. “I will sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me. How He left His home in Glory for the cross of Calvary.”—*Hymns of Dawn*

LIBERATION OF ALL

Satan, having had Paul and Silas beaten and thrown into prison with execution a distinct possibility come morning, had done his best to end their mission. He failed. All in the prison were set at liberty. “Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so

that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." (Acts 16:26) Supposing all the prisoners had fled, the jailer was as good as dead under Roman law, and he knew it. "The keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled." Death by his own hand was preferable to the numerous gruesome ways that the Romans could have put the jailer to death for his perceived failure. As the jailer drew his sword to end his life, Paul "cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Astonished, the jailer "called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"—vss. 27-30

Responding, Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Luke adds, "They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." (vss. 31,32) The message Paul and Silas related to the jailer could not have differed substantially from that which Paul delivered to the Colossians in his epistle, "I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach,

warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” (Col. 1:25-28) Hearing the word of the Lord, the grateful and now converted jailer “took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”—Acts 16:33,34

CHASTENED MAGISTRATES

Morning hours revealed a chastened local authority. “When day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, Release those men. And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace. But Paul said to them, They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out. The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans, and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city. They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.”—Acts 16:35-40, *New American Standard Bible*

Their previous day’s rash and illegal conduct of beating Paul and Silas, and incarcerating them without trial, placed the Philippian magistrates in

serious jeopardy of the very strict Roman law. Though Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy were introducing what appeared to be a new religion, the local magistrates' fear of the severe legal consequences for their official blunder ensured there would be no official reprisals against the Philippian church after the missionaries' departure. Going to the house of Lydia, a sister in Christ at Philippi, the four no doubt assured all brethren gathered there of that fact, after which they departed.

CHURCH'S MISSIONARY JOURNEY

The circumstance of Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy at Philippi is analogous of the church's experiences throughout the Gospel Age. Like the missionaries at Philippi, the church has been on a journey since Pentecost. Paul and his brethren were pursued by hypocrites who offered assistance for gain. Likewise, true Christians have been beset by those who feign interest in the Gospel of Christ.

Paul and Silas were bloodied in the marketplace at the hands of the magistrates of Philippi without a hearing. The true Church, in kind, has been unjustly drawn into the congregational marketplace where creeds and traditions of men are bought and sold for money. These true followers of Christ have often been condemned without being heard. Paul and Silas were publicly beaten in Philippi. Likewise, the church down through the age has felt the sharp lash of public castigation zealously laid on by the magistrates of Christendom.

Superstitious ignorance has often been the enthusiastic jailer of the Church and has forced it into the inner prison of obscurity even as "gross

darkness” covers the people. (Isa. 60:2) As Paul and Silas were bound by their stocks, the true Church has also been fettered by the doctrinal errors and religious traditions of others. For many centuries, these severely limited the Church’s access to those held in the deep darkness of religious deception. However, the faithful followers of Christ have done what is possible to do in their extremity. As did Paul and Silas, they continue to raise their voice in prayer and songs of praise, singing loudly the song of Moses and the Lamb for the benefit of others, not knowing to what hearing ear its voice may be carried.—Rev. 15:2-4

The “song of Moses” evidently refers to Moses as a picture of Christ, and all the ceremonial offerings of the Law which God gave to Israel through Moses foreshadowed the redemptive sacrifice of Christ. (Exod. 15:1-19; Heb. 10:1) “The song of the Lamb” refers to the Gospel message, the good news announced at Jesus’ birth and throughout his earthly ministry. The Gospel also includes the testimony of his disciples regarding Jesus as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7; I Pet. 1:19

The subsequent release of Paul and Silas well represents the glorification of the Church at the end of the present Gospel Age. The faithful and true followers of Christ will be loosed from the gloomy recesses of its prison of obscurity and will ascend to the brilliant light of prominence and power with the Sun of Righteousness. Then it will be revealed that these faithful servants of the Lord were, in truth, citizens of heaven.—Mal 4:2; Rom. 8:16-19; Phil. 3:20, *NASB* ■

Zealous of Good Works

“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.”
—*Nehemiah 4:6*

THE APOSTLE PAUL, WRITING about Jesus and his foot-step followers, said, “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14) The faith-

ful people of God in every age have been zealous of good works which have been authorized by God and blessed by him. Those who have merely professed to be his people, yet have been lukewarm toward the things he has asked them to do, have not been pleasing to him and are warned of the possibility of being removed from divine favor.—Rev. 3:16

In the Old Testament we find notable examples of zeal in the work of the Lord. One is that which is referred to in our opening text. The work in hand at that time was that of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after the Jews had returned from their seventy years of captivity in Babylon. There had been much delay in getting this work started, as

the enemies of the Jews had thrown hindrances in the way. Finally, however, Nehemiah, cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, came to Jerusalem with written authority from the king to proceed with the work, and this faithful servant of God did not permit further delay.—Neh. 1:11; 2:1-8

The Jews who were loyal to Nehemiah caught the spirit of the occasion and although they hazarded their lives to cooperate in the work, they zealously undertook the project, and the walls were built, “for the people had a mind to work.” The Lord’s work is never accomplished without difficulty, and certainly Nehemiah and his faithful company of co-laborers had to proceed in the face of much hardship, and even danger to their lives. Material was not plentiful, their supply of stones being limited to what they could find in the pile of rubble which was still there from the time the former walls of the city were destroyed.—Neh. 4:1-3

In addition to this handicap, the enemies of the Jews threatened to attack them in an effort to stop the work. Despite these difficulties, the people “had a mind to work.” Encouraged by Nehemiah and having confidence in his ability to plan the work properly, they labored on until it was finished. However, confidence in Nehemiah was not their only source of strength and courage. Nehemiah himself reveals the real source of their inspiration, saying, “We made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them [their enemies] day and night.” (vs. 9) The fact that they prayed indicates that the basis of their confidence, and the inspiration of their zeal, was Israel’s God.

THE GOSPEL AGE WORKS OF GOD

The work of God during the present age has not been the construction of literal city walls, but rather the building up of his people in their most holy faith—that is, their spiritual development as “new creatures” in Christ Jesus. (Jude 1:20; II Cor. 5:17) The foundation upon which we build, Paul explains, is Christ, and we are encouraged to erect an enduring structure by the use of gold, silver and precious stones, representing God’s precious promises, our faith structure, and character development. (I Cor. 3:11-13; I Pet. 1:7; Rev. 3:18) Contrariwise, we are not to build a superstructure of character with perishable material such as wood, hay and stubble, denoting false human traditions, theories, creeds, along with a lack of true faith and proper Christian character.—Col. 2:8-23; I Tim. 4.1-3; Matt. 15:8-9

In concluding his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.” (Matt. 7:24,25) Here the Master compares zealous obedience to his teachings to a work of building solidly upon a rock.

What are “these sayings of mine” referred to by the Master, obedience to which is so fundamental to success in God’s work? Going back to the beginning of his sermon we first of all find the Beatitudes. These emphasize many vital character qualities: the need for humility of heart—“poor in spirit”; heartfelt sympathy for the groaning creation—those who “mourn”; teachableness—the “meek”; a desire above

all else to know God and be pleasing to him—to “hunger and thirst after righteousness”; divine mercy and love—the “merciful”; sincerity—the “pure in heart”; faithfulness in the ministry of reconciliation —“peacemakers”; zeal in light-bearing which results in persecution—“they which are persecuted.”—Matt. 5:2-10

Continuing, Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth,” and warned against losing our “savour.” (vs. 13) We have no “savour” of ourselves, so it is evident that the reference is to that which the Lord has given us—namely, his Truth and the Spirit of the Truth. Though we may be very zealous, if we lose the Truth and its spirit, like salt which has lost its taste, the Lord states that we would be “thenceforth good for nothing.”

The Master also said, “Ye are the light of the world,” and then bids us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (vss. 14,16) Certainly we have no good works of our own, for the best show of righteousness we could ever hope to make would be as “filthy rags” in God’s sight, and obviously would not cause men to glorify God. (Isa. 64:6) These good works, then, must be, just as the Master indicates, the letting of our light shine. While Jesus refers to the light as though it is ours, in reality it is the light of divine Truth which the Lord has caused to shine into our hearts, and which he here bids us to make known to others.—II Cor. 4:6; II Pet. 1:19; I Pet. 2:9

How wonderfully does this light glorify our Father in heaven! It is the Truth of his plan, in which is revealed his infinite wisdom, his almighty power, his

perfect justice, and his boundless love. These attributes of the divine character harmoniously working together reveal his glory, and those who see the Truth behold this glory. Holding forth the Word of life is therefore one of “these sayings” of Jesus which we are to joyfully obey if we are to be true builders of righteousness.

Continuing, Jesus not only spoke against breaking even the “least” of his commandments—those commandments which magnified the Law and made it honorable—but also against teaching others to do so. (Matt. 5:19) This is an admonition against compromise in connection with any part of the Word of God. Since there is no part of God’s divine plan and purpose which does not have a bearing on how we serve him, the principle underlying this “saying” of Jesus is loyalty to his Word, not only in our own lives, but also in teaching it to others.

THE MODEL PRAYER

Among “these sayings” of the Master is also the model prayer which his followers have been using throughout the entire Christian age. (Matt. 6:9-13) Those who “have a mind to work” as God desires them to do, and who are faithful in watching and praying, will be guided by this outline of the fundamental principles of Christian prayer. We will delight to pray to “our Father,” and we will recognize the sacredness of his name. Prominent in our prayers will be the desire to see the world blessed by the setting up of the kingdom—“Thy kingdom come.” We will not make elaborate requests for ourselves, but ask only for the needful things, both temporal and spiritual—“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Realizing how far short we come of the glory of God, and our great need for divine forgiveness, we will petition God for his mercy, knowing meanwhile that we cannot expect his forgiveness unless we forgive those who trespass against us. We have the assurance that God does not tempt his people—that he tempteth no man. (James 1:13) Thus we will also claim this promise and ask God also to “deliver us from evil,” knowing how liable we are to stumble into the many pitfalls set for us by the Adversary.

HEAVENLY TREASURES

We are not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-21) This “saying” of the Master is perhaps one of the most exacting. Earthly treasures are the source of fallen man’s security, and it requires great faith to realize that true security is to be found only in the promises of God. Other scriptures indicate, of course, that reasonable provision is to be made for those dependent upon us. (I Tim. 5:8) However, too liberal an interpretation of what is reasonable might well result in a lack of faithfulness on our part in God’s sight.

Jesus further explained that the light of the body is the eye, and then adds, “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.” (vss. 22,23) This immediately follows Jesus’ admonition to lay up treasure in heaven and his explanation that where our treasure is there shall our hearts be also. The “single” eye, therefore, might well be a symbolic reference to a wholehearted setting of our affections on things above, rather than a compromising attitude between earthly and heavenly

treasures. A single eye would suggest seeking “first the kingdom of God,” in the assurance that all our legitimate material needs will be furnished.—vss. 25-34

JUDGE NOT

We are not to sit in judgment of others. We are not qualified to do that. Jesus in another saying indicates that the urge to criticize and condemn others might well represent a hypocritical attitude on our part, and that there is more wrong with ourselves than with those we attempt to judge. We are to “have a mind to work,” not to “cast out the mote” from our brother’s eye, but to “cast out the beam” from our own eye. This beam may be a “holier than thou” attitude toward others. The sin of spiritual pride is a flagrant one in God’s sight. If we are not on guard, it can easily fasten itself upon us, causing us to take pride in our development and in what we feel is our more “mature” judgment.—Matt. 7:1-5

Jesus also urged us to “ask,” to “seek,” and to “knock,” with the assurance that our Father will reward us if we ask for that which he has promised to give. (vss. 7,8) In Luke 11:13, Jesus indicates that the chief burden of our petitions should be for a greater infilling of the Holy Spirit. If we are filled with God’s Holy Spirit and influence, all our spiritual needs are supplied, because the Holy Spirit cleanses us, leads us, strengthens us, quickens us, and fashions us into the divine image. How blessed is the promise that our Heavenly Father is more willing to give us these “good things” than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children.

THE STRAIT GATE

Those who have “a mind to work” will not be seeking an easy way out when serving the Lord, but instead they will “strive to enter in at the strait [Greek: narrow] gate.” (Luke 13:24) To keep this saying of Jesus is not an easy task, but requires much effort. Many difficulties are encountered, and it is because of this that few find the true way—the way of service and sacrifice—to glory, honor, and immortality. It is found only by those who desire to work at the cost of weariness, sacrifice, and finally of life itself.

We are to beware of false prophets—wolves in sheep’s clothing—using the test suggested by the Master in another of his sayings, which is, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matt. 7:15-20) Love, in its various manifestations, is the all-encompassing “fruit” of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22) Thus, it is usually not difficult to detect whether would-be leaders are selfishly seeking their own interests, or are sincerely concerned over the welfare of the flock. A true sheep of the Master’s fold, one who is keeping his sayings, should be easily recognized in contrast with any who might be self-seeking exploiters of the Lord’s people, or desirous of being pleasing to men through “flattering words.”—I Thess. 2:4-6

AFTER PENTECOST

Subsequent to Pentecost, the apostles filled in many details of the divine will, but in “these sayings” of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, all the great principles to be followed by true Christians are to be found. It is, as it were, the blueprint by which we build the super-structure of character likeness to Christ, and blessed are all those who follow

implicitly these instructions. In this sermon, we are commanded to let our light shine, to be filled and controlled by love, to be faithful in prayer, to refrain from judging others, but to take ourselves in hand and make sure of our own standing before God.

Having “a mind to work” implies zeal in the application of the principles of divine righteousness in our daily lives, and of thus being transformed by the “renewing” of our minds and the “working out” of our own salvation. (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 2:12) In doing this, however, the Apostle Paul assures us that God is also working in us “to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13) The task is too great for us to accomplish alone, so we are glad to be assured that God works in us.

The Apostle Peter speaks of girding up the loins of our minds. This suggests a long and arduous undertaking. (I Pet. 1:13) When Nehemiah and his co-laborers were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, they did not so much as take off their clothes at night. They had to be ready always to meet the enemy, and at the same time carry on with the work. (Neh. 4:21-23) Such is our position today. Our Adversary, the devil, is seeking to devour us, and while we resist him by being steadfast in the faith, we must continue the work of building upon the “rock” of Christ.—I Pet. 5:8,9

It is important to remember that “these sayings” which we are to keep and by keeping them build our house upon the rock, include the necessity of being “ambassadors for Christ” by faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom. (II Cor. 5:20; Matt. 24:14) This is not merely a suggestion from the Lord, but a requirement, and is a part of the “holy

conversation and godliness” of every Christian’s life. (I Pet. 1:15; II Pet. 3:11) Faithfulness in proclaiming the Gospel does not interfere with the work of applying the other sayings of Jesus, but augments it; for the more we tell the Truth to others, the greater will be its power in our own lives.

THE GREAT OBJECTIVE

The work of God from Pentecost until now has been in preparation for what he has promised to do in the next age—that is, the blessing of all the families of the earth. (Gen. 22:18; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8) Thus we are being trained for that future purpose. Through the application of the divine principles of righteousness in our own lives, we are being prepared to administer God’s law to the poor groaning creation in the time of the world’s trial, or judgment day. (Acts 17:31) How wonderfully divine wisdom is displayed in the methods he has chosen for our training to be kings and priests unto God. (Rev. 5:9,10; 20:6) By these arrangements we are brought into actual contact with the people in our work of proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom!

As we have seen, our work of “building” is an individual one as well as collective. Collectively we work, for example, in our local groups, or ecclesias. When we are faithful in our witness efforts, they may result in attracting newly interested persons to our fellowship. These mingle with us, and we seek to help them grow spiritually. Some make progress, and remain. Others perhaps, after attending for a while, do not continue with us.

Throughout the Christian age every group of the Lord’s people has been a mixed one, and it is still so.

In Paul's day, for example, he indicates the varying degrees of spiritual development which existed in the churches at Corinth, Rome, and other places. He did not, however, suggest that witness efforts cease so that all in the individual congregations could ultimately become fully matured in Christ, and thus enjoy one another's fellowship the more. No, instead, he indicated that there would always be some in the church who were more weak and immature than others. Furthermore, he admonished that those who were strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves.—Rom. 15:1

How better could the Lord's people be trained to deal with all the various elements of society in the next age than by coming into actual contact with them now and endeavoring to help them understand something of the great principles of the divine character! It is the experience of all Christians who are faithful in trying to help their fellows understand the Word of God, that never is the message of divine love so precious and such a great power of regeneration in their own lives, as when they tell it to others.

Admonishing the church collectively, Paul writes, "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness."—Rom. 12:5-8

After emphasizing that all these services should be rendered in love, Paul adds, "Not slothful in business;

fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” (Rom. 12:11) The “business” here referred to is unquestionably the Lord’s business, his work, the various phases of which the apostle had just outlined. In this business we are to be “fervent in spirit,” which is Paul’s way of describing that same kind of zeal for the work of God which Nehemiah referred to when saying that his co-laborers had “a mind to work.”

When Nehemiah and his co-workers had just about completed the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls, except for erecting the gates, their enemies subtly made overtures to Nehemiah asking to have a conference with him. However, Nehemiah sent messengers to them saying, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?”—Neh. 6:1-3

This is a good thought to apply in our own lives. More than ever before, the enemies of the Lord, the Truth, and his people, are endeavoring to attract us away from the job. All sorts of temptations to ease, and myriads of misleading distractions and sophistries are being presented. In response to all these, though, may we always have the courage to say that by the Lord’s grace and with his help, “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.”

Ours is not the boasted “many wonderful works” of those to whom the Lord says, “I never knew you.” (Matt. 7:22,23) Rather, ours is the work of keeping “these sayings” of the Master. By so doing, we are preparing ourselves and one another for glory, honor, and immortality in the kingdom with Jesus, whose image we are endeavoring to reflect as we lay down our lives as his ambassadors of light.—Rom. 2:7; II Cor. 3:18

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SPEAKERS' APPOINTMENTS

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

T. N. Alexander

West Newton, PA
September 30-October 1

M. Balko

West Newton, PA
September 30-October 1

M. Costelli

Seattle, WA September 2,3

O. B. Elbert

Seattle, WA September 2,3

R. Goodman

New York, NY September 2,3

L. Griehs

Seattle, WA September 2,3
Grand Rapids, MI 23,24

K. Humphreys

Seattle, WA September 2,3

M. Kerry

New York, NY September 2,3
West Newton, PA
September 30-October 1

T. Krupa

New York, NY September 2,3

B. Montague

West Suburban, IL
September 2,3

H. Montague

Huntsville, AL September 8-10

T. Ruggirello

New York, NY September 2,3

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 John Donald Krasonic, Jr., West Newton, PA—August 5. Age, 90

Brother Joe Parrinello, St. Clair, MI—August 6. Age, 80

Brother Harry Grable, Akron, OH—August 7. Age, 100

Sister Antonina Skoczylas, Kozy Górne, Poland—August 8. Age, 76

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, PO Box 521167, Longwood, FL 32752-1167

NEW YORK CONVENTION, September 2,3—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact G. Passios. Email: gpassios11@verizon.net. Or contact R. Shahan. Email: sha4wv1@aol.com

SEATTLE CONVENTION, September 2,3—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd St., Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact J. Christiansen. Phone: (360) 633-5644 or Email: jrchristiansen@comcast.net

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 8-10—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (Hwy 72), Huntsville, AL 35806. Phone: (256) 562-2525. Contact R. Armstrong. Phone: (256) 281-6807 or Email: robin@exzaktec.com

HARVEST CONVENTION, September 16,17—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Harvest Hall, 2620 Valley Branch Road, Nashville, IN 47448. Contact R. Mee. Phone: (812) 603-6205 or Email: rmeern@yahoo.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 23,24—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Salvation Army Little Pine Island Camp and Retreat Center, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Contact K. Osterman. Email: kenosterman@gmail.com

WEST NEWTON FALL CONVENTION, September 30, October 1—IN PERSON ONLY—Sewickley Grange Hall, 1011 Greensburg Pike, West Newton, PA 15089. Contact G. Balko. Phone: (724) 771-0139

AGAWAM CONVENTION, October 8—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001. For hotel

accomodations, contact M. Wardak. Phone: (413) 789-6198 or Email: mtwardak@verizon.net. For all other information, contact F. Sansom. Phone: (860) 861-6881 or Email: elshaddai144k@sbcglobal.net

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 28,29—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—South Seminole Masonic Lodge, 122 Triplet Lake Drive, Casselberry, FL 32707. Contact J. Kuenzli. Phone: (321) 442-1862 or Email: jkuenzli@cfl.rr.com

MILWAUKEE CONVENTION, November 4,5—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Lake Lodge, 1235 East Howard Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53207. Contact D. Farchione. Phone: (414) 324-9667 or Email: debfarchione@aol.com

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

SEPTEMBER 7—“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”—II Corinthians 5:17 (Z. '03-333 Hymn 191)

SEPTEMBER 14—“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.”—I Peter 2:12,19 (Z. '03-365 Hymn 13)

SEPTEMBER 21—“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”—Psalm 23:4 (Z. '03-413 Hymn 12)

SEPTEMBER 28—“Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith.”—I Peter 5:8,9 (Z. '04-11; '00-32 Hymn 200)

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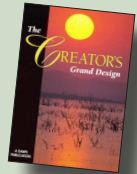


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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

THAT THE CHURCH IS “THE TEMPLE” OF THE LIVING GOD

—peculiarly “his workmanship”; that its construction has been in progress throughout the Gospel Age—ever since Christ became the world’s Redeemer and the chief “corner stone” of this temple, through which, when finished, God’s blessings shall come “to all people”, and they find access to him.—I Cor. 3:16,17; Eph. 2:20-22; Gen. 28:14; Gal. 3:29

THAT MEANTIME THE CHISELING, SHAPING AND POLISHING

of consecrated believers in Christ’s atonement for sin progresses, and when the last of these “living stones,” “elect and precious,” shall have been made ready, the great Master Workman will bring all together in the first resurrection; and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium.—Rev. 15:5-8

THAT THE BASIS OF HOPE FOR THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

lies in the fact that Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, “a ransom for all,” and will be “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” “in due time.”—Heb. 2:9; John 1:9; I Tim. 2:5,6

THAT THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH is that she may be like her Lord, “see him as he is,” be a “partaker of the divine nature,” and share his glory as his joint-heir.—I John 3:2; John 17:24; Rom. 8:17; II Pet.1:4

THAT THE PRESENT MISSION OF THE CHURCH is the perfecting of the saints for the future work of service; to develop in herself every grace; to be God’s witness to the world; and to prepare to be the kings and priests in the next age.—Eph. 4:12; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:6, 20:6

THAT THE HOPE FOR THE WORLD lies in the blessings of knowledge and opportunity to be brought to all by Christ’s millennial kingdom—the restitution of all that was lost in Adam, to all the willing and obedient, at the hands of their Redeemer and his glorified church—when all the willfully wicked will be destroyed.—Acts 3:19-23; Isa. 35

