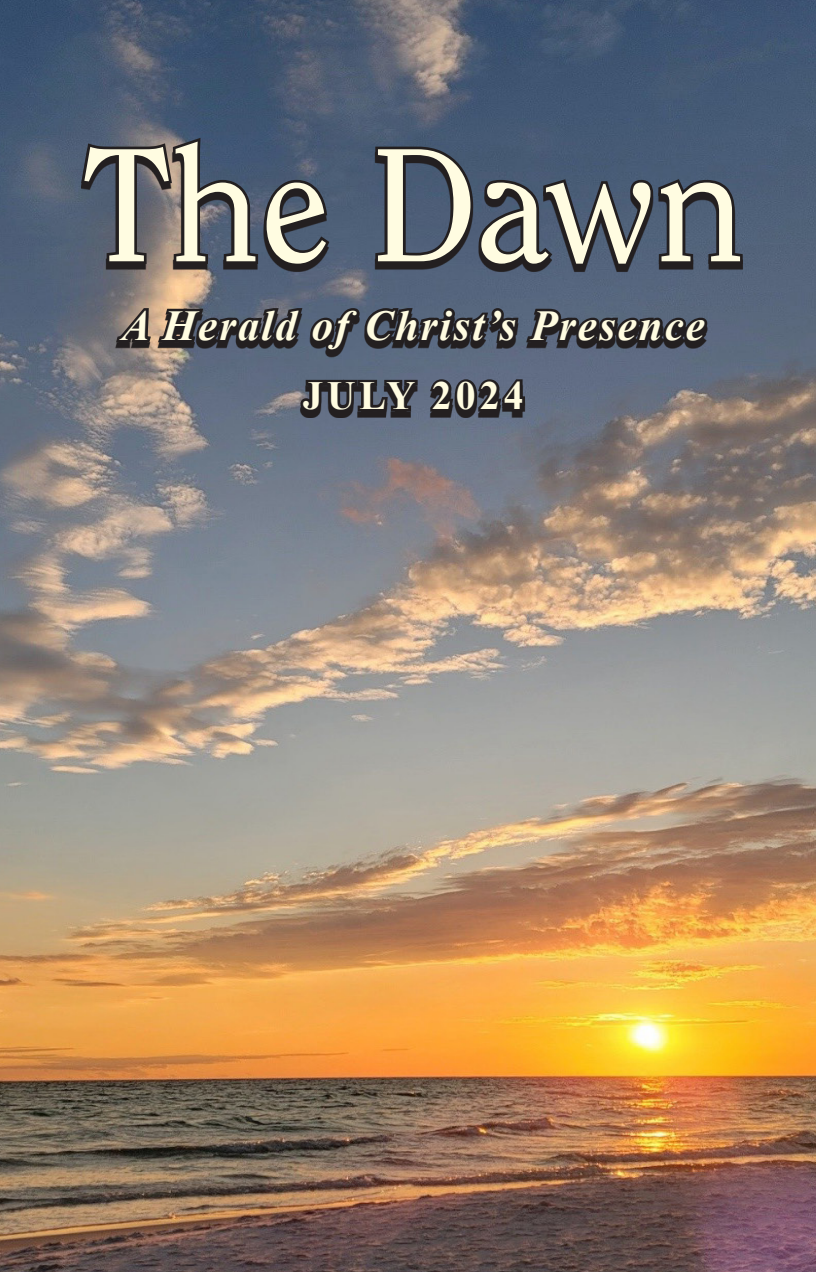
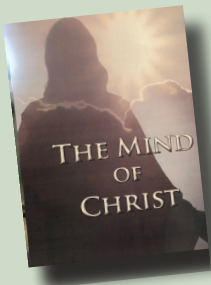


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Israel's Future among the Nations

*“Arise, shine; for
thy light is come,
and the glory of the
LORD is risen
upon thee.”
—Isaiah 60:1*

THE HOPES OF MANY IN
the world have been that the
dark and troubled Middle
East might be set on the road
to peace and light as a result
of the so-called “Abraham

Accords” and similar initiatives in recent years to negotiate better relations between Israel and several of her Arab neighbors. These hopes, however, were greatly dimmed by the outbreak of the current war resulting from the October 2023 attack on Israel by Hamas, a Palestinian Sunni Islamist political and military movement that has governed Israel’s Gaza Strip since 2007.

It seems evident that no amount of signed documents, past or present, will allay the historic animosity and conflict that continues to exist between Israel and those who either oppose her existence outright, or who at a minimum claim

ownership of a portion of her land. This bitter hostility has continued to fester, with periodic eruptions of war, ever since the reestablishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. The world now despairs to hope the animosity will ever end.

THE REBIRTH OF ISRAEL

Out of the whirlpool of conflicting disorder that has characterized nearly all major world events during the past century, there has emerged something as unlike the general pattern of things as day is different from night. A new nation was born—the nation of Israel. Actually, it was the rebirth of a nation which existed centuries ago. The current state of Israel is, however, different from the old in almost every respect, except for its shared Jewish heritage.

This nation was reborn at a time when comparatively few of these ancient chosen people of God were desperately striving to maintain their hold on the Promised Land. At the same time, Israel was ringed about with hostile armies which were either threatening or attacking them almost constantly. Yet, out of this travail, with powerful nations sometimes looking on only passively, the State of Israel was born. To say that it was a historical event is not enough. It was also a prophetic event, foretold in the Scriptures.

Both Biblical and secular history furnish an interesting and colorful background for this people. It has been well said that one of the greatest living testimonies to the credibility of the Bible to be found in the world today is the Jew. Now that the Jewish people have been brought together into a reborn nation, this testimony has been greatly

strengthened. Indeed, the majority of those who make up the new nation of Israel are themselves as yet unbelievers in the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Even this, however, substantiates the accuracy of the prophecies pertaining to their reestablishment in the land.

THE LAND AND THE SEED

Abraham is the recognized father of the Jewish people and was the first to whom the name Hebrew was applied. (Gen. 14:13) To him God made wonderful promises. One of these pertained to the land which would eventually become Israel. It reads, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." (Gen. 13:14,15) This promise in reality constituted an assurance of their future title deed to the land.

In addition to this assurance concerning the land, God promised Abraham that his seed, or offspring, would be involved in the blessing of all mankind: "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Gen. 22:18) Abraham evidently understood this promise to mean that one day his descendants would become a powerful nation and would be in a position to extend blessings to all other nations of the earth. In the New Testament we are told that he "looked for a city ... whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10) A city, in the Bible, symbolizes a government, much as it does in our language, as for example, when we speak of Washington, DC, the seat of government in the United States.

The descendants of Abraham became known as Israelites, named after his grandson Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel by God. (Gen. 32:28) Later, under the leadership of Moses, with him serving as a mediator, they entered into covenant relationship with Jehovah. Upon doing so, God said to them, “Now therefore, 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.”—Exod. 19:5,6

From this pronouncement it is plainly evident that obedience to divine law was to be the measuring rod by which God would determine whether or not Israel would continue to be his chosen people. If they were to occupy a high position in his arrangements they must show obedience to him by a sincere and continued effort to obey his law.

Over the ensuing centuries, Israel was unfaithful to God’s law much of the time. Finally, they lost their national independence and were taken captive to Babylon. Concerning the overthrow of their last king, Zedekiah, we read, “Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: ... I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”—Ezek. 21:25-27

After seventy years of captivity in Babylon, the people were permitted to return to their own land, but they did not regain their national independence. (Jer. 25:8-12; 29:10; Ezra 1:1-5) In addition to their captivity in Babylon, they were successively subject

to Medo-Persia, Greece, and then Rome. They were under their Roman taskmasters when Jesus came on the scene. (Luke 2:1-5) They had lost their position as a sovereign nation, but God's covenant of favor was confirmed unto them for a period of seventy symbolic weeks. (Dan. 9:24-27) Using the scriptural principle of a day for a year—in this case 7 days x 70 weeks—a total of four hundred and ninety years is shown in applying Daniel's prophecy. (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:5,6) This period included the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, and ended three and one-half years after his death.

Had they accepted Jesus, and under this final test proved faithful, the nation of Israel could have secured the position of God's "peculiar treasure ... above all people," and they could have been "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exod. 19:5,6) However, the record is that Jesus "came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11) Instead, Israel rejected and crucified him. Thus it was, nearly twenty centuries ago in the shadow of Golgotha, the noblest Israelite who ever lived—Jesus the Messiah, the promised king of Israel and the world—declared to the generation which rejected him: "Your house is left unto you desolate."—Matt. 23:38

THE NEW NATION

The hope of having part in God's city, or kingdom, which the divine promise had engendered in the heart of Abraham, and which originally belonged to his natural descendants, was taken from them by this final decree of rejection uttered by the Master. He explained further that the kingdom

would be taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth fruits thereof. (Matt. 21:42,43; Luke 19:42-44) The Apostle Peter identifies this new nation which inherits the kingdom promises made originally to natural Israel, showing it to be the church of this present age since Pentecost. (I Pet. 2:4-10) The Apostle Paul gives us the same information in pointing out the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the seed which was to be the channel of blessing to all the families of the earth. He explains that Christ is this seed, and that associated with him will be those who are called of God and "baptized into Christ," from among both Jews and Gentiles.—Gal. 3:8,16,27-29

Another very illuminating lesson on the status of the natural descendants of Abraham is the eleventh chapter of Romans. This chapter opens with a question: "Hath God cast away his people?" The Apostle Paul's answer is, "God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." What the apostle evidently means is that God was not discriminating against individual Israelites. This is shown by his further analysis in which he reveals that a "remnant according to the election of grace" had maintained a favored position in God's arrangements, and that the remainder were temporarily "blinded."—Rom. 11:1-10

The remnant Paul refers to is mentioned in the explanation that Jesus "came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." (John 1:11,12) Those who, through baptism into Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit become sons of God, and who are faithful unto death, will

reign with Christ. Together with him they will be the royal nation. (Rom. 6:3-5; 8:14-17; Rev. 2:10; 20:4,6) God's promises justified Israel in seeking this high position, but Paul explains, as a nation "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for."—Rom. 11:7

ISRAEL'S BLINDNESS TO BE REMOVED

Spiritual blindness results from unfaithfulness to God. It was so with Israel. They rejected the Messiah, and whatever spiritual vision they had prior to that time was lost. This condition was to continue, Paul explains, "until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Rom. 11:25) This coming in of the "fulness of the Gentiles" is described by the apostle as the ingrafting of wild olive branches into the original Israelitish olive tree, "contrary to nature." (vs. 24) In grafting, the grafted branch retains its original identity and bears its own kind of fruit, not being changed in any way by the sap of the tree of which it becomes a part. However, it is different with these Gentile branches. They are, contrary to nature, changed; for they become spiritual Israelites, and inherit the promises originally made exclusively to the natural descendants of Abraham.

When this grafting work is completed, then "all Israel shall be saved," wrote Paul, for, "as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." (vss. 26,27) The covenant here referred to is the one promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It is to be made with "the house of Israel, and with the

house of Judah.” Israel and Judah are both mentioned because at the time this promise was made the nation was divided, ten of the tribes being identified as Israel, and the other two as Judah.

Paul wrote, “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer” of Israel. Sion, or Zion, was originally, so to speak, the “Capitol Hill” of Jerusalem, and the name is used in the prophecies to symbolize the Messianic kingdom in the hand of Christ and his church. This is the kingdom which was taken from the natural descendants of Abraham and given to the new, spiritual nation composed of individual believers from among both Jews and Gentiles. Together with Jesus, these are shown to be on spiritual, or heavenly, Mount Zion as “saviours” at the time when “the kingdom shall be the LORD’S.”—Obad. 1:21; Rev. 14:1; Isa. 55:5; Hos. 1:10

It is to this deliverance and enlightenment to natural Israel that our opening text refers: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.” (Isa. 60:1) The true light of Israel—and indeed of the whole world—is Jesus. This is emphasized by Simeon’s prophecy at the time the babe, Jesus, was dedicated at the Temple in Jerusalem. In a prayer to God, Simeon said of this child that he had come to be a “light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”—Luke 2:32

This glory was not realized by Israel at the time of Jesus’ First Advent because the nation rejected the light, and killed him. Simeon foretold that the result of this would be their fall. He said, “Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken

against.” (Luke 2:34) Only a remnant—the few Israelites who received Jesus at his First Advent—experienced at that time the fulfillment of the prophecy, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.” These few, together with believing Gentiles throughout the ensuing age, have rejoiced in the light and have let it shine out in a dark world for the blessing and encouragement of others.

For the people of Israel as a whole, however, the time is still future when the light will be recognized by them, when their own eyes are opened to recognize their Messiah. It will be then that “all Israel shall be saved.”

LIGHT OUT OF DARKNESS

Following the assurance of our opening text, the Prophet Isaiah then states: “Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” (Isa. 60:2,3) This indicates that just prior to the removal of Israel’s blindness there would be a very dark period in human experience, a time when both Jews and Gentiles would be without spiritual vision. How descriptive this is of the present time!

Never was true faith in God at a lower ebb than it is today. Truly gross darkness does cover the people; this is true of Israel and all the other nations. While Jehovah’s hand has been in the affairs of the Jews, shaping circumstances to induce large numbers of them to return to the Promised Land, the motives of most have been economic and

national, rather than a strong faith in God's promises. There have been exceptions, of course, but only a relative minority have truly looked to God for help. Most have put their faith in munitions and wealth. While they have the pioneer spirit of enthusiasm, they, like the other nations, have no solution for their problems. Similar to most nations also, their government is strife-ridden with contending political and religious factions.

They hope, of course, that eventually they will find a solution for their problems and that the government will finally become prosperous and economically strong. The prophecies indicate that before their final trouble they will enjoy a brief period of relative peace and prosperity. (Ezek. 38:8,11,12) Meanwhile, God's hand in the affairs of men is directing the final issue, and in due time the light will come to Israel and to the whole world, and the result will bring blessings to all people.

That light is already present in the world, but Jews and Gentiles alike are blind to it, even as Israel did not recognize their Messiah at the First Advent. However, divine providence is even now shaping the affairs of Israel, particularly with respect to the Jews being regathered there. The prophecies indicate that their national rebirth as a nation and regathering of their people is prior to the time when their blindness is removed. This is shown especially in the prophecy of Ezekiel 37:1-14, where the whole house of Israel is likened to a valley of dry bones.

In the bringing back to life of these bones, a three-phase action is indicated. First, the bones

come together—"bone to his bone." Then they are covered with sinews and flesh. Finally, they are given breath, or life. Accompanying these developments there is a noise, a shaking, and then the blowing of four winds. It is out of the four winds that life comes to what is said to be the whole house of Israel.—Ezek. 37:7-9

In a general way, these three phases of revival seem to coincide with the three major spasms of the time of trouble with which the present evil world comes to an end. The first of these spasms was the First World War which started in 1914. As a result of this there came a rustling, as it were, of Israel's bones. Palestine was partly opened up to them, many returned, and the reclaiming of the land began. Out of the Second World War came the sinews and the flesh. Finally, the new state of Israel was formed shortly thereafter in 1948.

However, there is not yet life in these "bones" from God's covenant standpoint. Breath has not yet been given to Israel. Verses 13 and 14 outline this sequence of events: "Ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live." Three events are outlined here. God has now "opened" their national "graves"—event one; he has brought them "up out" of their graves—event two; but he has not yet put his "spirit" in them, so as yet they do not have life. It is not until all three of these steps in their revival have been accomplished that they will truly know Jehovah, and will recognize God's "only begotten Son," Jesus, as their Messiah, their Light.—John 3:16

A detailed description of the last phase of the great time of trouble is presented in chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel's prophecy, and here also we find that not until this final phase occurs, and in it God delivers his people from their enemies, will their eyes be opened to know him: "So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward."—Ezek. 39:22

In that day, God will, as he had done in olden times, fight for the Israelites who have returned to their land. (II Chron. 20:15; 32:8) The eyes of many nations also will be opened, and as the prophecy declares, "They shall know that I am the LORD." (Zech. 14:2,3; Ezek. 38:23) Thus we have the assurance that the time for the rightful blessing of Israel will then begin. "You ... have been the very symbol of a curse to all the nations; ... and you shall become the symbol of a blessing."—Zech. 8:13, *The New English Bible*

This does not mean, however, that the state of Israel under its current government will be transformed into the earthly phase of Christ's kingdom. Its government, as will those of all other nations, will fall, to be replaced by the Messianic kingdom government. It will be as individuals that Israel will be delivered from their enemies and have their eyes opened to behold the glory of the Lord and to recognize the great light which shall then come to them. By acceptance of their Messiah, and obedience to the laws of his kingdom, the glory of God's favor will rest upon them. Thus will be fulfilled the other part of Simeon's prophecy, that Christ was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." The fall came when they rejected the light, and

their rising will be the result of their accepting him.

PRINCES IN ALL THE EARTH

Today the Jewish people continue to be gathered to Israel in keeping with the divine arrangement for their eventual blessing. However, they will first need to recognize Christ Jesus as the Son of God, their Messiah, Redeemer, and Deliverer, before the blessings of the kingdom will be offered to them. (Zech. 12:10; Ezek. 39:25-29) The human representatives of the kingdom of Christ will be the resurrected faithful fathers of old such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Ancient Worthies, whom the Scriptures declare will be made “princes in all the earth.” (Ps. 45:16) See also Luke 13:28; Hebrews 11:39,40; and Isaiah 1:25-27.

These ancient heroes of faith will not be part of the spiritual phase of the kingdom—the personnel of which will be Jesus and his church—yet these worthy ones will occupy a position of preferment above the world in general, having attested their faith and love during the reign of evil, in a manner approved by God. Thus they were prepared and proved worthy to be the earthly ministers and representatives of the spiritual kingdom.

As individually the people of Israel recognize and accept the leadership of these resurrected ones as representatives of their Messiah, they, too, will have the opportunity of cooperating in the work of the kingdom. So also will believing Gentiles. The “new earth” will increase and spread its influence over the whole world, under the direction of the “new heavens.” “Of the increase of his government and peace there

shall be no end,” the Scriptures declare; that is, it will ultimately embrace all nations, with even the dead being awakened to have an opportunity to share in its blessings.—II Pet. 3:13; Isa. 9:6,7; I Cor. 15:22

The spiritual seed of Abraham, gathered from both the Jews and Gentiles during the present Gospel Age, will be considered by God as “spiritual” Israelites in the heavenly phase of God’s kingdom. (Rom. 2:28,29; Rev. 3:12; 21:2) So it will also be in the case of those who participate in the earthly phase of God’s kingdom, beginning with the faithful ancient ones of old who lived prior to Jesus’ First Advent. From this constantly enlarging “new earth” the light spoken of in our opening Scripture will shine forth until the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth “as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14) It is a glorious hope, and what a blessing it is to stand at the very threshold of the Messianic kingdom, and to see the early beginnings of the fulfillment of the promises of God. May we as prospective spiritual Israelites, “arise and shine,” and faithfully tell the whole world these blessed tidings! ■

“Thus saith the LORD against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people.”—Jeremiah 12:14-16

God Fails Not

Key Verses: *“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.”*

—*Lamentations*
3:21,22

Selected Scripture:
Lamentations 3:16-26

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH

has been called the “weeping prophet” because he foretold the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. In our lesson we find metaphorical expressions of the distress of God’s people due to their disobedience. They were like ones living on gritty bread fit more for breaking teeth than giving nourishment, and they were in a state of great mourning like ones covered in ashes.—Lam. 3:16

In II Chronicles 35:25 we read, “Jeremiah composed

laments for Josiah, and to this day all the male and female singers commemorate Josiah in the laments. These became a tradition in Israel and are written in the Laments.” (*New International Version*) The meaning of “laments” in these verses is “a dirge, chant, or elegy.” It was customary for the Jews to make lamentations or mournful chants at the death of a great leader. Jeremiah recognized in King Josiah a genuine faithfulness to Jehovah that merited a special observance.

The Book of Lamentations is one of the five “Scrolls” in the Hebrew Bible, the others being the Books of Esther, Song of Solomon, Ruth, and Ecclesiastes. Each of these scrolls is read in synagogues on a different Jewish holy day. The Book of Lamentations is read

annually on Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month Av, in both morning and evening synagogue services. This is a special day of communal mourning on the Jewish calendar. Rabbis have claimed that God ordained this day as one of punishment for the lack of faith evidenced by the Israelites during their desert wanderings after the Exodus from Egypt. Other events mourned on this day are the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.

Known as Judaism's saddest day of the year, Tisha B'Av is a means of raising awareness of personal failings. It is a time of introspection to reconnect with spiritual rather than fleshly needs. The sadness of Lamentations reminds Jews of the importance of not only mourning over personal sin, but asking the Lord for his forgiveness when they fail. Jeremiah was also a prophet of hope. He reminds us in today's Key Verse that we are not lost in our past failings: "I still dare to hope when I remember this: The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease."—*New Living Translation*

As Christians following in the footsteps of Jesus, we are likewise instructed to put away fleshly deeds and strengthen our spiritual connection with the Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul admonishes us: "Put all these things behind you. No more evil temper or furious rage: no more evil thoughts or words about others, no more evil thoughts or words about God, and no more filthy conversation. Don't tell each other lies any more, for you have finished with the old man and all he did and have begun life as the new man, who is out to learn what he ought to be, according to the plan of God."—Col. 3:8-10, *J.B. Phillips New Testament*

If ever we feel hopeless and disconnected from the Lord, or overcome with a feeling of guilt, may Jeremiah's words of consolation and hope encourage us: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."—Lam. 3:26 ■

Continual Hope in the Lord

Key Verse: *“I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.”*

—Psalm 71:14

Selected Scripture:
Psalm 71:12-21

(vss. 7,2) He talks of God’s mighty deeds, his strength and power, and the great things he has done (vss. 16,18,19) He realized that it was Jehovah who delivered and restored him in trouble, and reflecting on his life, he exclaims “O God, who is like unto thee!”—vss. 20,19

Throughout David’s life his trust and reliance on the Lord never wavered. Even when he made wrong choices which brought disastrous consequences, he accepted whatever chastening Jehovah gave for reproof and correction. By virtue of these experiences God referred to David as “a man after mine own heart.”—Acts 13:22; I Sam. 13:14

Now in his old age, David reflects on his life with the words of our Key Verse. The Bible is overflowing with examples of faithful individuals who refused to rest from their work upon reaching what many would call “retirement” age. As such, this psalm contains valuable lessons for all of us as we mature in our Christian walk. We focus

WE DO NOT KNOW WITH certainty who wrote Psalm 71. However, most Bible scholars believe it to be David based on the language throughout the psalm which mirrors his life. He had been taught from his youth. (vs. 17) He knew Jehovah as his refuge and his righteous savior.

here on three characteristics of David which should inspire us to use our older years to serve God even more intensely.

First, let us continue to develop a deeper knowledge of God as we mature. This psalm is permeated with a personal and practical knowledge of our Heavenly Father. David's knowledge of Jehovah did not diminish as he aged. So should it be with us. Paul said, "For yourself, concentrate on winning God's approval, on being a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, and who knows how to use the word of truth to the best advantage." (II Tim. 2:15, *J.B. Phillips New Testament*) The Prophet Jeremiah assures us our hope extends throughout our life when he says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."—Jer. 29:11, *New International Version*

Second, let us persist in acquiring godly habits of trust, praise, and hope. Habits are established over time through much repetition. Once in place, they become almost instinctive. The habits we develop in our younger years tend to take deeper root as we grow older. Have we become habitually negative or positive in response to life's experiences? The word "continually" is found in verses 3 and 6 of Psalm 71 as well as in our Key Verse. It describes the proper habits of thought David had developed along the lines of trust, praise, and hope. Such habits we do not necessarily pick up naturally. We must deliberately cultivate them over a lifetime of experiences.

Third, we must daily work to develop a lifestyle of ministry for God. David was old when he wrote this psalm. After a life of service to Jehovah he could have concluded that he deserved some rest, but he dismissed such thoughts completely. As long as he had breath, he wanted to keep telling people about God's greatness and glory. Aging does not prohibit us from witnessing the Truth to others. In some ways it may provide more opportunities. Let us continually proclaim our hope in God by declaring his promises for us and the world of mankind. ■

Delightful Precepts

Key Verse: *“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.”*
—*Psalms 119:73*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 119:73-80

THE 119TH PSALM IS structured according to the Hebrew alphabet. It is divided into twenty-two sections, one for each Hebrew letter. Each section has sixteen lines in eight verses, with that section’s letter appearing at the start of each alternate line. It is by multiplying eight verses by the twenty-two Hebrew letters of the alphabet that determine

the one hundred seventy-six verses of this psalm.

The ancient Israelites had to learn their alphabet just as we do today. Knowing God’s law was bound together with learning the written Hebrew language. Because a critical aspect of their education was understanding the law of God, we should not be surprised that the Hebrew alphabet serves as an ordering element in this psalm that celebrates God’s law and all the good that comes from keeping it.

The verses of today’s lesson begin with the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, “Yad,” which means “hand.” The first line begins with the declaration, “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me.” It should excite reverence, gratitude, and affection towards God when we view him as our Maker, as he put forth the careful skill and power of his hands in our forming and fashioning. Because he created us, God promises particular care over us: “He

will keep you safe, like a bird keeps its babies safe under its wings. Because he keeps his promises, he will keep you safe like a shield and armor.”—Ps. 91:4, *EasyEnglish Bible*

The second part of today’s Key Verse is our response to being created by the hands of God: “Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.” Proverbs 3:5,6 describe the process of receiving understanding from our Creator: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.” (*New Living Translation*) To this the Apostle James later adds, “If you want to know what God wants you to do, ask him, and he will gladly tell you, for he is always ready to give a bountiful supply of wisdom to all who ask him; he will not resent it.”—James 1:5, *The Living Bible*

The remainder of this tenth portion of Psalm 119, verses 74-80, focuses on personal experience with God’s precepts and its profitable influence upon others. The psalmist is in deep affliction, but he looks to be delivered and made a blessing, while relying on God’s mercy and comfort. Delight in the Word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart. The psalmist says that he meditates on the precepts of Jehovah, even when he is dealt with perversely by others. It was his joy and delight to give his mind and heart to the teaching of God’s Word.

There is often comfort in traditions that have been Jewish custom for centuries. Among practices for those who are on sick or dying beds are the reciting or offering of prayers, playing recorded music or singing, and reciting psalms. Especially beneficial is using the comforting words of Psalm 119 by choosing those eight verse sections which seem to fit best the circumstances of the moment. This is a blessed example of the fact that the letter and spirit of God’s Law are the same. ■

Confidence in the Lord

Key Verse: “*I am counting on the LORD; yes, I am counting on him. I have put my hope in his word.*”

—*Psalms 130:5, New Living Translation*

Selected Scripture:
Psalms 130:1-8

PSALM 130 IS THE ELEVENTH of fifteen psalms known as the Songs of Ascent. These songs were traditionally sung by Hebrew pilgrims as they ascended the uphill road to Jerusalem to attend the three annual pilgrimage festivals at the Temple.—Deut. 16:16; Ps. 122:1-4

The primary theme of these Songs of Ascent was to encourage pilgrims on their journey towards Jerusalem. A secondary theme addressed in these psalms was the hopeful expectation of salvation through the arrival of the coming Messiah. The Apostle Paul later refers to conditions and events such as these which should have made them ready to accept Jesus Christ when he appeared on the scene.—Gal. 3:21-24

Verses one through three set the context of this psalm. “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD,” verse one says. Deep waters is a common figure used in the Bible to denote distress and danger. Personal suffering is spoken of here, but also national suffering. The psalmist feels this burden intensely. Israel is in danger of being overwhelmed by a sea of trouble. The psalmist longs for redemption for his countrymen, as shown in verses 7 and 8, whereas verses 1 through 6 focus on his individual distress. Thus, we can learn personal lessons from the psalmist’s plight.

The word “depths” as used here could be applicable to afflictions such as sorrow from loss of friends, property, or physical suffering. It could also apply to the consciousness of guilt resulting from sin. Such depths can likewise result from mental anguish due to a loss of faith, succumbing to a powerful temptation, or distress and sadness of heart in view of the pain and suffering of the world. From these and other depths of sorrow, however, it is our privilege to call upon the Lord for help.—Phil. 4:6,7, *NLT*

Verse three of our lesson points out a severe fear of the psalmist. If God were keeping records of wrongdoing, no one could be saved. The Apostle Paul tells us that the law did exactly that: “Why, then, was the law given? It was given alongside the promise to show people their sins.” (Gal. 3:19, *NLT*) The only way of relief for a sin-entangled soul is by looking to God alone. Many things may present themselves as diversions or remedies, but the Lord alone can heal. How thankful we should be that such fear can be removed through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. “Because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.”—Phil. 4:7, *Contemporary English Version*

Today’s Key Verse reveals the psalmist’s confidence that God will hear and respond to every cry of pain, because love and mercy defines who he is. (1 John 4:8; Ps. 116:5) Not only did the psalmist put his hope in the Lord, but also the Apostle Paul reminds us concerning Abraham when the promise of a son in his old age seemed impossible: “God promised Abraham a lot of descendants. And when it all seemed hopeless, Abraham still had faith in God and became the ancestor of many nations.” (Rom. 4:18, *CEV*) Like the psalmist and those such as faithful Abraham, let us have unwavering confidence in the Lord and his direction in our lives. ■

The Potter and the Clay

*“Now, O LORD,
thou art our
father; we are the
clay, and thou our
potter; and we all
are the work of
thy hand.”*
—Isaiah 64:8

THE LESSON OF THE potter and the clay is interwoven through many scripture passages. In these word pictures, God portrays the peculiar interest and intimate relationship he has with his people and shows to us in a

most beautiful way how “we are his workmanship.” (Eph. 2:10) The Prophet Isaiah, in our theme text, gives us the principal thought of this lesson, speaking prophetically of the relationship of the church and their Heavenly Father.

AN ANCIENT ART

The art of making pottery, or earthenware, is one of the most common and ancient of trades and is still done today. Although more modern techniques are employed now, the basic principles of pottery-making remain the same as they have for millennia. It is abundantly evident in the scriptural account that the Israelites used earthenware

vessels as they wandered in the wilderness, and they later carried the potter's trade into the land of Canaan. The Israelites themselves had no doubt practiced the art of pottery-making while in Egypt, probably making some of the pottery used by the Pharaohs and other high-ranking officials. This is indicated in Psalm 81:6. There is later a royal establishment of potters at Jerusalem referred to in I Chronicles 4:22,23. It is believed that the "potter's field" of our Lord's day referred to in Matthew 27:10 received its name because of its use in ancient times as the pit from whence the clay was taken. It evidently was also a place where imperfect and broken pottery unfit for royal use was discarded. Isaiah 30:14 seems to refer to this arrangement.

The process of pottery-making which was evidently most commonly practiced in ancient Israel was a very simple operation. The clay, when dug, was trodden by men's feet so as to form a paste. (Isa. 41:25) It was then placed by the potter on a horizontal wheel beside which he sat and shaped the vessel with his hands as the wheel turned, adding water as needed to make the clay more pliable. Jeremiah 18:3 refers to this use of the potter's wheel. After being formed and shaped, the vessel was then smoothed and engraved with certain cutting tools. Finally, it was glazed and put into the kiln where it was baked to the proper hardness. These basic facts concerning the ancient art of pottery-making should be kept in mind as we consider how God used it as an illustration of certain aspects of his divine arrangements.

A PICTURE OF MANKIND

We read in Romans 9:21, “Has not the potter rightful power over the clay to make out of the same lump one vessel for more honourable and another for less honourable uses?” (*Weymouth New Testament*) It is clear from this verse and its surrounding context that Adam and his race are pictured as the “clay” in the hands of the potter in the apostle’s illustration. The unfitness of this human clay for any purpose through Adam’s disobedience is the teaching of the Scriptures. (Isa. 64:6,7; Rom. 3:10-12,23) However, the Bible also teaches us that God provided a remedy for the healing of this unfitness through Jesus, who redeemed the human family, and that ultimately there will be vessels of great honor and of lesser honor in the kingdom.—I Pet. 3:18; I John 2:1,2; Matt. 6:10

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL ISRAEL ALSO PICTURED

In Jeremiah 18, God through the prophet shows how the nation of Israel was a vessel of honor unto God so long as it served him and the Mosaic Law properly. God said to Jeremiah, recorded in verses 2-6, “Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith

the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." Israel, as a vessel, was marred in the hand of the potter when she failed to submit to the law of God. However, in due time, Jeremiah says, the potter would make again another vessel from the same clay.

We believe there is a great lesson here beyond that which Jeremiah could understand. It seemed for a time that fleshly Israel would be the means by which the Abrahamic Covenant would have its fulfillment. In due time, Jesus their Messiah, indeed, came unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel and gave them the opportunity to become the spiritual seed of promise. (Matt. 15:24) As a nation, however, they rejected him, and he declared, "Your house is left unto you desolate." (Matt. 23:38) As a vessel of honor, Israel had become marred in the potter's hand, and so they were cast off. Then God "made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." That new vessel of honor in Jeremiah's prophecy is spiritual Israel—Jesus and his church, the body of Christ. Our theme text of Isaiah 64:8 suggests that God, since Jesus' death and resurrection, is creating another beautiful vessel from this human clay, and it will take an entire age in his divine arrangement to complete this vessel of great honor and glory—his church.

While the great Master Potter has been busy forming this beautiful vessel of honor represented in the church, we see Satan was hard at work making a counterfeit vessel unto his own praise and honor. This is represented primarily in the great ecclesiastical systems of the world, designed in such a way to deceive the masses of the people. How glad

we are to know that this vessel which has been formed by the hand of Satan will soon be broken. Christ shall “rule [Greek: tend as a shepherd] them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers.” (Rev. 2:27; Ps. 2:7-9) This is in contrast to the way the true church is being developed as a vessel of honor in the hand of the potter. Psalm 139:15 says, “My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” The members of the true church are known only to God and to one another. The world, however, lying in ignorance and blind unbelief, cannot see nor understand anything about this beautiful vessel unto honor that is being “curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth” by the hand of God.

THE POTTER’S FIELD

We recall in Matthew 27:3-10 the account of how our Lord was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver—the price of a slave at that time—and that this was just enough to purchase the potter’s field. (see Exod. 21:32; Zech. 11:12,13) As previously stated, the potter’s field probably got its name from ancient times when there was a royal establishment of potters at Jerusalem, referred to in I Chronicles 4:23. It was the area where the clay pits were located, of which various royal vessels were made. Although the potter’s field had long since ceased to be used in connection with pottery making, its name continued unto Jesus’ day. It was considered then only as a mostly worthless piece of ground, no doubt containing many pits and marshes of miry clay suitable only as a place to dump refuse or, as it was

used after being bought for thirty pieces of silver, a place to bury strangers who could not afford a decent interment.—Matt. 27:7

We see in this a beautiful picture. The whole human family currently are strangers from the favor of God. Being reckoned as dead in Adam they are all represented as buried in the miry pit of the potter's field. Just as ancient Israel's potter's field once produced vessels used in the royal courts, our first parents were formed from clay, from the elements of the earth, and prepared and shaped into beautiful vessels of honor—created in the moral image and likeness of God. (Gen. 1:26,27) When sin entered in, however, they were cast off from God's favor and placed under the condemnation of divine judgment. The earth also was cursed on their behalf. (Gen. 3:6-19) It is in this miry pit of sin and death the human family has been brought forth and resided. "I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5) The whole earth is a potter's field for the entire human family, all of whom have fallen from divine favor.

We see that our Lord Jesus, through the shedding of his own precious blood on Calvary's cross, has bought back the potter's field. (Eph. 2:13; I Pet. 1:18,19; Rev. 1:5) In due time the human family will be lifted up out of the miry pit and shaped into vessels of honor under the mighty and loving hand of our God. When the plans of the great potter shall be fully accomplished, every creature in heaven and in earth shall be heard ascribing praise and thanksgiving, honor, dominion, majesty and might "unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."—Rev. 5:13; 7:12

A PERSONAL LESSON

We want to further apply this picture of the potter and the clay from a more personal standpoint. We recall our text in Isaiah 64:8, speaking prophetically of the church, declares the position of each one of us. "Now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." There is no illustration in the Bible that could better picture this close relationship that we have with our Heavenly Father and the tender care and interest that he has in us. As clay in the potter's hand is completely under his control as to the kind of vessel to be wrought, so only by the complete submission of ourselves to God's will can he shape us into a vessel unto honor, truly praiseworthy, reflecting the glory and majesty of him and his dear son Christ Jesus.—Heb. 12:9; James 4:7; I Pet. 4:1,2

Just as a potter seeks out the pure clay from which to make his vessels, so our Heavenly Father has been seeking out from amongst mankind those who search for him with all their heart—those who "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him." (Jer. 29:13; Acts 17:27) "I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."—Ps. 40:1,2

In ancient times, clay was tempered with water to make it more pliable in the potter's hands. Water is often used as a symbol of Truth, and so it is that as clay in the hands of the great potter, we must be saturated with the water of Truth. This life-giving water must have more than just a surface effect in

our lives. It must penetrate to the heart condition, because only by it being fully absorbed can the great potter work with us “both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13) How important it is then that we not allow anything to prevent us from being refreshed daily at the fountain of Truth, and thus keep ourselves in a proper pliable condition before God.

It was also necessary that all foreign objects such as stones, pieces of wood, or anything that was not part of the clay be removed by the potter so that it would not mar the vessel. The Lord is purging out of our lives the dross of sin that we may indeed be shaped into vessels unto honor. Paul wrote, “If a man therefore purge himself from these [impurities], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” (II Tim. 2:21) Our Heavenly Father, in his love and wisdom, is giving us experiences from day-to-day that are calculated to point out the sins and impurities that must be purged out of our lives. It is most important then that we do our part in this matter by learning and applying the lessons of experience that God gives us. “Those whom the Lord loves he disciplines.”—Heb. 12:6, *WNT*

MADE INTO A VESSEL OF HONOR

The ancient potter would take the lump of clay, put it on the potter’s wheel, and he would first shape it into the type of vessel that he had in mind to make. Then he would engrave upon it, with the use of certain cutting tools, the design or artwork with which he wished to (Continued on page 36)

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(Continued from page 31) beautify it. When God saw our heart condition and accepted our consecration, he in effect lifted us out of the miry pit and set us upon the potter's wheel. The world would think of these experiences merely the result of happenstance, but to us they represent the providential leadings of the Heavenly Father. If we submit to the turning of the wheel of his providence he will indeed be able to shape us into a vessel of honor.

After we have been generally transformed into the image likeness of our Master and pattern Jesus, then comes the work of the fine details of character that must be worked out gradually in the life of each one of us. This is where God, as the Master Potter, uses special tools to engrave our characters and to work out these details. If we have need of patience, God has a special tool for that—experiences that are designed to help us develop patience. If we have need of self-control, surely he also has special tools that he can use to help us along these lines. Gradually then, we are able to reflect Christ's image likeness more and more as our characters are developed and made beautiful under the loving hand of the great potter. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." (Rom. 8:29) We should also remember that God engraves each of his vessels separately. We each need special and unique experiences, those which will best work out our individual character requirements and which will best help us deal with our own particular needs. Only our loving Heavenly Father knows what is best for each of us.

Next, the ancient potter would glaze the vessel with a substance designed to smooth and harden the

surface and to generally beautify its appearance. Many people in the world have an outward polish or shine that seems to indicate a good character, but many times we learn that it is only a surface appearance. With the church, however, the “glazing,” or outward appearance, that we manifest to others should truly represent the character within. Let us be sure that our conduct and appearance before others gives evidence of our inward faith, conviction, and character.

FIERY TRIALS NECESSARY

The final process in pottery-making is that of baking the vessel in the kiln, this being required to permanently fix its condition, to harden it and make it strong enough to perform its required duties as a vessel. So the Heavenly Father crystallizes our characters through fiery trials designed to firmly fix us in the character likeness of Christ. When we stop to consider, God intends to entrust to us all the responsibilities that go with the high exaltation to the divine nature, and all the responsibility of the kingdom work. Surely he will only be able to use those who have been tried, proven, and found worthy. Thus we should, as Peter states, “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” (I Pet. 4:12) Rather, if God is permitting us to have severe trials, fiery trials, let us rejoice and be glad that in his love and wisdom he is fixing our characters and proving us in this way.

The ancient potter knew just how hot to make the furnace, and exactly how long to leave the vessel in it. God knows that about us too. He knows just

the proper kind of trials to give each us and will not permit any experience to be more than we can bear. (I Cor. 10:13) As the firing of the vessel was the final process, it seems to picture that these special fiery trials would come after we have reached a considerable degree of spiritual maturity, in the latter part of our Christian lives.

As we think of the trials that we are having, or may have in the future, we should always remember that we are in the potter's hands and that it is he who is carefully and lovingly preparing us for kingdom use. He has given "his angels charge over" us. (Ps. 91:11) If we keep this in mind, we will be able to pass through our trials successfully, and indeed, rejoice in tribulation, knowing that it comes to us by the will of God.

GOD'S WILL, NOT OURS, BE DONE

Do we ever question the Heavenly Father, or try to avoid some of the experiences he gives us? Have we ever thought in our minds that he has permitted some things to happen to us that were unnecessary? "Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" (Isa. 45:9) Let us never question the Father's leadings, but let our faith be strong enough to accept each lesson we get in the school of Christ as necessary for our learning and development. If we are finally found to be a vessel unto honor and worthy to be used to his praise in the kingdom, it will be because of the merciful and loving care of the great potter, our Heavenly Father. What a privilege it is to be among those who are being thus formed as vessels of honor who, if found "faithful unto death," will be used eternally to bring

glory to the loving and worthy name of the Master Potter.—Rev. 2:10

In concluding our lesson, let us remember the words of the 139th Psalm. “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

JULY 4—“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”—Isaiah 53:1 (Z. '99-10,11 Hymn 79)

JULY 11—“Whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not, ... but keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”—I John 5:18 (Z. '99-58 Hymn 208)

JULY 18—“In the last days perilous times shall come. Men shall be traitors, heady, ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”—II Timothy 3:1,4 (Z. '99-102 Hymn 306A)

JULY 25—“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who are thou that judgest another?”—James 4:12 (Z. '99-139 Hymn 136)

“After the Order of Melchisedec”

“Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee. ... Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”
—*Hebrews 5:5,6*

OUR PRESENT STUDY

will be an overview of Hebrews, chapter 7. Two chapters earlier, in the words of our opening text, Jesus is identified as a “priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” There Paul wrote that he had “many things” to say about this, things which to the Hebrew Christians would seem “hard to be uttered” because, as the apostle explains, they were “dull of hearing.”—*Heb. 5:11*

In the seventh chapter, Paul itemizes “many things” about Melchisedec which identify him as a pattern, or type, of Christ. This entire chapter is devoted to showing how much greater in every way was the Melchisedec priesthood than the Aaronic order under Israel’s Law Covenant arrangement.

KING AND PRIEST

Verses 1 and 2 of chapter 7 read: “This Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace.”

Melchisedec was both a king and a priest, and from God’s standpoint a very highly honored priest. Abraham, a friend of God upon the basis of his faith, was also highly honored by Jehovah. However, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec—giving to him a tenth of all the spoils of battle on the occasion when he slaughtered the kings who had taken Lot, his nephew, into captivity.—Gen. 14:18-20, *New Living Translation*

The title Melchisedec is a very significant one, being made up of the Hebrew words *melek*, meaning “king,” and *tsedeq*, meaning “righteousness.” He actually was King of Salem, which means “peace.” Thus, as stated by Paul, Melchisedec was both “King of righteousness” and “King of peace.” What a clearly defined type Melchisedec was, therefore, of Christ Jesus, the one concerning whom the Prophet Isaiah wrote that “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:7

Hebrews 7:3, speaking of typical Melchisedec, reads: “Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”

The evident thought of this text is that Melchisedec was without father or mother in the priesthood—

that is, he did not inherit the office from his parents. It was given to him directly by God. Paul emphasizes this point in order to offset the doubts some might have concerning Jesus, that not being of the tribe of Levi he could not therefore be a priest. In Israel's arrangement, it was God who established the Levitical tribe, the one from which priests were to be taken. God also had the authority and power to exalt others to the priesthood. This he did in the case of Melchisedec, and also Christ, the greater Melchisedec.

In the Levitical order of priesthood there was an arrangement of succession, but not so in the higher, or Melchisedec order. Melchisedec had neither predecessor nor successor in the priesthood. In this respect he was like "the Son of God," who similarly is the only one in this highest of all priestly orders. Paul explains that the significance of this is that Christ "abideth a priest continually."

LESS BLESSED OF THE BETTER

Continuing in Hebrews 7:4-10, the apostle writes: "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the Law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed

that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.”

Paul’s reasoning in these verses is irrefutable. Abraham is counted as one of the greatest, if not the greatest, hero of faith mentioned in the Bible. In Romans 4:13, he is designated the “heir of the world.” Yet he paid tithes to Melchisedec, and, as Paul states, “The less [Abraham] is blessed of the better [Melchisedec].” The head of Israel’s priestly tribe, that is, Levi, himself paid tithes to Melchisedec while still in the loins of Abraham, being his great-grandson. None of the Levitical tribe, not even the priests could, therefore, be as great as Melchisedec.

“Of whom it is witnessed that he liveth,” Paul asserts. (Heb. 7:8) There is no record of the birth or death of Melchisedec. All we know is that he lived. This makes him a fitting type of the perpetual priestly office of Christ, of whom it is prophetically stated, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6) In this statement the apostle may also have been alluding to the testimony of the “two men” at the tomb of Jesus, when they asked the women who were looking for his body, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” or, as the *International Standard Version* states, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is living?”—Luke 24:4,5

A BETTER PRIESTHOOD AND BETTER LAW

Hebrews 7:11 states: “If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that

another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?"

In this verse Paul presents still another argument as to why believers should expect that the Levitical, or Aaronic, priesthood would be succeeded by another and higher priestly order. It was the fact that the Levitical priesthood did not bring perfection to those who were served by it. God had spoken through the prophet David that there would be another priesthood established, one after the order of Melchisedec. (Ps. 110:4) Now the inspired Apostle Paul is pointing out another reason why this was necessary.

Continuing in Hebrews 7:12-17, Paul writes: "The priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

Hebrews who had accepted Christ would not find it easy to understand why changes needed to be made in the Law in order for Jesus to serve as a priest. Therefore, in these verses Paul's reasoning is to show why this change was the logical thing to expect, and quite in harmony with God's arrangement. Priests of the Levitical order under the Mosaic Law served by hereditary rights.

Jesus, however, was not of the tribe of Levi, so according to this hereditary arrangement of the Law, he could never be eligible for the priesthood. In God's plan a higher priestly order was designed for him. By the hereditary arrangement one could become a priest regardless of whether or not he was worthy of the office, but under the Melchisedec order this could not be. So far as his priestly service was concerned, Melchisedec was without "beginning of days, nor end of life." (Heb. 7:3) His genealogy is not recorded. None of his qualifications for the priesthood are recorded. His was simply a case of being chosen by God. It is this great fact that stands out in the case of Jesus, the antitype of Melchisedec.

The fact that priests of the Aaronic order inherited their positions was an evidence of the temporary nature of their service. However, with the Melchisedec order the reverse is true. No time element entered into this arrangement. Thus Melchisedec is a suitable pattern of the endless life and continuing priesthood of Jesus. As Paul presents it, the "power" or authority for Christ's appointment as a priest was that of "an endless life," this being in harmony with the prophecy which foretold his appointment.

A BETTER HOPE

Verses 18 and 19 of our lesson read: "There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

The Law was “weak through the flesh,” Paul wrote. (Rom. 8:3) The reason it failed was not because there was something wrong with it, but because of the weaknesses and imperfections of those who attempted to obtain life under its provisions. Since the Israelites proved by their own failure under the Law that its arrangements were not adequate to bring perfection and life to fallen human beings, it was automatically disannulled and the way opened for a new arrangement.

“The Law made nothing perfect.” (Heb. 7:19) This was an additional reason for the appointment of another priesthood, and it is in connection with this that we have been given a “better hope,” a hope which, when it matures, will result in perfection. It is a hope which includes the prospect of serving and reigning with Christ in the future work of blessing the obedient of mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, with “restitution” to perfection. (Isa. 60:3; Acts 15:15-17; 3:20,21) Though this aspect of his work is yet future, we have the assurance that Christ “ever liveth to make intercession” for us now, and that through the merit of his shed blood we are counted as acceptable to God. (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34) Thus, being “justified by faith, we have peace with God,” and can “draw nigh” unto him, going “boldly unto the throne of grace.”—Rom. 5:1; James 4:8; Heb. 4:16

CONFIRMED BY AN OATH

Hebrews 7:20-22 provides further insight. “Inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The

Lord swear and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament [Greek: covenant].”

Jesus was not only appointed by God to be a priest, but his appointment was confirmed by a divine oath. Surely, then, there should be no question in anyone’s mind concerning his right to be a priest, a greater right than those who became priests merely by heredity.

“By so much”—this refers to the great force of Jesus’ appointment to the priesthood as indicated by God’s oath. Although the Levitical priesthood established with Israel was made “without an oath,” God’s original covenant of blessing, made with Abraham, and which embraces the hope of both the church and the world, was confirmed by divine oath. This is probably why Paul associates the “better covenant” with the force associated with the divine oath.—Gen. 22:15-18; Heb. 6:13-20

The expression “better covenant” is in contrast with the Law Covenant. The covenant principally referred to is doubtless the promised “New Covenant,” first spoken of by the Prophet Jeremiah. (Jer. 31:31-34) By Jesus’ death and resurrection he became the “surety” that the New Covenant would indeed be established in due time. By the same token he also made sure our acceptance under the terms of the Sarah feature of the original Abrahamic Covenant, also oathbound, in particular that part of the covenant which calls for the development of the “seed” which is to bless all the families of the earth.—Gal. 3:16,27-29; 4:21-31

ABLE TO SAVE “TO THE UTMOST”

Paul continues to describe the superiority of Christ in Hebrews 7:23-25. “There were many [Levitical] priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He [Christ Jesus], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”—*New King James Version*

Who could fail to see this advantage of the Melchisedec order of priesthood? Christ “always lives to make intercession”—a priest forever. We can well imagine the case of an earnest Israelite under the Law Covenant seeking to live close to God, and leaning heavily upon a certain high priest for counsel and encouragement. He would become acquainted with the priest, and the priest would get to understand him and be able thus to better serve him; but suddenly this high priest dies. What a tragedy this would be for the one who depended so largely upon him.

This is not true of our High Priest, Jesus, for he “always lives,” and is ready at all times to make intercession for us. He understands us and knows our every weakness, yet loves us with an everlasting love. No wonder he is able to save “to the uttermost” those who come to God through him. (John 14:6) Those who desire to return to God and to his fellowship and blessing are helped and shown the way. The value of Christ’s redemptive sacrifice is imputed to them to cover their defects; and his intercession is able to make their earnest efforts successful. (Rom. 4:16,20-24) What a Savior! What a Priest!

“HOLY, HARMLESS, UNDEFILED”

The final three verses of our lesson read: “Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the Law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated [Greek: made perfect or complete] for evermore.”—Heb. 7:26-28

Our High Priest, Paul says, was “holy”—entirely devoted to his Heavenly Father, with a dedication prompted by love and based upon knowledge. He was “harmless” also. His every influence was beneficial and uplifting. He was “undefiled,” not only from the standpoint of the Law, but morally pure as well. Finally, he was “separate from sinners.” He was not tainted in any way with human imperfections. Because of his perfection in all of these areas of life and conduct, even unto death, Jesus is now “higher than the heavens,” a reference to his high exaltation when he was raised from the dead, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.” (Eph. 1:20,21) It was because Jesus was thus exalted that he is now able to appear in the presence of God for us.

The contrast between the sacrificial work of the Levitical priesthood and the sacrifice of Jesus is in the fact that Israel’s priests needed to keep repeating their work, day after day, year after year. Jesus, however, offered himself only once. The typical

priests offered sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people, Paul states. Then he explains concerning Jesus that “this he did once, when he offered up himself.” That is, he offered one sacrifice which covered the sins of his body members, the church, and also the sins of the people. In confirmation of this, the Apostle John says of Jesus that he became the “propitiation [atoning sacrifice, *ISV*] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”
—I John 2:2

Jesus was perfect as a man, and the experiences through which he passed while offering himself in sacrifice perfected him as a New Creature in the sense of being developed, or made complete. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.” (Heb. 5:8-10) How we should thank our loving Heavenly Father that he has provided such a great High Priest—for us now, and for the entire world of mankind in the coming kingdom on earth.—
Matt. 6:10 ■

*"For this is the will of My Father,
that everyone who beholds the Son
and believes in Him will have eternal life,
and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."
—John 6:40, New American Standard Bible*

Casting Out Fear

“He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”

—*Psalm 107:29,30*

IN MARK’S GOSPEL, HE recounts a day when a large crowd gathered around our Lord Jesus as he was teaching on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. (Mark 4:1) The multitude was eager to hear his words, and Jesus boarded a boat where, just offshore, he continued to address the people until the evening of the day.

Mark provides a wonderful narrative of the very moving scene that followed. “The same day, when the even was come, he [Jesus] saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them,

Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”—Mark 4:35-41

This circumstance in Galilee demonstrated the vast difference between mature and immature faith. Jesus exhibited total faith and confidence in his Father to protect and preserve him in the midst of what appeared to be a desperate, possibly fatal, circumstance. The disciples, on the other hand, failed to demonstrate the same degree of confidence in their Master and his concern for them.

This experience was used to impart a vital lesson, yet one might ask if a loving Savior could not have instilled that lesson by means less terrifying? It is the psalmist who best answers that question by stating a most obvious fact. He declares that all who sail upon the sea must expect occasional storms. He speaks of those storms as though they are created by God, but it is more accurate to say they are permitted by God for instructive purposes. Their intensity is precisely calibrated to show to the child of God many wonders that could not otherwise be revealed.

Concluding with the words of our opening Scripture, the psalmist depicts those who are subject to stormy experiences while upon the sea. “They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger

like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."—Ps. 107:23-30

IN THE SHIP

This psalm characterizes the experiences that all faithful Christians must endure while in the world. They are portrayed as analogous to mariners who go down to the "sea in ships" to do business in "great waters." The unbelieving world constitutes the great waters, spoken of more familiarly in the modern expression as the sea of humanity. Christ Jesus is the ship. Those who are in the "ship" of Christ Jesus during the present time are the Lord's people who sail upon that symbolic sea. The business of those in the ship of Christ is that of proclaiming and defending the Truth of God, as well as living according to his righteous principles and precepts under all circumstances of general opposition from an unbelieving world. While conducting their righteous business in that ship on the great waters, the child of God must be prepared to encounter deep currents and resistant forces as unseen and destructive as the wind.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, "We are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places."—Eph. 6:12, *New Living Translation*

The psalmist indicates that only those who “go down to the sea in ships” are privileged to “see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.” Only those who are under sail, and driving toward their “desired haven,” will experience the wonder of “the deep things of God,” many of which can be revealed in their fullness only by extreme circumstances while in his service.—I Cor. 2:10

RISING AND FALLING

The stormy experiences of life were also seen by the psalmist. He says, “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths.” The Lord’s spiritual mariners are sometimes carried so high by experiences that they seem almost carried to heaven’s height, but then they may plunge into a trough of deep trial. While in that condition their soul is melted because of the trouble. The buffeting and the pounding make the child of God “stagger” and “reel to and fro.” In their extremity, dazed and bruised, they may wonder if they are able to stay aboard the ship of Christ. As the strength of the storms reveals the true weakness of the mariners, they often feel they might be swept overboard. They have been brought to “their wits’ end [Hebrew: all their wisdom is swallowed up].”

The Christian can never calm the storm by his own wisdom. Though the immediate ferocity of the storm might diminish, it is usually only temporary. It will never become a lasting calm, and the wind will never totally subside to a sailing breeze. The waters will never be truly quieted because deep below the surface they will remain troubled, the more easily stirred when the wind rises once again.

If those who are in the ship of Christ persist in trusting in their own strength and wisdom, one day a storm will arise that may sweep them overboard into the sea. Exhausted and confused, such ones and their wisdom risk being swallowed up.

INCREASING FAITH

The Scriptures assure us that when we go down to the great waters, the Lord is ever present with us. He is prepared to help us avoid disaster, and he is ever eager to help us maintain a safe and true course toward our destination. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.”—Ps. 46:1-3

The psalmist declares that the spiritual mariners who would avoid being swallowed up by the sea should “cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.” (Ps. 107:28) That is what the Lord’s disciples did when on the Sea of Galilee. They did the right thing, but for the wrong reason. They cried unto the Lord in their distress, but their cry was born of terror and doubt about his ability and willingness to save them out of their trouble. The psalmist emphasizes that all spiritual mariners of mature faith will cry unto the Lord while in the very midst of their distresses, not from doubt and terror, but with thanksgiving and praise for the certain knowledge that he will, in fact, preserve them. Such faith and trust in the Lord was demonstrated by those

faithful men and women of Old Testament times.—
Ps. 11:1-7; Dan. 6:10

The psalmist does not say that the Lord will not allow further distresses, or that all troubles vanish and the course of the mariner will become smooth sailing ever after. The distresses noted are often the means by which the follower of Christ becomes more fully formed and develops more of the fruits of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22,23) When those in Christ cry unto the Lord in their trouble, they do not implore the Lord to make the experience vanish solely for their personal benefit. They do not seek to be guided around the storms to attain a life of ease. They cry that by those trials they may be made more nearly like their blessed Master, and more refined as gold from the fire. (I Pet. 1:7) They become more mature in the faith, and more nearly ready to praise him for their promised providential care.

IN FULL CONFIDENCE

When those who go down to the great waters cease attempting to preserve themselves by their own wit and wisdom, and when they cry unto the Lord in full confidence that he will hear and respond, true peace comes to them. “He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still,” the psalmist continues. A stillness settles over the child of God, not because the storm itself is immediately removed, but because fear of the storm is removed. (Isa. 26:3,4) Such have been brought to the realization that the very storms they are permitted to encounter are the truest indication that they are sailing in the proper course. They reach the inescapable conclusion that a course without the storms

would be a sure indication of not sailing in the proper direction. Their perception of the storm has changed entirely. No longer is there the fear of being engulfed by the waves. They have come to understand that every experience is in the hands of our loving God, and that progress is measured by mature faith in him. (Prov. 3:5,6) They have determined to remain in the ship in order to be carried through the storm. "Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven." (Ps. 107:30) Thankful for being delivered from the stormy experiences, they are convinced of the Heavenly Father's ability to guide and protect under all conditions while upon the great waters, and that he will steer them toward their desired haven.

The "desired haven" is the destination sought by every Christian who is walking in "newness of life" with the Lord. Paul explains, "We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4) This is the reason we have undertaken the voyage, that we may reach our destination with mature faith and character. To make that journey we must go down to the sea. A successful voyage is not determined by conditions, but by our faith and the casting out of fear. That significant truth was conveyed by our Lord to his disciples that day at Galilee.

OTHER LITTLE SHIPS

Mark records another small detail in connection with the great event that took place on the Sea of

Galilee. He writes, “The same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.” (Mark 4:35,36) The other little ships, and those who were riding in them, may represent those who at times witness the stormy experiences of the consecrated. As the consecrated are tossed to and fro on their personal or collective stormy seas, others are often affected by those storms. When God makes the storm a calm for his consecrated child, it no doubt has a powerful effect on the bystanders who may have been witnesses to what had taken place.

The Apostle Paul introduced this thought in his second epistle to the church at Corinth. He cautions his brethren in Christ not to seek respite from their distresses merely for personal ease, but for the beneficial effect it will have on those who witness God’s tender mercy exercised on behalf of his children who cry unto him in full faith, believing he will surely hear. Paul writes, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and

salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.”—II Cor.1:3-7

The cries of true Christians are more often cries of thanksgiving and praise to God, whether they are at peace or in the midst of distresses. They have learned that these are the means by which, in due time, they will be brought unto the desired haven. The spiritual mariners in Christ Jesus may cry out of their trouble for personal relief, but trust the sanctifying effect of God’s providence over them, and that their response will be an example and comfort to those in the other ships nearby.

What a blessing it is to realize the nature of God’s protecting hand over us that may often be manifest to others. The apostle brings this thought to our attention, saying, “Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”—Heb. 10:32,33

The Apostle John tells us, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” (I John 4:18) Let us cast out fear as we abide in the ship of Christ, remembering these words from Paul: “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have: For He Himself has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”—Heb. 13:5,6, *New King James Version*. ■

*“You have a strong arm; Your hand is mighty,
Your right hand is exalted. Righteousness
and justice are the foundation of Your throne;
Lovingkindness and truth go before You.
How blessed are the people who know the joyful
sound! O LORD, they walk in the light of
Your countenance. In Your name they rejoice all
the day, And by Your righteousness
they are exalted.”*

—Psalm 89:13-16, New American Standard Bible

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 Laddie Stewart, Columbus, OH—February
13. Age, 85

Sister Kay Curell, Knoxville, TN—April 30. Age, 86

Sister Jeannie Cohmer, Greenfield, OH—May 17.
Age, 76

Brother Orbia Lyles Jr., Dover, AR—May 18. Age, 80

Brother Jan Kornak, Lublin, Poland—May 19. Age,
87

Brother William Rozmus, Portland, OR—May 26.
Age, 96

Sister Anna Szafraniec, Racibórz, Poland—June 1.
Age, 91

Sister Genowefa Dyba, Chrzanów, Poland—June 3.
Age, 94

Brother David Donnarummo, Greater New London,
CT—June 5. Age, 85

Sister Mollie Heidelberg, Milwaukee, WI—June 6.
Age, 103

On, to the Haven, Eternal

Safe in the lifeboat I joyfully ride
Out on life's perilous ocean;
Shutting my ears to the roar of the tide,
Peaceful amid its commotion.

On to the haven eternal I glide,
Telling the wonderful story;
Jesus, my Pilot, remains at my side,
Filling my soul with his glory.

Safe in the lifeboat I smile at the wave,
Wave of repining or sadness;
Since at my side stands the "Mighty to save,"
Trustfulness fills me with gladness.

On to the haven eternal I glide,
Telling the wonderful story;
Jesus, my Pilot, remains at my side,
Filling my soul with his glory.

Safe in the lifeboat when tempests arise,
Wrecking some cherished endeavor;
Jesus I know is unerringly wise;
He will sustain me forever.

On to the haven eternal I glide,
Telling the wonderful story;
Jesus, my Pilot, remains at my side,
Filling my soul with his glory.

Safe in the lifeboat when danger is past,
Moored to the arches of glory;
While love's unspeakable ages shall last
Singing the wonderful story.

On to the haven eternal I glide,
Telling the wonderful story;
Jesus, my Pilot, remains at my side,
Filling my soul with his glory.

—Zion's Glad Songs

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

BIBLE STUDENTS GENERAL CONVENTION, July 20-25—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—University of Pittsburgh, 450 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904. Contact E. Kuenzli. Phone: (407) 670-4189 or Email: ekuenzli@cfl.rr.com

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION, August 6-11—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Folwark Zalesie, Poland. Contact T. Lecko. Email: theresa.kuehmichel@gmail.com

HODDESDON, U. K. CONVENTION, August 14-18—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—High Leigh Conference Centre, Lord Street, Hoddesdon, EN11 8SH U.K.. Contact N. Charcharos. Email: n.a.charcharos@gmail.com

EAST & CENTRAL AFRICA GENERAL CONVENTION, August 31, September 1—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact E. Jjuuko. Email: eliezer1874@yahoo.com

NEW YORK CONVENTION, August 31, September 1—BROADCAST ONLINE ONLY—Contact K. Weber. Email: kfweber@optonline.net

SEATTLE CONVENTION, August 31-September 2—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE—Scottish Rite Center, 1207 N 152nd St., Shoreline, WA 98133. Contact C Becker. Email: christie@christiebeckerviolin.com

TENNESSEE VALLEY CONVENTION, September 6-8—IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE

—Comfort Inn, 4725 University Drive (HWY 72), Huntsville, AL 35806, phone (256) 562-2525. Contact R. Satheesan. Email: rosaliasatheesan@gmail.com

GRAND RAPIDS CONVENTION, September 28,29
—**IN PERSON AND BROADCAST ONLINE**—Little Pine Island Camp, 6889 Pine Island Drive NE, Comstock Park, MI 49321. Contact K. Osterman. Email: kenosterman@gmail.com

ORLANDO CONVENTION, October 26,27—**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 2,3—**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

Be Still

*Stay still in the hand of the Potter,
Lie low 'neath His wonderful touch,
He shapeth and moldeth in mercy
The child that He loveth so much;*

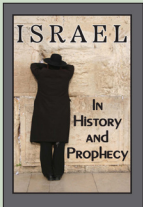
*Surrender thyself to His working,
The curve and the hollow He wills,
Nor shrink from the pain and the pressure
For the vessel He fashions, He fills.*

—Selected

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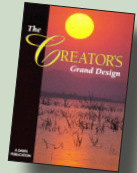


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To us the Scriptures clearly teach . . .

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

