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Finding Peace-Bro. Jerome Gruhn, France

IN Psalms 107:29-31 we read:

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. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his
goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

In Matthew 8:24-27 we also read about a calming of a storm:

And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that
the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his
disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we
perish. And he saith unto them. Why are ye fearful, O ye of little
faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there
was a great calm.

This psalm and the Matthew 8 citation prophetically express the
experiences of the Church of Christ during the Gospel Age. It is
characterized by great distress because God in his infinite wisdom
has permitted sin to cause storms and difficulties in life. But the
great Redeemer, whom God has chosen as a great Liberator,
supplies calm and peace in due time.

During this age when the Church is being selected, life's trials and
difficulties have been precious to help her develop faith, hope, and
patience, and to prepare her for her future work of restoring
humanity, as well as the privileges and glorious honor as the Bride
of Christ.

As far as the world is concerned, the great storm represents wars,
invasions, calamities, injustices, revolutions, discontent which are
the fruits of selfishness, hate, jealousy, and pride. Giant nations
have pilfered the small, enriching themselves at the expense of the
weak. The works of the great adversary the devil have
disseminated their poison and provoked all these uprisings. In vain
does humanity seek peace.

The increase of knowledge has been kindled in men regarding
pride in themselves. This motivates them to claim their natural
rights. The prophecies declare that by reason of the increase of
knowledge a wide-spread, general discontent will culminate in a

revolution that encompasses the whole world, and in the overthrow of all law and order. Anarchy and distress among all classes will be the result. But in the midst of this confusion, the God of all heaven will establish his kingdom which will satisfy the longing of all the nations. Exhausted and discouraged by their own lack of success, mankind will joyfully embrace the authority of heaven. Man's extremity will become God's opportunity and the desire of all nations shall come, the kingdom of God in power and great glory. Haggai 2:7.

The Last Days

The holy scriptures tell us of the last days, the end of the present dispensation. In 2 Timothy 3:1-4 the Apostle Paul says:

In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

The prophet Daniel speaks of this present dispensation as a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. Daniel 12:1.

But in the midst of this trouble and tumult in the world, what should be the attitude of the consecrated, faithful people of God? Is it fear? Oh no! It is confidence in the Lord who has said, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. (John 14:27) In the midst of the tumult and dangers which encircle us we hear the voice of the Lord and we rejoice because his word strengthens us. The Apostle Paul says in Acts 14:22 that the true children of God must all suffer: We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And the Apostle Peter confirms this in 1 Peter 2:21: For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us.

So, dear brethren, in these troublous days, let us not erect a house of wood or stubble, but of gold, silver and precious stones upon the true foundation a house of truth and faithfulness to the Lord which can resist the fire of this great day and which yields a great recompense of reward.

We have confidence in the promises of the all-powerful Heavenly Father, and in his son, who has already given us an inner peace that no outside storm can disturb. What peace and serenity we have if only we accept the promise of God that all things work together for good to them that love God. (Romans 8:28) Hence blessed

experiences can result for us in this time of trouble and testing of life.

The Lord gives peace to his people in his own way. He speaks to us of peace and we hear his voice through his word and by the knowledge that he gives us through his precious promises. He assures us of his wisdom, love, protection, power, and of his devotion to his people. Certainly this assurance gives us peace and repose of heart in spite of our trials. God teaches us the meaning of present conditions, the great time of trouble, and the glorious result to follow.

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, says David prophetically of our time in Psalm 46.

From where does this confidence of the people of God come? From dwelling in the secret place of the Most High [represented by the Holy of the Tabernacle] and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty [shown in the Tabernacle type by the cloud by day and the column of fire by night]. (Psalms 91:1)

Furthermore David says prophetically in Psalms 25:14,15: The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant. Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.

Let us do as David and keep our eyes on the Lord. To those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High is given a clear knowledge of the divine plan, of its times and seasons, so that they may understand the necessity for and the method of discipline which God brings upon the world. Because, as David says in Psalms 29:4,5,

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. [vs. 1] Give unto the Lord glory and strength.

The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 12:14 counsels us to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Be at peace among yourselves. . . . Be patient toward all. (1 Thessalonians 5:13,14) If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. (Romans 12:18)

The Peace of God

The peace of God flows from the immense springs and reservoirs of his power and wisdom. The peace of God does not uniquely originate from this source because peace is a fruit of an inner goodness. God personifies all virtue and goodness, fullness of contentment and peace of heart because of a perfect moral conscience, just as he possesses all power and wisdom.

Thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created (Revelation 4:11) and Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man. (Ephesians 3:15,16)

God created man in his image, an intelligent creature with the same mental and moral faculties, So that he would maintain communion and family association with his children. The creator and his creation could thus find pleasure, happiness, and satisfaction both in communion and in a perfect family relationship.

Although sin brought about the fall of our first parents, the love of God for his creatures did not cease since it continued to be manifested in God's serious vigilance in the development of the principles of righteousness.

The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:8 that God is love; it reveals to us the joy and the goodness of the Heavenly Father at the things that are acceptable to him: the principles and laws of justice, as well as his delight in those who obey him. Perfect harmony and equity are attributes of the divine character which assure peace in every circumstance.

We read in Psalm 119:165, Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them, a verse that is So reassuring because the trials that come upon us are necessary for our instruction. The Apostle Paul says in Acts 14:22, We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

The peace of God has not been disturbed by opposition and discord among his creatures; it has been preserved through all time. The plans of God, constructed with care and absolute wisdom, required for their accomplishment long periods or ages. They will eventually culminate in the glorious appearance of an intelligent creature in his own image, established in righteousness and worthy of the divine gift, eternal life.

In the meantime, as God's plans developed, discord and division inserted themselves into his family through sin. But God foreknew this state of events. It constitutes one of the necessary stages in his plan culminating in glorious results and, in his eyes, is well worth the disorder, ruin, and destruction which he foresaw and which, in turn, compel him to carry out the harsh task of enforcing discipline.

His love must remain hidden during the time when divine justice, implacable and severe, must do its work. During more than 6000 years God has endured the opposition of sinners. His all-righteous authority has been rejected and defied, his character has been disfigured and made to appear unjust. Nonetheless, oh wondrous grace, his love has not failed, as already noted, because the word tells us in John 3:16, God So loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and that the peace of God might remain in the heart of the redeemed ones.

Can we ever understand what it might have cost the Heavenly Father to consent to sacrifice his beloved Son in whom he had placed all his confidence and affection? Jesus, from the very beginning of his earthly life, manifested an absolute obedience to the divine will, even when the way indicated was one of humiliation and sorrow. Our Lord Jesus manifested a great love for the Father, who patiently endured the slander with which men assailed his character. It was because of his love that Jesus agreed to carry out the great sacrifice of his life in order to glorify his Father, to make men see the goodness and kindness, the love and grace of God, and to lead them to love this God of mercy who, in order to free them from the slavery of sin, provided the necessary arrangement to assure their eternal salvation and peace.

The gift of divine love his only begotten son whom he sacrificed for the redemption of mankind certainly did cost him much, knowing in advance as he did the sufferings, humiliation, ignominy, and the death his son had to endure. Jesus also knew how to pay back his Father through his absolute obedience to do the divine will even though this entailed a way of humility and sorrow. The Heavenly Father knew all the sorrow of paternal love when our dear Lord said: O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matthew 26:39) And again, when he said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. (Matthew 26:38) Nevertheless the peace of God accompanied him even unto death.

During the seventh thousand-year period, our Lord will have the joyous privilege of bringing all creatures in heaven and earth to a knowledge of the glorious character of his Heavenly Father. The Father will then have the joy of seeing the success of his work, eternal peace and goodness for all humanity as all are united in the glorified Christ. (Ephesians 1:10)

On the last night of his earthly life, our Lord, with a heart overflowing with compassion and tenderness, poured out his last benediction upon his disciples. It was an inheritance of peace, a precious inheritance of inestimable value: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

This inheritance of peace was not just given to the early church. The entire church even to the end of the age has a part in this blessed inheritance, which is PEACE. The Lord, in his priestly prayer, expressed his thought regarding all the church when he said, Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. (John 17:20)

If we want to know the basis of this enduring peace and the security which it provides, permitting one to surmount the most terrible storms of life, let us follow the example of our Lord and the apostles. They had faith in the love, power, and wisdom of God. They knew and believed that God was all powerful to do what he had promised. And it was in the confidence of the promises of God that the disciples obtained peace. Because of their faith, they were able to endure peacefully the terrible trials in their lives. It is only by a firm and unshakable faith that the peace of God, and also of our Lord, dwells with his children.

This peace of God which the Lord has given to his disciples and to us after his death, is a precious heritage, a serenity of the soul, a calm, a presence of spirit, an assurance and complete confidence in God in difficult times and in trials. The peace which the Lord has given to his disciples comes from God and is an expression of our rest in God by faith.

Lack of confidence, ignorance of the character and plan of God for our benefit, as well as God's promises prevent us from having peace, rest in God, and security, and the adversary will not fail to sow doubt in our hearts. Can we doubt divine protection? We read in Matthew 10:30, The very hairs of your head are all numbered and that he feeds the fowls of the air (Matthew 6:26)!

The peace of God which dwelt in the heart of the Lord in spite of all his trials, persecutions, contempt, and finally his death, was sustained by his faith in his father, and in his promises of a resurrection and glory. The perfect knowledge that Jesus had of his Father was the solid foundation of his faith in the purposes of God on behalf of the church and the world. It was that which assured him of peace, and this peace gave him confidence and helped him surmount all obstacles and triumph even over death.

It was by trusting in the promises of God that the disciples obtained peace. Their faith was rooted firmly in Jesus Christ. Even if they were frightened and afraid and had abandoned their Master after his arrest, they knew nonetheless that the all-powerful God would do what he promised, that his plan of righteousness and mercy would not fail to be accomplished. As a matter of fact, at Pentecost they were greatly rewarded by the peace that their Master had given them: Peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you. This blessed peace came from the assurance that they were recognized by God as his children, heirs and joint heirs with Christ, So long as they walked in the footsteps of their redeemer.

These words are directed also at us, at all those who have placed their will on the alter of sacrifice, who by the grace of God have become children of God. Only the children of God are justified by faith, are considered as righteous and as the church of the first-born. Our justification, represented by the wedding garment given to us through the merit of our Lord who accepts us, signifies our joining the family of God. The Apostle Paul states in Romans 5:1,

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace.

The child of God should then have a sense of security which the peace of God gives. If God be for us, who can be against us? says the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:31.

The prophet Isaiah also promised peace in chapter 26, verse 3 (Is 26:3): Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever.

So the peace of God which surpasseth all human understanding is thus assuredly granted to us if we but remain in the family of God. It should not be astonishing that we feel secure. God has promised us his peace and rest if we but submit our will to his. Let us do So with joy and we will have the peace of God that only he can give,

through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and by his word of truth.

What is the secret of this peace? We read in John 14:1, Believe in God, believe also in me, said the Lord to the disciples. These words tell us that what God has promised, he is able to accomplish. The truth is the shield of our faith. Let us then never lose the anchor of faith So that we do not give an opportunity to the adversary to profit from our weakness and destroy our courage.

As a father has compassion on his children, the Lord has compassion on those who fear him because he knows of what we are formed. He knows that we are but dust. As the prophet has said, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee. (Isaiah 26:3) The Lord told his disciples, The Father himself loveth you (John 16:27) and David said, Delight thyself also in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart (Psalms 37:4), especially peace even in the midst of trials and troubles.

The love of the Heavenly Father for the new creature is far superior to any feeling parents might have for their children. He oversees the proper development of their character and of the fruits of the spirit: gentleness, patience, joy, faith, love, and above all, peace. God has a fatherly love for all his intelligent creation.

This peace of God is like a sentinel who watches our heart So that all hostile, distressing, or fear-filled thoughts are stopped. In John 16:33 the Lord warned his disciples that they would be dispersed and would have tribulations in the world. He said, These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace.

This promised peace is not for the world because the world cannot appreciate it. This peace is for those who, with the Lord and our Heavenly Father, work to accomplish the plans of God. They may have to follow a difficult way in the midst of storms. And So it is for all those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. But as they walk through storms, this peace dwells in them, as Jesus said [Joh 16:33], In the world ye shall have tribulation but you will have my peace.

The prophet Isaiah spoke in exalted terms of those who do the work of the Lord to accomplish God's plan:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of

good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God Reigneth! isa 52:7

This beautiful prophecy is addressed to the last members of the church to us because it could not be publicized before the second presence of our Lord. It is the message of the presence of the Lord to his people. It is thus specially for those who live during the second presence of the King, the only ones who can say to Zion: Thy God reigneth!

The World Lacks Peace

The world searches in vain for peace. The prophet Isaiah tells us why the world does not find peace: There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the Wicked. isa 48:22

Selfishness, greed for money, the influence of the adversary, and deliberate ignorance of divine laws have caused the lack of peace in the world. The diverse religions have not been able to secure righteousness and avoid wars. On the contrary, how many bloody wars have been fought in the name of Christ and, recently, in the name of Allah but without his consent. Certainly there is a remedy: recognize God's supreme right to direct our lives according to the laws of righteousness and love; hence, return to God.

God is all-knowing, being the creator of all things. He knows that humanity was going to tear itself to pieces in hate. This is why he provided a remedy: he opened the way of salvation by giving his son. He has opened a unique way of peace and happiness in his plan for the restitution of all things by redemption through Jesus Christ. The everlasting one is able to keep all in his power because the entire universe accomplishes his will without incident. From his power and wisdom spring forth a profound peace, serenity, and goodness without end. Psalms 46:1,2 tells us:

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.

The call to repentance by the Apostle Peter during his discourse at Pentecost, which we find in Acts 3:19-21, is still applicable:

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord: and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before

was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.

Today we say, the heaven HAD received him until the times of restitution of all things because the Lord is present. Let us rejoice because he is at work, as we read in Revelation 11:17,18:

We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And [as a consequence] the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come.

Do we see the nations angry? Yet, this day of vengeance of God is also the day of judging the nations. To do this God has anointed his king in Zion, his holy mount (spiritual ruling). He will break them with a rod of iron, and the nations will be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel as Psalms 2:9 tells us. This time of distress has as its objective the destruction of the present evil world. Thus it can not bring peace to the world.

But the time will arrive where the divine promise of the restitution of all things spoken of in Acts 3:19-21 will be realized, when the King of kings will replace the disorder, confusion, and inability of humanity to establish peace, by his powerful reign of righteousness; humanity will learn to love and appreciate God's ways, goodness, and love in the example of divine love, as shown by the Heavenly Father in the giving of his only begotten son to redeem humanity from sin and death. This will be an age of peace, happiness, and everlasting life for all who will obey the divine laws of the kingdom and submit themselves with joy to those laws, So that they may be benefitted by this marvellous, blessed grace. Thus the divine promises of peace will be fulfilled.

When the nations will no longer learn war, as expressed by the prophet Micah in chapter 4, verses 1 to 3 (Micah 4:1-3), then there will be peace.

But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. . . . For the law shall go forth of Zion [spiritual government, the glorified Christ], and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem [the princes' seat of government, the ancient worthies]. . . . Nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. . . . For the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

So then at the time determined by God, peace will come to the world, because he promised peace on earth by the angelic choir at Bethlehem. This peace will be guaranteed by the Prince of Peace proclaimed by Isaiah in chapter 9, verse 5 (Is 9:5). And we read in chapter 11 (Is 11:2) that the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. (Is 11:5) And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Dear brethren, how appropriate a consolation the Apostle Paul gives us in Philippians 4:7 where he says: And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

In conclusion, let me exhort you with these words: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one Body.col 1:2; 3:15.

Amen.

Retrospective Wisdom-Bro. Donald J. Holliday, England

O LORD, THAT I MIGHT view my present walk, each test, each trial, each concept of thy Truth against the glory of that perfect day. O that with retrospective wisdom blest I could retrace each step, remold each thought, with noon-day vision of my Father's face.

The wisdom of retrospect is the ability to look back and trace the pattern of the Lord's leading in life, to view the past with the advantage of a mind no longer limited to the immediate present, a mind that has gained by experience, the process of trial, and has seen the end of the Lord.

Whatever stage along the way we may have reached today, we may each look back and review our personal walk thus far and ask, Where am I? What have I become? How ready am I for the perfect day? And with this calm assessment let us note the path that led to the present state. Perhaps already we detect in past experience rough or smooth some concept of objective not then seen, a Master Mind at work and capable of using circumstance, creating situation, in relentless pursuit of that great purpose with which he first took hold upon my life. In doing this we well may

realize some lesson glaring to us now, but at the time not seen. Perhaps what then we missed we now with retrospective wisdom may still use to his delight; what then seemed loss may yet be seen as gain if thus in me at last he finds designed response.

Revising hard at school, examination day in sight, we skimmed the pages of our work-book day-by-day, noting our Teacher's comments. Those things once a mystery to our minds at last take shape, and now we see the reason for low marks and understand why the Teacher wrote: Point missed . . . Try harder . . . See me after school. With such intense reflection do we gain the confidence to enter that final test on which it seemed our future would depend.

So in the Christian way we realize that unless it reach the inward parts, Truth has failed its purpose, missed its goal. Each day the lesson set was to this end: not what we know, but who we know, how intimately twined his way with mine.

Before the church began her course she gained a text-book full of vivid pictures from a previous age. She could look back a thousand years and a half, and could begin again where countless others failed armed with the lessons written in their lives. She could observe their course and gain by adding to her own the vast experience of ten thousand more. These things were all typed out for us, Paul said, on whom the ends of ages come. Stark warnings these, spelled out in human blood, to which we must take heed. But many, oh So many, heeded not.

Today the church has reached the hour of final test. Another age has passed of nearly two thousand years. Were any people any age before So well equipped in lessons from all history past? What retrospective wisdom now assists the humblest saint to make his calling sure! For looking back through time we can survey the scene throughout its course from Pentecost until this final hour of gathering home. The Patmos messages of Jesus fell on ears made dull. The patient waiting for the Lord had given way to restless seeking of a seen immediate object of desire and worship. Again a calf was made of gold, apostasy arose, bearing poor likeness to the things divine, yet proclaiming over this man-made effigy that name of a covenant God. The people of the covenant sinned and fell by thousands and ten thousands at the very tent-doors of the Joshua and Caleb of this Christian age. These were the few of which the Master spoke, that find the gate So strait, and walk the narrow way, the footprints of a Lamb, with different spirit to the host that use the name of God and yet deny the power.

Yet greater still our privilege at this hour, for now behind us is the harvest work of more than a hundred years. At this late hour we can look back and note the harvest tests, the entrance of the sickle, bundling of tares, the heat of harvest days, the waiting of the wheat now severed from this earth, yet still not gathered home. Does he delay? Like snow in harvest comes the test, and even at this stage still many fall prey to doubt, not of their Lord, but of their proper grasping of his Word. The evening breezes of the harvest field still test the faith of those who wait.

Cyrus as a Type

Yet what a vantage point is ours at this latest hour. For, near the close of harvest, patterns now are seen which could not be discerned in earlier days. Those times of Brother Russell's precious ministry to saints, who then could know how closely paralleled in time those years would be, that century and more that followed the coming of Cyrus, His Anointed, His Messiah, type of Christ's return. Cyrus, whose very name foretold the rising of another sun, dawn of a better day: the long-drawn period of Babylon's decline, the slow interminable course of Israel's rise again. Those many lessons typed So long ago were for these corresponding years in which one age is closed and another age emerges, these days in which we live.

Although Messiah had come, long years would pass. The test of time and waiting still remained. Then, at the very time marked out in Esther's day, a sinister hand would once again attempt to wipe out God's elect, both natural and spiritual seed, Jews and saints. In Europe Jews were coaxed to enter the gas chambers unsuspecting of their fate. Saints began to flee for their spiritual lives when Jezebel once more pursued and used the very channel of such blessing of the past. What troublous days indeed, and yet accompanying the very signs of their Messiah's works.

The threefold message of the Lord, So meaningful to them that century after Cyrus came, relates with even greater force to the needs of saints today. Haggai means Feast of the Lord from a Hebrew root implying dancing and delight. How well described that feast of Truth, the joy of early harvest days, and to what end? That his people turn from feathering their earthly nest, pursuing earthly things, to center all upon that sanctuary of God. Like David in Psalm 132, they should not rest until they had prepared with all their might a place full worthy of his name, where he would be at home. While Zechariah remembered of the Lord encouraged vision

of faith surmounting earthly trial, and though So little progress could be seen in those long days awaiting still more tangible signs of hope achieved, yet should they never lose their vision of a present Lord abiding with his people there in the lowly vale of myrtle trees.

Malachi brought the Lord's last word, the final messenger of the age. The test of time and waiting would reveal in our time as in those last days, such need for diligence sustained, the keeping of the heart entirely his. The passing years may dull the edge of sense once sharpened to perceive and love his perfect Will, and yet persist in outward forms of godliness. It may resent, like Peter hurt by repeated questioning of the Lord, Do you indeed love me above all else? and in amazement ask, Wherein did I fall short? Such are the lessons for this latest hour, directed to our hearts by heaven's love that we might as a bride in full adornment wait that final knock to hear upon the door that says, I have come to take you to myself.

Though these days need bring searching of our inmost thoughts that we might share that joy of saints now raised above, the Lord knows well our need of courage too, and confidence well founded on his love and his abiding faithfulness. He sends his Ezra to our aid, his Nehemiah too, to meet our every need. For Ezra's name means Help and Nehemiah Comfort of the Lord. This help and comfort from above will lead us on those last steps of the way. A light of truth he has sent forth, revealing divine desire So sacred to our hearts, to bring us to his holy hill, while every day of life his goodness and his steadfast love still follow in our wake. As Jacob's face was turned at last towards his home, we read that angels met him on his way. (Genesis 32:1) So at this special moment of all time as saints are gathered one by one, they know they are surrounded by a love So great. Many hands reach out to help and to sustain and keep from stumbling those who have found that closeness of Shaddai, and share with Jesus that special place near to the Father's heart.

With the passing of time we now can see these giant patterns in the history of God's dealings with those emerging from a Babylon doomed, then in the days of Cyrus, now in the days of Christ. Two mighty signs emerge to establish our faith on solid rock. For though So long a time each process takes the going down of Babylon and the rising up of Israel neither takes place before Cyrus appears, neither takes place today before the second coming of the Lord. These are sure signs indeed that he has come. We see him in his work, the works of a present Messiah.

The Signs Validating Moses

Other witnesses arise to add their testimony to this truth So full of meaning to his saints today. In Exodus 4:1 Moses receives instructions from God concerning his return to the people of Israel in Egypt. This is his second advent! He had been rejected by his own people at the first, and during the intervening years since his departure had won the affections of his bride. Now he returns at God's command to deliver. But behold, he says to the Lord, they will not believe me. They would fail to recognize the presence of God's appointed deliverer. So God gave three signs that it might be known that the divinely ordained deliverer had come: the rod, the leprous hand, and the water that turned to blood.

The more we think about these signs the more remarkably suggestive they appear of the signs that mark the presence of the Lord today. They confirm to our hearts that the greater Moses is here and that the count-down to deliverance has begun. Time now allows the briefest consideration only of subjects on which much has been written.

Sign number one: Exodus 4:4. Moses had fled before a fearsome serpent hissing at his feet. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand and take it by the tail . . . and it became a rod in his hand. What does that suggest to the mind? The Serpent is the devil. Moses flees before it. Jesus first, then his people down through the age, suffer under the Satanic power of darkness. Revelation 12 speaks of the conflict between the dragon and the woman and her seed. The same Greek word for dragon in that passage is used again in the Septuagint Greek scriptures in Exodus 7:9,10 for this very same serpent of Moses. A fearsome symbol of Satan, yet Moses put forth his hand, caught it by the tail, and paralyzed that serpent until it becomes stiff and helpless as a rod in his hand. And in that rod God had given to him a symbol of his great authority as the typical arm of Jehovah. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (Rotherham):

Whom the Lord . . . will . . . paralyze with the forthshining of his power.

We will return to this sign later.

Sign number two: Exodus 4:7. The leprous hand of Moses is restored. Behold it was turned again as his own flesh. That expression turned again permeates the Old Testament. Repeatedly it is used for the turning, the repentance, recovery, and restoration

of Israel to the Lord. They are the work of his hand. (Isaiah 64:8) They are the natural seed that the Lord will use to bless the families of the earth when he opens his hand and satisfies the desires of every living thing. They will perform the work of his hand, but this instrument of the Lord's blessing has not been worthy to show forth his praise. The hand has been leprous, full of sin. (Isaiah 1:4-6) Isaiah describes their sorry state, a sickness that cannot be cured by human remedy. For So long has Israel lamented in the words of Psalms 74:9-11,

We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even the right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom.

The vineyard which thy right hand hath planted and the branch which thou makest strong for thyself [that is, for thy use], it is burned with fire, it is cut down, they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man [son of dust] whom thou makest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee. Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Psalms 80:15-19

That hand which was made abhorred and useless by sin is to be restored as his flesh. It is to be cleansed, animated by his spirit, made responsive to his great mind, and performer of his work as epitomized by that perfect servant of Isaiah. Jesus himself was the very prototype of what Israel yet will be.

Brethren, the sign of the commencement of this process is evidence, infallible proof, of the presence and work of the deliverer. Let us review these two signs. First the taking by the tail of Satan and the beginning of the work of paralyzing that great system of Antichrist, Satan's masterpiece of deception, Babylon the great. Second the commencement of the restorative process of Israel, first to their land, then to their Lord, that will ultimately result in their readiness to be used of the Lord for his kingdom work.

As we have seen, neither process could be accomplished before the advent of Christ, but both processes were demonstrated in the days of Cyrus to occupy many decades. The collapse of Babylon was not the work of a moment. Even after the coming of Cyrus, Babylon remained a religious center of much of the area it

dominated. It also remained the center of trade by reason of its position in the world. But its temporal power was gone. No longer could it appoint governors and kings in any part of its once wide empire. Those days were past never to return. Israel's restoration too after the 70 years in Babylon was a preview of the equally drawn out and eventful sequence of our day. Both processes are taking place. That fact cannot be denied. Both are the works of Messiah. They are signs So big that it would be difficult to conceive greater. Neither process (Babylon's decline nor Israel's rise) could commence before the approach of Cyrus then, or the coming of Christ at this end of the age. We commend all Bible students to carefully compare the century and a quarter history of events following the coming of Cyrus with those since 1874.

Those years were full of hazards and disappointments as well as those brighter moments of rejoicing. The same was true in principle in the days of Moses, though events were more consolidated. Things did not go smoothly for Israel at either period. There was a moment when Moses cried out to God, Why hast Thou sent me? It seemed then that the only result of his coming was greater fury on the part of the oppressor. Those new-born hopes of Israel that were to mark each typical period of her deliverer's presence were to be dashed and shaken, her groans increase. Jewish tears were to be shed even in the days of the presence of her deliverer.

What of that third sign of Moses, the pouring out of water which turned to blood upon the soil of Egypt? In Exodus 4:9 the Lord said to Moses that if they fail to recognize the meaning of the other two witnesses, this could be the third. Has there indeed been a third sign, a witness as unmistakable as the going down of Babylon and the rising up of Israel, and which particularly marks our day?

Water represents life and also truth. Why then when it is poured upon the ground does death result? Blood represents death when spilled on the ground. We believe that water represents here as elsewhere the living truth of God's Word. The ground of Egypt is the territory of Pharaoh, representing the domain of Satan, the ground of his lies and deceptions. This then is the effect of the pouring out of the water of truth upon the territory of error and ground of lies. The pouring out of truth spells destruction, death, to darkness and error. To fully appreciate the force of this sign we would need to study closely the history of the 19th century.

In retrospect we now can see the preparations taking place during that 75-year period between the running out of the 1260 years and

that of the 1335 years leading to the blessedness foretold. First the Bible societies, then the clarifying of the meaning of Bible languages and the growing interest in Bible matters. In 1800 one in every 14 of the population of the USA professed a Christian belief. By 1850 it was claimed to be one in three. The way was prepared for the great King of the sunrising to open the sluice-gates for the flood of truth that was to pour forth during the last quarter century and beyond.

The effects of that truth flood we all have come to know: Gladness of heart for the truth-hungry. But that which was a savour of life unto life for the Lord's people proved to be the savour of death unto death for the very ground of Satan's errors: the deathless soul, hell-fire, the second person of the trinity who could only pretend to die for sins because he was God, the lost hope for the world. For these and other errors the sweet waters of truth were to be a savour of death unto death. The waters turned to blood upon the ground of Egypt. It did the same for Egypt's rivers and springs. It was to be the Master's last supper with his people on earth, a feast indeed, enriched by the bringing out of the storehouse spiritual treasures new and old, beautifully prefigured in those chapters of precious sharing, John 13 to 17. And as he blessed those heaven-provided truths to our hearts, did they not burn within and were not the eyes of his loved ones opened to his presence, though now invisible to natural sight?

Three great signs, So immense, So incontrovertible. We have not followed cunningly devised fables concerning the parousia of the Lord for we are eye-witnesses of his majesty. These signs are for his people that they may know that THIS IS HE that was to come, their Master, Lord, and Deliverer.

Additional Evidence

Now with retrospective wisdom we can look back on those early harvest days and ask, Were we deceived? Has the passage of time disproved or has it vindicated those early convictions? The answer comes with resounding clarity and force: We were not deceived. Since the days of Brother Russell far greater confirmations have arisen than anything he was privileged to witness in his earthly course. Particularly has this been true with regard to Israel. There are Jews in Israel today who know that what they are witnessing taking place around them and before their eyes are the works of their Messiah. Because they cannot see him, they are puzzled. They speak of the days since 1948 as the Messianic Era! They

know, as many Jews before them, that these works of restoration are the works of Messiah at his coming.

This was a great concern in the minds of the disciples when Jesus was about to leave them. He was Messiah, yet he was going without fulfilling his appointed role of restoring the kingdom to Israel. How could he do that? Later Peter had the task of telling his fellow countrymen that their Messiah had come and that he had also gone again. Immediately he knew he had to explain how this could be without the work of Messiah So long awaited. How could this be that he had not fulfilled Messiah's role? So Peter explains that heaven must receive him UNTIL the time was due for the restoration work to proceed. It takes only a moment's serious thought to realize that whatever other aspects of Messiah's restoration work may be eventually entailed, it was this, the restoring of Israel, that was uppermost in mind both for Peter and his audience. This would be the sign that he was no longer retained in heaven. The great until has been reached as every phase of Israel's restoration proves beyond all doubt. The other aspects of blessing are also mentioned in Isaiah 49:6, but this came first, that he should restore the desolations of Israel.

We are now living in a most wonderful time of that restoration process thus far. The Jewish year from the end of 1944-45 was to witness an outstanding turning point in the experiences of the Jewish people. The precise moment had arrived for them to leave the wilderness state and to infiltrate the land of promise. The wandering, suffering Jew became a fighting Jew, fighting for his land. Within So short a time there then emerged the sovereign State of Israel. That turning point just happened to be 30 years after the expiration of the Gentile Times in the Jewish year 1914-15. Another 45 years was to see a time of blessedness for Israel. So unexpectedly and dramatically it came, the answer to the prayers of Jews of So many years, as throughout Europe and other places too the gates were opened, restrictions lifted, for Jews to return to their land by the thousands. Even during the Gulf war the flow continued unabated. The story we know; it is still taking place. Yet So suddenly and unexpectedly it began just 45 years from that notable year of 1944-45. The year commencing at the autumn of 1989 had arrived. We are now just in a position to look back and notice with the wisdom of retrospect what we could not have guessed before the event, that Israel too was to have an eventful extension of a 1290 and 1335 years just as the spiritual seed before her following 1799.AD marked no particularly outstanding event but rather a point of time during the process of Papacy's development, in a similar way a point 1260 years before 1914 of

significance to Jewish history (i.e. 654 AD) was a point in the midst of the development of Islam, the Jews' great enemy, between the coming of the prophet and the building of the mosque upon the temple site.

Made Perfect Through Sufferings-Bro. Ioan Hosu, Romania

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. 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

I'M VERY GLAD I am here with you and that God has arranged this blessed time for us from many countries to meet together with those who lovingly carry on their shoulders the precious message of the faith once delivered unto the saints. We were dreaming and even had a conviction that such a time had to come, but only in the restitution of all things about which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets. We previously were like Elijah, feeling that we were alone. But thanks be to God that he has reserved to himself more than 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

My dear brethren, since I am for the first time at a convention of this kind, I am especially moved. When thinking about my Romanian brethren's invitation to serve here, a thought persists in my mind like that of Moses: O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send, (Exodus 4:13) or as Jeremiah said, Ah, Lord God! behold I cannot speak: for I am a child. (Jeremiah 1:6) But the Apostle Paul's words have strengthened me: For the strength [of God] is made perfect in weakness, and when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Corinthians 12:9,10)

Yet from ancient times since God began to work with fallen and sinful man through mediators, He has used His own methods that are unknown to men. At one time when trying to follow the philosophy of the plan of redemption and to know the mind of God concerning some things, the Apostle Paul exclaimed: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)

God and the Patriarchs

We see in God's dealing with the patriarchs how God worked with His servant Jacob. Even from his youth Jacob valued the blessing and profited from an occasion to buy it when his brother Esau sold it easily. Though he really became the owner of God's blessing, Jacob was obliged to leave the country and his father's house empty-handed and to live for a time as a foreigner in Mesopotamia. When he became son-in-law to Laban, he was deceived in both marriage and in the changing of his wages.

Why did God permit these things? Although Jacob passed through all these difficult situations, the Father permitted further humiliations. The meeting with his brother Esau shook him tremendously when he heard of his rage and that he had 400 armed men. Although Jacob knew God was caring for him as communicated through a dream and through angels, nevertheless this hard trial made him cry out in prayer and say:

O . . . Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred and I will deal well with thee, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan and now I am become two bands. Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau. Genesis 32:9-11

As he meets his brother Esau, he humbles himself and bows seven times to the ground together with his wives, children, and servants. He calls himself his brother's servant although he had received the right of the firstborn and the blessing.

That was not the end of Jacob's trial. He had to be separated from his dear wife Rachel. When it seemed that his life began to be more peaceful, another wave of trouble came over him to jolt him once again. The disappearance of Joseph, the terrible famine, the departure of Benjamin to Egypt these all spiritually crushed Jacob and embittered his existence. So when he arrived in Egypt, he told Pharaoh: Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been. (Genesis 47:9) Even though his life was often very rough, nothing could stain his character. Nothing could make him bend beneath the burden of trials. From the love for Jehovah his God, the God of his parents Abraham and Isaac, he heroically suffered any trial that came upon him.

And who has not shuddered at the life full of testings of the irreproachable Job? In a single day he lost all his flocks and all his children. Few among us could endure more or even as much as Job

suffered. These bitter sufferings and physical dehumanization made his friends abandon him. Even his wife misunderstood and said unto him: Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. (Job 2:9) In all this Job did not sin with his lips. It is as though we hear him saying: The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. (Job 1:21)

The Apostle Paul writing to the Hebrews about faith in chapter 11 leaves us an authentic testimony about those who through the ages have walked by faith, seeking a better country:

Through faith . . . [they] stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire. Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. Hebrews 11:33,34,36-39

The ancient worthies of the Old Testament had few models of faithfulness before them, but in the midst of harsh experiences they nevertheless had their eyes fixed on the reward. Based on divine promises they hoped there would come a time when the head of the serpent would be crushed and all the families of the earth would be blessed. In this spirit our Lord Jesus spoke about Abraham: He saw my day and was glad. (John 8:56) Strictly speaking, Abram saw this day only by the eye of faith.

Although these champions of faith from past centuries held up the standard of their God and defied the world order of the rebellious, nevertheless they could not put even a drop of oil on the wounds of the one who fell on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho. The righteousness of God had to be seen. Thus the great Michael appeared on the world scene, he who was perfect, blameless, on whose shoulders God had placed the whole burden of mankind. With the cross on his shoulders he climbed the *via dolorosa* or road of pain. He signed with his own blood the final act of the ransom and became the secure hope for all mankind.

God and Christians

The prophet Isaiah speaks about our Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 53 verses 3-5 (Is 53:3-5) saying he was like one despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: he

was So despised that we hid our faces from him and we esteemed him not. Nevertheless he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrow: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Verse 10 says that it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.

This was exactly what John the Baptist, who came to prepare his path, cried in the wilderness of Judea: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 3:2) Jesus began his mission on earth with the same words: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:17) Calling unto him all who labor and are heavy laden and inviting them to take his yoke upon them, Jesus promised them rest unto their souls. He addressed the disciples with these words: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. (Matthew 16:24) He in fact was calling his disciples to join him in preaching the messianic kingdom and establishing the solid foundation of the great edifice of peace and righteousness.

On the way to Jerusalem when Jesus talked about his death and resurrection, some of his disciples asked for the first place in that kingdom. Ye know not what ye ask, said Jesus unto them. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? (Matthew 20:22) The disciples said they could, and truly we see later how they fortified themselves So strongly in this faith that when Stephen was stoned, he was full of the Holy Spirit and fell asleep like his master with these words on his lips: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. (Acts 7:60)

Peter in a prison guarded by soldiers slept quietly although Herod had killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. He knew he was next. Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, cast into prison, and with their feet held fast in the stocks, prayed at midnight and sang praises unto God. Surely, my dear brethren, people who know not God see such things and consider it insanity. According to human wisdom Jesus wasted his life senselessly. They said he had a devil.

The apostles and their followers were a mystery for the world because they gave up their personal ambitions and worldly interests to preach the forgiveness of sin through the Lord Jesus. Paul left a high position. So did others. This was So mysterious for some that they said, Paul thou art beside thyself; much learning

doth make thee mad. (Acts 26:24) But the apostles and all their followers throughout the age were not affected by the world's considerations. They were glad every time they were able to suffer for the holy cause of our heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul writes to the Romans in Romans 8:18, For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. And he adds in Romans 8:28, We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Dear brethren, although we live in a transition time when the kingdoms of this world are dissolving and the kingdom of the great Emmanuel is on the ascendant, nevertheless on this sea of glass mixed with fire, we must use all the intelligence and wisdom that we have received So that we can stand firmly in this evil day. The assurances given by the psalmist comfort us: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved . . . the Lord of hosts is with us. (Psalms 46:5-7) The prophet Isaiah speaking about this same time says in chapter 24 beginning at verse 17:

Fear and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the Earth. isa 24:17-21

The prophet Zephaniah speaking about this great time of trouble says that even the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. (Zeph 1:14) It is the Apostle Peter who asks if the righteous scarcely be saved (1 Peter 4:18) and if all these things will happen, what manner of persons ought we to be? (2 Peter 3:11)

The words of our Lord Jesus tell us that there shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be; the mobilizing forces of the adversary shall try to deceive even the very elect. This attempt by Satan does not sow seeds of doubt within us nor do we tremble in the face of our enemy. On the contrary, we put on the whole armor of God to neutralize any burning arrow aimed against us. We don't fight

against creatures but, as righteous Elihu said, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. (Job 33:6) Our fight is against the leaders, against the kings, against the masters of the darkness of this age, against the spirits of wickedness in heavenly places. The weapons of our warfare, says the Apostle Paul, are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Satan, the chief general of the army of sin, is very skillful, sly, and capable of great surprises. We don't have to fight directly with him but with his disastrous influence. If Michael, the protector of God's children, were not on our side, our fight against this Cherubim would be doomed to failure. But thanks be to God that both in the small as well as in the great fights, His help is guaranteed for us. In this fight we are assured that even the hairs of our head are numbered. We have received the assurance of faith: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5) Even if a mother should forget her sucking child, by no means shall I forget you. (Isaiah 49:15) All these assurances fill our hearts with trust. We look with joy upon Zion, the city of our solemnities. (Isaiah 33:20)

Living in the day of battle, brethren, we are not allowed to fight or recognize another flag other than that of Christ and his word. This is our protection against all enemies.

Even though God promised us help to overcome does not mean we have won the fight. For this war the prophet says we need counsel and strength. (Isaiah 36:5) Moments of grief, trouble, and fiery trials will be permitted by the heavenly Father for discipline and to balance our character.

So as the Father found it proper to make our Lord Jesus Christ perfect through sufferings although he was perfect as a human being "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10) so also his joint heirs must be prepared to partake of the same cup. Our Father will permit trials and testings such as He permitted for His son in the Garden of Gethsemane. Our place is always near the Man of Sorrows in the Garden of the Winepresses. There we will better understand why God did not listen to him when he prayed that, if possible, that cup would pass from him. The Apostle Paul also prayed three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed, but God did not remove it. Later Paul consents to God's refusal with joy.

The saints through the age have passed through testings and trials to be made perfect through sufferings like their Lord, to become monuments of divine mercy at the appropriate time. Every believer, looking back, will praise the way So full of thorns on which the captain of their salvation has lead them to the triumph of victory.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Revelation 21:4

Having these exceeding great and precious promises, let us every day make important steps and considerable progress toward the great goal which is Christ the Lord. As far as the life we must live in the flesh is concerned, let us live it moderately, righteously, and piously, waiting for our blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and saviour Jesus Christ.

We should have a continuous and burning desire for understanding more and more of that wonderful light that shines from the face of Jesus in unchanging greatness. Every step in this light means growth in gifts and in knowledge. In the life of every Christian comes a time to mature, to mature in knowledge and appreciation of God's will. This is the condition that God asks of us, to become mature men in Christ and entrust all our spiritual interests to the Lord.

As we try fervently every day to live on the holy mountains, we will benefit from the inner peace and quiet soul God gives only to those who are completely devoted to Him, who enjoy life from this sanctuary. An ineffable happiness can be seen on their faces. These can say with the prophet Habakkuk,

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk 3:17,18

Brethren, this must be our state at this time. On the road to Zion we must not stop singing the song of Moses and the Lamb in spite of whatever restrictions the enemy imposes. There have always been agents who have discouraged those who were looking for a better homeland, but in truth God has always raised a faithful Joshua or a

fearless Caleb who through their testimonies fortifies our character in the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Brethren, no matter how much time may be accorded to us, we should not fall into the extremity of thinking that all the works of God are finished, that we do not need to do anything, that our fight is of little importance. Surely we as wise students who long for a better country desire to know where we are on the stream of time. Therefore when we finish our earthly course, we ask the Watchman, What of the night? And then the Watchman answers, The morning cometh, and also the night.

We have heard that some of God's arrangements are fulfilled. But don't think that there are gaps in the plan of God nor that when God finishes His work He allows the world to continue its course. Not at all! The plain fact that we are here now means that God is fulfilling some aspects of His plan through us. It is a fact that we are being used as messengers of the Good News for the whole human race. Those who understand this holy mission, who have a piety for God's will, will be the first who will be blessed in the kingdom of Emmanuel.

Therefore under present conditions it remains for us to follow the advice of the Apostle Paul: Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. (Hebrews 3:1) Let us keep communion with our Lord and with each other, meditating upon the words of Brother Russell that the only link that unites the children of God together is the bond of love based on two fundamental rules: faith in the ransom sacrifice and a full consecration to do the will of God.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8

Like true soldiers of Christ who understand the value of our calling and the mission we are to fulfil under this royal banner, we fight with honesty and devotion in the front line of battle. Let us consume and be consumed in this righteous cause, for there is nothing more dear today on this earth than to be a hero for God and to work for the triumph of the King of Kings. We will neither murmur nor repine at what the Lord's providence may permit, because faith can firmly trust him come what may.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. My admonition to all is this:

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Philippians 4:1

Amen.

Able Ministers-Bro. David Hrechuk, Canada

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST, it is with joy that we address you today and are able to be with you in convention in Poitiers, France. I bring you the warm Christian love of your brethren in Canada.

We have chosen for our theme text 2 Corinthians 3:6 which reads, Who also hath made us ABLE MINISTERS of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

From our studies, we know that the testament referred to here is the New Covenant. We recall the scripture pertaining to the Memorial of our Lord's death in Matthew 26:28, For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins. These, our Lord's words, referred to his blood and the blood of those who would participate in his cup which would be used for the sealing the New Covenant.

In the time allotted today, we would like to examine three major points in understanding how we are able ministers of the New Covenant: (1) A comparison of the ministration of the Old and New Law Covenants; (2) An examination of the importance in the fact that blood is used to seal the covenants; (3) An analysis of what it means to be able ministers in a practical sense looking at both the present and future aspects.

The Ministration of Death

Let us turn to 2 Corinthians 3:6 and read to verse 9. Note what the Apostle Paul said about the Law Covenant.

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament [or covenant] not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth,

but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death [the Law Covenant], written and engraved in stones, was glorious, So that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

We notice that the Law Covenant was referred to as the ministration of death or of condemnation, which it was to the Jews. No matter how hard they tried to keep the law, they could not. It was not because there was something wrong with the Law, but with the people. They were imperfect, but being unaware of this, they were trying to keep a perfect law, which is impossible. However, the Apostle Paul said that the ministration of that law, through Moses, upon tablets of stone, was glorious. And indeed it was. First, if fulfilled, it offered the prize of eternal earthly life. And even though Israel's efforts to keep the Law were imperfect, it was sufficient to typically justify them. But the ministration of that Law Covenant had something lacking, at least in respect to ministering it to an imperfect race.

How was the Law Covenant Ministered?

We remember from the type that the typical Law Covenant was ratified or sealed by Moses its mediator with the blood of bulls and goats. We read in Hebrews 9:18-22,

Whereupon neither the first testament [or covenant it is the same Greek word] was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book [type of the Law], and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

It is important to notice here that not only was the agreement of the people required in establishing the covenant (as we read in Ex. 24:7 where they said All that the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient), but blood was also necessary to seal, ratify, or make obligatory the covenant with the people. God required the sealing of the covenant with blood to make it binding upon the nation of Israel as well as being intended as a type. In addition, the

sprinkling of the blood upon the altar represented the satisfaction of God's justice. The sprinkling of blood upon the people brought the obligation of keeping the covenant upon them, as well as typically cleansing them from sympathy with evil and thus indicating their harmony with the law.

So in brief, this is how the Law Covenant was inaugurated and sealed. Moses was required as its mediator because this covenant was conditional IF Israel would keep the Law perfectly, THEN they would have the blessing of eternal life on earth unlike the Abrahamic Covenant which was unconditional and therefore did not require a mediator. The ministration of the Law Covenant was called glorious by the Apostle Paul in that the law was of God and is perfect, and that partial obedience to the law elevated the nation to typical justification. However, this typical standing had to be renewed by the annual Day of Atonement sacrifices. But, as the Apostle Paul states in Hebrews 10:4, It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. What was needed were better sacrifices that could actually cleanse and purify the people so that they would be in a position to keep the law perfectly. These better sacrifices are used in the sealing of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is necessary because the old Law Covenant failed to bring the desired objective: life to the nation of Israel.

The Ministration of the New Covenant

Having reviewed some features of the ministration of the Law Covenant between God and Israel, let us now look at the ministration of the New Covenant. The New Covenant arrangements will be able to bring life to the world because its ministration is better than the Law Covenant. Within that ministration, we can identify a few constituent parts.

First of all, with Jesus as its mediator, it is superior to the mediatorship of Moses. Jesus, our Head, is the one, and the only one, who can stand uncondemned before God's righteous law. He is a faithful High Priest who is able to sympathize with the problems plaguing the sin-sick human race. Jesus will associate with him in this work his tried and faithful bride.

The New Covenant will be superior in that it is built upon better sacrifices. The Apostle Paul says in Hebrews 9:23 that it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these [referring to the sacrifices of the Law Covenant blood of bulls and goats], but the heavenly things

themselves with better sacrifices than these. Jesus' sacrifice is the chief sacrifice upon which there could be any hope for life under any arrangement or covenant. But note that Paul is mentioning better sacrifices (plural), which indicates to us that by God's arrangement, besides Jesus' sacrifice, the sacrifices of the Church are also included in the inauguration of the New Covenant. We will expand upon this thought in a few moments.

The New Covenant is also better than the Law Covenant in that it is established upon better promises. In Hebrews 8:6 we read, But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also is he the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

To the fleshly house of Israel, the promises were all earthly while those to the spiritual house are all heavenly. The earthly promises were nonetheless great and glorious but those to spiritual Israel are even greater and more glorious. Under the Law Covenant any individual who could keep the law perfectly would have been granted life as a reward. Those who are being prepared to make up that Great Mediator give up the earthly promises for the better promises of glory, honor, and immortality. (Romans 2:7) And, under the New Covenant, all the willing and obedient will come under restitution So that they will actually be able to reap the reward of everlasting life upon the earth. In this way also is the New better than the Old. So we see that in these three ways at least better mediator, better sacrifices, and better promises the New Covenant is superior to the Law Covenant.

Better Sacrifices Give Life

Why is the New Covenant arrangement able to give life to Israel and the world while the Law Covenant failed in this regard? It is able to do So because it is built upon better sacrifices, sacrifices which not only typically justify the people, but have the power to actually justify people and cancel sin.

As we mentioned a few moments ago, the chief sacrifice is that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus. By voluntarily giving up his life as that great ransom sacrifice, the hope of deliverance from the penalty of sin, Adamic death, has become a reality. It was the blood of Christ, poured out for the world of mankind, which secures all of the promises for life in the scriptures. There is power in his blood, which effects much more than the blood of bulls and goats. In Colossians 1:14 we read, In whom we have redemption [deliverance] through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus has paid the ransom price in the sight of God's justice, and that now faith in his blood can justify us in God's sight. Everywhere throughout the scriptures this power of justification on the part of our redeemer is attributed to his sacrifice on our behalf. Various scriptures more or less distinctly speak of our being washed or cleansed or purified from sin. All of these scriptures point to the thought that the cleansing power is the blood of Christ the merit of our Lord's sacrifice. (See 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Peter 2:22; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19.) Thus we see from these scriptures that Jesus' blood truly is precious because it can take away sin. This is the foundation of the sealing of the New Covenant.

Jesus' ransom sacrifice enables the other sacrifices of the better sacrifices of Hebrews 9:23 to count in the sealing of the New Covenant. We noticed that there was more than one sacrifice which was used to inaugurate the Law Covenant. This was shown to us in Heb. 9:19 where Moses took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and the people. Since our Lord is represented as the bullock (or calf), then we see that the Church is represented in the goats. We see this beautiful (and astounding) feature of God's arrangement, that we have been invited to share with our Lord in the blood which seals the New Covenant. What a wonderful thought!

In our Memorial studies, we have carefully considered the import of sharing in the Lord's cup. It indicates that we are willing to share with our Lord in his baptism of death, that we are willing to undergo the shame, the ignominy, the suffering, and the reproaches for Jesus' sake. But the additional meaning is that all those who share in drinking of the Lord's cup also share in the sealing of the New Covenant. In Reprint page 4320 Brother Russell writes:

Only by thus sharing with our Lord, drinking his cup, being baptized into his baptism of death, surrendering all into his hand, can we have fellowship with him in his sufferings; and his death (including ours) seals the New Covenant in his blood, of which he said, Drink ye all of it. In his cup we are partakers, joint-sacrifiers. (1 Corinthians 10:16) We see that our only opportunity for gaining the great prize of the high calling is in connection with the sealing of a New Covenant between God and Israel. How beautifully the features of the Divine program balance. Their loss was our gain, and our gain through sacrifice will eventually become their gain; and altogether the Lord will be glorified.

How are we Able Ministers?

A question that might be asked is Has the New Covenant begun, or [if not] how can we be ministers of the New Covenant?

The New Covenant cannot begin until the death of the testator or the one who has made this good-will offering to Israel. Let us look at Hebrews 9:15-17,

And for this cause he [Jesus] is the mediator of the new testament [or covenant], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

From this testimony of the Apostle Paul we learn that the New Covenant cannot go into effect until the testator is dead. The testator as we have seen is not only Jesus, for the same Apostle Paul told us in verse 23 of Hebrews chapter 9 that there were to be better sacrifices which tells us that the Church is included as well. Since the Church also is counted in with Jesus' blood to seal the New Covenant, and since the Church, the body of Christ, is not yet complete, then we can say that the testator is not yet dead, and therefore the New Covenant has not yet gone into effect.

Then how can we be servants of the New Covenant if it is not yet in operation? We quote from Reprint 4332:

We are ministers of the New Covenant in that we are laying down our lives in its service, in its interest, although it is not yet a covenant, but merely a promise. We are not only laying down our lives, but seeking our fellow-members of the Body of the Anointed One and assisting them in the laying down of their lives, under the assurance that these He hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption [deliverance] through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

We have now received the atonement, the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:11, which enables us to have a standing before our Heavenly Father. In this light, then, our only relationship to the New Covenant is that the Father drew us to Jesus and Jesus covered us with his robe of righteousness and thus made it possible for us to be called to joint-fellowship with himself in the better

sacrifices, participation in the cup of suffering and death. This cup is also the blood of the New Covenant for the sealing of the New Covenant for Israel under which all the families of the earth will get a blessing. We see that only by our Heavenly Father's good pleasure is Jesus now accepting the little flock as his members and counting their sacrifice or blood as part of his own.

One meaning then of being servants or ministers of the New Covenant is in yielding our earthly rights obtained by faith-justification and giving them back to the Lord. As we have obtained mercy through Israel's unbelief, the Apostle Paul tells us that through our mercy in giving up our reckoned earthly life rights, they also (Israel) may obtain mercy the opportunity for life under the New Covenant arrangements.

What a beautiful thought and inspiration this adds to our Memorial participation of dying daily with our Lord. The cup was symbolical and pointed forward to Jesus' own death and his blood which was to seal the New Covenant. Jesus offered the cup to his followers, symbolizing our privilege of participation with him in the sin offering, to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church, as the Apostle Paul told us in Colossians 1:24. So in our daily dying with our Lord let us remember that our efforts along this line will eventually be used to bless Israel and the world.

In what other ways are we Ministers of the New Covenant? Since the New Covenant has not yet gone into operation, we cannot help Israel nor the world to follow the letter of the Law and expect to see them progressing to actual human perfection. We can, however, be ministers of the covenant in telling them that the time for these blessings is near. Since we have an insight into the nature of these blessings, which, if we are faithful, we will assist in administering to Israel and the world. We can tell them of God's beautiful character and his just laws. We can also relate to them that obedience will be required of mankind to God's righteous laws which will bring about the desire of all nations.

In general our service now to the covenant is one of enlightenment and comfort. All those anointed of the Holy Spirit have the commission of service and of preaching the truths which have reached their ears and hearts.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,

and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn. (Isaiah 61:1,2)

Is this not our commission now? While we believe these words are directed in a primary sense now to Zion (the Church), in a secondary sense we are to comfort all that mourn. This we believe can also be seen as doing service to the New Covenant in that we are preparing them for the blessings to follow and hopefully helping them (the meek) to get in line with its spirit, because it will help them when actually under the New Covenant. We also see a special work to be done in this regard with the nation of Israel, also telling them of the blessings which God has in store for them under the New Covenant. This we read in Isaiah 40:1,2:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably [affectionately] to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Able Ministers (Future)

We have looked at some aspects of how we are able ministers now. But what of the future? How will we be ministers of the New Testament when it is inaugurated?

Let us look at what our Heavenly Father tells us through the prophet in Isaiah 49:8-10.

Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee [the Gospel age now is the accepted time (2 Corinthians 6:2)] and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee [Christ and the Church] for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Who is given for a covenant of the people? These words are directed to you and me, brethren, if we prove ourselves to be faithful unto death. The Christ, head and body, will form that great Mediator of the New Covenant, and have agreed to lay down their

earthly life rights in order that these life rights might be passed on to Israel and the world.

This will be our future work under the ministration of the New Covenant. The Apostle Paul said that the Law Covenant was glorious, but the New Covenant is to be much more glorious. And from this scripture alone, Isaiah 49:8-10, we can see why. Can you imagine calling to those in the prison-house of death and saying Go Forth, get up from the grave? Can you fathom leading the world of mankind up the highway of holiness by feeding them the truth and the various instructions and corrections which like leaves of a tree, shall be for the healing of the nations? Can you see yourself sympathizing with those whose hearts have been broken by the reign of sin and death and leading them and comforting them as they progress in the law under the New (Law) Covenant? This, we believe, will be the nature of the work of those ministering to the New Covenant when it is inaugurated. Those whose blood is used to seal this covenant drink from a cup of sorrow, suffering, shame, ostracism, and heartbreak. But it will soon turn to a cup of joy and blessing in the mediatorial phase of the kingdom!

Brother Russell sums up this work beautifully in R3109:

When the entire mediator shall be complete, the covenant will come into force, become effective to all the families of the earth, thus constituting the blessing mentioned in the covenant made with Abraham. The curse of the divine sentence will then end, and divine favor and power will be given the great mediator who shall then begin his great work of ruling and teaching mankind in righteousness and administering laws and regulations for their benefit, for their physical, social, mental and moral uplifting. The whole arrangement shall be in the hands of the mediator and his work of helping and restoring the race which he purchased with his blood shall progress throughout the Millennial age.

So these works of uplifting the nations and helping the world progress in obedience to the laws of the kingdom under the New (Law) Covenant, we believe constitute some of the future responsibilities and privileges of the able ministers of the New Covenant.

Conclusion

In closing our thoughts for today let us turn to 2 Corinthians 4:1,10,11 and the Apostle Paul's words of encouragement for the able ministers of the New Covenant. We read:

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not. Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

The whole creation has an interest in our sacrifices, brethren. They are groaning and travailing in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. For not until the death of all the members of the testator can the New Covenant go into effect with the nation of Israel. Let us look forward with anticipation to God's words in Jeremiah 31:31-34,

Behold the days come saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days [of the development of the Mediator], saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

We are thankful that the Lord has shown us mercy and grace to come into this arrangement whereby we can be Able Ministers of this New Covenant arrangement. We pray that we will come more and more in harmony with all of its features and arrangements. We pray that we may be faithful in our privilege of assisting our brethren in drinking of the cup So that the Church would soon be complete and the blood of the New Covenant may be applied to sealing the Covenant with our Lord and So that the blessings may begin to flow to mankind.

The Word of God-Bro. Dick Kindig, USA

GOOD EVENING. I am Brother Dick Kindig of Newark, Ohio, USA. I would like to thank the committee for their efforts to organize this convention, and a number of brethren who helped immeasurably in the effort to prepare this presentation.

We felt that the interests of the Harvest work could best be served if we made a series of short audio-visual presentations which could be adapted for use in your own witnessing efforts. And So the first three presentations you will see tonight are designed to be understandable to a public audience. My remarks, and the short audio-visual presentation at the end, are intended more directly for you brethren assembled here.

Someone once said that the last person to recognize his need of water is the fish! Surrounded by water and living in it, it never occurs to a fish until he is deprived of water, just how important water is to him. And So it is with us. The Word of God is our source of light, of food, of life itself.

Tonight, therefore, we hope to remind all of you fish of very basic things in the language of the Apostle Peter, though you already know them, and are established in the present Truth.

Creation by the Word of God

Imagine the universe, as it flashes into being. Outbursts of energy assault the blackness. Raging storms of light . . . they press the limits of infinity, and yet are obviously held in check by some unseen control.

Who among men can comprehend the power? Man, indeed, has finally learned how to destroy our fragile little world. But all the bombs that the human race has made, would only light one star for one millionth of a millionth of a second. A force of superior power is warming the earth with light.

If our soil is rich, it is because that power has worked for ages past. If our cities bustle with traffic, it is just another form of the energy that came to earth as sunlight, eons and eons ago.

While the stars can still be seen, observe them see the meaning of infinite power. And then focus a microscope, to learn the meaning of infinite wisdom. Molecules of matter particles tinier than dust yet organized as energy systems. They, too, obey unseen control. They can bond together, firm and rigid, or associate freely, in a fluid. They can bend, stretch, and shrink. They can form into

purest crystals, flawlessly guided by an inner plan. They can transmit the light of the stars . . . bend it into color. And, most amazing of all, these structures of inner space, can see the light from outer space . . . in that amazing organization of inanimate matter that we call, Life.

Consider the eye. The only transparent part of a living organism yet occurring in every one of the higher life forms. Living structures that can clearly transmit light like purest glass; adjustable lenses that can focus it; millions of nerve sensors that detect the difference between brightness and color; and a brain that can collect these impulses, discern patterns in them; gather information from them, react to them, remember them.

In five different classes of creatures sight occurs: mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and insects. In every case, a miracle of engineering, perfectly designed to meet the needs of that creature. To the great scientist, Isaac Newton, the eye was irrefutable proof that there is a God in heaven.

Except where man has destroyed the natural balance, we find that order prevails . . . we observe order within the workings of the tiniest cells; specialized activities, harmoniously carried out; communication with itself, and with the outside world.

Order and symmetry, abundant variety and superfluity, give evidence not only of practical response to an environment, but also of the work of a master designer. Strength . . . and delicacy . . . power . . . and mobility . . . speed . . . and grace . . . simplicity . . . and ostentation . . . camouflage . . . and grand display.

When we reflect on the variety and interdependency of life on earth, we see not merely a food chain, but a symphony of freedom, where every creation has its place, and the most important roles are played by the most insignificant participants.

What is the force that unleashed the raw, rebellious power of the universe, and yet imposed an order that controls even the stars? What is the power that transformed mud into granite, coal into diamonds, and ashes into life? The Word of God!

By the Word of God the heavens were made. God spoke, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast. By a word from the Almighty the mighty seas were gathered. By a word from the Almighty the mountains arose. By a command from God the

flowers produced seed. The birds carried it away, the islands gave it ground.

By a word from God a stony earth became the mother of a thousand forms, a million varieties of life. By the word of God, mankind was made in God's image. A voice that can whisper, and shout, and sing; a hand that can draw, and write, and build; a mind that can wonder, and search, and choose.

By the word of God, ordinary men were tapped by the finger of God. Men who walked with God, grew to become poets, or philosopher-kings, or simply, saints.

By the word of God, freedom is the law, disobedience is a thing that is permitted, and the judgments of God are difficult to trace. By the word of God, the path of righteousness, when it can be found at all, is not always met with pleasant rewards.

By the word of God, life for most people is a maze of shadows, where the darkest shades are felt in deeply personal ways. But by the word of God, the tragedies of this life will not be wasted. And the wisdom each man gains will not be lost forever. Even with its pain, life is always a blessing . . . and death, though sometimes a relief, is always the enemy.

When man first exploded an atomic bomb, its inventor repeated the ancient Sanskrit boast: I am become death, the destroyer of worlds. But God boasts of His creations. The universe he brought to pass through the power of His spoken word. And in His written Word, he tells us that He is not the God of the dead, but of the Living. He identifies himself as the one who created the earth. He assures us that He did not create the earth in vain. He formed it to be inhabited. He asks us, not to worship him in fear of destruction, but in thankfulness for creation. Because He, and He alone, has the power to create a galaxy, or a flower, simply by sending forth His word.

If we have questions, let us ask them. If we feel the pain of the human race, let us turn to God for answers. There is enough evidence of a God in heaven to justify our search: the stars can prove to us God's power. The miracle of life can teach us His wisdom. And the Word of God alone can show us His justice and His love.

Defining Our Terms

Before we proceed, let us define our terms. The Words of God are His spoken commands, uttered in the heavens. Rarely has the literal voice of God been heard among men.

The phrase, Word of God sometimes refers to the actual written message of the Bible, the inscriptions themselves. This is the case in some places in the New Testament where the Greek word *rhema* is used, such as 1 Peter 1:25.

But most of the time when the Bible uses the expression Word of God it is *Logos* the spirit that moved in the holy men of God as they wrote the Bible. It is the sacred truth they brought to us not merely the words, but also the significance behind them.

In this sense, the written Word of God is a living principle, an extension of God himself, that operates in the minds and hearts of those who approach God in sincerity and truth.

This is the force that Paul describes when he says that the Word of God is alive, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . able to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Word of God, as a principle, transforms us by the renewing of our minds. It shows us our sin and unworthiness of life apart from Christ. It shows us that fellowship with God is not achieved through self-examination, but by God's examination of us. In Thy Light, we see light. In the language of David in Psalms 139:23, God searches US. When His probing uncovers a need, we respond by looking at God's Word, and like a mirror it shows us precisely what we need to do. We don't look at ourselves, we look at the MIRROR God's word. It corrects us, instructs us in righteousness.

The Word of God is also a person: our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the plan, expression, intention, of God Himself. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, So that we can behold the glory of God. To Moses, God showed his back side. In Jesus, we are able to see God's face.

And finally, the Word of God is personified in the Church of God. It is spoken of as the epistle of Christ. The apostles wrote words, but Christ writes his message to the world in the hearts and lives of his followers.

Not many miles from here, the great humanist philosopher Voltaire inaugurated the Age of Reason. The modern world can thank Voltaire that we are free to express religious views without fear of

being burned at the stake. But Voltaire also vigorously attacked the Bible, laughing at the idea that it could be the Word of God. Crush the infamy was his cry.

While God allowed Voltaire to prevail against false religions, Voltaire's attempts to destroy the Word of God met with utter failure. The wrath of man will praise him. The remainder of wrath he will restrain. Within a few short years of Voltaire's death, Bible societies sprang up all over Europe and America. Some years later it was learned that the very room where these Bibles came to be stored had been the site where Voltaire issued his most famous tract attacking the Bible. The Word of God is always triumphant.

The Word of God Personified

There are many ancient books. What is so special about the Bible?

The Bible speaks in a straightforward way that has the stamp of truth. In its account of creation, the Bible passes by obvious opportunities to speculate, and describes with simple precision the order in which life appeared. The fossil record stands today as indisputable proof of the accuracy of the Bible account.

Like the people in a masterful novel, Bible characters come to life as we read. The complexity and good qualities of its bad men come through and the faults of even its most saintly people are honestly presented.

For the last century, scholars did not believe the Bible account of the destruction of Jericho. But recent discoveries reveal the complete destruction of ancient Jericho at the precise time that Bible chronology records. Even the Bible statement that one small portion of the wall escaped intact is verified by recent archeological evidence.

Higher critics once ridiculed Luke, the author of the book of Acts, as mistaken when he referred to the Philippian rulers as praetors. According to the experts, two duumvirs would have ruled that city. But recent archeological findings revealed that praetor was indeed the title they used.

The following passage in the Book of Luke, contains more than a dozen references that can be checked for accuracy against secular history:

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitus, and Lysanius was tetrarch of Abilene . . . Luke 3:1

Every one of these facts has been verified. This kind of historical accuracy led Sir William Ramsey, the Oxford professor who spent 15 years trying to refute the New Testament, to finally conclude, Luke is an historian of the first rank. [He] should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.

When critical scholars first began questioning the reliability of the Bible text itself, the oldest New Testament manuscripts were copies made almost a thousand years after the original was penned. But in the last hundred years, thousands of older manuscripts have been found. Two complete ancient copies date back to A.D. 325 and 350 less than 250 years after the original writing.

The oldest surviving copy of Homer's Iliad was made 500 years after the original was penned. Other surviving ancient texts, whose authenticity no one doubts, range from 500 to over 2000 years more recent than their ancient originals. But some recently-discovered copies of New Testament books date back to 125 A.D. just 25 years after the Bible was completed!

Only ten copies of Julius Caesar have survived from antiquity, seven copies of Plato, 49 copies of Aristotle. Among the major ancient books, the Iliad has by far the most numerous surviving manuscripts, with 643 except for the Bible, which has 24,000!

In addition, scholars have now documented 89,000 quotations of the New Testament by ancient writers. These quotations contain all but eleven verses of the New Testament!

The Old Testament is equally reliable. Higher Critics who questioned the accuracy of the Masoretic Text have had to accept the overwhelming evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Hebrew Bible was flawlessly preserved for two thousand years. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered since 1948, have verified every book of the old testament except Esther.

Though written by forty writers across 1500 years, the Word of God has one harmonious theme. Its subject matter ranges widely from history to law to poetry to visionary prophecy, to personal letters. But one golden thread unites the entire book: the process by

which a single creator-God plans to bring redemption and peace to the world of mankind.

One figure dominates the Bible from beginning to end: Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God. We read of Him in the first few pages of the Bible. The human race has been deceived. Paradise is lost. God's face has turned away from man. But God stirred their hopes with one clear promise: that an offspring of the woman would bruise the serpent's head.

We read of Jesus in the last few pages of the Bible. He is a King, reigning with his bride. He lays hold of the figurative serpent and destroys him so that the nations will no longer be deceived. Paradise is restored. God dwells with man, his face once again can be seen. The nations are healed, and death itself is destroyed. From Genesis to Revelation, Jesus Christ is the glue that binds all the pages of the Bible together.

Jesus, the Word Of God

The Word of God is so preoccupied with Jesus, the Son of God, that it shares its name with him. He is the Word of God personified.

The man who spoke of himself as the way, the truth, and the life, also said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And the writer of Hebrews made it clear that Jesus was the complete expression of God to man:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke to us by his servants the prophets, has in these latter times spoken to us by His son. Hebrews 1:1,2

Jesus is the Son of God, because he fulfilled hundreds of prophecies of the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God, because Jesus was raised from the dead and proved the Bible true. Let's look at what the Word of God said about the Messiah:

He would trace his genealogy to the tribe of Judah, and present himself to Israel as the Prince of Peace. (Genesis 49:10)

As Messiah, he would purge the temple which implies that he appeared before the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. (Malachi 3:1)

He would present himself to Israel 483 years after the command to restore and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and would die 3 years later. These chronological prophecies were fulfilled precisely on time. (Daniel 9:24)

He would be the Promised Seed of Abraham who would bless all the families of the Earth. (Genesis 12:13)

He would be the great Prophet of which Moses wrote. (Deuteronomy 18:15)

He would be the great King who, in the new world, would reign on David's throne. (Psalm 2)

He would be pierced. (Zechariah 12:10)

He would be crucified. (Psalm 22:14,17)

By being hung up on a tree, as despised as a dead snake, he would become the healing agent for the entire world. (Numbers 21:8,9)

The reliable history of the Word of God identifies Jesus of Nazareth as this promised Messiah. He traced his human life back to David, and yet was David's Lord. In fulfillment of scripture he was born in Bethlehem, fled to Egypt, and settled in Nazareth. Like Moses, he was led into the wilderness, and fasted 40 days before beginning his work.

When asked by John the Baptist's followers if he was truly the Messiah, he asked them to go tell John of the work he had done: heal the sick, feed the hungry, comfort the brokenhearted, give sight to the blind, preach the gospel to the poor, and raise the dead all of them works that the Word of God had predicted of the Messiah.

He strikingly fulfilled Bible references to the manna or bread from heaven, the sacrificial lamb, the veil of the temple, the high priest, the blood of atonement, the passover lamb.

He was born at the time of the day of atonement, died at the time of the passover, and was resurrected at the time of the offering of the first-fruits itself a picture of resurrection.

Yes, Jesus was the Word of God personified. As he stated repeatedly, he came to do the Father's will, as it was written in the scroll of the book.

By healing all who came to him, he demonstrated his title as Lord of the Sabbath Day the great future Day of the Lord that all Jews hoped for.

He is the Ransom, the savior of the world.

Just as the sin of one man became the cause of hereditary death for all So the righteousness of one man became the cause of a hereditary blessing the free gift that in due time will come to all men, justification to life.

Even while dying on the cross, Jesus disregarded his own pain, and focused his mind on fulfilling the will of God, as expressed in the Bible. He meditated on prophecies about his death, and the glory that would follow it.

He recited aloud the first and last verses of a well-known Psalm. True to Jesus' experience, the Psalm described the feelings of the crucified redeemer: his bones were out of joint, the proud and rebellious mocked him, the soldiers drew lots for his clothes. They pierced his hands and feet. Even his one mention of himself while on the cross was uttered, according to John, So that bystanders would recognize he was thirsty and fulfill the last remaining prophecy about his death: that in his thirst, he was given vinegar to drink.

As he breathed his last, he prayed yet again. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. Immediately, an earthquake shook the land, and the four-inch thick veil of the temple was torn in two.

The human Word of God had died, after fulfilling every detail of the written Word of God concerning him every detail, except one that God alone could now bring to pass: the resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead is held up as the central fact of the Bible. It is not enough to believe that Jesus was a great teacher. He TAUGHT that he was the son of God. He TAUGHT that he would be raised from the dead.

Five hundred eye witnesses saw him, not in a momentary vision, but repeatedly and in different circumstances, over a period of five weeks. They had time to cross-examine themselves, question what their senses were telling them. There were skeptical voices, and challenges to their reports. They had opportunities to touch, eat with, and converse with the resurrected Jesus. So convinced were

these eye-witnesses of the reality of the resurrection, that their transformed lives transformed the ancient world. And though they often faced a martyr's death, the eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection insisted to the end that Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God, lives again.

The only evidence for entire ancient races is often a few shards of pottery, a few fragments of bone. The identity of entire ancient dynasties is often found in a hieroglyph or a third-hand scrap of history.

By comparison, the evidence that Jesus lived, died on a cross, and was raised from the dead, is compelling, rational, and complete. Professor Thomas Arnold, professor and author of History of Rome, stated:

I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence than that . . . Christ died, and rose again from the dead.

Evidence to satisfy the human mind and hope to sustain the human heart: these are the treasures of The Word of God.

Where is the Word of God Today?

Let the little children alone for of such is the Kingdom of heaven.

In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go that I may prepare a place for you.

Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

If the Bible is the Word of God, where is it today? We read about the Love of God in the Bible, but where is the evidence of this love in the world? We read about the Justice of God, but where are His judgments among men? We are asked to believe in miracles because we read them in a book. Why doesn't God do some indisputable miracles, now, miracles on a scale that is worthy of Godlike the widespread curing of cancer or the delivery of millions of children from starvation?

If the Word of God is true, why is it not more active in the world, NOW?

We will try to show that the Word of God is VERY active in the world today. God is painfully aware of the suffering of all peoples, that though the world SEEMS out of control, the troubled events of today are the necessary steps toward the peace and worldwide happiness of tomorrow.

Let's start with miracles. 1900 years ago, at a time when legitimate miracles were common, the Word of God boldly predicted that special miracles would cease. (1 Corinthians 13:8) In fact, the only prophecies of future miracles given in the New Testament describe miracles that will be performed by false teachers. Repeatedly the true believers are warned to be suspicious of miracles done in the name of Christ. (Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:14; 16:14; 19:20)

There is not a single New Testament assurance that miracles, or special powers, would be an evidence that God is with believers. The only outward sign of authorization promised to believers is that they would find themselves learning how to love one another, and all men. And that this love would be so unusual as to attract attention. (1 Corinthians 13:13; John 13:35; 1 John 3:14) It is obvious that the number of people on earth who fit this description is just what Jesus predicted it would be: a little flock. (Luke 12:32)

The followers of Christ were told to preach the gospel all over the world as a witness to all nations. The terms of this command have been met. Faithful Christians have introduced the Bible to over 500 people-groups around the world.

But were Christians told to expect the masses to hear the Gospel and be converted? Not at all! Christ predicted that the good seed he sowed would be almost completely overrun with weeds. He wondered aloud whether, when he returned, he would find any true faith in the earth. He compared the days of his return to the days of Noah, when preaching righteousness had no effect, and the people of the world at that time KNEW NOT that a great change was at hand. Instead, they went on with their own business until suddenly, the flood came.

The foretold dominance of unbelief, and the predicted lack of trustworthy miracles today, are themselves proof of the Bible's reliability!

One reason why thoughtful skeptics assume that God is not active in the world, is that so many Christians keep on trying to win the world for Christ and keep failing. Today, there are more Avon or

Amway salesmen around the world than Christian missionaries!
Soap and makeup, we can sell salvation can hardly be given away.

Unbelievers find it either amusing or irritating to watch modern evangelists straining, and pleading to get a few converts all the time speaking as though these meager efforts are God's attempt to reach the unsaved before Christ comes. No wonder unbelievers are convinced that God is weak and uninvolved in human affairs!

The fact is, that though faithful Christians do preach, they should do so in dignified ways, and they should not expect to convert the world now. Bible prophecy predicts that in the next age, the entire earth will be converted.

In that day, it will not be necessary to say to your neighbor,
Trouble in the Church

The Word of God described the rise of large institutional churches on the ruins of the Roman Empire. It predicted that they would prosper for more than a thousand years. The near-total ban of the Bible during that time is clearly foretold. The return of the Bible to worldwide prominence was also predicted, along with the date when that rebirth would begin: 1799.

The word of God predicted that many who claimed to follow Christ would be more concerned with money and power than obedience to the simple teachings of the Gospel.

The word of God predicted that the weeds that infest God's church would be gathered into bundles and that though there would be many different denominations of Christianity, God's people would be individually known by Him spiritually one body, even if unknown to each other.

The word of God predicted that the hand of God would be especially heavy on those Christians who boast loudly that they are God's people, while failing to demonstrate the appropriate fruits.

And concerning the joining of churches into two great camps, the Word of God predicts that their practical union just before the end of their existence will be an uneasy alliance, motivated by self-preservation.

Gathering of the Nations

In ancient times, we read that God scattered the world. (Genesis 11:1-9) And for most of man's history they have remained scattered isolated from one another by differences of geography, custom, and speech. But the Word of God declares that God is determined to gather the nations in the last days. Are the nations being gathered?

The age-old expression, it's a small world, has new meaning today. It is now commonly said that we live in a global village. East is intertwined with West. The North cannot live without the South. China still has its wall, but it cannot avoid trading with the West. Japan is no longer an island. The deeds of African elephant and rhinoceros poachers are the subject of international conferences. Europeans will die to keep Asians from killing whales. The entire world sends observers to an election in tiny El Salvador, and watches with bated breath to see how people vote in South Africa or Pakistan.

The nations have been gathered. For what? For the nations to feel the heat of God's anger. Not that they will be literally destroyed because the Word of God also states that God did not create the earth in vain. He formed it to be inhabited. After social structures are consumed by the intense probing of a righteous God, the people, we are told, will all call on the Lord, to serve him with one consent.

The prophet Daniel predicted that the time just before the full establishment of Messiah's kingdom would be a great time of trouble. He described it as a time of much running to and fro when knowledge would be increased.

Modern man tends to be filled with pride at the many inventions of our day. Educated people seem to think that the explosive growth of knowledge and travel in this century points to some evolutionary advancement of mankind. But since the technical knowledge of the human race did not significantly change for thousands of years prior to 1800, we suggest that God should be given the credit for advances in modern technology.

The Vision Lives Outside the Church

The Bible describes in great detail the loss of power of the institutional churches which it criticizes for pragmatic cooperation with the kingdoms of this world. In the book of Revelation, this decline is signalled by a drying up of popular support.

And yet the Bible did not predict that the vision of a Golden Age would die. The vision of human potential burns brightly in the secular world.

God has opened the minds of man to the possibilities of human life. Two centuries ago, the masses of men were ground beneath the millstone of oppression. Today, most of them still are, but the full flower of human potential is now a vision before their eyes. People literally everywhere now aspire to the benefits that God created them to enjoy not just transistor radios and designer jeans(!)but beauty, health, opportunity, knowledge, happiness, with liberty and justice for all.

The vision is beautiful, but its contrast to the sad facts of human experience today make it destructive to present society.

Unless Those Days Were Shortened, No Flesh Would Survive

The Word of God boldly predicted that just before Christ takes control of human events, men will have it in their power to destroy the world. Imagine a writer whose only experience with weapons was spears and arrows, predicting that men would be literally able to destroy all flesh! And yet even this fantastic notion has been fulfilled in the frightful specter of overkill. But God gave us His word that this power will not be fully used. The earth will not be destroyed, either by men OR God.

The Word of God described a day when it will actually be possible for the entire earth to be conscious of a fact at the same time, a time when human knowledge will dramatically increase, when travel and stress will greatly accelerate.

And yet though this is predicted to be a time of knowledge and invention, it is spoken of as a time when darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people.

Yes, there is more darkness than light. In fact, the Word of God predicts that the era of Christ's second coming will be accompanied by the energetic working of Satan's spiritual enemies of God and His people who will be permitted to exercise all the power, and lies, and even miracles that they can muster, to deceive the world.

According to the Word of God, this increased conflict among competing spiritual forces is strong evidence that Christ himself is actively at work behind the scenes, breaking up Satan's empire,

and preparing to liberate mankind from the spirits that deceive them.

Avoid everything occult. Christ will not liberate you through spiritualism, theosophy, or the New Age teachings. Christ liberates today's believers through the repentance and conversion described in the Word of God; and he will liberate tomorrow's believers through the Kingdom of God, which he will establish throughout the earth.

Israel, the Harbinger of Hope

Perhaps the most striking fulfillments of the Word of God have been the many prophecies of the rebirth of Israel. The Word of God had repeatedly declared that His people, Israel, would be dispersed among all the nations, that they would lose their temple, and their priesthood, and their national identity. It predicted that they would have bitter experiences during this dispersion.

Notice: the Bible did not authorize anyone to persecute the Jews. In fact, it promises direct punishment from God for anyone who harms the Jews or even curses them. But the Bible predicted clearly that they would be harmed by the rest of the world scattered and in despair.

The Word of God predicted that the Jews would literally buy the land back. They have paying for their beloved land in cash, sweat, and blood.

The Word of God predicted that under cultivation by the Jews, the wastelands of Palestine would blossom once again. And it predicted that during the time of God's blessing to Israel, rainfall would increase. It has.

The Word of God predicted that Jerusalem would be a hotly-disputed territory. It is.

It predicted that the community of nations would become involved in that debate. It has.

It predicted that the reborn Israel would be a mighty military power. It is.

The Word of God predicted that Jews and Arabs would, after a stormy period, live together in peace. It hasn't happened yet, but the Word of God said it, and it will come true.

And the Word of God predicted that after that peace is reached, a future attempt by many nations to attack and destroy Israel will be the trigger that brings God forward to declare his sovereignty. Finally, the mystery will be over.

The temporary nighttime of earth will end. The morning will come. Worthy people of God, tested and proven to be honest, humble, and compassionate, will become the leaders of earth.

Heaven will show its face, and open its hands to bless. The Golden Age will have come, and there is not a person who has ever lived who will be beyond the reach of the Redeemer of the world.

Moses gave Israel a test by which they could evaluate a prophet. If what he said came true, you can have confidence that he speaks the Word of God.

The Bible passes that test. It is verified by fossil evidence, historic data, and prophecy fulfilled both in time and precise detail.

The final test is a personal one: does the Word of God deliver on its promise to bring spiritual transformation to the lives of those who seek?

That is its claim and anyone who feels the hand of God is invited to put it to the test. There need be no blindness in an act of faith, only a solid foundation the authority of the Word of God.

Applying the Word of God in Our Lives

We would now like to turn our attention to the Word of God in our own lives as brethren in Christ. As Bible Students, we have much to rejoice about. The Harvest Message has enriched our lives, and as the trouble in the earth increases, we can all have more and more appreciation for the Truth which we hold.

But we would like to suggest that it is not enough for us as footstep followers of Jesus to teach what the Bible says is true. To be fully in harmony with the Word of God, we must emphasize what the Bible emphasizes.

How can we tell what the Word of God emphasizes? By what it repeats often, by what it states clearly, by what it stresses with strong language.

Two quick examples: Paul seems to be using the strongest possible language when he states that even if he died a martyr's death, if he had not LOVE, he would be NOTHING. (1 Corinthians 13:8)

And in speaking of the Resurrection, Paul stated that he delivered to us AS OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE, that Christ died for our sins, and rose again. (1 Corinthians 15:3) These are examples of the ways in which the Word of God emphasizes some truths more than others.

The Word of God also draws contrasts and comparisons. Just as in the human body, every limb is controlled by opposing muscles which push and pull against each other, So it is in the Body of Christ, and So it is in the realm of ideas presented in the Word of God. The correct position can often only be found in the clash, or tension, of opposing views.

For example, we are taught in Hebrews 13:1 to have strong brotherly love. But in the next verse we are told to BALANCE this love among ourselves with active love toward strangers. The sense of the Greek text in these verses is that we should nurture brotherly love and affection Phila-delphia but balancing it with love of strangers: Phila-xeneas.

The Word of God is timeless, and fits all cultural situations. But we must be careful not to forget the historic context in which its principles are set.

For example, it was not really possible in New Testament times to ignore the brethren in our own vicinity, and forge instead relationships by telephone and travel with other, more like-minded friends. We suggest that we be very careful not to ignore the difficult relationship challenges that we find in our local ecclesias for the perhaps more agreeable, but more superficial relationships we can form at conventions. Travel may one day be restricted again. And we will need to master the art of loving one another in our local assemblies.

Let us consider some of the teachings of the Word of God that directly impact our relationships with each other.

In Ephesians 4:3 we are taught to keep, or preserve the unity of the body. We do this not by merely avoiding conflict the Word of God does not hold up tranquility as the goal, but rather by pursuing the Biblical peace in the sense of completeness common cause

hammering out of differences, continual mutual work, dedication, and submission.

And So the Word of God is full of advice about how to act in a community of brethren. We are taught to love one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, submit to one another, admonish one another, serve one another.

Let's consider one of the most under appreciated virtues on this short list: prayer. Daily Bible study, accompanied by prayer, is essential for walking with God. No one should be attempting to serve God without daily attention to prayer and thoughtful study of God's word. Even Jesus, who had perfect powers of recall and a full, unlimited measure of the Holy Spirit, did not go without prayer for a single day as far as we know. He would lose sleep rather than miss out on his times of fellowship with the Heavenly Father.

Active prayer, based on our standing with God as justified believers, is the best way to resolve differences with employees, or bosses, or wives, or family members, or brethren.

There has never been a great man of God who was not a man of prayer: Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, Peter, Paul, John and Jesus.

The Word of God records the things that great men of God have prayed for:

That a specific believer's faith not fail. John 13

That we might be successful in correcting the shortcomings in the faith of others. 1 Thessalonians 5:12

That God would forgive the sins of others against us. Matthew 5

For personal wisdom. James 1

That God would forgive our own newly-recognized sins. Matthew 6

That God would indicate his choice for us in the outworking of duties he has given us to do.

We also find, when examining the prayers of great men of God, that they often included four elements: Adoration of God,

Confession of sins, Thanksgiving for His blessings, and last of all, Supplication or requests for blessings to ourselves and especially others.

Another area of importance is submission to one another. In 1 Peter 5:5, we are taught that the younger should submit to the elder. Then Peter makes it a two-way street by saying, yes, and all of us should submit to each other.

Paul adds further insight by telling us that our submission to the leadership of others in the Church should be proportional to the actual work they do in Christ, and the fruitfulness it seems to have borne.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul discusses the works that we are able to perform because we are justified in Christ. He notes the impact these habitual actions have on our characters and describes the impact of this fruitage on our future reward. Therefore, actual deeds are a barometer of spiritual strength, and are to be respected by the brethren. In 1 Corinthians 16:16 he urges submission to those who are committed to service of the saints. In 1 Timothy 5:17 he puts study and teaching high on the list of valuable services. In Hebrews 13:17 he urges us to obey our spiritual leaders and try to avoid making their task unpleasant. Yet in 2 Corinthians 3:1 he makes it clear that positions of leadership do not flow from a name, elected office, or a letter of commendation, but from the reality of a life of service. Lack of an official office is no excuse for lack of service to the brotherhood. And in 2 Corinthians 10:13-17 Paul sets down the principle that our work that we do for the Lord and His people is the measure of our influence. He speaks of a measure or sphere of spiritual authority, and directly links it to the actual success he has enjoyed in the Lord's service.

Mutual submission is, of course, not the only virtue laid down for us in our relationships with each other. We cannot read the New Testament accounts without being impressed with how vigorously the apostles argued their points with each other, and with worldly influences on the Church.

In Colossians 3:14-16, Paul prefaces his command that we teach and admonish each other with several requirements: that the Word of Christ dwell inside of us richly; that we have bowels of mercies deep-seated, emotional feelings for each other; that we practice forbearing one another, or overlooking as much as we can of each other's imperfections; that we show forgiveness to one another in

the same way that Christ forgave us; that we love one another; that we cultivate peace not only in our individual hearts, but also in our collective one body; and that thankfulness pervade our relationships.

Having said all of that, Paul then tells us to teach and admonish each other which we take to mean that we should communicate with each other truthfully and honestly about how we should live and act. And Paul recommends a positive, joyous tone in the admonishing an atmosphere seasoned with spiritual music and the spirit of grace.

Finally, Paul states in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 that we should know those who labor among us and admonish us. Perhaps that suggests that there could be those among us who are performing a service of labor and admonishing who have not been recognized by the Church. Perhaps it means that we should pay attention to what our leaders tell us, even when it is unpleasant. At any rate, we are admonished to overcome our negative reactions to being corrected, and recognize that those who perform this service to us are paying a price. Those who labor among us and admonish us should be highly esteemed.

Because the body will have lots of communication if it is healthy, the Word of God speaks much about forgiving one another. The necessity for much forgiveness implies that there will be many offences. Don't be surprised by your brethren's sins. Don't piously put down our brethren by talking about how at this stage of the Church we can expect lots of the Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things (as the new heavens and new earth), be diligent that ye may be found of Him IN PEACE. 2Pe 3:14

Who May Abide? -Bro. Daniel Krawczyk, Poland

BELOVED BRETHREN IN our Savior Jesus Christ. The subject I desire to share with you brethren I have entitled, Who may abide?

Our God through the prophet Malachi 3:1-3 foretells the second coming of Jesus, to whom he was to come, and the consequences of his coming. He will come to his church as king, not as one who needs to suffer and die as a ransom sacrifice because this was accomplished at his first coming. Now he comes to rule.

However, before assuming world-wide control, he came to those who desired him greatly. He came to those who are ready for his coming and desire to leave this earth to join him. But who may

abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? Only that person to whom Christ is life, and to die is gain, as Paul writes.

Is Christ the main and most important goal in my life? If he is, then the refiner's fire will do no harm but will help purify my character. The Apostle Peter writes in his first letter, 1 Peter 4:12,13:

Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad with exceeding joy.

The intention of a refiner of metals is to separate all impurities from the precious metal. The intention of our Lord is that we cleanse ourselves from all impurities. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:1: Having therefore these promises . . . let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit. This is a fight with the desires of our flesh which is for the development of the new creature.

We can not allow jealousy, greed, suspicion toward others or slander to enter our minds and hearts. This is a constant work of purifying ourselves. And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver. This fire of experiences is not only for warmth, but to cleanse all our impurities So our Lord can see his reflection, his likeness.

The sons of Levi represent the household of faith: gold is the Church, silver is the Great Company. Both classes must be tried and tested before entering the royal palace.

The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Psalms 45:13-15

Being glorious within means to have pure feelings, a pure heart and a pure conscience before God and man. It is visible on the outside through a garment embroidered with gold. It is embroidered with a golden thread of personal communion with God and the brethren. This communion with God is formed through fellowship with all the brothers and sisters.

Breaking our communion with the brethren is breaking communion with God or breaking the golden thread for the embroidery of the garment. We could pretend to be great among the brethren, win their trust, respect, and popularity, but lose the communion with God and, because of that, not be able to abide.

Who shall abide? Only the godly, meaning those who lead their everyday life according to God's will. Psalm 1 tells us:

Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Who are the ungodly, sinners and scornful? The Bible says that they will not abide.

The ungodly are those who found God, found the gate difficult, entered through it to the narrow way and therefore made a covenant of sacrifice with God. They were spirit begotten, but they neglect their covenant falling into a state of self-complacency and failing to do the will of God daily.

The sinners are those who do not reject their covenant, do not deny the Lord who bought them. But they fall away from God's grace because they neglect to live according to the requirements of that covenant. They are sinning against the covenant which they made and are neglecting self-sacrifice. This is a result of loving comfort and pleasures, and excessive anxiousness for the present life.

The slanderers are also those who have a degree of knowledge of holy things, but take it lightly and at times scorn the truly consecrated.

When [refining] experiences come, none of those will abide. As David writes in Psalm 91:7, They shall fall at thy side . . . and at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. What do we need to do today to withstand the trial and not fall, but to abide? What does it mean to abide?

Some think that to abide is to live through Armageddon and enter into God's kingdom still alive. Our desire is to be ready in our character and for the Lord to take us with him. He promised I will come again, and receive you unto myself. (John 14:3)

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. Luke 21:34-36

The prophet Isaiah 57:1 writes: The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. Let each one of us examine our own reflection in the mirror of God's word in which the fruits of the spirit have been developing, and which requires further development.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Gal 5:22

Is my love the ripened fruit toward God, the brethren, and enemies? Thou shalt love God above all. Beloved do we realize what kind of love that is? Jesus said, Who would love their father, mother, wife or children more than me is not worthy of me. He was the one who loved his mother so much that he asked John to take care of her.

In this greatest love toward God no one can interfere. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:35) None of these things, only myself, my prejudice toward a brother or sister or a class separates. Then it seems that it is others who are at fault, not me, and that the love of the brethren has cooled. But I do not recognize this coolness in myself. This means that I have not withstood the trial and cannot abide.

Joy Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. (Philippians 4:4) Do I rejoice always? Do I rejoice the more and longer that I am in the truth?

Peace or spiritual balance. Blessed are the peacemakers. What did I do to promote peace in the family or in the class? Wherever the child of God goes, peace should accompany him.

Longsuffering endurance, bearing of sufferings, peaceful waiting, understanding and mildness. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. (Romans 15:1) Are we able to bear others? Does our patience continue to grow?

Gentleness a constant desire to do good unto all even the unbelievers and unthankful. For He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. (Luke 6:35)

Goodness no more tendencies or desires for evil, doing good to whomever he can, harming no one.

Faith complete trust in God, a living faith supported by acts of love every day toward God and one's neighbors. Can I trust God even when I can't understand Him?

Meekness gentleness, peace, silence, quietness, modesty, slow to anger. The meek are eager to learn something. Blessed are the meek, said Jesus and he proved this with his life. When they falsely accused him, he did not defend himself. But when they defiled the temple, he defended the House of God. We also should defend the truth, but not by ourselves nor defend ourselves. David writes in Psalms 25:9, The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Temperance self-control, restraint. What should we restrain ourselves from?

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1Pe 2:11,12

Who shall abide? Only the one whose fruits grow and ripen. Every man's work shall be made manifest. (1 Corinthians 3:13)

Elijah and Elisha

The last experiences are shown in Elijah and John the Baptist. The final end of the road of Elijah and Elisha, described in 2 Kings chapter 2, points to the final journey of the Church and Great Company. God sends Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel, to Jericho by the Jordan. In each of these places they expected Elijah to be taken. In none of these places was Elijah taken, and from these various places dates were established concerning the gathering of the

Church, and mistakes were made. The Lord directed them to continue further.

Elijah and Elisha both stopped by the Jordan and had a conversation. Elijah took off his mantel, rolled it up, and smote the waters of Jordan. Then the waters separated and both men continued beyond the Jordan while they were speaking. Suddenly a chariot of fire separated them and carried Elijah away in a whirlwind. Elijah was taken but Elisha remained.

What lessons could be drawn from this for us? We are not allowed to make the divisions between who will be of the Church and who will be of the Great Company. Only a difficult experience (fiery chariot) will separate both classes while taking the Elijah class.

A question arises: Where are the antitypical Elijah and Elisha on the stream of time today? I believe they have crossed the Jordan and are walking further while conversing. The rolling of the mantle means the gathering of the truths in one harmonious picture. The truths were rediscovered through many reformers, but completely harmonized through that Faithful Servant. These truths smote the waters of Jordan. Then the people, the nations, were divided into two camps nominal Christendom and the atheistic world.

Some believe that those two camps represent East and West or church and state. However, it doesn't matter how one explains this division. The fact remains that the division took place. Then Elijah and Elisha (true believers) were unnoticed as they walked through the divided waters. Those two walls of water looked at each other and saw danger in each other.

Today we see these waters uniting together: Christianity and atheists, the church with the state, the East and the West (a united Europe). If we see these waters uniting together, then it means that Elijah and Elisha have passed Jordan and are walking and talking together. What should we expect in the near future? The fiery chariot and the whirlwind in which the church will be taken. This is not a reason to fear, but to be alert So the chariot does not pass us by, because only the one who will abide will be taken, and it is our desire to leave this place and be united with the Lord.

Only then the Great Company will awaken saying, The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. (Jeremiah 8:20) At that time they will double their zeal, and they will make up for their carelessness. They will cleanse their garments during the time

of trouble and will not perish forever, but will serve before God's throne night and day and in his temple. (Revelation 7:15)

John the Baptist through the scheming of Herodotus was beheaded, and the last members of the Church could also have similar experiences. In the Manna comment of August 11 we read:

We are to anticipate a second attack on the true church (not upon the nominal system), and this may mean, as in the case of John the Baptist, a second and a seemingly complete victory of the Babylonish woman and her paramour, the world, over the faithful members of the body of Christ in the flesh. We shall certainly not be surprised if the matter So result; but this and all things must work together for good to those who love the Lord. We must all die to win our heavenly prizes beyond the veil. The Elijah class this side of the veil must and will be vanquished, but the apparent defeat only hastens the Kingdom glories.

The fire of this day of tribulation will destroy everything except the true values which Jesus encouraged in the gospel of Matthew 6:19-21,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

What is most precious to me? Where do I most dedicate my consecrated time? If I truly want to abide, I have to find the precious pearl. How much does it cost? Everything I possess.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matthew 13:45,46

Taking advantage of the reward of the heavenly calling will cost us everything we own. Less will not be accepted by God. More we cannot give because we do not have it. In our consecration, we have to do everything that is possible and the rest will be added by our great leader, Jesus Christ, from his worthiness. So who shall abide? In 2 Peter 3:9 it is written:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Come to repentance means to turn away from evil, do good, change our thoughts from earthly to spiritual or heavenly. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:13)

What does it mean to live after the flesh? To submit to whim or to fancies or pleasures. We have different responsibilities to our body as a tabernacle in which the new creation is developing. It depends, however, about what we care more about, our flesh or spirit.

Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Peter asked Jesus. (Matthew 19:27-29) Jesus answered: When the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Why do they deserve to sit with the Lord? Because they left everything and followed the Lord.

If we retain something for ourselves (not offering it to the Lord), then we will only pretend that we are following the Lord, and the Lord will not accept us and God will not beget us as new creatures. Either we serve God from our whole hearts and follow the Lamb wherever he goes, or we don't serve Him at all. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. It is not possible to serve God and mammon.

The ties of marital, family love are wonderful, but we have to be able to evaluate everything. One student, when he was planning his future, planned it this way: First, complete college with good grades. Then, find a good job. Next, marry the best, richest, and most beautiful woman. Raise children, gain financial security for old age, and many other goals. There were 50 in all. His 51st goal was: Now I will serve God.

Such were the plans. God, I know what you require of me. But just wait. Now I'm strong and healthy So I will serve my flesh and Satan. But when I get old and am no longer strong, I will serve you, O God, and you will take care of me. Poor man. He wants to make God his caretaker in his old age. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, says Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Then who shall abide? To him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

This overcoming I wish for you brethren as I also desire it for myself. Give this to us, O God. Amen.

The Four Great Judgments of God-Bro. Romain Mlotkiewicz, France

BELOVED BRETHERN IN CHRIST, dear friends of the Truth. We who are reunited in this privileged place to meditate on the Word of God, let us be guided, during this stay, by the Holy Spirit, which unites us in a single faith in Christ our Savior.

The subject of our meditation is entitled: The four great judgments of God and their results. It will be based on the passage in the Holy Scriptures found in Isaiah 26:9, For when thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

These words are rather comforting, seeing that they lead to righteousness, even though the world in general fears the judgments of God, because it does not know the true attributes of God: wisdom, justice, love, and power which Satan has always sought to misrepresent. Speaking of a day of final judgment, a great part of humanity is in terror, awaiting a great cataclysm which will select a minority to live in eternal joy, and a large majority to live in eternal torment. Happily such is not the true meaning of the judgments of God! For the judgments of God are always tied to justice. Incidentally, man has adopted the emblem of the balance as a symbol of justice, be it to weigh things in general, such as produce, or to weigh moral actions (to approve or disapprove of our behavior toward God and men).

The term judgment in the Bible is taken from the Greek word krisis, which signifies a certain period of testing, and not a verdict, decision, or sentence, although such may come into play as the result of an analysis of the different elements of the test. We must therefore have in mind that the term judgment constitutes a definite period more or less long, several years, several decades, several centuries, yes, even a millennium.

So then the expressions verdict, decision, sanction, sentence, will come in at the end of this period of testing. The decision may be favorable towards the person (if that person fulfills the required

conditions of the previously established contract), or unfavorable (if the person has failed in the conditions of the contract). In the first case, a recompense will be awarded. In the second case, a punishment will follow, and this is designated by the term condemnation in the Holy Scriptures.

In what manner will God exercise his judgments towards man? Since God is justice, it is necessary that the requirements towards man be equitable, realizable and without any pitfalls. God can judge only responsible beings, possessed of all their physical, mental and moral faculties, who will have to be instructed in the divine law. We are going to see in the four principal judgments of God that this has truly been the case.

The First Day or Period of Judgment

We must go back 6,000 years in the past, to the beginning of creation, and more particularly to the creation of Adam and Eve. Our first parents were put to the test. What was the duration? It is estimated to have been one or two years. Adam was perfect and responsible in all his actions. The divine law was written in his heart. The instructions of Jehovah were clear and precise:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof dying thou shalt die. Genesis 2:16,17

Adam, with full knowledge of the facts, voluntarily transgressed these instructions. The verdict (result of the judgment) was pronounced by God: Dying, thou shalt die. It was definitely a matter of a just punishment, a just condemnation.

The Scriptures clearly teach that not only Adam and Eve were condemned, but that all of us find ourselves under this condemnation, as the Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 5:12, Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Is the case for humanity So hopeless? No, because the Apostle Paul assures us in the following verses that this condemnation has been lifted (Romans 5:18): Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even So by a single act of righteousness came justification to life for all men.

This condemnation was really lifted by Jesus Christ (the second Adam) at the crucifixion, and more particularly at the resurrection, although the benefit of this reconciliation will not be applied in our days to all mankind as we shall see. This clearly shows that Adam and Eve could not pass through a new judgment, a new trial, before the wages of the first sin were paid, before the condemned were liberated from the punishment for sin. In due time Adam and Eve will again be able to prove their fidelity to God because Jesus tasted death for every man. (Hebrews 2:9)

The Second Day or Period of Judgment

The period which next comes to mind is the deluge. But can one rank the period of the flood a day of judgment toward man? This would be an error! Mankind still found itself under the sanction of the first trial, and Noah and his family, after the flood, were not liberated from the first condemnation. Against whom, then, was this ordeal directed? Against the angels, those who had not kept their first estate. God has them chained (neutralized). Jude 6: And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. On the other hand their offspring, the issue of their union with the daughters of men, were annihilated forever in the flood.

The second day or period of judgment had its beginning on Mount Sinai. With Moses as the mediator, this special covenant of the Law was between Jehovah and the people of Israel only. Compliance to this Law was to bring life to the people of Israel, as the Apostle Paul recalls for us in Galatians 3:12, But the Law does not derive from faith; but (it says), Those who practice these things shall live by them. But Moses and the people of Israel were still under the condemnation of the Adamic sentence.

The trial (judgment) could be applicable only to perfect beings. It was therefore only in a typical (symbolic) manner that God justified Moses and in him all the people of Israel in introducing animal sacrifices which should purify them (by blood) temporarily. In this manner, by observing the Law Covenant, they would have been able to become the Kingdom of God which was to bless all the nations of the earth. The test lasted from Mount Sinai up until the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. The majority of the people of Israel (who turned aside from the Law) fell again under the Adamic condemnation with the reproaches formulated by our Lord in regard to them. We read:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Luke 13:34,35

On the other hand, to some among them (such as the apostles), who had remained faithful to the Law, there was granted the privilege of becoming with Jesus the foundation of the Kingdom.

The Third Day or Period of Judgment

At the end of what we call the Jewish Age, a special trial began, concerning a certain number of persons from the Jews and then from all the nations. The kernel of this class (a remnant of the children of Israelro 9:27) was: first, the twelve apostles. Next, a few hundred disciples of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:6): After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. And then several thousand after Pentecost (Acts 2:41): Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Or again in Acts 4:4: Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

All these were justified by faith, sanctified, begotten by the Spirit, and constituted from that time what the Apostle Peter mentions in 1 Peter 2:9, But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. This was possible because the members of this class have been liberated from the Adamic Sentence (by the blood of Christ). They were justified by faith; clothed with the robe of righteousness (thanks to the merit of Christ); are holy in the eyes of God, and therefore in harmony with Him. On the basis of these things God can judge their actions.

We must remember that there will be many called, but few chosen (Matthew 22:14), and in addition that the number of the elect is limited 144,000 (Revelation 7:4). And what is more, the opportunity to attain to these privileged conditions (if that opportunity is still possible in our days), is going to cease. That will be the closing of the door to the High Calling (Heavenly Calling), which God will close in due time.

The Fourth Day or Period of Judgment

Ac 17:31, Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. This judgment concerns the entire human race. Is it going on now? No, but we feel it is very near. Before that, it is necessary that all the members of the Church (the body of Christ), those involved in the Third Day of Judgment, be judged and the overcomers glorified with Christ. It is not until after the glorification of the Church that the Fourth Day of Judgment, announced by the Apostle Paul, will take place; because it is Christ and those who are his (members of the Church) who will then judge the world. 1 Corinthians 6:2, Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?

Although the judgment belongs to God, God will establish Christ as Judge, and he will act as Mediator (better than Moses) between the people and Jehovah God. This Day of Judgment will not be a day of terror, nor of anguish, as so many suppose (although a great distress will precede its introduction). It will not be of short duration, but of a thousand years (Revelation 20:4): They reigned with him a thousand years. This will be a day of rejoicing, of relief, prophetically announced according to 1 Chronicles 16:31-34: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.

This good news was equally announced by an angel, to shepherds, at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:10,11): And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

All will be delivered from Adamic condemnation and will be allowed to have access to an individual test, introduced in ideal conditions, identical to those which prevailed in the Garden of Eden. Then shall all know the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:34) Every knee shall bow. (Phil. 2:9-11): Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The result of this Fourth Day of Judgment will be: for some, life everlasting on the earth; for others (the rebellious), eternal annihilation (the Second Death).

Here we have in this short exposition (certainly incomplete) the Plan of God which we uncover in studying the Holy Scriptures.

I Beseech You Therefore Brethren-Bro. Homer Montague, USA

IT IS A PLEASURE for me to join with you in convention on this occasion, dear brethren. As I look out over this vast throng, I am reminded of a passage from Revelation chapter 5, verses 9 and 10. I'm reading from the Phillips Modern English translation:

They sang a new song and these are the words they sang. Worthy art thou to take the book and break its seals for thou hast been slain and by thy blood thou hast purchased for God men from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Thou hast made them a kingdom of priests for our God and they shall reign as kings upon the earth.

I believe the context of these two verses attests to the faithfulness and worthiness of Jesus Christ as the one that God entrusted with the responsibility to carry out his plan and purposes with regard to the redemption of mankind. Furthermore, mention is made of those dear saints who have been drawn by the Heavenly Father in this age to present their bodies a living sacrifice and, if faithful, to reign with our head Jesus Christ in glory as kings and priests. Additionally, we would be reminded that the elect Church will not be taken exclusively from Jews nor Gentiles, but in fact those who will comprise the body of Christ, while they are on this side of the veil, will be international in scope and character.

Our subject, I Beseech You Therefore Brethren, will be readily identifiable as having been taken from the opening words of Romans the 12th chapter. The Church at Rome at the time of this epistle was comprised of individuals who were both Jewish and Gentile in origin. This treatise represented Paul's efforts to free both classes of saints from the former yoke of Judaism So they would understand that their standing with God was not based upon their attempt to keep the Mosaic Law, but rather through the mercies of the Heavenly Father, provided they had made a full consecration and had accepted the redemptive merit of Jesus Christ as being their purchase price from the Adamic condemnation.

In the first chapter of Romans, verse 7, we read the salutation, To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Returning to the 12th chapter of Romans, we suggest the exhortation, I beseech you therefore brethren, is made to the spirit begotten, although we would understand that some of the believers addressed had not yet made a full consecration unto the Lord. Paul's words would seem to apply to those who had already presented their bodies in that they should continue doing so, but also, he encourages those who were still undecided to fully submit their wills to God and thus present their bodies as a living sacrifice. Clearly, when one would come to see the nature of God's mercy to all, as detailed in the preceding chapters of Romans, it would be but a reasonable service for such to follow in the way of the cross.

In the spirit of this exhortation, I believe all true saints have taken to heart the admonition given by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews the 10th chapter, verses 24 and 25, as follows:

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and So much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

This text, though penned at the forepart of the Gospel Age, would appear to have applicability throughout the entire period of Church history. As participants in the great plan of redemption with our Head Jesus Christ, body members recall the circumstances under which Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden because of their sin. Specifically God's words as found in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, indicated there would be enmity between the serpent, representing Satan, and the seed of the woman, referring to The Christ, head and body. This promised seed would bruise the serpent's head, or destroy the evil one and all of his power at the appropriate time.

We are convinced that the adversary has some understanding with regard to the import of this promise and that he has attempted to destroy or prevent the completion of this seed class So that he may perpetuate his reign as the god of this world. One of his methods of attack has been his attempt to divide the body of Christ. The concept of divide and conquer is an old strategy that has been used with great success by conquering generals of the military as well as leaders in the political arena who strive for power by having the masses of people oppose one another So they cannot come together

in a unified, harmonious manner to achieve a common goal which would benefit them all.

As we noted earlier, during the Apostle Paul's day, there were many concerns among the brotherhood which affected some believers who formerly were Jews and others who formerly were Gentiles according to the flesh. In the 15th chapter of Acts, verse 1, it reads: And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

From verses 4 to 29 of this same chapter, we note that the issue of circumcision, as well as keeping other features connected with the Mosaic Law, were discussed at the Jerusalem conference of apostles and elders.

We can clearly appreciate the concerns of those brethren who previously had been Pharisees. They were firmly established in the Mosaic Law and its ceremonies, but they also accepted many additional traditions of the elders. Certainly they would be inclined to believe their new brethren, formerly Gentiles, would need some of the restraints under which they themselves were reared. Nevertheless, the matter was properly resolved and after James addressed the brethren on the subject, a satisfactory course was adopted by all in attendance which evidently was pleasing to the Lord.

Diversity from God's Standpoint

For want of a better expression, I would suggest there is great diversity today among the Lord's people much of which is good and proper, and yet some of it if manifested to an extreme, may not be as helpful as we might desire and could lead to a spirit of divisiveness. We noted previously that saints who formerly were Jews and Gentiles came into the body of Christ from very different backgrounds.

I think it is true to a considerable degree today that our conception of what being in Christ really means varies widely (at least in the beginning of our consecrated walk and perhaps well into our consecrated walk) depending upon where we were when the Lord accepted us. Those of us who were reared in a Truth home may perceive things very differently from those who formerly were Roman Catholics, who might view things differently from those who sprang from fundamentalist as opposed to more liberal Protestant backgrounds; and former Jehovah's Witnesses might

have still another perspective, etc. Nevertheless, the spirit behind Galatians 3:28, though written nearly 2000 years ago is equally applicable today: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

It is for this reason that although some of our customs and habits of the past may take considerable time to change, or may never change, we are to bear in mind that God judges things from the standpoint of the heart. Where one of the Lord's dear ones gives evidence of faith in the ransom, full consecration, spirit begetting and putting on the graces of holiness, we are to be very careful about rendering judgment with regard to the practices, expressions, and beliefs of such an individual, unless there is scriptural authorization to do so.

Unquestionably, there are fundamental truths essential to be understood for the sanctification process to occur in spirit begotten children. Since we are informed that now we know in part, it is also evident that certain truths exist which may not be required to be understood in order to make one's calling and election sure, although I am not going to attempt to provide such a listing.

Even if some of the Lord's people have an accurate knowledge of every truth which they deem essential for membership in the body of Christ, that alone would not insure us of victory. I believe that making one's calling and election sure also involves the development of the fruits of the spirit which are embodied in the word love, as described in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians.

Rather than mentally considering or vocally expressing the thought that brethren with whom we disagree on various points are not well grounded in the Truth, if we have internalized such graces as patience, humility, kindness, and meekness, among others, we should be able to appreciate that we could not have any spiritual standing except by God's grace, and if he was able to take us from the miserable and wretched condition in which he found us and now considers us sons, he surely is able, in his own time and manner, to see that each spirit-begotten child is given full opportunity to receive those truths which are essential to victory. Whether or not each one of us makes proper use of such information, however, is a matter between each individual and the Lord.

This being the case, we need to exercise great care that we are not guilty of judging individuals or other groups of brethren with

regard to their standing in the Lord. Rather we should appreciate the fact that God is dealing with them also and that his ways of viewing things are higher than ours. Any adjustments in beliefs on our part or theirs which may be necessary, he can effect in due time, if our hearts are right.

A convention such as this affords us the opportunity to meet many brethren with whom previously we may have had little or no contact. When we return to our home ecclesias, one of the things which will probably be of interest to those we left behind might relate to the geographic location from which each of the attendees came. If we were to respond in a casual way, we might state there were a certain number of European brethren, a certain number of South American brethren, a certain number of North American brethren, a certain number of African brethren, and So on. If we wanted to be even more specific, we might identify the brethren by the country of origin or by the ecclesia they attend.

One of the difficulties in speaking about brethren in this manner is that there may be a tendency to think in terms of certain generalities which do not relate to the new creature at all. Suppose, for example, we were to list certain adjectives such as devoted, wealthy, clannish, serious, studious, loving, meek, humble, liberal, etc., and then tried to complete the following sentences:

European brethren are very _____. North American brethren are extremely _____. South American brethren are quite _____. African brethren are exceptionally _____.

Would any of those adjectives seem to describe better the brethren in certain countries than in others? Are all the brethren in a particular country the same?

It may not appear to be of great importance, but it seems appropriate to use the scriptural designation, if we are going to make reference to the geographic origin or location in which the Lord's saints may be found. The Apostle John, for example, in giving his message to the seven churches identified in the book of Revelation, places emphasis upon the word Church as opposed to the location from which such individuals might be found. We recognize that there were certain characteristics that might seem common to those ecclesias, and more than that, to those specific time periods which these churches symbolized in the overall Gospel Age. Nevertheless, Revelation chapter 2, verses 1, 8, and 18, are written as follows: Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus

write. And unto the angel of the church of Smyrna write. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write.

This same pattern is followed in describing each of the seven periods of the Church and because most of us would probably agree, based upon the signs of the times, that we are in the Laodicean stage of the Church, we would like to note the same consistency in Revelation 3:14, which reads, And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write.

Each individual in the church of Christ, no matter where he or she may be found, has a commonality with all other members of the body. Such a one has followed the admonition of our Master who, as recorded in Matthew chapter 16, verse 24, tendered the invitation to all who would seek to be his disciple in the following words: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

It is important to realize that each individual who has been received of the Father and has begun his sojourn here in the flesh and is walking after the Master by virtue of having been begotten by the Holy Spirit, is now a new creature in Christ.

However, this new mind, this spiritual mind, needs to be developed. It is contained in an earthen vessel. 2 Corinthians 4:7 puts it in this manner: But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

So we see that this transforming work that will bring us from the human nature to the divine, if we are faithful, is a work of grace which brought us to the starting point of our Christian journey, but we must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. When we realize that this earthen tabernacle in which our new mind is housed is not the basis of our identification as new creatures in our Lord Jesus, then it sharpens our perspective. We more clearly realize our citizenship is not here on earth but rather in heaven, and as pilgrims and strangers, while we walk in the path of the Master, we are to strive mightily against any of the old fleshly tendencies with which we were born, and which have been ingrained in us as part of our learned behavior as natural human beings.

Our Relationship as New Creatures

In the fifth chapter of 2nd Corinthians, verse 17, the apostle states the following: Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new

creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new. As we develop as new creatures, we should note that gradually this becomes true of us. Those earthly tendencies of pride, vanity, and follies begin to pass away as the new mind has its affections set upon the things above. By virtue of the ransom price having been applied on our behalf, we are no longer under the Adamic condemnation and therefore our past heritage from God's standpoint is no longer considered.

Our hopes, our aims, our prospects, our standards, our relationships are all in the process of becoming new. The more that we find our minds are renewed by feeding upon the things of the spirit, the more we will gravitate towards those who have demonstrated this same spirit as members of the body of Christ.

The Lord during his earthly sojourn here, indicated that we would be able to recognize one another when he said, By their fruits ye shall know them. So it is that we should expect to see manifested in the lives of the Lord's saints, those spiritual qualities and graces that are identified in Galatians 5:22-24:

But the fruit of the spirit is love, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

We would hope that as a result of our interchange with one another, we would go beyond the surface identification which, according to the flesh, we have in common with many others in the world who are not of the body. If we were to stress that some of us were North American brethren instead of brethren in Christ who live in North America, we would be emphasizing a characteristic which is not spiritual. There are millions of individuals who are North Americans, but when the body of Christ is all counted up the little flock that is it will include merely 144,000. So it is that beyond our fleshly designation of being North Americans, South Americans, Europeans, Africans, or Asians, we are to see those qualities of Christlikeness that bind us together, those fruits of the spirit that we just enumerated.

Sometimes, however, it may be difficult for us to de-emphasize surface distinctions among the Lord's people. The Bible notes that even the great and faithful Apostle Peter once demonstrated a weakness along this line. The account is found in Galatians 2:11-14. It describes how the Apostle Paul had to rebuke Peter in Antioch because he would not continue to eat with believers who

formerly were Gentiles as he had been doing previously because now some of the saints who were Jewish in origin had come to Antioch and perhaps he feared their possible reaction. It, therefore, seems that this incident was recorded in the scriptures as a lesson to be internalized throughout the Gospel Age by all of the spirit begotten.

One of the great joys of being together in convention is that we find ourselves in an environment where we are surrounded by others who similarly have a deep appreciation of God's love as we have. So it is that there has been a general feeling of spiritual euphoria, because it is so very different from the circumstances we encounter in our normal daily activity. It has been said there is a special pleasure in uniting with others of like precious faith because we desire to be with those that we hope to spend our lives with throughout all eternity. Certainly there have been lessons for us to gain as we interact with one another in this school of Christ. When we return to our native lands, and for some of you that will be France, but in any event, most of us may reflect upon others of the brotherhood with whom we have not had as frequent contact as perhaps we should. Sometimes there may be barriers to such an interchange. We know, however, if one is a member of the body of Christ, the body cannot be completed without the inclusion of that individual beyond the veil. So as we seek to work out our own salvation, we want to be very solicitous of others who are seeking to work out their salvation as well. This can be done through prayer, personal communication, and by any loving way of which the Father would approve.

Here at the end of the age, as it was during the beginning of the age, and probably throughout the Gospel Age, there have been perhaps some artificial groupings of the Lord's people, based upon certain beliefs on non-fundamental issues. Sometimes this has caused an exclusiveness or isolation from other believers which should be avoided. In 1 Corinthians 3:4 the Apostle Paul reminds us: For while one saith I am of Paul and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?

If God is the judge, which surely he is, we must be persuaded that making one's calling and election sure is not done on a geographic basis, on a national basis, an ecclesia basis, or even a family relationship basis, but rather by the complete application of the scripture text, found in Romans 12:2, where it tells us:

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

We assert that the body of Christ, wherever it is found, is not divided, even though some of us may see differently on such matters as prophecy and other areas where there is not a thus saith the Lord. In fact, we can well appreciate, because the school of Christ is a growth process, that we see through a glass now, but darkly, and that if we are faithful, when we pass beyond the veil, all things will be revealed unto us.

In the spirit of thinking about and reflecting upon the needs of our brethren everywhere, if we recognize there has been any barrier to the full, hearty support which should exist between ourselves and other body members, let us remember the words of 1 John 3:14 and 18, because it is by this standard that ultimately we will be judged in God's estimation:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

So dear brethren let us resolve that for whatever period of time the Lord permits for us to complete our course, that we will keep that particular admonition in mind.

In the United States of America, in the year 1858, Abraham Lincoln, who subsequently became the 16th president of the country, said this in a speech:

You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time. But you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

We close by paraphrasing the words of this well-known statesman as we reflect upon all of our brethren near and far. Let it be said that we have progressed to the point where we will not love all of the brethren some of the time, and some of the brethren all of the time, but let us love all of the brethren all of the time.

May God grant us his wisdom and spirit that this may be a reality in each of our lives. Amen.

Mercy-Bro. Michael Nekora, USA

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Proverbs 28:13

THE DICTIONARY DEFINES mercy as kindness in excess of what may be expected or demanded by fairness; forbearance and compassion. Strong's Concordance gives kindness and compassion as synonyms for the two Hebrew words usually translated mercy.

Mercy and God

We read in Exodus 34:6,7:

And The Lord passed by before Moses and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

These words So thrilled Joseph Rotherham that he added a footnote in his English language translation of the scriptures. He says, This most gracious proclamation by God of His name and character is . . . worthy to be described as the refrain of the Bible. The devout reader cannot fail to be delighted with reminders of this fundamental revelation which are scattered throughout the Old Testament. Although this paragraph in full may not occur anywhere else, snatches of it abound.

It is only because of God's mercy that you and I are here today. Let us look at what Paul wrote in Romans:

For as ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [Israel's] unbelief: even So have these also now not believed that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God had concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon All. ro 11:30-32

Paul says we have obtained mercy, or kindness in excess of what may be expected or demanded by fairness; forbearance and compassion. God was not obligated to do anything for us. When Adam and Eve disobeyed, they could have died immediately. God was not obligated to change the sentence of death nor was He required to provide a resurrection from the dead. And certainly He did not need to grant an opportunity to anyone to change his nature from human to heavenly.

Paul in Romans shows that the unbelief of Israel, God's original Chosen People, does not mean they will receive some special punishment, nor are they everlastingly lost. In spite of their unbelief, God will still have mercy on them.

We know that without God's mercy, we are nothing. We could never save ourselves. We have done nothing whatsoever to deserve favorable treatment from God. Grace is another word we sometimes use to describe what we have received from God. Grace means unmerited favor.

How Do We Receive God's Grace?

Although we do not merit God's favor, according to our opening scripture in Proverbs, whoso confesseth [his sins] shall have mercy. A recurring theme in the scriptures is that confession of sin is absolutely required before God can bless. We see that lesson in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican as recorded in Luke 18, verses 10 to 14. This reading is from the New International Version:

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. 2Sa 12:13,14

Saul preceded David. He had a different attitude. In the 13th chapter of 1 Samuel, Saul waits seven days for Samuel, but when Samuel does not come, he offers burnt offerings, something he knows he should not do. As soon as he finishes, Samuel appears and asks what he's doing. After Saul offers his explanation, Samuel speaks (verses 13 and 14):

Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue.

Saul does not confess his sin and he is not forgiven. Samuel leaves, and Saul continues with his life. Cain is another example. Cain becomes so angry with his brother that he kills him. When God asks where Abel is, Cain replies Am I my brother's keeper? God passes sentence and Cain responds (Genesis 4:13):

My punishment is greater than I can bear. [verse 16] And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.

Cain does not acknowledge his sin nor does he show remorse. Consequently there is no forgiveness. Even Adam does not acknowledge his sin nor show any remorse. Notice his words (Genesis 3:12): And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Adam shows no contrition of heart for what he's done. This is a dangerous position for anyone who expects to maintain a relationship with God since God has made it very clear where he will make his abode. Notice the words in Isaiah chapter 57, verse 15:

Thus saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Of course God dwells in a high and holy place. But it is surprising that the God of the universe says he also dwells with those who maintain humility and contrition of heart. We can't avoid sin in our lives. But if we have the right heart attitude as shown by acknowledging our shortcomings and failures, we will receive the cleansing we need. That's what it says in 1 John 1, verse 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We have consecrated ourselves to God and accepted Christ as our personal saviour. But we would never be brought to this position if we did not first confess our sins and acknowledge our need for a redeemer. Those who cannot acknowledge their sinful state cannot accept Christ because they see no reason to do so.

What Happens After We've Obtained Mercy?

Jesus taught that the mercy God grants to us must radiate out toward everyone with whom we come in contact. This is beautifully illustrated in one of the easiest-to-understand parables the Master ever gave. It is in Matthew, chapter 18, verses 21-35. I'll read it from the Goodspeed translation:

Then Peter came to him and said, Master, how many times Am I to forgive my brother when he wrongs me? Seven times over? Jesus said to him, Not seven times over, I tell you, but seventy-

seven time over! For this reason the Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king, who resolved to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he set about doing so, a man was brought in who owed him \$10,000,000. And as he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all he had, in payment of the debt. So the slave threw himself down before him and implored him, That is what my heavenly Father will do to you [hand you over to the jailers until you pay all you owe] if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts!

If we willingly forgive faults, sins, or shortcomings in others, we demonstrate our commitment to mercy. We should do this even if the other person does not ask for forgiveness because it is our heart attitude that is on trial. The other person has his own relationship to God. Whether God forgives him or not will depend on his heart attitude. We must watch our own heart attitude with great diligence So that we receive forgiveness from God for all our trespasses. We read in Mark 11:25, And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

The lesson Jesus gives here is that we must show mercy by forgiving a brother even if he doesn't act contrite or ask for our forgiveness. It doesn't even matter whether our complaint against him is justified or not. If we are Christians, we must follow the pattern set by our Lord and Master. Of course we are not God and we cannot erase another's sin. But by showing mercy we can copy this wonderful characteristic of God.

Consider words in the Lord's model prayer (Matthew 6:12): Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. The word debts is not limited to financial debts. It is any situation where compassion, kindness, yes mercy, would be the appropriate behavior. If we are unwilling to forgive those who have wronged us, there is no point in asking the great king of the universe to forgive us our iniquities. Remember the servant in the parable? He lost the freedom he had gained when he was unwilling to exercise mercy toward his fellow servant.

When he delivered his sermon on the mount, Jesus uttered a series of beatitudes including this one from Matthew 5, verse 7: Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. The clear implication is that those who are not merciful, who are unwilling to show kindness in excess of what may be expected or demanded by fairness, will themselves not receive mercy from the Heavenly Father. Then Jesus went on to tell his disciples that they must do

even more than just forgive someone who wronged them. They had to try to correct a relationship when they realize that they have wronged another person. This is what Jesus says beginning in verse 23:

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.

The brother has an ill feeling against us because he has been wronged by us. So when we come to God (here termed bringing a gift to the altar) and suddenly remember the brother's justified anger because of what we've done, we must immediately do something about it. We must try to correct the problem and heal the wounds. Then we can come to God.

We Must Be Merciful

Make no mistake about it. The forgiveness God has granted to us from our sins is conditional. If we fail to observe the requirements God has laid down, we will lose even that which we have. The king in the parable never told the slave that he had to be merciful toward others since he had received forgiveness from such an immense obligation. It should have been obvious. In the parable, we see someone so blind to his own actions that he loses everything. This is the principle: If you don't forgive your fellow servants, God won't forgive you.

Micah briefly summarizes the three things God requires of us in chapter 6, verse 8: To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. Do you love mercy? Think about it. Are you still waiting for your brother or sister to come to you and ask for your forgiveness for some wrong they committed against you? If you are, then you do not love mercy. In Matthew 23:23 we read:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith.

Do you still remember some injustice that has never been corrected by another even as you carefully pay tithes of all you have? If you do, you're like the Pharisees for you have omitted something much more important than a tithe. You have omitted mercy.

As bad as it may be to remember another's sins and shortcomings, it is much worse to seek revenge for some perceived wrong committed toward you. Such a heart attitude will keep anyone from being a part of the bride of Christ. Notice the words of Romans 12:17,19-21:

Recompense to no man evil for evil. . . . Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Of course the truth is important. But it is not enough to save us. In Proverbs 3, verse 3, we read: Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart. It is mercy and truth that we should embrace.

Do you feel any responsibility to go to another to try to ease the tensions he may feel toward you? Do you even let your mind think about ways to get revenge for something he did? If you do, then perhaps mercy has forsaken you.

We have had many lessons delivered to us at this convention. We have had old truths confirmed, and new insights revealed. We have had a wonderful spiritual feast at the feet of Jesus. But it is not enough to hear the words. We must put the words into action, we must change our behavior. If we do not, our religion is vain. It will not do its transforming work and we will not gain the prize for which we seek.

The concept of forgiveness was an important part of the teachings of Jesus. He taught his followers that they had to overcome evil with good. So whenever evil is committed toward you, recognize it as an opportunity to overcome it by being merciful. In this way you will grow into the image of the Heavenly Father.

We would like to close this lesson by quoting words written by William Shakespeare about the time the King James Bible first appeared. In *The Merchant of Venice* Antonio foolishly agrees to guarantee a loan for his friend by offering a pound of his flesh if the loan is not repaid. The friend defaults, Antonio can't pay, and the creditor demands the pound of flesh. Near the end of the court proceedings, Antonio's lawyer, Portia, pleads for mercy. This is what she says:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd; It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest; It blesseth him that gives and him that takes. 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes The throned monarch better than his crown; His scepter shows the force of temporal power, The attribute to awe and majesty Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings; ; But mercy is above this scepter'd sway. It is enthroned in the hearts of kings. It is an attribute of God himself; And earthly power doth then show likest God's When mercy seasons justice. Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene 1.

The Second Presence of the Lord-Bro. Nicoara Nenestean, Romania

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST. This international convention is a special privilege, giving me the honor to speak before such a wonderful audience. This is my first meeting with brethren of other nationalities who live outside Romania's borders. Therefore I ask for your understanding concerning my emotions which are testing me at this moment.

I bring you the loving greetings of the brethren from Romania and especially from Calineste, my home ecclesia. May the good heavenly Father pour His blessings upon us. With His help and grace we shall try to analyze some scriptural affirmations which prove that the second presence of the great king, Jesus, who came to establish the kingdom of justice and love, is the only remedy for all the complex problems that mankind faces at this end of the age. Therefore, our subject will be The Second Presence of the Lord.

The Lord's return is a subject of special importance for all true believers. Since the purpose of the first coming was to give his life as a ransom price for all, we understand the purpose of the second presence is to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. (Ephesians 1:10) In this context the Apostle Paul states that, The heaven must receive [him] until the times of restitution of all things. (Acts 3:21)

Thus the second presence of the Lord extends over a much longer period of time than the first presence. The mission of the first advent ended within less than 34 years while the work to be accomplished during the second presence requires 1000 years. We can easily see that the work of the second presence is as important as the work of the first presence, being the logical result of the ransom. In this sense the words of the prophet Isaiah in 53:10,11 appear suitable to us:

When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.

While looking for biblical proofs in connection with the second presence, we should not expect extraordinary or sensational events which would draw everyone's attention to his presence. This is not God's usual method of working nor did this happen at the first advent. At the second advent he doesn't come to pay tribute to Caesar and suffer humiliation, injustice and oppression. He comes to reign, to put into effect all power in heaven and on earth.

Not through the light of human knowledge did we come to the discovery of Christ's presence, but through the light of God's word. We cannot recognize the presence of Christ the way people recognize each other. But we, as new creatures, recognize him as our bridegroom, our head and leader. Of course we cannot see him with natural eyes, but we do see him by the eyes of understanding enlightened by the light of our lamp. (Psalms 119:105)

Thus we recognize our Lord and Savior, whom we love, and we believe in him without seeing him. (1 Peter 1:8) We know he is present now to test those who claim they are his, to gather unto himself the wise virgins the pearls who are found worthy, who follow the Lamb wherever he goes So they might be heirs with him, exalted with him as his bride, the Lamb's wife. (Revelation 14:4,5; 21:9; Malachi 3:17)

Proofs of the Second Presence

Here are a few biblical proofs which confirm the Lord's second presence.

Daniel's prophecy in 12:11,12 speaks about an historical event, namely the abomination of desolation established in the Most Holy which replaced the daily sacrifice through the institution of the mass, an event generally applied to 539 A.D. In this same year the overthrow of the Ostrogoth monarchy (the obstacle for the development of the great papal system) and the recognition of the bishop of Rome as the supreme head of the church took place. From this date the reckoning of the 1260, 1290, and 1335 prophetic days or years begins. Therefore if we add 1335 years to 539 we reach 1874, the date of our Lord's second presence.

We observe from the context that the blessedness of those who waited and came took place at the end of the 1335 years, when they recognized the second presence of the Lord as well as the fact that they were now living in the time of the harvest of the Gospel Age and in the time of the establishment of Michael's (Christ's) kingdom. We don't have words to express this blessedness. It is easier to feel rather than to express it. Only those enlightened by the sure word of prophecy, refreshed in spirit by that new wine of the kingdom could appreciate it. In Luke 12:36,37 we read:

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

From this we understand that the Lord, at his return, will find servants watching when he knocks at the door. The promise made to such servants is that he would gird himself and serve them. The abundant spiritual food at this end of the age given by the Lord to the household of faith through the Laodicean messenger is a new proof of his second presence. Consequently his second presence will be secret and will be made known through that which is expressed by the metaphoric words and he knocketh at the door. It is sure that the knocking at the door refers to the signs of his presence given to us through the prophetic word which is confirmed by present events.

So the Lord wants to assure us that at his second presence he will make known to his people special truths that were not due to be understood before then. These truths pertain to the mystery of God's kingdom and the divine plan of the ages. It is sure that all believers will partake of a royal dinner such as they have never had before.

I think it is good to emphasize that though the meat is given to all the household of faith, nevertheless the partaking of it is an individual work as our Lord's words indicate in Revelation 3:20,

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me.

Given the fact that we are So overwhelmingly blessed by the Lord, let us appreciate and feed joyfully upon this spiritual food through which we grow more and more in his likeness.

In the parable of Matthew 13:24-30 the Lord tells us that the wheat and tares were to grow together until harvest, the time in which the separation of the wheat and tares would take place. One who carefully studies the scriptures will observe that we are living in the time of the end because in this time the harvest of the Gospel Age is taking place. So says the Lord in Matthew 13:39, The harvest is the end of the age.

This is a period rich in events because during this time the whole crop must be put in the heavenly garner, but the tares are to be tied in bundles. This work is about to end and is being carried out under the leading of the Lord Jesus who is shown as having a sharp sickle in his hand. (Revelation 14:14) The burning of the tares or the treading of the winepress is to be the last work of the harvest, the last part of the time of trouble which all nations must experience. Then all claims by the tares that they are of the wheat class will vanish, leaving only the fact that they had always been natural, worldly people. Daniel 12:1 reads:

At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.

Michael means one like God and refers to the Lord Jesus at his return. One may observe that when Michael takes control, there will be a time of trouble. The time of trouble, or Day of God's wrath, is that period of time in which the kingdom of God under Christ is being established on the earth while the kingdoms of the world under Satan's influence will be crushed. (Daniel 2:44; Psalms 2:8,9)

During this time of social and political instability of the breaking down of the old order, Christ is present not as the prince of peace blessing mankind, but rather as a great general of Jehovah's army subjecting all things to himself. This thought is also supported in Jeremiah's prophecy where it is written:

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. Jeremiah 1:10

Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Habakkuk 3:13

For behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. Amos 6:11

We can clearly see from these prophecies that the work of breaking the unjust systems based on selfishness, as well as rebuilding a new social order based on justice and love, were entrusted to the great king, Jesus, who holds all authority in heaven and on earth. The events of the last century, the rapid and dramatic changes in our day, the lightnings that enlighten the earth (Psalm 97:4) which is to say the principles of liberty and dignity, the unprecedented cry for human rights these are all arguments and signs (proofs) which confirm the presence of the Lord.

Our Lord himself stated: As it was in the days of Noah So shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. (Luke 17:26-38; Matthew 24:37) This testimony was the answer to the disciples' question: What will be the sign of your presence and of the end of the age? (Matthew 24:3)

Here we notice a striking point: the resemblance here is not between Noah's coming and the Son of Man's coming, nor between the coming of the flood and the Lord's coming. The point of comparison is clearly shown and can be discovered easily if one reads this passage carefully. Except for Noah and his family, the people were unaware of the coming flood and did not believe what Noah and his family told them. Because of this, they did not know anything until the flood came and took them all away. So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. (Matthew 24:37)

We see, therefore, the point of comparison: the unawareness of those in the days of Noah and of those in the days of the Son of Man. Even as then only Noah's family believed, So now only the Lord's family believes the things prepared in the days of the Son of Man. Others will not know anything before the present human systems melt from the great heat of the fire of trouble which is now very near.

Their unawareness is illustrated by these words: For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, they bought and sold, they planted and builded,

and knew not, So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.
(Matthew 24:38,39; Luke 17:28)

These things are not sinful or shameful. No, but they are reminders of ignorance and indifference of people in the face of the Lord's presence and the great tribulation. This, however, was the Lord's response to the disciples' questions. In essence he told them: For those outside, there won't be any special sign. They won't know anything about my coming and the transition period. They won't pay any attention to the events that indicate my presence.

Only a few will know and believe these things. It will be those who are taught by God through His word before the appearance of some sign or some indication that can be seen by the world.

The restoration of Israel in the promised land, an event happening in our day in an impressive way, is new evidence of the Lord's second presence. In Isaiah 11:13 we read:

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.

And in Revelation 18:1 we read:

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

The prophet Daniel says that in this time knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:4) It is evident that in the time of the Lord's second presence we are witnessing an amazing explosion of science and technology. People are making rapid leaps in advanced technology in all fields: computers, electronics, construction, and travel.

Summary

In summary, I want to assert that these are only a few of the many prophetic proofs related to this subject. We have observed, dear brethren, that . . .

1. The 1335 days or prophetic years were fulfilled in 1874.
2. The Lord, at his second coming, blessed his people with spiritual food through a wise and faithful servant.

3. The harvest is still in progress under the direction of the Chief Reaper, the Lord Jesus.

4. The Lord's presence is marked by a time of trouble through which he overthrows the house of the evil one, setting the foundations of the fifth universal empire, the kingdom of God.

5. The similarity between the events of the days of Noah and those of the Son of Man is convincing testimony to his second presence.

6. The development of science and technology confirms the prophetic statements and the time of his presence.

We have observed that the Lord's second presence is an accomplished fact, that the prophetic signs and present events testify to this incontestable truth, that the Lord has returned to glorify his church and to establish his kingdom for which he taught us to pray: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

May this special opportunity by which we are blessed fill our hearts with appreciation and love. May this cause us to be diligent in the Lord's honored service, that we can be kept by him, pure, innocent, and in peace, ready to enter into the rest which still remains for his people.

This is what I wish for you with all my heart, as I wish for myself. God bless you.

Amen.

Edifying the Brethren-Bro. Timo Nordman, Finland

FIRST OF ALL I want to say that your Finnish brethren send you their loving greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus. For many years the Finnish brethren were like lost sheep. But a few years ago we learned there were brethren in other countries. Now we have had contact with many wonderful brethren. These contacts have brought us great joy and encouragement in our walk along the narrow way.

We first met brethren from other countries at the International Convention in Willingen two years ago. Since then, many wonderful brethren have visited Finland. They have been a special

blessing and a gift from our Heavenly Father to us. Through their encouragement we have received new strength to serve God.

Dear brethren, we have had the honor to receive the high calling, to be joint-heirs with Christ. The Lord has purged our conscience from dead works through Christ and called us to walk in the footsteps of Christ. (Hebrews 9:14) He is developing us for the future work of blessing mankind. As imperfect human beings we need many experiences to become merciful judges like Jesus Christ who became a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. (Hebrews 2:17) By serving the brethren and encouraging them in their walk along the narrow way that leads to life, we can learn much that will benefit us for our future work.

Pleasing Others

Selfishness is a dominant principle in the world. People generally seek their own satisfaction, often in unjust ways without considering others. But a Christian must take another direction. The followers of Christ should not seek their own selfish interests but rather seek to help others. The disciples of Christ should always think of others and try to please them and forget their own comforts. In Romans 15:1-3 the apostle tells us:

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbors for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself.

Christ did not come into the world to do those things that pleased his flesh. On the contrary he gave up his fleshly aspirations for the benefit of mankind. This is what we promised to do when we consecrated to walk in his footsteps. Jesus said, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (Luke 9:23) Self-denial here called taking up a cross means that we give up our own will and selfish desires. Love seeketh not her own. (1Cor. 13:5)

We should particularly seek what is best for the edification of our brethren. This does not mean that we necessarily please them according to the judgment of the flesh; that might be contrary to their edification. If we want to please them in the right way, we ought to stir up their pure minds to love, faith, and good works. (2 Peter 3:1) We ought to remind them of the great promises of God, to help them better understand the word of God, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to encourage them by our own example as we

faithfully follow Christ. We ought to encourage them to use all their talents in the Lord's service no matter how small those talents might be. Whatever we do or say, we should always ask ourselves: Does this really edify the brethren to greater love and faithfulness?

But sometimes brethren may feel grieved by our efforts to serve them rather than be pleased. But if we with humble mind try to please them for their spiritual edification, our efforts will have the Lord's blessing.

All the members of the body of Christ have different inherited weaknesses against which they must fight all their lives. And these weaknesses can sometimes be in conflict with the rights and comforts of others. The Apostle Paul tells us: We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak. (Romans 15:1) Instead of criticizing and judging other body members, we should be very sympathetic toward them. We do not know their difficulties, trials, or their inherited weaknesses. This should make us very merciful toward all brethren.

But this does not mean that we should never admonish someone regarding his faults or help him eliminate his weaknesses. However, we should do it in the spirit of meekness and kindness. We should look for his best interests, not for our own interests. We should please him for his spiritual growth and, if possible, kindly help him fight against his weaknesses. We must endure humbly and patiently the inconvenience that his weaknesses might cause us. Love covers the faults of others; it does not uncover the faults of one who is faint nor does it shame him before others. We know we each have inherited weaknesses and we all need the understanding and help of other brethren. This should make us very sympathetic toward others.

If this spirit permeates the body, there will not be disagreement because there is a mutual love and care between body members, care that encourages and strengthens everything that is good and, by its own example or with kind words, discourages everything that is improper.

Giving up Rights

All the members of the royal priesthood should remember that our particular duty and calling in this age is to sacrifice. We sacrifice ourselves and serve the brethren by giving up our desires, plans, and habits for the benefit of others. If we have our Master's spirit, we will find many ways to sacrifice ourselves. The law of love

encourages us to act contrary to our natural attachments So that we can encourage brethren to greater faithfulness to the Lord.

In his letter to the Corinthians Paul talks about the Greek custom of sacrificing nearly all meat to idols. Paul knew that an idol was nothing and So the meat was absolutely unaffected. It was not wrong to eat this meat, but there was not in every man that knowledge. By eating such meat some injured the conscience of a weaker brother, one who thought the sacrificed meat was contaminated. The apostle explains that he would rather give up his right to eat meat than hurt the conscience of a weaker brother who does not have full understanding. (1 Corinthians 8:7-13)

The apostle was ready to give up his rights So he could encourage others. According to this principle we should also give up some of our rights if this contributes to the edification of a brother and prevents an injury. We should ask ourselves if our behavior in any way causes another brother to hurt his conscience or shake his faithfulness to the Lord. If it does, we lose whatever good influence we may have with him. Of this Paul says: But when you sin So against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. (1 Corinthians 8:12) But he also advises us to take the opposite way saying:

Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way ... nor any thing whereby your brother stumbles, or is offended, or is made weak. Romans 14:13,21

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth . . . Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offence . . . to the church of God. 1Co 10:24,31,32

Our love for righteousness and our hate of unrighteousness should lead us to self-examination and attentiveness So that we would do nothing to hurt, dishearten, or weaken a brother and cause him to fall from the right way. Yes, we fight against our own selfish flesh, not against our brethren.

Bearing Burdens

The law of Christ is the law of love, and love says: Bear you one another's burdens, and So fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2) We all go through times of great difficulty and are almost overwhelmed under our burden. How important in such

circumstances is comfort, sympathy, and encouragement from another body member! Our worldly-minded friends can sympathize but they cannot understand our struggle for righteousness. They regard our sacrificing as exaggerated and So usually give us the wrong advice even though they have the best of intentions. But with the brethren, we can share these burdens. If we try to fulfill the law of Christ, we want to encourage our brethren with sympathy and give them the help they need as new creatures.

We have an example of bearing the burdens of others in an experience of the Master on the cross. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John were grief-stricken. But instead of thinking about himself and his pain, our Master thought about others. All during his life he did good, So in this hour of death he thought about the welfare of others. He took care of his mother by entrusting her to John by saying behold your son to her, and behold your mother to John. This shows us that we should not be So concerned with our own troubles and trials, whether great or small, but rather should bear the burdens of others by letting our sympathy, thoughts, and activity work for the blessing of all the brethren.

Not Seeking Vainglory

The apostle urges us to cultivate the virtue of humility and to consider others on every occasion. He wrote,

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:3-5

The apostle explained that each of us should have the humility of mind that can see the good qualities and talents in other members of the body, and at least in some cases consider those qualities better than our own. Self-satisfaction and striving for pre-eminence must be put aside as an enemy of the spirit of the Lord. We should never lift ourselves up but humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (James 4:10) We should never emphasize our own superiority for our own glory but instead we should look for the glory of the Lord and what is best for our brethren.

Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Matthew 20:26,27

The apostle not only presents the Lord as a great example of humility, self-denial, and love, but he also sets before us the final outcome, the prize that our Lord Jesus Christ received. To increase our zeal and strength to follow faithfully in the footsteps of our Master, he reminds us how the Father lifted the Master on high, to the divine nature. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name. (Philippians 2:9) If we likewise forget about ourselves and work for the edification of the brethren by encouraging them to walk in Christ's footsteps, eventually we will be glorified with him and share his name, his throne, and the great work of blessing the world of mankind.

Dear brethren, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. The apostle assures us that God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have shown toward his name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:24; 6:10)

Amen.

Be of Good Cheer-Bro. Zygmunt Pasierski, Ukraine

BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE LORD! I would like to greet you with our Lord's words: Peace be unto you! We are grateful to our Heavenly Father for this time of brotherly fellowship, for the joy, for this spiritual rest, for all that you brethren from various countries have done for us So we could be in your midst. We who came to this convention and all the brethren who remained in the Ukraine, wish to express our Christian brotherly love to you and to all those who are not here but profess the same holy and precious faith. May the Heavenly Father who has called you to the fellowship with his Son, strengthen and give you consolation along this narrow way of consecration, for Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

We will now direct our thoughts to the good Word of God, to the Gospel of John, chapters 14 through 17. These parting words of Jesus were full of love and grand heavenly promises. Each verse by itself provides a topic for a separate discourse from which we are sure all would receive a great spiritual upbuilding. Let us again look into the words of the scriptures.

Aware that his final hour was at hand and that by the will of his Father he would offer up his life on the cross, Jesus desired that

those with whom he had been associated for the three and an half years of his ministry could now share his sadness, encompassing his soul in view of the coming experiences of Golgotha. But in addition to his sadness, there was joy in his heart because those whom the Father gave him were near and he would be able to share with them things long hidden in his heart.

These things have I spoken to you in proverbs; but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs but I shall show you plainly of the Father. For the Father himself loveth you because you have loved me and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. Howbeit, when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, and he will show you things to come. John 16:25, 27,28,7,13

These three chapters are to some extent different from the preceding utterances of our Lord. Here Christ is focusing mainly on the spiritual blessings, on the close and intimate fellowship with the Father, that the disciples were to receive after Pentecost. The Lord made no secret that faithfulness to the truth would bring severe experiences and even death. However, there are many more words where he tells us the Church of the Gospel Age of peace, joy, and unwavering hope. That becomes a great spiritual help for us. The last verse of chapter 16 is, as it were, a summary of all that had been said. This verse will be a basis for our discussion:

These things I have spoken unto you that you might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

The Church Has Peace Today

We live in times which generally lack peace. Over the last 100 years, man has attained a very high level of knowledge. The whole world of science boasts today of its advancements in the invention of weapons of mass extermination, and the level of high technology reaching to the 21st century. Greedy for power and universal rulership, the world's leaders offer hypocritical compromises to each other and look not for the will and wise counsel of the Creator but conceal him and look for a way to put a still stronger yoke on their people, to imbue them with fear and uncertainty about tomorrow, instead of caring for the common good. Huge arsenals of weapons demand huge costs for

maintenance and trap those who thought that their use would bring peace and safety to mankind.

This situation is also reflected in the religious world (the symbolic heaven). An ordinary person who would sincerely know the Heavenly Creator, cannot easily find the right direction on the merry-go-round of the various religious groups and so-called Christian churches. Every day the press, the radio, and television bring us more and more elaborate promises of peace, of a spiritual rebirth and common efforts toward saving sinful man and his permanent dwelling place planet Earth. Human fables and traditions, mistranslations and finally the dogmas of the Middle Ages, plague men with warnings of destruction, eternal torment in hell, Armageddon, and draw for the earth itself dreadful pictures of dead emptiness and, what is more, of its eventual annihilation.

As a means of a spiritual rebirth, an ecumenical union is suggested with a skillfully designed slogan: Let us speak only about what links us together. On the subject of peace, there are still more diverse thoughts and opinions. Each religious persuasion guarantees peace only through an exclusive adherence to its own guidelines; each government and social movement set as their priority the achievement of peace and prosperity only for their followers. The whole world relies on a peace established by armament, a peace in which a poor, weary man goes to sleep not sure of tomorrow. Was this the peace the Lord spoke about to his followers? Can man find a resting place for himself in this confusion? We read in John 14:27,

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

The Lord's people know this precious message of the eternal peace which the Most High will introduce on our planet through Christ.

And his name shall be called: Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom. Isaiah 9:6,7

All of us wait impatiently for the kingdom rule that will turn human hearts to truth and perfect harmony with love and righteousness in which all of us will have a part. The pouring out of peace upon the whole world will prove to be an extraordinary thing. The Church receives this peace during the entire Gospel

Age. It means a complete trust, a rest for the mind, even in the worst difficulties, a joy from blessings received, and a thankful prayer for the experiences gained. The author of Studies in the Scriptures writes:

What are joys which no man taketh from us, which persecution and affliction and trouble can only deepen and widen and make more sweet? What joy is this? This joy is a foretaste of the blessings to come, an earnest of our inheritance. It is inspired by confidence in him on whom we have believed: confidence that he is both able and willing to perfect the work which he has begun and which we desire shall be perfected in his own best way: confidence that So long as we are firmly holding to his gracious promises with the arms of our faith, he will not permit us to be separated from him. Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ? Shall tribulation and persecution? Our confidence is that It shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people (another translation: when the power of the holy nations weakens completely), all these things shall be fulfilled.

We remember that unlike many other teachers, Christ promised his faithful ones trouble, sufferings, and difficulties. These trials were to come immediately after their last conversation with him and the prayer of our Lord. They were to last not only until his second presence, but beyond. We read that when in the fourth watch of the night Jesus came to them walking on the sea, they were afraid. But Jesus immediately said to them: Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. (Matthew 14:27)

With the Lord's presence the Church received great spiritual strengthening. Yet when Jesus spoke those words of reassurance, the wind on the sea did not subside until he entered the boat. Similarly now, the peace and spiritual rest received during the second presence eases the difficulties and experiences which the Church suffered and still suffers since the parousia of our Lord. It will be So until all the faithful go beyond the veil.

A very similar picture is recorded for us in 1 Kings, chapters 18 and 19. The prophet Elijah came from the wilderness where he had spent three and a half years. He prepared a sacrifice acceptable unto the Lord and when the Lord accepted this sacrifice, he commanded that all the prophets of Baal be killed. In a short time the rain came, but Elijah again hid in the wilderness from Jezabel's persecutions. Upon arriving at the mount Horeb better known as mount Sinai he received from the Lord clear information about the

events to come and also what his further mission would be. Antitypically, after the three and a half [prophetic] years (1260 literal years) were fulfilled, not only was the Church (the antitypical Elijah) in a state of isolation (in the wilderness), but the whole land was hungering for the truth, the word of God (rain did not fall).

From 1803 to 1815 the Bible societies began their activity. They have distributed the Bible in millions of copies in many languages literally throughout the whole earth. The world of that day noticed to some extent God's overruling of this situation, and yet turned again to papacy and also to the religious sects which then came to existence. The true Church was again forced to go to an isolated place where she waited until the second presence of the Lord and the beginning of the execution of his royal office, and received specific instructions about the development of events during the harvest of the Gospel Age. Having thus encouraged his faithful through a clear understanding of the truth, the Lord showed them their further work.

We remember that, having returned to the land of Israel, the prophet Elijah was to accomplish three things:

1. to make a preparation for his departure;
2. to make Elisha his successor prophet and prepare him for that service;
3. to give orders concerning the changes which were soon to occur in Israel and Syria.

Additionally, Elisha was encouraged by the news that in Israel itself there were still seven thousand who did not bow their knees before Baal, neither did they kiss his image.

Similarly, the Church is informed about the time and order of the establishment of the Millennial kingdom. Her duty at the present time is to tell the Lord's words to the thousands of people who, being within nominal Christendom, do not agree with its false teaching and who only to some extent are blinded by an improper representation of God's character. The words of the Lord are as follows: Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues. (Revelation 18:4). On his return from the wilderness, Elisha was no longer concerned with Jezebel and her threats, but with full commitment he set to work on all that the Lord committed into his hands.

In such a close fellowship with the Heavenly Father and his beloved Son, holding in our hands these precious and glorious promises, and having so clear an understanding of present truth, with what words can we express the peace and joy that fill our hearts when we see all of you gathered here? The words of the Psalmist David come to mind, from Psalm 133:1: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity. In Psalms 119 he adds:

I rejoice at thy word as one that findeth great spoil. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love thy law and nothing will offend them. Psalms 119:162,164,165

Going back to the time of our Lord, we remember that the first words he spoke to encourage his disciples after his resurrection was the greeting Peace be unto you. (Luke 24:36) These words are with us not only during this discourse, they have been with the Church throughout the Gospel Age. With these words we begin and end each brotherly meeting for fellowship. These words are always present when we shake hands as brethren. They protect us from losing our faith and from spiritual apathy. They uphold us in the experiences suffered for the truth and they are a pledge when everything and everyone seems to be against us.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

Men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Marvel not my brethren, if the world hate you.

If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

These words of our great Teacher have to be true until the end of this age and they are as true today as before. Whoever would faithfully fulfill his mission and who would not hesitate when preaching God's truth will soon get acquainted with the sufferings of Christ and be able to say: The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. (Romans 15:3; Volume 5, page 419)

The Purpose of Trials

Trials help us feel God's care as far as both individuals and whole ecclesias are concerned. Almost in every country the brethren had

and still have their difficulties. The brethren in the Ukraine were not spared from those experiences either. Before the second World War, we enjoyed considerable freedom as did all of Europe at that time. That was a blessed time of free and almost totally unrestricted work in the field of the Lord. That freedom enabled a broad declaration of the joyful message of the kingdom through which many brethren came to a knowledge of present truth.

That freedom, however, lasted only until the war. Then the words of the Lord were fulfilled: In the world ye shall have tribulation. The meetings were officially prohibited. Brethren gathered only under the cover of friendly visits and from time to time there were occasions to say a few words of consolation at funerals. This was true until the year 1991 when for the first time since the war, a convention was organized with no obstacles and with the participation of Canadian brethren who initiated that convention.

Especially difficult were the experiences during the post-war years under Stalin. We know many brethren who directly felt the difficulties of persecution. One brother was sent to Siberia for ten years because meetings were held in his house. No word or remark about the authorities or the then present order could be uttered without bitter consequences. Our conditions were very similar to those that existed in Romania until recently.

But as we have always believed that this trouble would have an end, So we believe now that this moment of freedom will also have an end. Remembering the difficulties and persecutions of the brethren, we conclude that after many hard trials, the Lord allows a short period of rest, a short spiritual oasis, before the Church is faced with its most difficult, final trials.

A corresponding picture is the last days and death of John the Baptist. If we believe that the Church (the antitypical John the Baptist) is still on earth, then it is in similar circumstances that its mission should be finished. The great fire of trouble that will follow will prove to be a partial vengeance for Zion (the Church). Yet, this does not mean the Church herself looks for revenge. Christ in his prayer teaches forgiveness to those who bring distress and pain. Yet this vengeance is required by God's justice. As an illustration, we will use the words written in Matthew 23:35,36:

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zecharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.

These men of God perished from the hand of their brethren. The last of these martyrs was our Lord Jesus Christ. As they died they did not desire vengeance, for they were persuaded that their lives were to be such in the midst of an evil world. But the Lord did not forget their sufferings and he gave the nation of Israel a very bitter lesson which began when the apostles were still living.

Similarly, the Church becomes aware that all its lessons and difficulties are necessary to develop all the needed characteristics which would be required by the Master. We must die to receive the heavenly reward beyond the veil. Our warfare is to be not less than the one endured by our Lord. The apostle writes: All that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)

Exercising daily our humble perseverance, we should consider our experiences a privilege of proving our total devotion to the Lord and his cause.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand on the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

We should realize that if he endured such contradiction of sinners, then neither can we, despite our weariness, faint in our minds.

In our theme verse we read: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. In the word world Christ confronted all three things which can cause spiritual downfall: the world, the flesh, and Satan, because both the flesh and Satan's influence bend human hearts to the things of this world. We can say that the Lord's victory had its beginning as early as his consecration when, having entered the clean waters of the Jordan, he ended the war of the flesh and began a new war as a new creature. We know that Jesus as a perfect man gave up his life on earth. We read that seeing evil and death all around him, he has loved righteousness and hated iniquity. He expressed this in the simple and clear words: Lo I come (in the volume of the book it written of me) to do thy will, O God. (Hebrews 10:7)

It was the Father's will that Jesus should fully consecrate his life and present a burnt offering, in death. That sacrifice took three and

a half years and was consummated on Golgotha when Christ spoke the words: It is finished.

During his mission, Christ could have avoided many trials, because as a perfect man with a perfect mind he knew when derision was coming, or even persecution. However, it was the Father's will that he should endure all this because . . .

in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God . . . For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 2:17,18; 4:15

When we look at the Church's history, her life, and her experiences, we remember one of the great scriptures written in the Song of Solomon 6:5 which in the Ukrainian Bible reads as follows: Turn your eyes away from me, because they move me. There is something more significant in this scripture. We find here a great sympathy, a great love of our Teacher and at the same time a request to his beloved that she turn away her look, her eyes full of tears and pleas.

It seems that for a time the Lord seemed not to respond to prayers. Some could have been discouraged. This could have weakened their faith and hope, but in the scriptures we have a wonderful assurance:

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them, for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Deuteronomy 31:6

We live in wonderful times. The Millennial Kingdom of Christ will soon be established in power and glory and abundant rivers of truth will be poured on the land, until the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Then, as David writes, mercy and truth will meet together and righteousness and peace will have kissed each other. (Psalm 85:10)

Truly, all this will happen soon. But for the Church of the Gospel Age, there is still a short time to faithfully carry out her mission until the end. This time will require a complete effort, a complete consecration, a complete faith, and perfect love. And the peace of

God which passeth all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

Light of the World-Bro. Edward Pietrzyk, Poland

BELOVED IN CHRIST, brothers and sisters: Peace be unto you! Today we will have a lesson from the Gospel of Saint Matthew, chapter 5 verses 14 to 16, where we read:

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light So shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

These verses are part of the Sermon on the Mount. The gospel writer introduces the sermon with the following description: And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him. Thus the words Ye are the light of the world were directed to a group of his closest friends, his disciples, and not to the people who surrounded him every day. Evidently that was not a coincidence but a purposeful and deliberate act on our Lord's part.

Moreover, we conclude from the words of Jesus that even the saints of the Old Testament were not described as being that light. The Bible gives an honorable report about John the Baptist: Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist. John, the writer of the gospel, said: He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. (John 1:8)

Since John was not that Light, others before him were not lights either. The Apostle Paul continues when he makes a distinction between the house of servants and the house of sons the antitypical and real light.

The True Light Defined

When we look through the pages of the Word of God, we notice that biblical Light is defined as:

a. God himself, as we read in 1 John 1:5, God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all.

b. Our Lord Jesus Christ who, when talking to the Pharisees, says of himself: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

c. The Church of Christ. In addition to the words Ye are the light of the world, we can add another testimony of the scriptures in Ephesians 5:8, But now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.

Moreover, the scriptures teach that not only is the whole Church that light, but our Lord also adds in Revelation 1:16,20 the following: And he had in his right hand seven stars ... The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

Jesus foretold that during the Gospel Age as long as the church is being selected, special lights would shine. These lights were made for God's special purpose. The prophet Daniel wrote about them: And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

So the true light is God, Jesus, and the Church. What makes a true light? What determined that the simple fishermen from the Sea of Galilee had the honor to become the light of the world?

We are told that God is light and we are not surprised. He is the omnipotent, without beginning and end, immortal, the source of wisdom, power, justice, and love. Similarly we are not surprised that Jesus is light, the only begotten son of God. He is and always will be the reflection of the glory of his father, reflecting the true light. We read, I am in the Father, and the Father in me. (John 14:10,11)

Yes, Jesus was and is the light of the world. If we do not understand some of the events from Jesus' life and activity when reading them today, we should admit our own imperfection of mind and heart and not think our Lord made a mistake. As Job we are to confess before the Lord, Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. (Job 42:3)

God? Yes. Jesus? Yes. But us? In what way can we who are weak and imperfect be called the light of the world? Surely as people we are subjected to the common besetments like others. In this respect there is no great difference between us and others.

Perhaps our manner of life is worse than others. We realize that there are many noble people around us, although they are the children of wrath, without hope and God in this world. (Ephesians 2:2,12) Sometimes looking at our own society, we see some who may be considered great lights in the eyes of their societies or associations.

So we are told that John the Baptist was not that light, although in the society within which he lived and was active, he was regarded as an exceptional man. But Jesus, when saying Ye are the light of the world, did not mean the world but the Church of the Gospel Age.

What makes the difference? The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:8, For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. The scriptures teach that the true light is in Christ: Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. (Ephesians 5:14) In Romans 8:15-17, Paul gives us an insight into the true light:

But ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

The same thought is expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:21,22, where we read: Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us is God; who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Thus without doubt, the scriptures call those who are spirit begotten the true light. They have the spirit of sonship in Christ Jesus, our Lord. How can we recognize the true light? Christ the Lord left us a lesson recorded in Matthew 7:16-20, where we read:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even So every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Of course, it seems very appropriate at this point to cite Paul's letter to the Galatians (5:22,23). There the apostle defines the fruit of the Spirit which should abound within those who belong to Christ, those who crucified their bodies together with its cravings and desires. The fruits are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. A similar thought is recorded in Ephesians 5:9 where we read, For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

On the other hand the Apostle John mentions the most important thing, the true indicator of our relationship with God. In 1 John 2:8-11 he writes: He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

This is the New Commandment which Jesus talks So much about: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35) They should recognize us because of our love, love that is simple, unconditional, sacrificial, and a copy of Jesus. It is said that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Not even knowledge should be the discriminator, although one cannot say that knowledge is not necessary. Absolutely not! A knowledge of God's Word is necessary and can bring the great fruitage of faith, but only if this knowledge is placed in the right place in the education of God's child. We should reflect deeply upon the words of warning in Volume 6, page 387, where Bro. Russell writes: The increase of knowledge can cause turning away from piety. We have to shine, we have to be a true light in the Lord. The fruit of our activities will prove who we really are.

Letting Our Light Shine

Let us at this point pose another question: Why did Jesus give this assignment to his followers and what did he want to achieve by it? His own words recorded in Matthew 5:16 constitute the answer to this question. Let your light So shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Does the world really receive the true light in this way? Not quite. Our Lord was the greatest light. We know about his mission on earth and also the result. Of course there were those who saw the light and who recognized his outstanding personality. In John 7:46 there is a testimony about Jesus given by the officers: Never man

spake like this man. However, because of jealousy and hatred, the majority gave Jesus into the hands of pagans and crucified him.

The Lord's followers met with a similar result. This is in accordance with his statement found in Matthew 10:24,25. We read:

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

How were even the very special lights, the stars in the hand of the Lord (reformers to the seven Churches during the development of the Church), received? They died as martyrs, they were persecuted, people made fun of their teachings and although it pains us, we have to admit that even now this occurs among our fellowship.

However, there are those who notice the lights. In Acts 26 we note the reaction of two people, the Roman governor Festus and the Jewish king Agrippa toward the Apostle Paul. One of them noticed the light and appreciated it: Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Others receive the testimony about Jesus as a sign of madness and a lack of common sense.

In the Gospel of John there is a statement that helps us to understand this state of affairs: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (John 3:20) John the Baptist serves as an example in this respect. He was not that light yet the reprimand he gave Herod exposing his evil deeds led to his imprisonment and death.

Beloved brethren in Christ, what an example the ecclesias of the early church have left us! They were called by the Lord to be the light of the world. Let us go to the Word of God and find these precious lessons. In Acts 4:32 a testimony is given: And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.

We all know it is very difficult to preserve unity on earth. We are told that after Peter had delivered a sermon connected with the sending of the Holy Spirit, 3000 people believed. (Acts 2:41; 4:4) Thus the class in Jerusalem where the apostles served was made up not of tens of individuals but a few thousand. We are told that all believers had one heart and one soul. So let us ask, how did they succeed?

Our classes are made of tens, very rarely hundreds, and yet we see many problems, controversies, and sometimes splits and divisions. The secret of their success is revealed in Acts 2:42, And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. And what doctrines were taught by the apostles? The Apostle Paul gives us the essence of his evangelical teachings: For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)

It is true that the unity of the first church was lost over time. Divisions in Corinth and difficulties in Galatia can serve as an example. As long as the Apostle Paul was alive he tried to take steps against these. Led by the Spirit he foretold that the Church would not preserve their first unity. In his farewell words to the ecclesia in Ephesus, he talked with sorrow about the days when after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:28-30)

The history of the church during the Gospel Age sadly proves how these words were fulfilled. Our fellowship, the Gospel church during the harvest time, has had similar experiences as well. Until 1918 the Bible Student movement was essentially not divided, although a few years before 1918, when Brother Russell changed his view regarding the New Covenant, a few classes did leave him.

That was the first disappointment, but it was not quite a division. It was only in 1918 that the division occurred between the Free Bible Students and the Society. The whole world looked on as Bible Students fought among themselves. How was the light shining then, light from those who claimed to be the Church of Christ? Was that really the spirit of Christ, full of love, tolerance, and forbearing?

In Acts 4:32 we read another testimony regarding the first Christian ecclesias: And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul. That was the first communism based not on politics but on religion. It was a great blessing to all as we are told that neither was there any among them that lacked.

Are we inclined this way as well? It is So easy to open the Bible and read that we are only stewards of our possessions and the Lord Jesus does not want us to get rid of them. Supporting this argument we quote the words in Luke 22:36, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip. But to give everything as the

members of the first Church did is very difficult. However, the examples from recent history show that it is possible to do the same as those who did it long ago.

The author of the Studies of the Scriptures in Volume 3 mentions the Miller Movement which occurred in 1844. He gives a beautiful testimony about them. After the manner of the first Christians they also did not call anything their own. On page 92 [Polish edition] we read:

Accounts of those times, of their fervency of zeal, etc., fill our hearts with admiration.... Those who had money to spare piled it upon a table in front of the pulpit, where it was free to all needing it; and the sincerity and zeal of the believers at that time were such that, it is said, the money thus consecrated to the Lord needed no guarding, as those who did not need it would not touch it.

In Hebrews 10:34 we read a different testimony: [They] took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Do we understand the tragedy behind those words? What does it mean to have your goods spoiled? I think those of the brethren who lived during the first and second World Wars can tell us a lot on this subject.

The first Christians received joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Are we as strong as they in the Truth? Are we like Abraham able to leave our home, land, the possessions of a lifetime and follow the voice which called Abraham, Abraham?

Yes, life on this side of the veil is a trying time and it will prove that every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire: and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss. (1 Corinthians 3:13-15)

One more comment connected with the class in Berea. That class was especially appreciated in the eyes of the apostle. We read in Acts 17:11, These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

We ought to admire the first Church for their great faith, consecration, and devotion to God's Truth. They were not hindered by the difficulties of everyday life and increasing persecution but were able to find strength and time to meet together daily to study God's Word.

We with busy work schedules can hardly find time to meet twice a week. I don't know how many brethren would be able to attend daily meetings if we were to vote to do so in Krakow (my home ecclesia) following the example of the Bereans. I don't know how many times I personally could participate in such an arrangement. Let us remember the admonition given by the Apostle Paul: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. (Hebrews 10:25)

Beloved brethren, nearly 2000 years ago Christ the Lord gave a wonderful testimony about his Church: You are [or will be] the light of the world. These words have been echoing throughout the Gospel Age. But we should remember that as long as we are in the flesh, in our earthly tabernacle, there is no way we shine with full light. Perhaps our light will be dim, hardly visible among the storms and difficulties of an earthly life. But change will come with time. Jesus left us this hope in his parable of the wheat and the tares: Then the just ones will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Matthew 13:43)

May we participate in the fulfillment of these words. Amen.

Israel: Appointment with Destiny-Bro. Kenneth Rawson, USA

OUR DAY HAS witnessed many wonders, but perhaps the greatest comes from antiquity. After two thousand years, the miraculous rebirth of a nation. The Bible Students, a Christian association, watch with excitement and hope, hope entwined with the nation of Israel.

(Voice of Jack Campbell) Shalom. I'm Jack Campbell. If you visited Israel sometime during the 1960's and 70's, you may have seen y sons and me at work on Masada, rebuilding ancient walls or repairing mosaic floors, for it was my privilege to be engaged as restorer there. During the Yom Kuppur war and for the period of hostilities that followed, I served there as acting director. As a Bible Student, I'm a Zionist. I believe Israel is the most dynamic, positive development in the world today.

The historic position of Bible Students as non-proselytizing friends of Jewry is well documented. Here's part of our record:

1891: Charles Taze Russell, the pastor of Bible Student congregations around the world, proposed to Baron Rothschild a

practical plan for Zionism. Several years later Theodore Herzl made similar proposals that in 1897 resulted in the first Zionist congress.

1909: Invited to write 12 articles in the noted *Overland Monthly* on God's chosen people, Pastor Russell chided Christendom for the absurdity of the doctrine of the Trinity (Three Gods in one) and commended the Jews for their monotheism based on the Sh'ma Israel. Also, he chided Christian churches for their missionary efforts to convert Jews.

1910: Jewish leaders invited Pastor Russell to address a Jewish mass meeting in New York's largest auditorium on the subject of "Zionism in Prophecy." Pastor Russell's Hippodrome address was enthusiastically received by an overflow crowd of 5,000 Jews.

1910-1916: Until his death in 1916, Pastor Russell, by lectures and publications in Yiddish and English, continued to inspire Jews in the United States and Europe with Zionist hopes.

1914-Onward: Bible Students tell the Jewish people that the Gentile times have expired, therefore the Jews should go up and take their land. According to their faith it will be unto them.

1936-1940s: During the Hitler persecutions, Professor Franklyn Hudgings, a Bible Student, by publications and lectures enthused Jewish audiences with Zionist hopes based on their prophets.

1960-1980's: Bible Students continued in their tradition of encouraging the Jewish people, and these efforts were appreciated.

As an incitement to courage and faith, *Immunah*, Bible Students fraternally present...

Israel: Appointment with Destiny.

(Voice of God) "I am the Lord and there is none else, here is no God beside me. I form the light and create darkness. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens. I have made the earth and created man upon it." (Isaiah 45:5, 12)

"When I divided to the nations their inheritance, when I separated the sons of Adam, I set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel. For Israel is my portion; Israel is my inheritance. I am the God of Israel, I have formed thee O Israel, thou shall not be forgotten of me." (Deuteronomy 32:8, 9)

"I, the Lord, shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." (Psalms 121:8)

Over 4,000 years ago Israel's destiny was fixed when God appeared to Father Abraham, saying:

"Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great. . . In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."
(Genesis 12:1)

This promise was to be so important that God did something he never did again: he confirmed it by an oath when Abraham offered up his son.

"In blessing I will bless thee . . . and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 22:16-18)

Notice the promise has two parts: first, the seed of Abraham is to possess the land forever; and second, Israel, as part of Abraham's seed, is to bless all other nations. What a destiny fixed by divine will! Israel is to be a blessing nation to all other nations in the Messianic Age.

Four hundred years after God's promise was made, Moses delivered Abraham's descendants from Egyptian slavery. Then, at Mount Sinai, God gave his Torah to his people Israel.

Under Joshua, Israel secured some of the promised land. Their national glory reached its zenith during the reigns of David and Solomon. But the great deflection from divine law during Solomon's reign caused the Lord to divide the nation. For 400 years Judah waned until the destruction of Jerusalem. Although the Babylonian captivity came to an end, Judah remained a vassal state. Yet there were spurts of glory. Although the first temple was destroyed, there was the joy of the second. Esther saved her people and Purim was born. Judas Maccabaeus defied military logic and Israel was free for about 100 years.

Again provoked by cruel exploitation and armed with little more than a fierce independence, Israel found itself in open revolt against Rome, the iron-fisted masters of the world. Notwithstanding the heroics of Masada and the Bar Kochba revolt,

the great dispersion to the ends of the earth began. Then, under the terrors of Christendom, the Jewish people left a footprint of blood in every nation.

These centuries of blood letting was not true Christianity, but the inevitable corruptions of a church-state system. Christendom was looking for a scapegoat to cover its own ills.

Prophetic Hope

Many rabbis use Hos 3:4, 5 to explain Israel's adversities since the destruction of the temple.

"For the children of Israel shall sit solitary many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim; afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and shall come trembling unto the Lord and to his goodness in the end of days."

Bible Students have keenly felt the commission of Isaiah 40:1, 2: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Bid Jerusalem take heart, and proclaim unto her that she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Israel was to be especially encouraged and comforted when her double ended. What is this double or duplicate portion? Israel's history covers two periods of time, each 1845 years. Israel was to experience a double or duplicate period of disfavor equal to her period of favor. The time prophecies of the double showed Israel's period of national disfavor ended in 1878. In that very year the Berlin Congress of Nations was held. Benjamin Disraeli—the first and only Jewish Prime Minister of England—was there. By Disraeli's maneuvering, England was given a protectorate over Turkey's middle east provinces, including Palestine. Centuries old restrictions on Jews to buy land and settle were eased. The time to favor Zion had indeed come, for Israel has an appointment with destiny.

Even before 1878 Bible Student predicted this date would mark the beginning of national favor returning to Israel. David Ben Gurion's speech on Israel's tenth anniversary confirmed this prediction.

(Voice of Ben Gurion) "The state did not come into existence on that great day of May 14, 1948, nor, was it the 650,000 Jews who lived in the country on that great day who established it.

Pioneering activities of three generations preceded the declaration of independence beginning in 1878 when the first Hebrew settlement in the country, Petah Tikvah, was founded."

Petah Tikvah, the first Jewish colony for *aliyah* means "Door of Hope." For years thereafter many new *olim*, like the young Ben Gurion, were trained in Petah Tikvah. Sitting on the hillside together at night, they would sing Hatikvah and dream of re-establishing the Jewish state.

1878 marked God's favor for *aliyah*. 1914 marked the beginning of the end of Gentile dominion over Eretz Israel. After 1914 Bible Students encouraged their Jewish friends to go up and take possession of the land, for they had an appointment with destiny.

Valley of Dry Bones

In Ezekiel 37 a dramatic prophecy of Israel's restoration is given. Ezekiel is shown a valley filled with dry bones. These bones are indentified in Ezekiel 37:11 as Israel's hopeless condition as a nation.

Although alive as a people, national polity had been dead for centuries. But in 1878 the bones began to come together. World War I resulted in the Balfour Declaration and sinew began to cover the bones, then flesh and skin. In 1948 the miracle occurred and the body of national polity emerged. Israel was a nation again. Why? Remember that the promise to Abraham contained two parts: first, Israel was to possess the land forever, and second, Israel was to be a blessing to all other nations. In 1948 Israel met its first appointment with divine destiny. Israel will never be destroyed. It is now marching toward its second appointment with divine destiny—the blessing of all nations in the Messianic Age.

The State of Israel is Born

The new Israeli state is a miracle of history. Never before has a nation been destroyed, its people dispersed to the ends of the earth, and then, nearly 2,000 years later, regathered to their homeland and re-established as a nation.

On May 14, 1948, Israel declared itself an independent state. Another miracle occurred. The armies of seven Arab nations marched on the newborn state boasting that they would push the Jews into the sea. Outnumbered 100 to one, Israel not only repelled

the invaders but acquired more of Palestine than was granted in the United Nations partition plan.

During this war, Jordan had seized the biblical Jerusalem. Therefore Israel declared the new city of Jerusalem as its capitol, but deep in their hearts they knew that the real Jerusalem was occupied by Jordan. Nevertheless, it was apparent that God was dealing once again with Israel as a nation.

Many predictions of the Hebrew prophets relating to Israel's regathering since 1878 are being fulfilled.

The Olim in Aliyah

And the Lord said:

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. (Jeremiah 31:8)

The Law of Return declared that any Jew, anywhere, could return. In fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:8, all, both maimed and whole, were welcome to the shores of Israel.

There have been some very unique aliyot. The most colorful was Operation Magic Carpet. The Yemenite Jews lived in a very ancient culture. Many had never seen an airplane and concern arose that they might not enter one. They arrived at the airport and, when told to board the planes, rushed forward without hesitation. Why? They recalled the scripture that they were to return to the promised land on the wings of an eagle. Jews from the four corners of the earth have been regathered.

Fishers

Jer 16:16 foretold the conditions that would result in aliyah. Verses 14 and 15 speak of the regathering from all nations. Then verse 16 says:

Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them.

The fishers were the Zionist movement. As a fisherman uses bait, So the Zionist movement used the idealism of a national homeland

to inspire Jews to return to the land of their fathers. God raised Theodor Herzl who founded the modern Zionist movement in 1897. In his book, Herzl portrayed the idealism of a Jewish state:

[Voice of Herzl] The Promised land, where we can have hooked noses, black or red beards, and bow legs, without being despised for it; where we can live at last as free men on our own soil, and where we can die peacefully in our own fatherland. There we can expect the reward of honor for great deeds, So that the offensive cry of Jew! may become an honorable appellation, like German, Englishman, Frenchman, like all civilized peoples; So that we may be able to form our own state to educate our people for the tasks which at present still lie before our own vision. For surely God would not have kept us alive So long if there were not assigned to us a specific role in the history of mankind.

Hunters

Hunters as well as fishers are mentioned in Jeremiah 16:16. Divine foreknowledge knew the anti-Semitism of the Gentile heart. Persecutors like the Nazis literally drove the Jews out of the nations.

Yad Vashem was erected that the new generations of Jews would never forget the Holocaust and never permit it to happen again. In the Memorial Chapel an eternal flame burns as a symbol that the Jewish race will never be extinguished. The floor is composed of six million tiles, one for each Jew slaughtered. The name of each death camp is also memorialized here.

All the school children in Israel are bussed to Yad Vashem to learn a bitter fact of history that in times of crisis, the Jew is often turned upon as a scapegoat and becomes the victim of pent-up hate and scorn. How cruel, yet how true.

The Holocaust is an indictment of so-called Christian Europe. Both Catholic and Protestant sociologists observed that the Nazi extermination of six million Jews was impossible without the active cooperation of the public. The suppressed Gentile anti-Semitism surfaced in that atmosphere of self-preservation. Thousands of professed Christians turned informant, or cooperated in numerous other ways. By 1942 the Allied Powers (the so-called Christian West) were aware of the genocide, but refused to bomb the railroads leading to the death camps. Christendom was revealed for what it had become: a hollow shell of professions.

Yet in that dark night of hate there were a few lights of love, memorialized in The Garden of the Righteous of the Gentiles at Yad Vashem. Each tree honors specific Gentile individuals or families that risked life itself to save the Jews from the Holocaust.

After the hunters the Gentile world, after reneging on their promise since 1922 and now guilt ridden, finally felt a moral obligation to grant the Jews an independent state.

Land Purchase and Reclamation

Jeremiah prophesied that returning Jews would first have to buy the land. Between 1878 and 1948 millions of dollars were raised through worldwide fund drives to purchase land for settlement. Over 90% of the land purchased was barren waste, for which exorbitant prices were paid to a small class of wealthy Moslem landowners.

In 1905 Doctor Abraham Kuyper, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, wrote of his trip to Palestine: The Jews have come in vain. Only God can check the blight of the in-rushing desert. Only a miracle can save the Holy Land.

The reclamation of the land to the fertility of old is a miraculous fulfillment of the Hebrew prophets:

And they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them. (Amos 9:14)

Israel is a land of cities built upon the desert. In 1910 upon barren sand, the city of Tel Aviv was founded. Its mayor was elected before ground was broken. It is now one of the largest and most beautiful cities in Israel. Well did the prophet say, They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them.

In addition to barren desert, vast malaria-infested swamps defied all reclamation efforts by wealthy Arab landowners. The Jews then bought the land and fought and finally won the battle of reclaiming the malarial swamps. But at great price. Henrietta Szold, founder of Haddasah, wrote in 1920:

[Voice of Henrietta Szold] It is not I who am ill, but nearly everybody around me. Malaria is a terrible plague. All the stones of this country, and heaven knows there are plenty of them, appear to cry out in pain. The immigrants who are arriving at the rate of

300 a week contract it in the first eight days. They go into the country to work, and soon return, asking to be admitted to hospitals that don't exist. Every day we are turning away sick people with temperatures of 102. Even if we had all the gold in the world we could not prevent these first immigrants from becoming fertilizer for the land. Our task requires the sacrifice of young lives. It is a struggle with nature. I still believe it is worth the while. But it is hard, very hard.

The Hula Valley, one of the worst swamps to be conquered, became one of the most fertile parts of all the land. Fish ponds are nestled within beautiful farmland throughout the valley. Exporting fish has become a major industry. Citrus fruits, wheat, avocados, and vegetables of every kind are grown on ground made fertile by the sacrifices of many Jewish lives.

Journey of the Waters

Where there is water, there is life. After the capture of Mount Hermon and the Golan Heights in the '67 war, Israel found itself in the skiing business. Beginning with the snows of Mount Hermon, Israel has one of the most extensive irrigation systems of any nation. From melting snow and rains, water collects in the foothills. Through various tributaries the waters of Mount Hermon funnel into the Jordan River.

Once the Jordan has descended an elevation of over 900 feet, the muddied river flows into the sweet crystal-clear waters of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Genesaret. After travelling 12 miles through the purifying sea, the Jordan exits with fresh living water for a dead and thirsty land. Is it any wonder the rabbis say, Adonai has created seven seas, but the Sea of Genesaret is his delight. Upon leaving the Galilee, the Jordan pursues a winding course, all along which its waters are diverted through pumping stations, pipes, aqueducts, and ditches to bring life to the parched land. After a journey of over 200 miles, some of the water from the snows of Mount Hermon flows into this reservoir to create fertile farmland for a kibbutz near Beersheba.

Where there is water, there is life. In fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the land from north to south is returning to its ancient fertility.

The '67 War

The greatest miscalculation President Nasser of Egypt ever made was his demand that the United Nations remove its peace-keeping

force in the Sinai. This inevitably touched off the '67 war. Although outnumbered, the Israeli army overran the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in six short days. In fulfillment of Bible prophecy, the Sinai, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and Old Jerusalem became Israeli territory one of the greatest military feats in history.

The old city of Jerusalem was taken in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy:

Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. (Zechariah 12:2,3)

Jerusalem is a problem to two groups. Verse 2 identifies the people round about Israel Arab nations. Verse 3 states that the city is also a burdensome stone to all the people of the earth.

Verse 6 reveals that as a result of war with the Arabs, the people round about Jerusalem shall inhabit its own place, even in Jerusalem, a unique phrase. What does it mean? In 1948 when Jordan took the old city, Israel declared the new city of Jerusalem as its capitol. But in their hearts the Israelis knew the Bible Jerusalem was in the hands of the Arabs. When Jordan entered the '67 war, the Israelis attacked old Jerusalem with a religious fervor. With the capture of the old city, Jerusalem, Israel's capitol, now occupied its own place even in the biblical city of Jerusalem, a remarkable fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy.

Not only were Jews denied access to their holy places during Jordanian occupation, the holy places were deliberately desecrated. Sacred stones were used for walkways. Since the '67 victory, a Moslem holy place has never been desecrated by Israel. Both Arabs and Christians have access to their holy places.

Between 1948 and 1967 Jordan had systematically destroyed the old city's Jewish Quarter, levelling synagogues and eliminating evidence of Jerusalem's Jewish character. Since 1967, the Israeli government embarked upon an ambitious building program. The old synagogues have been rebuilt. The largest, Hurvah, was left in ruins. This arch was built as a memorial to another of the endless list of indignities suffered in the Jewish Quarter.

Now with the old city once again in Israeli hands, such indignities have been brought to an end. The restored Jewish Quarter is sufficient testimony that Jerusalem could never be surrendered after the remarkable recapture of Israel's true capitol in the '67 war.

Jerusalem

Jerusalem means City of Peace, yet few cities have experienced more wars than Jerusalem in its 4,000 years. Still a center of controversy, the Bible reveals that Jerusalem will soon become the City of Eternal Peace the capitol of Messiah's kingdom which will bring peace and righteousness to the whole earth.

One senses the presence of those prophets who, centuries before, walked the streets of Jerusalem. History surrounds you: David's shaft through which his army entered Jerusalem unawares and captured it. King Hezekiah's tunnel constructed over 27 centuries ago. Archeological digs yield thrilling finds: the stairs and paved streets that led to the second temple, the divine name on a silver amulet dating back to the days of the first temple, Babylonian arrow heads next to the remains of an Israeli defense tower the first evidence of the siege and destruction of first temple Jerusalem. Further excitement is felt at the discovery of the actual foundation stones of both the first and second temples.

Who can doubt Jewish antiquity in Jerusalem? Who can doubt Israel's right to Jerusalem? Further, this is THE holy city of the Jews, as is pointedly reflected at the Western Wall, part of the Temple Mount. For centuries this was the center of Jewish worship, especially during the periods of the first and second temples. Is it any wonder that the Jews throng here to pray, the same place their ancestors had worshipped for nearly 3,000 years.

But how holy is Jerusalem to the Arabs? When Arabs worship in the Mosque of Omar, they face this niche, for this niche faces Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The Arabs in Jerusalem face toward Saudi Arabia to pray. The Arabian center of worship is Mecca, not Jerusalem. To the Jews, Jerusalem always was and ever will be the center of their worship.

Western powers including the United States, insist that Jerusalem is negotiable in any Israeli-Arab peace talks. Jerusalem is not negotiable! Archeology and history confirm Jerusalem is in the hands of its rightful owners. Remember Zechariah's prophecy: all nations who involve themselves in the Jerusalem issue will be

sorely wounded. The nations of the world had better heed this warning.

Masada

The Israelis are determined that their state will never be destroyed again. Masada was symbolic of the destruction of the Second Commonwealth. Its defenders are glorious heroes of Jewish history. At night in awe-inspiring ceremonies on the slopes of Masada, new Israeli Defense Force recruits take the solemn oath: Masada shall not fall again!

They have kept their oath. The I.D.F. has fought five brilliant wars and emerged from the Lebanese war rated the fourth strongest military force in the world. But the Jewish people are weary of war. Israel wants peace. Camp David proved that Israel is willing to sacrifice much for peace. They gave Egypt the whole Sinai. This made their southern border very militarily vulnerable. But they were willing to take this chance for peace. They gave Egypt the Sinai oil wells which had supplied 75% of their energy needs. This played havoc on their economy, but it was a price they were willing to pay for peace. And still the world asks Israel to give more. Israel asks, What have the Arabs given for peace? Israel wants peace with its Arab neighbors so that they can concentrate on their economic crisis and the absorption of Russian Jews.

Despite the existence of so-called moderate Arabs, many still feel that the Arabs are intent on the destruction of the Jewish State. Arab military sophistication is on the increase. Seemingly time is on their side. It is only a matter of time before an Arab country has nuclear weapons. Also, Operation Exodus is of major concern. Without massive annual grants from the United States, and the Herculean donations from world Jewry, Israel would very likely collapse. Since the Iraqi war, world opinion is again turning against Israel.

Can Israel survive the overwhelming long-term problems facing her? [Here is] Kenneth Rawson, a Bible Student and for over 30 years a student of the Middle East:

Israelis emerged from the Iraqi War awed by the miracles of divine providence that left Israel relatively unharmed after 39 Scud missiles. But new dangers lurk on the horizon. In the peace process, the U.S. or the world powers may try to superimpose unfortunate peace terms on Israel. But Israel need not fear. Why? Remember Psalm 121. Your Guardian will not slumber. Indeed,

the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers or sleeps. The Lord is your Guardian, your shelter at your side. The Lord will guard you against all evil.

Israel is a miracle of history and it will continue to be a miracle of divine providence. In the in-gathering of the exiles, the reclamation of the land, and the development of the nation, we have seen the hand of the Almighty in the fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

The possible immigration of one million Russian Jews and the accelerated housing construction on the West Bank was a significant factor in bringing the Arabs to the peace table. If the negotiations don't break up, the peace process could take years. If the large-scale immigration continues, one to two million Russian Jews will turn the tide in favor of Israel.

This will be a miracle because there are So many odds against it happening. But this miracle will solve the Arab demographic problem. One to two million more Jews in Israel will cause the Arabs to more readily come to peace with Israel. And the Hebrew prophets reveal that peace will finally come on terms most favorable to Israel.

Bible Students believe it is not a coincidence that the rebirth and development of the State of Israel occurred during a period of unprecedented world upheavals, unprecedented wars and revolutions, unprecedented social and economic changes.

The Hebrew prophet Daniel spoke of a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation during which Daniel's people, the nation of Israel, would be delivered. Arnold Toynbee, the dean of contemporary historians, took this biblical phrase to describe our era as an unprecedented time of trouble. Israel will endure her divinely allotted share of these troubles. But these unprecedented world-wide upheavals are the birth pangs which will usher in the Messianic Age.

[Voice of God] I am the Lord, I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all my mountains. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood. And I will cause rain to rain upon him and his bands and upon the many people with him, an overflowing shower and great hailstones. I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations and they shall know that I am God. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord God . . . neither will I hide my face anymore from them; for I will pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 39:28,29)

Israel will stand alone before this massive invading force. Even the United States will forsake her. The Hebrew of Zechariah 12:8 teaches that the Lord will protect and deliver those who bend the knee, that is, implore the Lord in prayer for help. How are they helped? By the angel of the Lord that goeth before them. Not by Israel's military might, not by her alliances, but by divine intervention will this massive invasion be defeated.

Then Israel's appointment with destiny will be fulfilled. The law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (Micah 4:2) Despite centuries of persecution, Jewish hearts have remained enlarged toward their fellow men. Judaism has a vision, a vision that has never dimmed nor narrowed. Now Israel, a disciplined, humbled, redeemed people will fulfill their vision of world-wide peace, prosperity, and health to all.

The Hebrew prophets beautifully portray this vision as Messiah's Kingdom. There will be no unemployment, fear of automation, inflation, depression, or other economic problem. God's kingdom will assure equity and justice to all. The psalmist says, "He [God] will defend the cause of the poor, deliver the needy and crush the oppressor." (Psalm 72:4)

Our history is one of bloody war, but in the Messianic Age "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4) Neither will there be any more crime or violence. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain [kingdom], for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9)

Think of the parched drought belt of Africa where millions have starved to death in recent years. The climatic conditions of the kingdom will cause the earth to bring forth in abundance. The blossoming of the Negev since the rebirth of Israel is the Lord's assurance that his promises are true.

There will be no sickness, no crippling diseases no cancer, diabetes, arthritis, heart failure. The blind will see, the deaf hear, the crippled walk! Messiah's kingdom will satisfy all the legitimate longings of humankind.

The Torah presents you with a challenge. Your Jewish heritage comes before anything else. Don't ever forget this fact of life.

Don't resent it or try to hide from it. Rather cherish your Abrahamic heritage. Divine providence has an appointment with Israel. Your lifetime may see the Messianic era ushered in, when the children of Abraham will bless all the nations of the earth. Yes, the Torah will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Now that God's appointed time has come for Israel to become a nation, ponder deeply your responsibility to Israel. Are Israel's concerns your concerns? Are Zionism's needs your opportunity?

[Voice of God] Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for thou art My servant; I have formed thee, thou art Mine own servant; O Israel, thou shouldest not forget Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee. Isaiah 44:21,22

In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. Zechariah 8:23

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. Jer 3:17

And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Zechariah 8:3

The Torah will go forth from Jerusalem, and nations shall walk in thy light.

Worshipping the Beast-Bro. Roman Rorata, Poland

BELOVED IN OUR Saviour! God in his Providence allows us to live in these times in which the fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy is taking place. The worshipping of the apocalyptic beast is happening before our eyes. Do you see how the nations humble themselves before it? Maybe you are not making a note or realizing that these events are a sign of the end of times! In Revelation 13:11-15 we read:

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth

and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast ... And he doeth great wonders ... in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

The foregoing verses contain several important components or elements of our study. We are living in times in which the working power of these two beasts who cooperate together greatly influence the present nations. They not only inspire the people, but in one sense give direction to some governments. Economic and political matters depend in great measure upon clerical powers.

In our country, Poland, this matter is very clear. It cannot be denied that the Catholic clergy tries through all possible measures, both lawful and unlawful, to get control of all areas of society. Many citizens have noted the actions of the clergy and have commented about obvious clerical interference stating that it is not in harmony with the gospel. This refers mostly to the interference in the area of government. Much is being written about it. Poles don't like any pressure on their freedom and they will turn away from the church if it tries to exercise too much power.

The clergy diligently attempts to hide its endeavors to get power. In answering the accusations, the religious leaders try to explain to the people that the church in Poland does not want to be involved in politics, that this involvement comes only from the church's desire to serve the nation with which it is so closely united. They claim they are only helping in planning a Polish house, and, as far as political action, the church keeps its distance.

One popular weekly magazine concluded: The eagerness of the Church to use its pulpits for the purposes of campaigning does not show an effort to distance itself from politics.

Surely the serving of society by the Church need not include this kind of involvement. Does Polish society need spiritual leadership in political matters?

On August 27th [1991] an Episcopal plenary session took place during which bishops insisted that all believers should participate in the parliamentary election. It was said, The election of representatives by knowledgeable and upright people, those who

recognize the evangelical system of values and Polish Christian tradition, gives believers the likely opportunity to influence the shape of the country.

Episcopacy declared, It is necessary to look closely at the candidates and vote for those who fit the required criteria.

Worried about the faith of the homeland, spiritual fathers prayed for a peaceful election campaign. We read in the declaration: Building statehood without God will not withstand the test of time. This is exactly the distance between religion and politics.

In everyday life we run into similar facts that have important links to biblical features of the final days. Let me suggest, dear brethren, some thoughts on the symbols spoken of earlier which seem to explain the correct view of the Holy Scriptures.

And I beheld another beast the Catholic Millennial version of the Bible says, I saw a different Beast. Following the history of Christianity, it seems logical to accept the thought that the Eastern Church with its Byzantine ritual became this other beast. As a result of widening ideological differences during the middle ages between the Greek East and the Latin West, and also as a result of a battle between Rome and Constantinople for pre-eminence in Christianity, the split in the Church occurred in 1054 A.D.

This beast differed from the first beast. If the first is shown as a terrible creature battling with the saints and speaking blasphemies against God and against the faithful ones, then the second beast had two horns like a lamb.

New philosophies of life are being offered by the two horns representing the spiritual superiority of religious authorities Orthodoxy and Protestantism two patriarches the Czar of Russia as the head of the Orthodox Church, and the King of England as the head of the Anglican Church.

The horns, like a lamb, point to youthfulness, innocence, and gentleness. She came out of the earth and rose from among a peaceful society in a sparsely populated region rather than arising out of the sea which represents turbulent nations. From the beginning she was characterized by tolerance and humanitarianism, and she respected people and their dignity. Her character was peaceful rather than predatory.

The characteristic in common between the beasts was the fact that they were both authorized by the dragon. But they differed in that the dragon gave power to the first beast, which represented civil governments, whereas the second beast spoke like a dragon.

Horns of the lamb and voice of the Dragon

These point to a vivid difference between the actual state and its declarations. History has proven that all churches as they became popular began to corrupt previously taught principles of peace and tolerance. One example of this is the Anglican Church which, in the 16th and 17th centuries, was characterized by inhuman persecution of true Christians. The other protestant churches acted no differently. It is known that Michael Servetus, a victim of religious intolerance, was burned to death at the stake in 1553 on John Calvin's order.

Such was the history, but we are interested in current events which are no doubt being expressed in apocalyptic vision. As we see, this other beast was supposed to accomplish great deeds: And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him. This quotation is worthy of note because it shows the activity of the second beast was to take place at the same time as the first beast existed. That first beast, as we know, is the papal system. The efforts and endeavors to unite do not come from the first beast but the second, that is from the protestant churches and presently from the Greek Catholic Church [Orthodox].

Presently, like never before, this matter becomes clear. The protestant churches admire papal organization and are looking for closer ties. As a result of the restoration of religious freedom by Gorbachev, the orthodox religious leaders are beginning to speak like a dragon, representing civil powers, and they are speaking from a position of power. Everyone is striving for unity under the banner of the ecumenical movement. For this purpose the churches are subduing civil powers and are co-organizing papal visits during which the earth and those who dwell therein ... bow down Bow down is the reading of the Polish Bible. The English word in the King James translation is worship. to the first beast. Bowing down means to worship, to adore, flatter, endorse, support mentally and materially, or actively participate in the cultic services.

The present Pope is very industrious. None of his predecessors demonstrated this level of activity. Not So long ago, his predecessors were being called the prisoners of the Vatican. This one is continuously on a pilgrimage. His Pope mobile travels

through the streets of cities, settlements, stadiums, and airports. He is present everywhere. He has visited many countries on different continents and still he announces new trips. He is already planning a visit to Russia in 1992.

We understand that ecumenicalism needed such a person. His influence over the fall of communism and at the same time the rebirth of democracy is not being hidden. In addition, it all began in the Pope's native country. In the Rome newspaper Tempo we read:

Karol Wojtyla identifies himself with the Universality of the Church, which has no geographical borders and knows no political barriers. But at the same time the Polish pope is convinced that his country will play a special role on the European stage and up until the present time history agreed with him.

The Pope gave a witness to this during his meeting with young people who came to Jasna Gore in Czestochowa [Poland]. He said, Today finally came your hour, and he called on the participants of the meeting to be, announcers of hope. After a long period, during which the borders stayed closed, the church in Europe can finally breath freely with both of it's lungs, East and West, said the Pope.

This remark has it's own significance because such comfortable circumstances have been created that the church presently has no obstacles to accomplish its objectives. As far as Poland is concerned he called it the European tree which sustains and grows. The Pope said:

It's not enough to just recall the historical truth of the beginnings of Europe. As pertaining to roots the roots cause a tree to live and grow. There is a constant need to be convinced whether our European tree Polish existence was not in reality pulled away from these roots.

Our Polish president, Walesa, noted these words of the Pope and said,

Europe is rising in front of our eyes. We Poles want to contribute to this process what we have that is most precious: our entire heritage along with a young generation.

The chairman of the church committee, priest and doctor Marian Duda who is preparing the Sixth World's Day Of Young People, said at the beginning of the press conference:

Czestochowa is today a strategic place of Europe and the world. And if someone should write a book about the unification of Europe, the first sentence of that book should be: August 1991Czstochowa.

The Lamentations Stampa newspaper has a similar opinion:

The government represented presently by Walesa can not make it without spiritual leaders and also can not resist the charms of the secret king of Poland the Pope.

He is not only the secret king of Poland, but also of other nations. Wherever he is, in whichever country, he receives tribute. They humble themselves before him just as they once did before the Egyptian goddess Isis, or the Ephesian goddess Diana.

A good example of this worship is the words of the Love Covenant spoken by the young people at Jasna Gora:

We greet you with the words of Jesus; you are Peter, yes Holy Father, you are Peterrock. We greet you with great joy new joy, not expected joy, and surprising joy. We greet you with a new joy which is original and exclusive.

The Polish primate, [archbishop] Glemp, in his welcoming address added:

You are walking at the head of the pilgriming church. You are standing at the head of the young peoples' pilgrimages. Most worthy pilgrim who stops in different sanctuaries who brought us to a place where in the silence of the dusk the Black Madonna is present and watches together with us.

The news magazine Time reported:

American newspapers, radio, and TV cover the Pope when he comes for visits more than any other man of state. The popularity of the Holy Father is growing almost to gigantic proportions. This uncommon popularity which he meets wherever he goes is a subject of deliberations by the greatest philosophers of our time. Just as two thousand years ago, countless multitudes followed Christ, similarly they follow John Paul II. And it seems that a special grace flows down from him unto the multitudes. His presence creates in people feelings of indescribable happiness.

Philadelphia welcomed him with sunshine and a multitude of about two million people. Again there were thousands of flowers, garlands, confetti and choral chants of Hallelujah, Hallelujah! One of the American TV commentators expressed himself: After following the mission of John Paul II throughout the world I can say that the entire world is in his hands!

Isn't this the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Revelation 13:1-3,12?

And I saw a beast ... and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. ... And they worshipped the beast saying who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him.

Questions arise: What is the Pope trying to accomplish through his travels? What are his goals? We can answer: Successes, and once more Successes! ideological successes, successes in unification, and political successes. These have meaning in the goals of the Catholic church. They know that the present world needs some kind of a moral element.

Different ideological circles need different factors, some kind of moral support in the complicated situations of the nations because of the danger of failing economies, politics, and religion. The Pope accomplishes that goal, persistently and without hesitation.

First, he increases the prestige of the church which he heads. Second, he strives for domination and superiority in the Christian Ecumenical Council. Third, he is quite aware of the dictatorship of his predecessors and the fact that the rulers of this world had to take them into consideration.

There are, however, places in which this type of activity is not welcome, western Europe for example. They say that the Pope is very conservative with regard to lifestyle in the world and they don't accept his ideology. The Pope however, does not pay attention to these reservations and stubbornly strives for his goals. Every pilgrim trip becomes the next milestone laid on the road leading to the objectives of the Pope on the road to renewed Christianity through a joining of all Christians in the spirit of ecumenism under the banner of the Catholic Church. This is a main goal which he is cleverly and persistently aiming at. This same Pope, described by his opposition as conservative and closing up the church in its structures, is, on the other hand, open to outside contact and accepts under his influence those who were

far from him. Through this he lets them know that they could be close. This is a clever and captious action, used where there are not many Catholics. In places where Catholics are a majority this cleverness and gentleness is not used.

Poland is an example of this. Ninety percent of the nation is Catholic. The Catholic religion can be seen with its total brutality where the public sector is being integrated into the church. Religious leadership takes control of every aspect of life, all national structures, and all areas of government. Even in such places where they are learning to make war, priests can be found together with the Holy Father. Note this example taken from a speech given by the Polish army's Field Bishop in Koszalin:

There had to be great changes in the consciences of Polish people and meaningful incidents in the life of the nation in order for the people in army uniforms, soldiers of the Polish Army, to come for a meeting with the successor of Saint Peter. I'm standing before you Holy Father, ordained by you as a Field Bishop and sent to the military sheep fold. I thank you for the gift of reestablishing church services in the Polish field army after 50 years of interruption. There are present here chaplain bishops who finally are able to preach the teachings of Christ and perform the most holy sacrifice out in barracks, hospitals, military institutions and firing ranges. They stand before you, Holy Father, as soldiers, officers, standard bearers, privates, and civilian army workers, representing army units as well as all types of military powers. All of them in their numbers and through liveliness want to express to you, We are the knights under the banner of Mary standing here to serve you again; we Poland, we the nation, your people. We offer you, Holy Father, our hearts' enduring and faithful love as military soldiers. Just as commander-in-chiefs of ages past, and our forefathers and kings stood before battles and events, we are also Christ's orderlies and servants of Mary. Strengthen all the good that is awakening and growing in the Polish army through your apostolic word and blessing.

Nothing could be added or taken away from this. Religion, the army, and politics are all united. It is difficult to comprehend how such a three dimensional collection could unite with the Holy Father and be displayed to the entire world through contemporary mass media. Many politicians in power, including generals, ministers, admirals, presidents etc. are bowing down quite often and with subservient attitudes during the visits of the shepherd, Karol Wojtyla.

What's happening here is similar to the incident in the Babylonian kingdom on the plain of Dura. Great masses of people turn to religious psychosis, thinking that this road leads to salvation.

Many observers state that there were similar manifestations being organized with masses of people; and there were guitars, songs, fireworks, cheers, and shouts of, May he live! Today these elements are gone and there are none who would want to do that. It was decided that those were the people who followed false prophets, false ideology which lead them astray. So this time the same thing could happen again with one difference, the banner would be different.

Deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by those miracles

The greatest miracle of our time is the work of ecumenism. Who could have foreknown that the churches, who have been enemies for hundreds of years, would eventually try to speak the same language? They are trying to remove the barriers that divided them for ages.

Through the ages they fought each other with thoughtless determination and refused to the other God's grace. Each thought there was no salvation outside their own church. The dogmas have established so much prejudice that even the best resolutions of the Ecumenical Council are not able to eliminate it. Will the ecumenical movement really bring together all Christians? Will they speak together and live with each other in the spirit of Christ's love and tolerance? This is an important question and answering it is exceptionally difficult.

It seems reasonable to expect that this coming together will only affect arrangements and organization, or in other words on paper. Uniting the members' hearts of different church groups will not take place because a very deep rift of religious fanaticism divides them. This is deceiving those living on the earth. The voice of tolerance, as it is quite often heard today, is only a smoke screen. It leads public opinion astray to pave the way for followers.

These are the methods used today since history proved that burning at the stake, inquisitions, anathemas, and curses did nothing to bring the expected result. Today tolerance is being talked about despite differences of dogma. Is it possible for a person to tolerate another with a different outlook on life after being fed for hundreds of years with the gall of hatred? Will a few speeches about tolerance remove deep rooted prejudices?

As far as this is concerned we have great doubts! The reason is because trivial dogma concepts have penetrated the human subconscious So deeply that life on the level of God's laws of love is far off in the future. Man's only possibility of obtaining this lies in God's kingdom, with the help of the great mediator, Jesus Christ.

Let us note the hatred between both sides of the churches. The Greek Catholic Church and Roman Catholic Church have almost the same church liturgical ceremonies, but under a different authority. How fierce and full of hatred are the relationships between the members of these churches. Did the church leaders centuries ago have any kind of influence on the present state of things? We don't see [a harmony between] the continuation of what the church has been teaching and the ecumenical mission of the Pope.

Presently, all the dividing barriers would like to be removed instantly. But the adversity of one against the other is the fault of the church. These are the results of bad teachings. The Church has lost much of its authority and is no longer the only power something the Church would like [to restore] through unification. Let's notice this through the example of what happened in the Polish city of Przemysl.

Long existing protests between the members of the Greek Catholic Church and Roman Catholic Church over the ownership rights to one of the cathedrals turned into a riot. The Pope used his June visit [1991] to make peace between them. They prayed together and performed a holy mass for peace for opposing sides and officially transferred the cathedral into the hands of the Orthodox to keep as their possession. But as soon as the Pope left, the situation returned to its previous state, and fierce religious fighting resumed.

People who protest, do So in the name of their own guarded values, rather than simply out of pure egotism. Somehow they think that their actions are good and don't realize that they are evil. They believe that they are right and we can not judge them for that. Judging them would be an easy way out. But the problem is people know So little about each other and each other's beliefs. This is the fault of teaching. The church should have prepared them. This mistake of the church greatly damaged the prestige of the Pope because they did not appreciate his decision concerning peaceful co-existence.

This conflict is not a surprise. The lack of accomplishment and oversights of the church are resulting in damaging consequences. This a natural consequence of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic characteristics.

There is a need to ponder whether the common followers with some Exceptions have a greater belief in God or in the Church. There is a concern that they believe more in the Church because it is more showy, ceremonial, and uplifting. This is a basis for the crumbling foundations of Christendom which are already brittle and leading to a complete moral downfall.

Church leaders seeing the forthcoming dangers try by all means to strengthen the decaying church structures. They are raising a great image of an ecumenical fortress. They think that through this method they will preserve the nominal Christian systems against their final destruction. They try to accomplish a miracle of lengthening their usurped, unlawful apostolic succession, by which they deceive themselves and their flock. The prophetic statement Babylon is fallen, is fallen soon will point to its final destruction.

The image is already standing on the plain of Dura (Daniel 3). The skeleton of the World Council of Churches, established in 1965 is seen in its glory on the plain of the churches' activities.

Two beasts have crawled out on the earth to perform miracles they depend on human imperfections and offer atonement under the banner of Christian unity. This is the time of deceits and they are going to be So strong that they could deceive even the very elect.

We are waiting for the image of the beast to receive its spirit, to come alive, at the time when protestant and eastern churches tighten their organizational bond with the Pope's church and they will receive lawful power to work together and receive support from the dragon civil power. These events could be accelerated through the upcoming 1992 visit of the Pope to Russia.

Everything points to the nearness of the time when the faithful will be tested as to whether they will accept the sign of the beast on their forehands or hands. (Revelation 13:16) It seems that this could be done either by open support out of reverence or by fear. Let us endeavor to replace the sign of the beast with the seal of the Holy Spirit which will fortify our sober minds and increase our zeal to serve only the Lord.

God will allow such experiences to separate his overcomers from all those who will submit to the deceitful power of delusions and will bow to the image of the beast. God reassures us that His chosen will be kept from falling.

May the action taken by the three young men recorded in Daniel be our support:

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Daniel 3:17,18

Beloved in the Lord! How important it is for us to keep in the love of the Lord, to have a knowledge of the forthcoming events, timely facts and try to develop Christ's spirit because that will allow us to be faithful until the very end.

Amen.

Joseph, Preserver of Life-Bro. Lutz Ruthmann, Germany

TODAY WE WISH to consider the life story of the patriarch Joseph as recorded in the 37th through the 50th chapters of Genesis.

This biblical story can more accurately be called the story of Joseph and his brothers. In this richly symbolic story, it is generally accepted that Joseph pictures our Lord Jesus, and that Joseph's brothers picture fleshly Israel. At first Joseph was degraded in this dramatic account, and then later he was rewarded and elevated to a position of power. We wish to consider these symbolic pictures in the same sequence of events.

When considering that Joseph pictures our Lord Jesus, we can also see that the patriarch Israel is a picture of our Heavenly Father during the time in which Joseph was hated by his brothers and was persecuted by them. Later, when Joseph was advanced to reign over Egypt, the Pharaoh pictured our Heavenly Father.

Finally, we consider the brothers of Joseph, or rather, fleshly Israel: first, under the old law covenant when they hated Joseph and plotted against his life, and then later, under the new law covenant when they bowed before him and were kept alive by him.

When we carefully consider Joseph's life story, we recognize a long list of events that may seem to be unrelated, but in reality they work together toward the goal of bringing Joseph to the court of Pharaoh.

The brothers hated Joseph, because they could see that their father loved him more than them. Their hatred resulted in his being sold into slavery, picturing death. As a slave Joseph was sold into Egypt and came to the house of Potiphar. His rejection of Potiphar's wife brought about his imprisonment. He had to be jailed to come in contact with Pharaoh's chief butler. This was an important event, because after the butler returned to Pharaoh's service, he remembered that Joseph had interpreted his dream.

What had to happen, and why did these events take place in Joseph's life in the way that they did? These events unfolded to bring Joseph to the court of Pharaoh at the prescribed time, so that he could become the preserver of life for his brothers and the Egyptians.

When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he spoke these words:

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. Genesis 45:7,8.

In the antitype it was the hatred and jealousy of the scribes and pharisees that drove the people of Israel to reject and crucify their Messiah. The Heavenly Father, however, overruled this evil deed into something good, for he provided that our Lord's sacrifice would be a corresponding price for the purchase of mankind from Adamic death, thus making Jesus a Preserver of Life not only for his brothers, but also for the Egyptians, as well.

When Joseph met his brothers and revealed himself to them, he explained that God's purpose was that he go to Egypt so that he could become the preserver of life for them and for Egypt. Joseph said unto them:

Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Genesis 50:20.

Going to his Brothers

Joseph was asked by his father Israel to see if all was well with his brothers and with the herd. Israel said, Come, and I will send thee unto them, and Joseph answered, Here am I! (Genesis 37:13,14) Joseph's spontaneous answer revealed a joyful obedience, as if he were to say: Here am I, to serve you in any way that I can. We are reminded of the words of Isaiah that apparently speak of the Logos in glory:

Also I heard the voice of the Lord [God] saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. Isaiah 6:8.

Joseph went to Shechem, but his brothers had moved to another grazing place. A stranger noticed that Joseph appeared to be lost and asked whom he was seeking. Joseph answered, I seek my brethren, tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. vs. 16.

When Joseph learned that his brothers had moved to Dothan, he followed after them. We read in verse 17: And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

And Joseph went after his brethren. Joseph looked for his brothers. He followed them, although they did not want to hear from him, or even greet him. They openly showed him their contempt and hatred. Joseph followed his brothers and returned their hatred with love as he fulfilled the command of his father Israel.

In his loving obedience to the wishes and purposes of his father, Joseph reminds us of our Lord Jesus, who was sent by his Heavenly Father to look after His people Israel. Just like Joseph (the type), our Lord (the antitype) was also hated and despised by his fleshly brothers. His own people did not accept him, and at the end of his mission our Lord uttered the sad words:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Matthew 23:37.

We can read the reaction of Joseph's brothers in verse 18 when they saw Joseph coming in the distance.

And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

And when they saw him afar off. In some ways the pharisees, scribes and elders were prejudiced against our Lord. They saw him afar off, they saw him as gluttonous and as a winebibber, as a publican and sinner. (Matthew 11:19) They viewed him as a Samaritan who had a devil (John 8:48), and they saw him as one who did not keep the Sabbath holy. (John 9:16) They saw him afar off, not as the one whom the Heavenly Father had sent to them. They did not consider him to be a messenger of the Father, and before he drew near with the message of his father, before he could bring the message close to their hearts, they agreed to kill him. We are reminded of the words in Mark 12:6,

"Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them . . . but those husbandmen said among themselves, this is the heir; come, let us kill him."

Joseph was hated by his brothers without provocation. The motive of their hatred was envy and jealousy. The declaration that the Father still had "a son well-beloved" corresponds typically to the statement in Genesis 37:3, 4,

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age ... and when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

The pharisees and scribes were jealous of our Lord when they saw that God allowed him to perform signs and miracles which were impossible for them to disclaim. They heard what the simple people said of him: Never man spake like this man. (John 7:4) And the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. (Matthew 7:28,29) They could neither snare nor refute him in his doctrines, So they decided to kill him.

The brothers decided to kill Joseph and throw him into a pit, but Reuben, the first-born son of Leah, thwarted the murder. Joseph was thrown into a pit but was not killed. The question arises: Can we view this treatment as a type that would represent the actual slaying of our Lord on the cross?

Consider that the Jews, his brethren, actually did not lay a hand on Jesus, but rather allowed the Romans to take care of the situation. We could go so far as to say that Joseph was symbolically dead when he was being thrown into the pit. He was dead both to his brothers and to his father. And when he left the pit as a slave, he

became a possession of the Ishmaelites who bought him. They could control him at will and sell him to someone else if they pleased.

Another important similarity is our Lord's resurrection since he rose from the pit or grave on the third day. Perhaps even this period of time in the grave, or pit, is foreshadowed in the life story of Joseph. Also, the fact that someone wanted to throw Joseph into a grave is not without symbolic meaning as well, since the expression to throw him into the grave is an irreverent expression for burial. Only criminals were buried in this way, and their bodies were simply thrown into a grave. The prophet Isaiah prophesied about our Lord with these words, And he made his grave with the wicked. Isaiah 53:9.

An apparent difficulty in this part of the story is the fact that Joseph was sold by his brothers for twenty silver pieces, whereas Judas sold our Lord for thirty pieces of silver. The consistency in this parallel is figurative, not literal. Thirty pieces of silver was the price for a mature slave, and twenty pieces of silver for slaves under twenty years of age. Joseph was not yet twenty when his brothers sold him.

Joseph's brothers did not believe that his dreams of their sheaves in the fields having to bow down to his sheaves could be fulfilled. As they threw him into the pit, they said with irony, We shall see what will become of his dreams. Joseph was convinced that both his dreams would be fulfilled. How do we know this? Do we find an answer in the scriptures?

When Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams of the fat cattle and the lean cattle, and the seven good ears of corn and the seven bad ears of corn, he spoke to Pharaoh with these words:

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Genesis 41:32.

Joseph could bear all sadness and suffering, the hatred and disdain of his brothers, the degradation of slavery, the false accusations of Potiphar's wife, the jail, the loneliness, because he realized and was completely convinced that it is because the thing is established by God, that finally he would be exalted and that his brothers would bow before him. Joseph could patiently wait for this time because he knew that God will shortly bring it to pass.

When Joseph then saw his brothers in Egypt for the first time, they bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them. Genesis 42:6,9.

Disbelievers like to think of us also as dreamers when they hear us speak of the restitution of all things, of God's Kingdom on Earth. When they see us in affliction or in a low condition and know of our heavenly hope, then they can say to one another just as Joseph's brothers did: We shall see what will become of their dreams. However, dear brethren, we know whom we have believed, and we know that the matter is established by God, and that God will shortly bring it to pass.

We read in Genesis 41:46, And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, King of Egypt. This remark, which appears to be a mere side remark, is not without meaning. Our Lord came to Jordan to be baptized by John when he was thirty years old. He came to lay down his life and to consecrate himself to do the will of his father.

Symbolically our Lord stood before the master of the universe to show through his immersion in the Jordan river that he was ready to do the will and purposes of his Heavenly Father. The Father filled our Lord Jesus with His holy spirit without measure, So that he would have the understanding and the strength to accomplish the work before him, to become the Preserver of Life. This unrestrained consecration of our Lord unto the will of God was greeted with the following words from our Heavenly Father: This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Matthew 3:17.

In this type we find the same appreciation of Pharaoh for Joseph. We read in Genesis 41:38, And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

Up until his baptism in Jordan, we knew our beloved master as Lord Jesus, but after his consecration, the Holy Scriptures give him the title of Christ, or, according to the Hebrew, Messiah. Both have the same meaning: Anointed.

Joseph also received an honorable name from Pharaoh, and this name revealed a future work which Pharaoh had in store for him. It actually was a title that the King of Egypt bestowed on Joseph. We read in Genesis 41:45, And Pharaoh called Joseph's name

Zaphnath-paaneah. A footnote in the German Elberfelder Bible says this means Savior of the World or Preserver of Life.

In the Berean handbook we find another version of the meaning of the name: Savior from death through the bread of life. The commentary also states, A reference to our Savior, who is the bread which is come down from heaven. And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. John 6:51.

On the Throne

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee. Genesis 41:41-43.

When we read these verses, we can determine that Joseph received an extraordinary reward and effusive honor for his service to Pharaoh. Although Pharaoh had already demonstrated his appreciation by bestowing the honorable name upon Joseph, he showed in this way as well, that Joseph had become the Savior of Egypt and had become the Preserver of Life.

We will first understand the full extent of Pharaoh's dealings with Joseph after we have considered the antitype. In his letter to the Philippians (2:6-9) Paul speaks of how our Lord made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant ... and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He follows in verses 9 and 10:

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth.

Paul tells us that our Lord in unrestrained obedience gave up his heavenly glory as the Logos, left his father, and lowered himself to become a man in order to be faithful unto death, and thus to become the preserver of life for Adam and his race. For that reason our Heavenly Father exalted him to sit at His right hand, and he gave him all power in heaven and earth. (Matthew 28:18)

By examining the words of Pharaoh, we recognize that he, too, exalted Joseph to power and authority. In Genesis 41:40 we read, Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 15:27,28,

For he hath put all things under his feet ... and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

In chapter 41:41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. Egypt represents the world in this picture. In verse 42 Pharaoh makes a symbolic gesture: And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand. In other words, Pharaoh transferred his authority to Joseph, since the hand is a symbol of power, and the signet ring is a symbol of authority.

Pharaoh granted Joseph the authority to seal things in his name. Joseph also did everything in the name of Pharaoh. After his resurrection when he had become the preserver of life, our Lord said: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Matthew 28:18.

In Genesis 41:43 we read: And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee! Again it is plain to see that our Father in the antitype honors the son and exalts him to his right hand. The Lord stands second only to the Father in power and authority. Symbolically viewed he travels in the second chariot. The Father agrees that the son should receive the same honor, just as Pharaoh had others call out before Joseph: Bow the knee! We read in John 5:22,23,

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.

When starvation reached Canaan, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt for it was known that Pharaoh's court had abundant grain. Their first encounter was with Joseph himself, since he was the one in charge of selling this grain.

When the brothers saw Zaphnath-paaneah in his kingly authority they did not recognize their low-esteemed brother Joseph whom they had sold for twenty pieces of silver to the Midianites. Joseph recognized his brothers immediately, but he did not reveal himself to them. He closely observed them, however, and did something

they found remarkable. He made them sit down to eat by order of birth, something that had probably been customary when Joseph had lived at home. We read in Genesis 43:33,

And they sat before him, the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

In this way Joseph caught his brothers' attention by giving them something to think about regarding himself. We can well imagine how they must have asked: Who is this powerful Egyptian? How could Zaphnath-paaneah know such things which are known only within our small family circle?

Joseph dealt further with his brothers. He was able to influence the course of their lives, and he left them greatly troubled with unanswered questions. They asked themselves: Why? Why has all of this happened to us since we have come to Zaphnath-paaneah?

As they had to tear Benjamin away from their old father, they were reminded of what they had done to their father by selling Joseph to Egypt. It sounded like remorse or discernment when the brothers said to one another in chapter 42:21,22,

We are verily guilty, concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us ... therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

We remember how the children of Israel cried at the crucifixion of our Lord: His blood be on us, and on our children. (Matthew 27:25) Oh, how much these words spoken in haste have been fulfilled on the children of Israel! Oh, what they have had to suffer as a branded and undesirable people among foreigners after they rejected their King and Messiah!

We are nearing the time when our present Lord will remove the veil of disbelief from the eyes of his people Israel, after some 2000 years of suffering, and God will seal his new covenant with them. God's word tells us that this will occur during a great time of trouble for Israel Jacob's trouble. Zechariah speaks prophetically of this time in 12:10,

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for

him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

The people of Israel will look upon their Messiah whom they have pierced with eyes of understanding, and they will be ashamed of their terrible deed and will suffer bitterness. The Lord will comfort them, though, just as Joseph comforted his brothers with the words:

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.
Genesis 45:5.

When the brothers returned a second time to Egypt they had their brother Benjamin with them. This time Joseph's dream was fulfilled because all of his brothers bowed themselves to the ground before him.

Joseph asked them in chapter 43:27 about their welfare and asked the question: Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? It is remarkable that Joseph asked these questions in an unexpected order, for he first asked if his father was well, and then if he was still alive. This question in another form is also remarkable for Joseph asked a similar question after he revealed himself to his brothers.

Let us notice that Joseph asked the question in this manner before he was recognized by his brothers: Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spoke? Is he yet alive? When he revealed himself to his brothers, and they fell crying on his neck, Joseph again asked about their father. He did not ask the question as we would expect, however. He did not ask: Is OUR father yet alive? No. Instead, we read in chapter 45:2,3,

And he [Joseph] wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth MY father yet live?

Joseph appears to ignore the fact that they were all sons of one father. Isn't Joseph exclusively claiming his father when he asks Is MY father yet alive in the midst of his brothers? Other than the fact that Joseph had a closer and more trusting relationship with his father than all his brothers, there can be no satisfactory explanation for this remarkable behavior. We will, however, find a completely satisfying answer to this problem by considering the antitype.

If we check a concordance, we see that our Lord uses the words My Father some 30 times in the Gospel of John alone when speaking of the almighty God. In one verse, John 20:17, he says to Mary:

Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto MY FATHER, and your Father, and to MY GOD, and your God.

Who are these brethren whom Jesus wishes to be told that he ascends to his father and their father? The answer is not hard to find. Our Lord speaks here of his true disciples, those who have accepted him as Messiah and Savior, the spiritual Israelites. They alone possess the right through Christ to call the almighty God father. They are in a relationship of father/son with God and may call him our Father in prayer through the name of Christ.

Fleshly Israel, on the other hand, is in a relationship of servitude, or slavery, with God. Not only did they reject their Messiah whom the Heavenly Father sent to them, they also rejected his claim of being the Son of God. The high priest of Israel tore his clothes when he heard Jesus claim to be the Son of God, and he pronounced him a blasphemer. In the type Joseph shows us that fleshly Israel does not share the privilege with Christ to address the almighty God as father. Joseph alone claimed this right in the midst of his brothers when he said Is MY FATHER yet alive?

In the life and service of our Lord as he was on earth, his first and last thoughts were always: MY FATHER! How can I please my father? How can I honor my father? How can I bring my brothers closer to my father? When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, his first and most proper question was, I am Joseph, is my father yet alive? I am Joseph, I am the Messiah whom you have rejected (whoever rejects me, rejects the one who sent me). You have now accepted me as the one sent by my father-Is my father yet alive? Is my father, about whom I ask, yet alive in your hearts?

Joseph became the preserver of life for his brothers (fleshly Israel) as he was also for the Egyptians, who portray the godless world in the type. While the Egyptians had to sell all their gold, cattle, land and all their possessions in order to live, Pharaoh gave Joseph's brothers the best land in Egypt, the land of Goshen, So that they and their herds of cattle could live and prosper. (Genesis 47:5,6)

This preference of Pharaoh for Joseph's brothers is shown to us in the antitype of the Holy Scriptures. From the patriarchs to the apostles we have written proof that the brothers of Joseph, Israel

after the flesh, are a chosen people of God, and they will come under the new covenant arrangement in the future. We know this through Paul's logical reasoning, that God's grace is without repentance [i.e., irrevocable]. (Romans 11:29)

The Holy Scriptures clearly show us that the disbelieving world, pictured by the Egyptians, never had a connection to God until now. During the restitution of all things, they must allow themselves to be led step by step by The Christ, Head and Body, to God. In the type the Egyptians purchased their lives by selling their gold, their cattle, their land, and finally themselves as slaves into the hand of Pharaoh through their mediator, Joseph. Antitypically this means a full consecration of all things to God.

It will be different with Israel. The people of Israel after the flesh remained in a covenant relationship with God through His promise and through His law. They already gave themselves over to the hand of God when they agreed upon the Law Covenant. When they were disobedient to the law and finally rejected the Messiah, they distanced themselves from God. The Apostle Paul, however, said they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes, because the gifts of God are without repentance. After the completion and glorification of the Church, they will transfer from the old covenant to the new covenant, which law God shall write in their hearts.

So we see that Joseph's brothers do not take the same steps as the Egyptians, the disbelieving world, since they are already preferred by God and are selected to be the chosen people of the earthly kingdom.

And Joseph spoke to the people: Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh. (Genesis 47:23) We notice that Joseph uses a symbolic phrase when he says I have bought you THIS DAY for in reality the Egyptians were not all bought in one day, but instead were bought in an unspecified period of time.

Antitypically, this day refers to the 1000-year day. We may accept that it refers to the seventh 1000-year day, the Millennium. On this 1000-year day, our Lord Jesus will purchase all of mankind brought back from Adamic death for the Father, as Joseph typically purchased the Egyptians for Pharaoh. Since the Egyptians finally surrendered themselves and their lives into the hand of Pharaoh, it appears to show that mankind will have to completely surrender to the will of the Heavenly Father at the time of the resurrection if they wish to purchase eternal life.

As Pharaoh turned this work over to Joseph, So the Heavenly Father turns the work of the resurrection over to The Christ, Head and Body. Since Joseph says in verse 23, I have bought YOU this day and YOUR LAND for Pharaoh, it appears that the curse on the physical earth brought about by sin will also be lifted. When our Lord turns everything over to the Father at the end of the Millennium So that God will be all in all, then he can rightfully say: I have bought you this day [the Millennial Day] and your land for Pharaoh [the Heavenly Father].

To our great God and Father in heaven we give praise, thanks and adoration for this wonderful salvation and for his beloved Son who has purchased us and the whole world unto the preservation of life.

Amen.

Come let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord-Bro. Samuel Stalder, Germany

DEAR BRETHREN AND friends in the Lord: love and greetings from my home ecclesia in Frankenthal, Mannheim. They wish all of us God's blessing and guidance for this convention.

You are aware that we've met here to receive communion in the spirit and also, of course, to learn about God's plan. Yes, His plan is full of wisdom, power, love, and justice. Therefore our discourse will be on the future kingdom of peace on this earth, for which we even with our heavenly hope all long for. As a basis for our study we will use the prophet Micah and the psalmist David. Both have given us a prophetic view into the future which describes this kingdom of peace. Micah 4:1 reads,

But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills.

And a parallel text in Psalm 72:3,

The mountains shall bring peace [salvation] to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

Further on the prophet Micah says in chapter 4, verses 2 and 3,

And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways . . . And we will walk in his paths:

for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

In Psalms 72:8,11 we read in the same context,

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. . . . Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

As faithful followers of Christ we do rejoice in these wonderful and precious promises. So let us examine those two texts in Micah 4 and Psalms 72 with some questions. We can divide the subject into three main questions:

1. How will the law go forth from Zion?
2. How will the word of the Lord go forth from Jerusalem?
3. And how are the kings and nations going to submit to the Lord?

Question 1: The Law from Zion

Let's turn to the first question: How is the law going to go forth from Zion? To answer this question we have to understand the meaning of Zion. From our text in Micah we realize that Zion is not synonymous with Jerusalem. Originally Zion was the fortress of the Jebusites and later was also called the city of David. King David conquered the mountain of Zion and then lived there. (2 Samuel 5:6,7,9)

Zion became a holy place for God. We also know that David had the ark of the covenant brought there. Later the temple on the mount Moriah was included in the meaning of Zion, and here the ark of the covenant was found during the reign of Solomon. David writes about Solomon's rulership in the prophecy found in Psalm 72. It was also a typical picture of the reign of the entire Christ. The ark of the covenant indicated the presence of God. And through its presence Zion also became the dwelling place of God. (Psalm 9:11)

But the Bible also tells us that the Babylonians destroyed Zion and Jerusalem. Back then the captive Jews often thought of their far-away Zion and they wept in sorrow. (Psalm 137:1)

The Zion here is the place where the lamb and the 144,000 are standing. Spiritual Israel has a hope of another Zion, the heavenly

Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul writes about this in his letter to the Hebrews (12:18,22) saying,

For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched . . . but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Then it is obvious that it is just this mount Zion on which the lamb of God and the 144,000 body members are standing. (Revelation 14:1)

But the kingdom of Christ will have not only a heavenly phase, but also an earthly one. In our text Zion therefore can foreshadow the heavenly phase of the kingdom, while Jerusalem has another meaning. Through God's Plan of the Ages we know that the heavenly power will come out of Zion, the new Jerusalem. As we have already observed, our text makes a distinction between Zion and Jerusalem. The Bible makes still another distinction between the old and the new Jerusalem.

Now that we have examined the antitypical meaning of Zion we can come back to our original question: How is the law going to go forth from Zion? The New English translation uses for the word law the word instruction. And in verse 2 of our text we also find the word teach. I think that both these words harmonize with each other and believe that the word instruction would be better. But the King James reads law, and So do several other translations. Why should that be of such interest to us?

Dear brethren, we all know of a biblical class from which we expect will come the instruction to all mankind. It is the same class from which will come the first people to be resurrected on this earth. And where do we expect to find them? In Israel, yes, in Jerusalem! They are the ancient worthies, the ancient heroes of faith: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the other ancient worthies under the old covenant. We expect them to help mankind at the time of the New Covenant. (At the beginning Israel will, of course, also need this help.) They will be the living witnesses of the love and power of God who will deliver His people from the trouble of those days.

And So it also will come to pass in the last days that . . . the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains. So the instruction or the law will not go directly to the people, but first of all to Jerusalem. Now that we know the place of destination we

return to our question: How will the law and the instruction go forth from Zion?

Brother Russell thought that the direct communication between the Ancient Worthies (and heroes of faith) and the body of Christ could be the channel of conveyance of instruction, laws, and information. In our second question we will look at this more closely. But this communication will really guarantee the superiority of the Ancient Worthies. So we can say that this class of faithful men and women will be the mouthpiece of the Christ, head and body.

Now we can also better answer our question. The instruction or law shall go forth from Christ through spiritual communication to that faithful class, and thus will go forth from Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. These worthies will have a multitude of helpers and co-workers in Israel, and most likely also from the other nations. And thus we arrive at our next question: How will the word of the Lord go forth from Jerusalem?

Here Jerusalem can be a symbol for the earthly kingdom because it isn't called the New Jerusalem, or Zion. Yes, in this instance Jerusalem is the earthly phase of the kingdom. Then, of course, it will also be the seat of the kingdom's earthly representatives. It is the place where the Ancient Worthies in natural Israel will be the princes of the New Covenant. Brother Russell even thought that it would become the world capital. At this time we can cite a few more thoughts of Brother Russell about which we have already spoken. He writes:

When Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the ancient worthies have been resurrected and shall appear amongst the regathered Israelites, about the close of the time of Jacob's final trouble with Gog and Magog, their superior mental powers will speedily distinguish them from others. Moreover, their perfect minds will quickly grasp present-day knowledge and inventions; and they will be peculiar in many ways, as was the man Christ Jesus, of whom the people said, How knoweth this man literary matters, having never learned. (John 7:15) . . . Besides, these worthies, Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 4, ppg. 626, 627.

Now we know Brother Russell's opinion on this question in more detail. It is logical and at the same time it is founded on the Bible. According to the Bible we expect these events in earthly Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem is another city and another symbol. From Revelation we know that the New Jerusalem is a symbol of the bride of Christ. (Revelation 21:2; 3:12) Brother Russell tells us that this is the glorified church. (Reprint 5189) It is also called the City of God, and we understand that the New Jerusalem has an important role in God's plan.

Question 2: The word from Jerusalem

But how will the word of the Lord go forth from the earthly Jerusalem? If our assumption is correct, we should think that first of all the word would go forth from Zion as instruction. In Jerusalem the ancient worthies will then pass that word of instruction or law on to the people. Furthermore we assume that the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven may be symbolic. Couldn't the coming down of the law to Jerusalem be meant by that?

The word will go forth from Jerusalem! The word of God is also the bread of heaven. How wonderful must this time be, when all people will enjoy the fruits of The Christ glorified.

Yes, dear brethren, at the end of the days it will come to pass that the mountain of the Lord will be on top of the mountains. The nations will say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. And the scriptures tell us that the kings shall submit to the Lord. How will that happen? That is also our third question:

Question 3: How will the kings submit to the Lord?

We can give the texts in Micah 4:1-5 and Psalm 72 as an answer. There we see four steps of submission:

1. The acceptance of God and the recognition of his Anointed including the ancient worthies. (Micah 4:2)
2. The offering of the gold of Sheba and of the presents of Tarshish. (Psalm 72:10,15)
3. The beating of the swords into plowshares. (Micah 4:3)
4. Finally the cultivating of their own vine and fig tree, the abundance of grain: the acceptance of righteousness. (Psalm 72:16)

Now when we look at these four points together we will always have to remember: 1) The law goes forth from Zion (from the

church in heaven), and 2) The word of the Lord from Jerusalem (the earthly capital). This means that the instructions go forth from the sole ruler, the king and the body of Christ. And the nations and the kings of this earth will recognize this as the only right way.

Let us consider the first steps of the submission of the kings. The acceptance of God and the acknowledgment of the anointed, The Christ, will be the result of Jacob's great trouble. In this tribulation, which will be at the end of the great time of trouble, God will reveal himself to His people Israel. We know that he will do so through The Christ, head and body. This time will be the time of the Lord's appearing, his epiphania with the church in glory. Shortly afterward the Lord will then reveal himself; this will be the time of the apokalupsis. This revelation or Apocalypse is meaningful now to our present study.

The Lord has to reveal God's plan to mankind. He will then say what is going to be allowed from that time forward. He will give instructions out of Zion. (Revelation 14:1) These instructions will go forth from Jerusalem as the word of the Lord. The resurrected ancient worthies will spread the word. By means of the bright shining during the epiphania the people will receive a certain amount of knowledge. This is also the main thought in Brother Russell's booklet Our Lord's Return.

Thus enlightened, the people will enter a new path, one which many today do not yet consider. The time of the opening of the highway of holiness will have come when the New Covenant has been established with the house of Israel.

This will be the first part of the submission: accepting God after the appearing of the Lord, after the miracle in Israel, the resurrection, the New Covenant, and the opening of the highway of holiness.

The second step of submission is pictured by the giving of the gold of Sheba and the delivery of the presents of Tarshish. We read about this in Psalm 72:10, 15. What does that mean?

Bible Students agree for the most part that Tarshish is a symbol for the countries that lie far away from Israel. In Hebrew the name Tarshish is also pronounced Tarschisch. Some scientists believe that it means Chrysolite or golden-colored stone. We can also give the approximate geographical direction of the location of Tarshish. When the prophet Jonah fled because he did not want to go to Nineveh, he boarded a ship that went to Tarshish. This ship was

anchored in the harbor of Joppa which today is called Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

So Tarshish must have been located on or near the Mediterranean Sea. And it must have been easier to reach by ship. Because Jonah fled and because Nineveh was located northwest of Israel, we can assume that Tarshish was located to the west or southwest. We may also presume that Tarshish is not the city of Tarsus in Asia Minor, the birthplace of the Apostle Paul. Tarshish was rich in iron ore, silver, tin, and other minerals. Tarsus was not.

In ancient times Spain apparently had a number of mines. So the signs point toward Europe. In the fourth volume Brother Russell explains that Magog, Meschech, Tubal, Gomar, Javan, and Tarschisch (Tarshish) were the children of Japheth. Japheth probably was the progenitor of Europe's first inhabitants. Large parts of America, Australia, and New Zealand were later colonized by Europeans. Therefore we can probably include these countries in the word Tarshish.

Sheba and Dedan were the great-grandsons of Ham, whose descendants colonized North Africa. In the great conflict described in Ezekiel 38:1-13, these people play a significant role. It is the conflict over the land of Palestine. Tarshish and Sheba probably were the mightiest and most influential in their area. Of the so-called western countries, England and the United States are the most internationally involved.

Perhaps Ethiopia will gain influence in North Africa, though now this looks unlikely. The North African countries have great political influence in the United Nations because of their votes. But economically and militarily they are rather weak.

The gold of Sheba goes back to the story of Solomon when the Egyptian Queen gave gold in the amount of about \$3 million to the king of Israel as a present. Just as this story was a great event in the typical picture, so also the antitypical fulfillment will be a tremendous event. While the European countries are more powerful militarily and economically which is probably symbolized by the presents of Tarshish yet we do see that the African countries have international POLITICAL influence.

The key seems to be political obedience. In Brother Russell's comments on Psalm 72:15 he writes that the gold symbolizes obedience. Isn't this a wonderful thought? Couldn't these countries practice political obedience and support for Christ's kingdom reign

on earth? All the people who did not know God, or knew Him only in part, will willingly submit and be obedient. Prayer also shall be made for him [the entire Christ] continually; and daily shall he be praised. (Psalm 72:15)

But how wonderful is yet another thought which we receive from the prophecy of Isaiah 60:6,9. We read that the ships of Tarshish will bring the children of Israel back into the Holy Land. We also read that the dromedaries of Midian will bring gold and incense from Sheba. We know that in our day many Jewish friends have been rescued from Ethiopia. Couldn't this indicate a further fulfillment? And we expect that Jews from many parts of the world will still be gathered to Palestine. Tarshish symbolizes these countries of European and Anglo-American culture.

Thus we can expect the fulfillment of the prophecy soon, for these things have already begun. The precious goods could also refer to the Jews who are being led home. (Isaiah 60:9)

The third point in the submission of the kings is the beating of swords into plowshares. After the kings of the earth have acknowledged the anointed one and when they will have given him honor, obedience, and support [gold, presents, incense], the next step follows. They will have to demonstrate that they indeed do submit. The future kingdom on earth will be a kingdom of peace. No place will be found for weapons.

Today the people of the earth are in the process of destroying weapons. But this is not the fulfillment of that prophecy! For there are still more weapons being produced all over the world, more than are being destroyed. We think that the kings will not be producing any more weapons in the future. So the weapons industry will have to concentrate on recycling the materials of their giant arsenals. This recycling will obviously be of benefit to the entire work of restitution. Farming and cattle-breeding will flourish.

This is the transition to the fourth and last step of submission: The acceptance of justice by the kings of the earth. Our text in Micah 4:4 tells us that every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree. Psalm 72:4 also says clearly, He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

Truly, oppression will end! Truly justice will rule! The people will be filled with the knowledge and the love of the Lord! These, too,

are the words of the psalmist: Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. (Psalm 72:18)

Yes dear brethren, He does wondrous things. He alone! Today we still don't know all the details of the execution of His plan, but we hope that soon we shall participate in this great work of restitution.

So let us lift up our heads, for we now see that our deliverance draweth nigh. And let us be happy that after this short time of trouble, the kingdom of peace will soon be established on this earth.

Yes, let us always think of David's words (in Psalm 72:19) who wrote, And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen!

Building the Temple of God-Bro. David Stein, USA

WE HAVE ALWAYS thought it was appropriate that Jesus was a carpenter prior to embarking upon his ministry. At that time the custom was that a son would learn his father's trade and carry on a family tradition. There is no doubt that Jesus, as he learned the art from his step-father Joseph, would have become well skilled in building with wood. Just as a talented artisan is held in high regard today, we have no doubt that products fashioned by the hands of this perfect man were much in demand for their craftsmanship and utility. I like to think of the man Jesus as bringing new creations of wood into existence just as he assists in bringing new creatures of spirit into existence during the Gospel Age.

As we look into the pages of the Bible, we see many references to construction projects initiated by divine providence. And nearly all of these are intended to teach lessons about the great construction project of Jehovah's Divine Plan of the Ages. Nor should we consider these merely from the standpoint of observers. It is vital that we see the invitation not only to be built by God into something he can use, but just as importantly we must see the privilege we have in helping to build others. This is a special relationship we have with Jesus in being co-laborers in the assembly of the temple of God. The finished structure, of course, will be the New Jerusalem, an administration that will work wonderful miracles in connection with restoring mankind to fellowship with Jehovah once again. The success of New Jerusalem is guaranteed because the individual stones have been severely tested and proven. This elect class ripens both as individuals and as a unified body, in the likeness of Jesus.

We would like to draw some lessons from the scriptures that show in type this splendid construction work which is ongoing even as we speak. We would also like to draw some practical applications from these lessons.

Bezaleel and Aholiab

To get started we would like everyone to turn to Exodus 31 where we will look at the call and work of two individuals, Bezaleel and Aholiab. Bezaleel and Aholiab were Israelites who, with the rest of the nation, were delivered from Egypt. When the nation arrived in the wilderness, God commanded Moses to begin the construction of what we have come to call the tabernacle. Bezaleel and Aholiab were chosen and commissioned to do the actual construction. They were especially endowed with skills to produce what surely must have been some of the greatest works of art ever made on this planet. Bezaleel is the chief of the two. He is introduced to us in Exodus 31:1-3:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

In Bezaleel, we believe we see a type of our Lord Jesus, the chief constructor of his Father's plan. It is interesting to see how clearly the identification of Bezaleel with Jesus is marked out in holy scripture. Consider the parallel language used of Jesus in Isaiah 11:1,2:

And there shall come forth a root out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the LORD.

Did you notice the strong parallel with Bezaleel's calling? Both Bezaleel and Jesus are filled with the spirit of:

wisdom understanding knowledge workmanship or counsel and might

We believe that this parallel is intentional and meant to make us see the meaning of the type. But the identification of Divine

Providence is yet more explicit. The very meaning of the name Bezaleel is the shadow of God. This is a marvelous description of Jesus. Does not the Apostle Paul speak of him as the express image of the Father's person? Turn to Hebrews 1:1-3:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

I cannot think of a phrase which depicts similarity better than express image. The express image makes Jesus the most perfect shadow of God that can be. An explicit shadow indeed!

Several of Bezaleel's ancestors are named in the text. When we consider the meaning of their names the identification of the antitypical Bezaleel grows even clearer. Moses writes that Bezaleel was the son of Uri. The name Uri means light. How significant this is! Who most among Jehovah's creation is associated with light? As Jesus himself stated it in John 8:12, I am the light of the world. This is like saying I am the

We read Paul's description of Jesus a few moments ago in Hebrews where he described Jesus as the express image of God. But he also mentioned the brightness of his glory. The pointing to Jesus by the name Uri is inescapable.

The next name that comes before us is Bezaleel's grandfather Hur. You may remember that Hur and Aaron performed a vital Job for Moses during a battle Israel had with the Amalekites as recorded in Exodus 17. During the battle Moses held his staff up which resulted in an advantage for Israel. But as he tired and his arms came down, the Amalekites began to gain an advantage. Aaron and Hur came to the rescue by holding up Moses' arms and the battle was eventually won. So Hur set a fine example of service and devotion to the interests of God. He no doubt was a godly influence on his whole family, with blessed results.

The name Hur means noble. This provides another distinguishing character trait of Jesus. His nobility is clearly defined in giving up his high position in heaven in order to come to earth to die an ignoble death for sinners. In Romans 5:6-8 Paul shows the noble love that actuated both Jesus and his Heavenly Father:

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

What nobility! What love! To die for the ungodly is incomprehensible to the world. Jesus' sacrifice truly defines nobility. Paul highlights this godly trait again in 2Corinthians 8:9:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Nobility is to put the welfare of others ahead of oneself. In this there is no greater example than Jesus.

Finally, we see that Bezaleel was of the tribe of Judah. Judah means praised. How well this applies to Jehovah's esteem of his Son. Jesus had the very highest position in heaven during his prehuman existence. But as a result of his faithful obedience even unto death, he now has been praised by being granted the divine nature. Notice this truth once again in the symbolic language of Revelation 5:9-14:

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

I think that you would agree that these verses reveal Jesus as most praiseworthy!

Another text which shows this worthiness of Jesus is found in Philippians 2:9-11. Note the language of commendation here.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

No greater praise could there be than being Lord to the glory of Jehovah! Surely then the meaning of Judah must suggest Jesus as the one most worthy of Jehovah's praise.

One final observation about the name Judah. The man Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah and even possesses the identifying title also given in Revelation 5:5 of Lion of the tribe of Judah, another link for our understanding.

So in the names of Bezaleel and his ancestors we see the character and actions of Jesus. He is truly the Son of God, being made in his express image, a shadow of God reflecting every beautiful facet of Jehovah's divine character. Jesus became the light of the world and showed the nobility of loving sacrifice for the world of mankind, and was praised of the heavenly Father and of all who recognize his great loyalty to the Divine will.

Aholiab in Antitype

Now we would like to consider Bezaleel's assistant in his important work, Aholiab. Just as we see in Bezaleel a type of Jesus, So we see in Aholiab a type of the church in the role of assistants and fellow workers with Jesus. Aholiab is identified in Exodus 31:6, And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan.

Once again we can look to the meaning of these names to make the application of the type clear. The meaning of the name Aholiab is the Father's tent. Is this not fitting? It is only in the church during this age that God dwells by his spirit. This collective sanctification also defines the responsibilities and privileges of each individual member of the church. Paul wished to call this important fact to the attention of all spirit-begotten believers during this age in 1 Corinthians 3:16: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

The fact that Paul asks this as a question hints that the brethren in Corinth did not always act as if they remembered this. And a study of 1 Corinthians shows this to be true. But his point remains. We

are the tabernacle of God, the temple of God, the Father's tent. We are Aholiab and must act in harmony with this truth.

Aholiab was the son of Ahisamach which means my brother has supported. Once again, how appropriate is this meaning. We of the church depend vitally upon the help and support of our elder brother Jesus. Our standing and acceptance before the heavenly Father relies entirely on Jesus. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:6, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Is not that expression accepted in the beloved beautiful? Jesus is the beloved of Jehovah and we are the beloved of Jesus! It is for his sake that we stand accepted before Almighty God.

Jesus teaches this himself in John 15:5 where he says, I am the Vine, ye are branches ... without me ye can do nothing.

Have you ever seen branches thrive while being detached from the Vine? When I prune a branch from a vine, it quickly dries up, withers and dies. For a branch to live and thrive, it must be supported by the Vine just as we must be supported by Jesus. But that attachment must remain strong, else we may be broken off in adversity.

Ahisamach was of the tribe of Dan which has the meaning of "judge." This is a strong indication that the purpose of the call of the church is to be judges. This is certainly true of the future as Paul clearly states in 1 Corinthians 6:2, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" But in declaring this, Paul also draws attention to present requirements as he continues writing:

And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?

So our training as judges means we must judge rightly now, while still in the flesh. Paul infers that it is vital to grow in godly discernment to be found worthy of a judgeship beyond the veil.

In summary of Aholiab and his ancestors, we see clear pictures of the church in her relationship and activity with Jesus. We are the Father's tent, his temple. Our life depends upon the support of our elder brother Jesus. And our development is for the prime purpose of being judges who will be able with Jesus to bless mankind in his glorious kingdom.

Of the two artisans, we noted back in Exodus 31:2 that it was Bezaleel who was specially named, and was given the preeminence in the work of constructing the tabernacle. We also took note that he was given special endowments to do the work required. So is it also with the antitypical Bezaleel, Christ Jesus. He has been given the same preeminence. Turn to Colossians 1:18.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Preeminence means having the first position. As Bezaleel was preeminent over Aholiab, So is Jesus over the church. He is our head. Turn to Ephesians 4:15, But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Let us consider now, some lessons in connection with the actual construction materials used by these two artisans. The purpose for raising up Bezaleel and Aholiab was to construct and erect the Tabernacle. In the type, the Tabernacle represents Christ and the church who will one day be the sanctuary of God that is to be among men. Scripture tells us this in Revelation 21:3-5:

The tabernacle of God [God's dwelling, the glorified Church] is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be [become] his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things [the reign of Satan, sin and death] are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.

This is a marvelous hope set before us, to be part of this glorified arrangement. But we must build carefully now.

The Building Materials

All of the materials that went into building the Tabernacle have a message to give. A summation of Bezaleel's work is given in Exodus 31:4,5. Let us read what he was to do:

To devise cunning works, to work in gold and in silver, and in copper, and in cutting stones, to set them, to work in all manner of workmanship.

Jesus, as antitypical Bezaleel, must work with the materials of which the great antitypical Tabernacle of God is to be made. Thus he works with gold, silver, and copper. What do these materials picture?

Gold As the most valuable and rare and incorruptible metal of ancient times, gold must refer to those things that pertain to the divine and its nature.

Silver It was the next most valuable metal after gold. We believe silver refers to the Truth, and perhaps more particularly with that Truth which has to do with redemption. Please recall in this connection that the sockets supporting the Tabernacle were made of silver. Not any silver, but silver from a particular source, namely the redemption money, paid by the Israelites as a head tax. (See Exodus 30:12-16; 38:25-27.) So truth, particularly the truth about Jesus' sacrifice, is the foundation of the divine purpose.

Copper This metal looks a lot like gold, but close inspection reveals it to be inferior to gold. The human nature is like the divine in certain respects. Man was made in the image of God. But human nature, even in its perfection, is a little lower than angels, inferior to the spirit nature. So copper would seem to represent the perfect human nature of the man Christ Jesus, and the justified humanity of the Church. This nature is to be put off, however, sacrificed unto God, and eventually replaced with the spirit nature.

The typical Bezaleel oversaw the Cutting of Stones. To cut a gem required sure hands and heavy blows. But this momentary violence produces objects of surpassing beauty and value. The antitypical Bezaleel oversees the cutting of the antitypical stones. You and I, dear brethren, are those stones to be cut and shaped for divine use. Jesus as the head of the body oversees all the trials and experiences which have to do with the preparing of these precious stones. The value of these stones cut and shaped by Jesus is great. Note what Jehovah himself thinks of them in Malachi 3:17:

And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

These precious stones, these jewels, are likewise highly valued by our Master Jesus, like the pearl of great price for which Jesus gave all that he had (Matthew 13:45,46). This value is also suggested by the fact that those stones, when finished, were placed in the beautiful setting in the breastplate of judgment of the High Priest.

The metal and stone materials used bring to mind Paul's comment about Christian building in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 which reads:

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet So as by fire.

Paul here contrasts the permanent, fire resistant with the temporary and corruptible. Fire purifies some things and destroys others. With what are we building, dear friends?

The antitypical Bezaleel, is also responsible for the Carving of Timber. Is Bezaleel here using antitypically inferior building material? It might seem so, but when we seen the lesson, the use of wood is quite fitting.

In the type, the timber referred to was the shittim wood used exclusively in the Tabernacle. The furniture of the Tabernacle including the Table of the Shewbread, the Incense Altar, the Ark of the Covenant, and the boards were all made of shittim wood, but were overlaid with gold. We suggest that shittim wood, which incidentally was an evergreen, represents the mortality of the human nature. We say mortality because wood is corruptible. This does not mean it is corrupt, but simply corruptible. But the corruptible, mortal human nature will in time put on incorruptibility, immortality. Notice this in 1 Corinthians 15:53,54:

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

And how beautifully this is shown in the fact the shittim wood was overlaid with gold. What could be more fitting as a type of Paul's explanation. It is this mortality that is now being dealt with in a cutting off here, and a cutting off there, involving what the Scriptures call a circumcision of the heart. (Colossians 2:11; Romans 2:29)

Aholiab was Bezaleel's chief assistant. So is the Church to Christ Jesus. She cooperates with him, her Head, her Lord, her Master, in bringing everything into subjection to the mind which was, and is, in Christ Jesus!

We mentioned at the beginning of our lesson that the success of this building venture is guaranteed. Here again a prophetic type testifies loudly. In Solomon's Temple, there was a porch structure that carried two large pillars. (1 Kings 7:21) Curiously, these two pillars were named! It is this very curiosity that draws our attention. The name of the pillar on the right (facing the Temple) was Jachin. The pillar on the left was called Boaz. Jachin means he will establish or he will firmly establish. Boaz means in strength. When you put these together, and scan it as a Hebrew sentence, from right to left with the temple in between, we read:

He will firmly establish the temple in strength

Isn't that magnificent! It is made absolute by the promise of God.

Concluding Thoughts

We would like to conclude with some practical application of these things. Let us call to mind once again our privilege to assist one another. Peter says we are lively stones or better translated living stones built up into a spiritual house. How much effort are we devoting to building each other up as a day-by-day commitment? It is essential to making our calling and election sure that we care for the needs of our brethren. Let us read Paul's counsel in Colossians 3:16:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

But how are we to do this? Not by busybodying into the private affairs of our brethren. But rather by sensitive observation motivated by love and being an example of a believer. At our meetings and conventions, let us not be content to allow greetings to become mere social amenities. Rather, seek from your hearts the welfare of your brethren. Look for the new creature in each one and minister to it. Some might say, I don't know if I have what it takes to build up my brethren. But dear friends, you all do!

The brethren in Rome during Paul's ministry had these traits and it prompted Paul to write in Romans 15:14:

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

We trust then, dear friends, that by the Lord's assisting grace, we may finish the exciting construction work that yet lies ahead. The making ready of the bride of Christ is the most important work taking place today. May each one of us, as members of the antitypical Aholiab, fervently and energetically assist the antitypical Bezaleel, doing with our might what our hands find to do, and doing it all for the glory of Jehovah!

Taking the Precious from the Vile-Bro. Joseph Sygnowski, Poland

THIS IS THE first time I have the privilege to speak at and participate in the International Convention. I consider it a blessing from the Lord. Taking this opportunity and relying on the Lord's help and on your prayers, I would like to share with you the topic: Thou will take forth the precious from the vile. Our golden text will be the words of the prophet Jeremiah in 15:19:

Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, God shows his relentless anger with Judah. Jeremiah prays fervently, asking God for mercy. God answers Jeremiah, presenting two important conditions. First: If thou return, then will I bring thee again. Second: If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.

The word of the prophet shows that already in ancient days God set high requirements before those who would return to him. This means that God demanded from the called ones both very high moral standards and a precious thing, which is faith.

Jeremiah addresses these two important aspects of our consecrated lives. The first If thou return pertains to our morality, our Christian life, our conversation with others, our walk. The other the precious pertains to our faith, and especially to the purity of the doctrinal teachings of the Scriptures, finding true light and recognizing it as the precious and error as the vile.

To properly appreciate the truth, to find a basis for our conversion, to distinguish the positive from the negative, and to find the Lord and sustain our faith in him, to be his mouth, we have to have our conscience made very sensitive. Only then can we properly judge different values. To preserve faith and particularly an appreciation of God's Plan for salvation, caused many difficulties for both servants of the Old Testament and Christians of the apostolic era.

Despite cultural developments and civilization, sin has continued as an unchanged phenomenon. The sinful human nature has not changed for the better in any respect. No wonder, then, that the Apostle Paul, when writing to Timothy, commands him to preserve the precious thing, for which one has to fight with a good conscience.

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith and a good conscience.¹
Timothy 1:18,19.

It follows from this text that warring a good warfare and attaining salvation depends on two factors: faith and a good conscience. Both are important and essential.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh unto God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.heb 11:6.

Thus faith is a main factor and is decisive in salvation.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be Saved.ro 10:9.

When faith is born in one's heart as a result of a need for salvation, and when it is sincerely confessed before God and men, it means one is at the beginning of the good warfare. Yet we know that it is not a good beginning that secures life but he that endured to the end shall be Saved.mt 10:22.

We have to deal with this temporal life, whether short or long, in which we must war this hard battle with evil, unrighteousness, and error sown by the image of the beast. And it is necessary that our faith should here be confirmed by our conscience.

Surely this is not an easy thing to do. We know that the world lies in evil, but it is essential to have a good conscience, regulated by the Word of God, for on this depends our bringing the good warfare to a successful end and receiving the crown of life.

Conscience affects the moral and doctrinal attitude of a man, and his faith and walk in everyday life testifies to the sensitivity of his conscience.

The prophet Jeremiah commands us to return and to distinguish the precious from the vile, and we believe that the differentiating agent is conscience. Paul the apostle commends to Timothy pure faith and the true and pure Word of God, which can be achieved through a good conscience. What then, is a good conscience? It is an inner property of man, that points out his wrong doings to him and judges him. It gives him a feeling of guilt and points a warning voice at consciousness and honesty. It permits religious freedom and tolerance, and gives the right to believe. It shapes our behavior in accordance with our faith, it does not permit a falling away.

Conscience is a feeling that provides a basis for the existence of morality, moral issues and laws that man recognizes and that his heart approves of. Conscience speaks clearly and tells what is good and what is evil, what to believe and what not to believe. Conscience pronounces a deliberate judgment of different values that fall under the criteria of truth and untruth.

Conscience can be likened to a clock whose dial is correctly marked with the hours, but whose operation depends on a main spring that has to be adjusted if the clock is to give the correct time. Conscience can be relied upon only when it is attached to the main spring, i.e. the new heart and pure will, brought into harmony with the law of love. Only then can it truly show us what is good and what is evil, which opinion or thought we should identify with and which ones (as contrary to the Lord's spirit) to reject.

Everyone has this sense of what is good and righteous and it is this sense that prompts one to be obedient to God. The Apostle Paul testifies to this in Romans 2:14,15:

Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

Conscience is not a voluntary action of man because he often finds himself in opposition to it. At times it gains so much influence that it torments one for his shameful deeds and makes him confess the

transgression committed despite the consequences. The sense of shame, the recognition of one's own wickedness become So burdensome, and the guilt of conscience So overwhelming that the transgressor can no longer withstand it and willingly yields to justice.

Conscience is a critical factor in shaping one's character, both in a positive and a negative way, depending on whether one abides by his conscience's rulings or violates them. In the first instance, one grows strong in good, and rejoices in a clean conscience. In the second instance, one experiences torment and suffering due to an offending conscience, which, So long resisted, was made silent and completely indifferent. Yet from time to time it wakes up only to fill one's heart with fear and to burn like hot iron.

In other words, conscience, this inner voice, tells us to do good, warns against evil, points at wrong and false teachings and forbids us to do acts in disagreement with the law of God. If one heeds this voice and acts according to its rulings, he will never come in conflict with his conscience.

If someone acts against conscience, he will feel guilty, he will experience an inner reproof, sadness, shame, and hurt. Conscience opposes certain deeds and man has to make a choice, in the midst of a conflict of two influences: the tempting gain of transgression on the one hand, and a natural tendency to avoid evil on the other.

Conscience is in man at all times, though it is not always active, e.g. during sleep, rest, etc. Conscience can undergo changes, thus it is not an unchangeable sense, with a consistent sensitivity. It can be made more sensitive, or it can be dwarfed, or made dull or even completely silenced.

Speaking in general terms, a conscience can be true or wrong, that is false. A true conscience judges deeds properly on the basis of true information. A false conscience judges deeds improperly, based on false teachings and principles. A false conscience is caused by a deliberate abandonment of God's law.

The word conscience is not found in the Old Testament. In the Polish Bible, the activity of conscience is presented in other expressions, such as 2 Samuel 24:10, And David's heart smote him; Job 27:6, My heart shall not reproach me So long as I live; Proverbs 20:27, The soul of man is the candle of the Lord, searching the inward parts of the belly; Isaiah 65:14, Ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

In the New Testament the word conscience is often used. In the Polish Bible, it occurs 29 times. On the basis of the scriptures we can see that conscience can be described differently depending on the morality of an individual. For example, there can be a good conscience, or an evil conscience, a clean or unclean one, sensitive or dull.

It should be noted, however, that everybody has a defiled conscience by virtue of belonging to the sinful race, for in Adam all sinned (Romans 5:12). But if someone comes to God when tempted, confesses his sins and is given forgiveness, then he is also given a purification of his conscience through the blood of Christ, and becomes a new creature, and is granted a new and pure conscience. The Apostle Paul supports this in these words:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, Who through eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. heb 9:14.

Do we want to know our conscience, to study whether it is like the scriptures tell us? Let us try to do this carefully and meticulously, and we will be able to see what our conscience is like.

A Good Conscience

is renewed by spiritual re-birth of someone who by inheritance has a conscience hard, misshaped, dwarfed, and silent. It becomes good through a spiritual rebirth:

The like figure thereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request toward God for a good conscience). 1Pe 3:21 in the Polish Bible.

The Apostle Peter tells us that making a covenant with God, doing his will, and standing fast in the vow made, is a request made toward God for a good conscience. Those who become new creatures have their consciences renewed.

God is good. He calls us and gives us a good conscience that is sensitive to all principles in life, pointing at the right way of conduct and that lets us see the light of the Gospel. It is quick to apprehend the true teachings and eternal life through Christ. It hears the voice of the Gospel and makes itself heard when error and false Christs arise.

We mentioned at the beginning that the Apostle Paul advises Timothy to hold a good conscience until the end. Every brother and sister should take this advice. Not everyone can hold their good conscience until the end. Paul saw that some put away a good conscience and became shipwrecked.

One cannot be just influenced and guided by his own conscience. God gave us his Word and the Holy Spirit which teach our conscience. Our conscience will point out worldly things, sins, errors, injustices, etc. when it is connected to the main spring of God's Word.

A Clear Conscience

is cleansed by the blood of Christ. It differs from a good conscience only in that it emphasizes the necessity to maintain this undefiled conscience after conversion. Or it is a conscience which in the further process of sanctification is kept in a holy cleanliness.

When the Apostle Paul stood before the judgment seat of governor Felix, accused by the Jews, he said: I do my best to have a clear conscience before God and men. (Acts 24:16 TEV) And it was so in reality. From the moment of his conversion until his death as a martyr he never defiled his conscience.

Having this kind of conscience, Paul emphasized the precious: holding the mystery of the faith in a pure [clear] conscience. (1 Timothy 3:9) This is one of the qualifications of elders and deacons. This means a knowledge of the laws God, his commandments, an understanding of doctrines in harmony with God's principles and the holding of purity in the daily battlefield.

To hold a clear conscience one must act toward both God and men with honesty and justice. We cannot hold our conscience clear even if we consecrate our whole life to God and yet injure our neighbors or allow a falling away in the faith, a misrepresenting of the harp of God.

A Sensitive Conscience

and very delicate is with those who avoid committing even the smallest willful sin. In 1 Samuel 24:1-8 we find an interesting event described. David, when running from Saul's persecution, came to the Dead Sea and there hid in a cave with his men. It happened that Saul came there too. David's men insisted that he kill Saul, this being the best chance to destroy an enemy. David's

conscience was so delicate that it did not let him take Saul's life. He only cut off a piece of Saul's skirt:

And it came to pass that David's heart smote him ... and he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed.

A pharmacy scale can serve as an illustration of a delicate conscience. What is our conscience like? Do we stretch forth our hands, do we shout false accusations, evil speaking, etc. against the Lord's anointed, God's child?

People with a sensitive conscience will feel guilty even when for different reasons they are absent from a meeting, when they are not able to pray, or read the Manna or the Bible, when they do not help the elderly or when they accidentally miss paying their bus fare. They feel upset when nature is destroyed or when someone is cruel to innocent animals. There are few people with such delicate consciences but they are very needed in our time.

A Weak Conscience

is with those who are weak in the faith, who have not reached the proper knowledge. The Apostle Paul speaks of those: But when ye sin so against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 1Co 8:12.

Those who have this type of conscience are easily stumbled and offended. Even the smallest thing which, in their opinion is wrong, stumbles them easily. In the times of the apostles, such were stumbled by others eating meat bought in meat markets, meat which might have come from sacrifices to pagan idols. (1 Corinthians 10:25,31)

In our times some can be stumbled if we drink a cup of coffee in a cafe or if we eat dinner in a restaurant. People of weak conscience are stumbled by another's clothing or behavior. They manifest dissatisfaction with a discourse, study, with reading volumes, and generally question God's plan of salvation.

Paul used the word weak in the sense of an unstable conviction in the faith and the doctrines. He used it in the sense of a spiritual sickness, lack of subordination, and sinning against the brethren and Christ. This kind of conscience cannot turn away from sin, cannot take forth the precious from the vile, but instead it quickly brings a fall and needs curing.

A Dull Conscience

usually comes from living a sinful life for a long time. A person with such a conscience does not see sin where it is, or thinks that the sin is not as big as it really is. Such a conscience is a result of a negligence of evil caused by negligence of God's law. Such a conscience has lost sensitivity and the ability to judge acts properly. One with this kind of conscience thinks that every deed is good as long as it brings gain.

Let's use the prophet Balaam as an example. He taught the Moabites how they could lead Israel into sin, which was against God's will and Balaam's own conviction. (Numbers 22:5-41; 23:1-30; 24:1-25)

A dull human conscience allows one to classify sins into big and small, which sometimes leads one to think that each convenient sin is not big.

A Pharisee Conscience

(seared) is a conscience of hypocrites.

Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies and hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. 1Ti 4:1.

It is a symptom of a moral hypocrisy. It does not use a consistent measure when judging different deeds. Much attention is paid to the external effects, and often a great sin is ignored, if only it can be hidden from the eyes of other people. A pharisee conscience makes a lot of noise and passes condemning judgments as far as an enemies' transgressions are concerned, but in one's own transgressions it is undisturbed and silent.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commended us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And

again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. And which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst. John 8:3-9.

People with Pharisee consciences think of themselves as perfect and pretend to be saints. They are like whited sepulchres that are beautiful on the outside, but within are full of dead men's bones and uncleanness. (Matthew 23:27) Such people do not care whether they go home on a straight path or if they sneak through crooked paths as long as they bring something with them. The Apostle Paul said that their conscience is seared with transgression.

An Unclean Conscience

is possessed by those who do not know discipline (as described by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:10-15). Through carelessness and ignorance of God's word their hearts are hardened and their sinful lives have so defiled their consciences that there is nothing clean in them.

It follows from Paul's words that in his time there were many Christians who had their minds and conscience defiled. Their conduct was so dishonest that Paul called them deceivers who did everything for filthy gain.

An Evil Conscience

is a transgressing conscience and will commit the worse offenses. Paul when speaking of entering into the holiest through a new and holy way, enjoins us to have our evil conscience purified.

Let us draw near with a pure heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure Water. heb 10:22.

An evil conscience gives consideration to nothing and considers any means good if it leads to a specific purpose. It is all the more dangerous because it is clothed in religious piety. A typical example is King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. (1 Kings 21) Because they could not purchase Naboth's vineyard honestly, they used deceit to get it. They proclaimed a fast and a special gathering, they gathered the elders and the nobles and set Naboth on high among them. Then they brought two deceitful men and, based on their false testimony against Naboth, they stoned him.

A Defiled Conscience

is a very corrupted conscience, deceived by a different truth coming from the adversary.

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. Titus 1:15.

There is a big corruption in their mind, in their understanding of the truth. There is a rejection of the meat in due season, lack of faith, error and falsehood, pride, egoism, wickedness and hatred.

A Dead Conscience

is possessed by those who, through living a life of transgression for a long time, have completely lost a sensitivity of sin. They think there is no sin in a given action. They even say that sin does not exist. In this way they are completely insensitive to their own sin and lose the ability to judge the moral value of their own behavior.

Criminals and frequent law offenders have a dead conscience. They go undisturbed from one offense to another, from one crime to another. Their conscience does not bother them. God's Word tells us that we can kill our brother through our words, that we can steal his good name. So we, too, can be in danger of having this kind of conscience.

A powerful experience, a great shock, can awake a dead conscience as happened to Judas. (Matthew 27:3-5) But it rarely leads to true repentance and a return to God. The sow that was washed turns again to her wallowing in the mire. This is how a human conscience can be changed and degraded. When someone loses his conscience, he loses the fear of the Lord and shame before men. (Luke 18:2-5) He will be unscrupulous and will not blush to perform shameful acts.

The loss of a good conscience leads to a complete spiritual collapse, and those who reject conscience become shipwrecked. They do not know how to return to God and he does not accept them. They do not take forth the precious from the vile. They will not be the Lord's mouth.

We have presented ten different kinds of conscience. Now let everyone decide what kind of conscience he has. The first three are positive, and may we all have those. The other seven are negative, and may the Lord keep us from them.

Amen.

Symposium: The Aaronic Priesthood-Bro. Edouard Pilarski, France

TO SPEAK OF THE Aaronic priesthood is to evoke God's choice of a particular servant in the spiritual and religious domain who would be suitable to provide the many sacrifices of consecration, thank offerings of reconciliation and blessing, personally experienced and conveyed to the tribes of Israel, a believing people, a people chosen by God in their covenant at Mount Sinai.

These people had as their goal to reach the promised land and, at the end of their captivity in Egypt and start of their exodus, to be in harmony with their God and live on a higher plane as a called-out, set-apart people. God gave them the decalogue followed by a series of ordinances and organizational prescriptions rules of conduct for community life under a theocracy.

Moses was the first who was called. God placed him in the midst of his people as the head. In a way Moses was the personification or representative of God. God imprinted in Moses' heart and spirit all the activities and details of a place of worship: the tabernacle with its series of sacrifices to insure a permanent relationship with the Israelites.

Aaron, the brother of Moses, was chosen by Moses to discharge the function of high priest. He consecrated himself to God to offer sacrifices for the purpose of bringing about the reconciliation of the people with God whence the priesthood after the order of Aaron.

The apostle [probably Paul] reveals to us in his letter to the Hebrews the relation of these activities to the reality, the type of figure contained in each particular animal and person, and the antitype, as well as the period during which this is a reality-see Hebrews chapters 3, 4, and 7 to 10-because these were a shadow of good things to come.

Moses and Aaron descended from one of Jacob's 12 sons, from Levi through Kohath and Amram. To assist him and to preserve a family unity, Moses also called Aaron's four sons for service: Eleazar, Ithamar, Nadab, and Abihu.

It is remarkable that these six people were selected and placed in charge of specific ceremonial duties even before the first-born were exchanged for the Levites, the other participants used solely in the disassembling and transporting of the tabernacle's constituent parts (yet only after Aaron had covered and carefully wrapped each element).

Any deviation in the offering of sacrifices, even with commendable intentions such as those of Korah, who was in addition a Levite, was punishable by death. (See Numbers 1:50,51,53; 3:25-28; 4:5-15; 4:18-20; 16:1-16,32,40,50.)

There are three ceremonies in particular that inform us properly about the Aaronic priesthood. They are described in chapters 8, 9 and 16 of Leviticus, but two of these, in particular, furnish the details necessary to our talk, namely chapters 8 and 16.

Although Chapter 9 is very specific (it is the only one that mentions the blessing of the people by Moses and Aaron), we will not consider it because the participants and the animals are different, and the views of brethren in different countries do not agree. I do not care to add an additional view. We simply note that it is only after the consecration ceremony (with its anointing) as conveyed in the type and antitype (the reality) that this second ceremony takes place.

The First Ceremony

Let us begin with the first ceremony as described in Leviticus chapter 8. It is the second year, first month, first day of the month, and it requires seven days (completeness). We notice that the construction of the tabernacle was finished in this same day. (See Exodus 28:41; 29:1,21,29,35,37,44; 40:1,13,15,17; Leviticus 8:12,13, 30,33,35.) We also notice that before completing the ceremony of chapter 8, the tabernacle had no value. And as with Aaron, before the completion of the consecration of our Lord Jesus the antitypical tabernacle has no value.

All that concerns consecration and its acceptance by God the begetting, the anointing, the induction into office (to begin functioning), and the effects and results on Aaron and his sons, and on the Lord Jesus and all who are called, because the latter is what really matters this is what one finds in this chapter. We can even find an illustration of the ransom.

In the type, at the time of this ceremony, there was on the one hand a camp containing all the Israelites on an equal standing, and on the other hand a priestly house containing Aaron and his four sons, the entire household of faith. These were the true consecrated ones. (See Question Book, bottom of page 693.)

The camp represented those who in the Millennial Age actually manifest the desire to be in harmony with God and who desire (and who will desire) to do the will of God, who want to be in accord with God and honor his name (but who do not go as far as consecration). In other words, these are believers (non-consecrated, non-justified) who are the friends of the truth according to a 1910 article (Reprint 4607).

Previously Aaron and his sons were among the people, but as of that time they were no longer of the people. They left the camp to be in the court. And Moses appoints them to a specific responsibility. We see a parallel with our Lord Jesus. Starting then it was Moses who foresaw and did everything. All was foreseen (from the foundation of the world) and accomplished by God through the coming of our Lord Jesus to this earth.

It was Moses who washed the priesthood, dressed them in garments and undergarments of linen and glory and beauty (Exodus 29:4,6,8,9). He thus devised human perfection for the Lord Jesus, and justification for those who are called, prepared for them unleavened cakes (pure spiritual food), and furnished for them animals for sacrifice. All this was foreseen by our heavenly Father in anticipation of and beginning with the real baptism of his children.

This ceremony was accomplished in the court of the tabernacle with:

Moses, with Aaron and his four sons, Eleazar, Ithamar, Nadab, and Abihu (Exodus 28:1), with one young bullock, two rams, and unleavened bread (prepared by Moses).

Garments of glory and beauty (Exodus 29:4,6,8,9).

It lasted seven days which in the eyes of God represented completion, perfection. Moses anointed Aaron and his four sons in the presence of Aaron (Exodus 29:21; 28:41; 30:30; Leviticus 8:30) with the anointing oil and with blood (Exodus 28:41; 29:1,9,21,23; 30:30; Leviticus 8:6,13, 30,33; 10:7). These symbolize consecration unto death, begetting, and anointing.

For the ceremony of consecration, begetting, and anointing, Aaron was in his glorious garments. In the reality, this is an exceptional day, memorable to the one who consecrates his life to the service of the Creator, to his heavenly Father. One of the most wonderful days in our Lord Jesus' earthly life was his day of consecration at baptism. (The other was the one when he, then already begotten, cried, It is finished.) From that moment on the priesthood is holy, pure, perfect just [our Lord] or justified [called-out members]. It is honored, accepted, begotten, and anointed.

All this occurs at the same moment except, as Bro. Russell says, the begetting is an instantaneous act and is repeated for each called out member. But the anointing has been bestowed and given to the church in the upper room once for all. Each of the called is automatically placed according to how he develops himself, how he is able to do or accomplish the will of the Father, how he is able to resist the adversary, gain mastery over himself, divest himself of the old man, suffer unjustly, cultivate and develop the fruits of the spirit, and manage his consecration. One seed brings forth 100, another 60, and another 40. This is why Brother Russell said some will receive of the anointing a little, or not fully. (See Question Book, page 121.)

God recognized the Lord Jesus as an only begotten son, but begotten by the spirit, a redeemer, a perspective king who passes from the state of a perfect man to that of an embryonic new creature. Our Lord Jesus Christ was 30 years old when he began his ministry. This begetting process is the same for each of the called-out body members. For the head, it occurred at Jordan. For the body members, it occurred in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

Thus it is here, and uniquely here, and it happened just once for the 40 years of service of Aaron and his sons, that this consecration ceremony took place. That's why we understand this first ceremony related to an indeterminate period (once for all).

And the reality, during the Gospel Age, begins with the first body members mentioned here, until the consecration of the last called-out member.

From this ceremony forward one must consider that the individuals represent embryonic new creatures and the animals the humanity (or body, either perfect or justified) of these same new creatures; it

is no longer necessary to show their begetting in some other ceremony. (See Question Book, page 691 and 39.)

We have already noted that this ceremony took place in the court (Exodus 29:10,12,15-37) with a blessing by Moses, and an anointing by Moses with the oil and blood of the sacrifices, and this included the utensils also. (See Reprint 1914 ppg. 113,114; Exodus 39:43; 40:9-11; Leviticus 6:9,18,19; 8:10,11,15; Numbers 7:1; Hebrews 9:21.)

We remember that the court which had sockets of copper (representing perfect humanity, or the human nature), a linen curtain (perfect faith) fastened by silver hooks (divine truth), admirably represents real justification which is granted only to those who consecrate themselves; and this at the very moment of consecration, which is immediately followed by acceptance and begetting. The gate and even the door into the Holy represented our Lord Jesus. Only the called sheep who want to offer themselves pass through this gate and into the court, because no other person was in this place during this ceremony.

Thus this court represents human perfection, just or considered as such, justified. This is why the animals which were there represented the just or justified humanity of the new creatures with their purification activity at the copper laver and the offering of their bodies as living sacrifices at the copper altar. (Romans 12:1) as justification absolutely implies consecration, Brother Russell correctly states:

1. That those who enter the court accept the death of our Lord who suffered to take away their sins. (See "Question Book" page 408.)
2. That at the moment when we pass through the gate, we begin to run the race and are called to the one hope. (Question Book page 307.)
3. That in the last analysis, the court represents the spirit-begotten ones. (Reprint 4745.)

Let us add that the Holy, because of the presence of the participants, is meant for the development and growth of the embryonic new creatures in the unseen ecclesia arrangement (Henceforth know we no man after the flesh 2Co 5:16) with its candlestick situated in this spiritual, heavenly place (see Ephesians 1:3; 2:1-6; Question Book page 408), where nourishment is

provided by the table of showbread, and access to the divine throne is obtained by prayers through incense at the golden altar.

The posts were covered with gold and stood in copper sockets. Let us not forget that the embryonic new creature is still in the flesh. We have this treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7), but in the justified flesh, considered as perfect.

In the Most Holy the posts were covered with gold and stood in silver sockets. This shows the resurrection of the begotten new creature from its physical state to its spiritual state.

So the Aaronic priesthood member begins with his being set aside through sanctification, with his vow to offer himself to be in the service of the Father, to put off the old man, and carry out his true baptism to death. The treatment of the bullock shows us all these things.

This Aaronic priesthood consecration had the same meaning to God as the consecration of each of the church members: two rams Aaron and his sons, our Lord Jesus and the called-out members. It implied the same consecration, the same walk, the same conditions, the same baptism identified with sufferings (the cross), and received the same appreciation by our heavenly Father, by whom is granted even the same resurrection to the divine nature of the 144,000 dearly beloved.

There is nevertheless a difference in the value of the sacrificed life. The life of our Lord Jesus was a corresponding price to redeem those lost in Adam. This is the ransom. None of the other members participate in this. No one adds anything to this.

The Third Ceremony

The third ceremony that interests us at this time is found in Leviticus chapter 16. It is called the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippour) or Sin Offering (sacrifices of reconciliation). It took place in the second year, seventh month, and the tenth day of the month. It was repeated annually. (Leviticus 16:29; Numbers 29:7) It involved Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu, the two other sons, were consumed by fire before this. (In my opinion I think this happened during the seven days of the first ceremony since its duration in antitype is the Gospel Age.)le 10:1-11; 16:1.

The sin offering consisted of one young bullock supplied by Aaron, and the Lord's goat and scapegoat supplied by the people. The burnt offering consisted of one ram supplied by Aaron and one ram supplied by the people.

These two ceremonies are very different from each other. To better emphasize the difference the tabernacle had its location changed in the second year, second month, and 20th day of the month. Numbers 10:11, 13.

If the first ceremony teaches us that the life offered (in consecration) was the ransom price by the death of the bullock with its poured out blood (1 Timothy 2:5,6; Matthew 20:28; Deuteronomy 19:21; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Lev. 17:14; Deuteronomy 12:33), and the begetting and anointing, then the third ceremony teaches us:

the methods of the subjugation of all sin,

who are the beings who will be solicited to do this,

what sins will be expiated and by whom.

In other words, the sin offering indicates to us the pattern, the process, the means employed, and the manner used to annul involuntary sins due to an unfortunate inheritance from Adam, and voluntary sins from the least to the greatest evil: thefts, lies, attempts at crime, wars and slaughter, tortures, coercions, injustices, and the works of the flesh. Galatians 5:19,20.

In these sins all who ever lived will have participated until the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth. Then the page will be turned and other conditions will be operative.

The first ceremony furnished in a relatively short time a price ready to be applied and to be effective. The second ceremony shows the application, the washing away, the imputation of the merit of Christ as it is applied every day until the results of the ransom, which guarantees a re-awakening of each individual, is completed during the Millennium when the last human being comes forth from the grave.

Here is an example which illustrates the difference between the ransom price and the sin offering.

The wages paid to a breadwinner is like the price, the money one has at one's disposal. The many expenses to be paid for what we find agreeable (sustenance, spare time activities, education) or disagreeable and which make us gnash our teeth (debts, taxes, traffic tickets) are what one might call the application or dispensing or imputation of the wages.

To annul all the sins of Israel in that former age, God instituted this third ceremony, but we note that only three people had the authority to assume responsibility for these sins: Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Nadab and Abihu, the two other sons, were previously consumed by fire [Le 16:1] having had contempt for their priesthood).

The reality or antitype confirms that those who go into second death, having been called, consecrated, sanctified, begotten, and under the original anointing as shown in the type (Leviticus chapter 8), have absolutely no role in the sin offering because they are not there. Their humanity (the animals) no longer exist (there is no resurrection for those who die the second death). On the other hand, the animals corresponding to the three people are worth considering.

Moses (God) is always there, but this time it is Aaron who does the sacrificing. He comes with his bullock and the two goats furnished by the people for atonement. Our Lord Jesus comes with his humanity just, holy, perfect and the called-out members come from the people with their humanity which has been justified, sanctified, and considered as perfect (linen clothing Leviticus 16:4). As we have noted, during this ceremony of chapter 16, as during the first (Leviticus 8), there was no one else in the court which, as in the first ceremony, suggests something extremely important. The ceremony consists of offering one bullock and one goat and carrying the blood into the propitiatory so that divine justice is satisfied and the sins of Israel are annulled for another year. The blood of the literal bullock and literal goat had value only for this period, but it could not definitively take away sins (i.e. once and for all). Hebrews 5:3-9; 9:12,13; 10:3,4,11.

Leviticus 16 specifies that Aaron offers his bullock for himself and his house. And if in the type, at the time Aaron lived, he had a need to be purified, it is not the same in the antitype because our Lord Jesus had no need of this application. Therefore, one must understand that the word himself implies his body, the perspective members of the body of Christ who have need to offer something

for their weaknesses, their shortcomings, etc., inherited and involuntary.

There was also the Lord's goat offered for the sins of the people and the scapegoat which expiated the sins confessed over it and which died in the desert.

In addition to the original sin, all the voluntary as well as involuntary transgressions committed from birth until the moment of consecration must be removed because fully or partially voluntary sins since consecration receive a consequent and personal retribution. (See Question Book, page 416 and 417.)

Thus the way the bullock was treated represents the way transgressions are assumed (endured, expiated) by our Lord. He could give his life in a less cruel way, but the sufferings he endured, as well as the contempt, injustice, mockings, beating, blows, and great distresses are a sign that they have something to do with the sins and transgressions that must be atoned for.

The people of Israel had made a covenant with God. But the breaking of this covenant immediately caused a malediction, and the one cursed was hung upon a tree; thus there was a complementary transgression. (Galatians 3:10-13; Exodus 20; 24:3, 8; Deuteronomy 27:26) To free the people of Israel from this curse, it was thus necessary that the Lord bare this kind of sentence- "[Christ] being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13) -and this is why he was nailed to a cross (tree) particularly because of the law covenant of the Jews. Were it not for this, he could have died another way. This is what the sin offering teaches.

The Lord's goat suffered the same fate as that of the bullock, but it made atonement for the people. The scapegoat was sent out to die in the desert after having received the confession of the sins of the people. If the Lord alone furnished the ransom price, he permits the members of his body to have a part in the sin offering and, as the apostle Paul says, to fill up, to complete the sufferings of Christ. Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13.

But why two animals for the people? All the involuntary sins of the people are removed by the sufferings of the little flock and added to, or fill up those of the Lord. On the other hand, the sins confessed over the scapegoat were equally of the people. These will be all the voluntary iniquities and transgressions which they committed during former ages up until the beginning of the age to come. And the scapegoat (the great company having failed to make

a complete and voluntary consecration) is shown to carry away this sort of iniquity, and the last members of this class pass through a great tribulation and wash their robes in the blood of the lamb. Revelation 7:14.

At the close of these activities, the high priest took off his garments and washed himself, and, after putting garments on, offered the two rams for a burnt offering. (Leviticus 16:24) So again there is an equivalent meaning of this sin offering and equivalent effects, both when it was offered in the past before the Lord and now for each church participant.

The priesthood of Aaron has its application until the kingdom of God delivers the benefits of the ransom which will be when the last member of the human race will be awakened. But meanwhile the tabernacle is in the process of being disassembled. The class of Levites are involved only for carrying it after Aaron had covered everything (Numbers 1:50,51,53; 3:25-28; 4:5-15) and we find ourselves before the temple of Jerusalem where Christ takes on his function of king and priest after the order of Melchisedek. Another brother will soon talk to us on this subject.

One additional note to further clarify that the Lord at his second coming could not assume the function of high priest in a literal temple because the priests had to be of the line of Aaron, his sons, and grandsons. They served the type. But our Lord Jesus, of the line of Judah, is the antitype of these, and is of a higher order, established as a spiritual house with better sacrifices than these, more valuable and lasting. Hebrews 3:1,3; 4:15; 5:1,3-5; 7:11-17,23,24,26,28; 8:1-6; 9:11-14,24,25; 10:11,12.

In conclusion, the Aaronic priesthood concerns the external appearance, with its humiliation, incomprehension, deception, derision, the sufferings, as opposed to an internal conviction of the happiness to be with God, to be called by Him, and to belong to Him, to be begotten by Him, to be under His holy protection and to have His approval, as shown by the fact that angels came to comfort the Lord and that the Almighty has accorded him the privilege to be seated at His right hand.

Let us learn this lesson and walk faithfully in the footsteps of our dearly beloved Saviour and be able to suffer with him.

May the Lord bless you abundantly!

Symposium: The Melchizedek Priesthood-Bro. Adolphe Debski, France

IN HIS RELATIONSHIP with men, it pleased the Lord to establish two priesthoods: the priesthood according to the order of Aaron and the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. The one according to the order of Aaron was established in connection with the giving of the law covenant to Israel at Sinai after they were brought out of Egypt. On the other hand, the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek was established long before that, but in such an unobtrusive way that the Israelites never noticed it.

However, it was of primary importance as the Apostle Paul writes in Hebrews chapter 7. It was presented to us in the Old Testament only once and with just a few words, as though God wanted to show but a flash of it. Here it is:

And the king of Sodom went out to meet [Abram] after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. Genesis 14:17-20

Out of this description comes a feeling of peace, calmness, majesty, victory, happiness, and felicity. It is curious that in the Old Testament this priesthood will be mentioned only once more, in Psalm 110:4,

The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

This speaks to the risen Christ, as the Apostle Paul tells us in Hebrews 6:20. And according to Hebrews 7:1,2 Melchizedek was not only a priest of the most high God, he was also a king; he was King of Salem. He was a king of righteousness because the name Melchizedek means king of righteousness. And he was a king of peace because the word Salem means peace. Salem was the name of the city over which he reigned and was probably the original name of the city of Jerusalem.

This king of righteousness and peace was at the same time the priest of the most high God. He was a priest who was blessing and reigning, a priest clothed with royal glory and dignity. This last point is important.

A second point should be noticed: no sacrifice is shown in the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. There is no sacrificed animal; no bullocks or goats are slain. Consequently neither the sufferings of Christ are shown, nor his humiliation and humility. However, the merits of Christ are shown, those provided by his sacrifice, but not the sacrifice as such. These merits are pictured by the bread and wine offered by Melchizedek to Abraham.

These observations show when the Lord begins to fulfil what was prefigured in the blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek. This will not happen before the sacrifice of the church is complete because the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek includes our glorified Lord, the high priest, and the members of the Church, his body, made kings and priests. (Revelation 5:10; 1 Peter 2:9)

Since the church is not yet fully formed, the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek is not yet fully developed. This will happen when the last member of the body of Christ will be joined to the Lord, being changed in the twinkling of an eye by the power of the first resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:51,52; Revelation 20:14)

Before this picture can begin to be realized, the last member of the Great Company will have to go through the great tribulation and make his robe white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14) Only then will the merit of Christ, used by the consecrated during the Gospel Age, be liberated and able to be used to benefit the world. That means that even though the reign mentioned in the prophecy of Isaiah 52:7 is taking place, this picture is not yet fulfilled.

This reign is being accomplished at the time when the feet members, the last members of the body of Christ, are still on the earth and publish the message of peace and salvation associated with the gospel. It's being accomplished now. In fact, the Lord, who returned and is present now like a thief in the night, is using his royal power to shake and tear down the world's social order. (Revelation 16:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Hebrews 12:26; Jeremiah 1:10)

Neither is the Melchizedek picture being fulfilled when the reign mentioned in Ezekiel 20:33-37 is being accomplished with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. This reign was to be upon the Israelites as concerned their return to their land. It was particularly accomplished during the second world war and was witnessed by the entire world. And although it is not written that it won't happen again, it seems improbable.

On the other hand, the picture begins to be fulfilled in a further stage of the second presence when the Lord will be revealed to the entire world in all the glory and power of his kingdom. (Matthew 25:31) The Church, then complete and with him, will also appear to the entire world as Paul informs us in Colossians 3:4. Then the priestly function of forgiving sins, and instructing and blessing all mankind will be associated with the royal function of establishing an era of peace and righteousness. And So the Lord will begin the work shown by Melchizedek. According to Hebrews 8:3,

"Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; hence it was necessary for this one [for Christ] also to have something which he might offer." (Diaglott)

Bread and Wine

Melchizedek offered bread and wine; the Lord will also offer the bread and the wine which represent the merits of his sacrifice.

The bread pictures the body of the Lord his flesh, his perfect human nature. (Matthew 26:26) (The Church, as the spiritual body of Christ, is not spoken of here.) But the rights to life the Lord had as a perfect human being were rights that he did not lose since he did not personally sin. He sacrificed these rights So that man could receive the benefit of them.

The wine pictures his blood. (Matthew 26:27,28) Blood flowing in the veins means life, but shed blood means the death of the being. So the shed blood of Christ pictures his death, his expiatory death for Adam's sin and the sins of the whole world. (Matthew 26:28; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 1:5) This blood is also the ransom price that will free mankind from the prison house of death. (1 Timothy 2:6; John 5:28)

The service the Lord will accomplish with this blood before God, namely its sprinkling on the mercy seat of divine justice for the sins of the whole world, is not shown in the priesthood according

to the order of Melchizedek, but in the Aaronic priesthood. It was on the Day of Atonement when Aaron the high priest entered the Most Holy a second time with the blood of the Lord's goat and sprinkled the mercy seat with it for the people's sins. That blood pictured the blood of Christ that passed through the members of the Church.

However, the service the Lord will accomplish with his blood before men is shown by Melchizedek offering wine to Abraham. Giving wine to the people will mean that the Lord will give them the good news that through the grace of God he died for their sins, that propitiation was made before God for these sins, through his blood, and that they can receive forgiveness if they repent.

That will mean that the price of redemption was paid, that the death sentence was abolished, and that the awakening of the dead could commence. That will also mean that his blood will still be available during the Millennial Age for the shortcomings and the unwilling sins that men may still commit then. Giving this wine, this blood, will also be an invitation for men to accept the Lord as their Redeemer and see in the work of redemption the love of God toward them. (John 3:16)

But after having been awakened from the sleep of death and freed from their sins through the blood of Christ, men will still be imperfect. They will find themselves in the same state of imperfection as they were when they died. To live everlastingly they will have to reach the same mental, moral, and physical perfection as Adam just before his transgression. To attain that, they will have to, figuratively speaking, eat the bread the Lord will give them, with the wine as he says in John 6:51,

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

This flesh won't be the body of the Lord that was nailed to the cross and put in the tomb. But like the bread it pictures the perfect human nature of Jesus, his right to everlasting human life that he sacrificed for mankind.

Eating this flesh will mean appropriating to oneself this right to everlasting life as a perfect human being. And with the appropriation of this right, mankind will progressively go up the slope of imperfection to reach finally human perfection where they

will be able to obey perfectly the divine law and, as a consequence, live everlastingly.

Men will also have to render strict obedience to the teachings of the Lord and the Church, the royal priesthood, and to the laws they will put into force. This is because as a King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus will establish a new social order founded on righteousness and love.

His unlimited power will be used for the truth, peace, well being, and happiness of mankind and against error, unrighteousness, wickedness, and all who will voluntarily sin in the kingdom of Christ during the Millennial Age. The latter, if they persist in the wrong way, will be destroyed forever in the second death. (Acts 3:23; Psalm 37:9; Isaiah 65:20)

On the other hand, those who will obey Christ with joy and love will obtain the blessing of everlasting life. They are pictured by Abraham giving Melchizedek tithes of all. They also will give a tithe of all to the one who was represented by Melchizedek to obtain his blessing. Giving a tithe of all will mean renouncing one's own will in everything and submitting to the will of Christ, to obey him and make as their own the divine law that he will put into effect.

Everyone who acts like that with sincerity and love will overcome the last test that will take place after the end of the Millennium when Satan will be loosed for a little season to try to deceive those whose obedience will not have been perfect the ones who, figuratively speaking, will not have given tithes of all. Consequently they will not deserve everlasting life and will die the second death. (Revelation 20:7-10; 21:8)

But the former will not let themselves be captivated by the adversary and will prove that they deserve the supreme gift of everlasting life. They will constitute the earthly posterity of Abraham which is compared to the sand which is upon the sea shore as it is written in Genesis 22:17. In this study, it appears that Abraham's earthly seed may be pictured by Abraham himself.

Characteristics of the Melchizedek Priesthood

We just saw the work that this wonderful royal priesthood after the order of Melchizedek will do. Now let us study some of its distinctive characteristics. They are recorded in Hebrews chapter 7.

In verse 3 it is written that Melchizedek was 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. What a strange man was this!

We know that God is the only one who has no beginning of days because he had no beginning. But all other beings, including Jesus Christ the son of God, and Melchizedek too, were created and So have a beginning of days. Furthermore Melchizedek would not have an end of life. That would mean that he is still alive today.

More surprising, it is written that he is without father or mother. Except for God the almighty creator, all other beings without exception were created, whether on a celestial, spiritual, or human plane. All had a father who is the one who created them. So Melchizedek also had one. And since it's more than likely he was created on the human plane, he also had a mother. Additionally, when we carefully study the Bible, we can see that Melchizedek was in fact Shem, one of Noah's three sons. Since this was probably the case, we do know his father and his mother.

But didn't the Apostle Paul know this? Of course he knew. Then why did he write that Melchizedek was without father and without mother? He wrote that because it's not mentioned anywhere in the Bible about Melchizedek's genealogy under the name Melchizedek. The genealogy of every important man of God is recorded in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, but not Melchizedek's. However this man was at that time the most important in the eyes of God because he was His priest. Even though this priest was undoubtedly a member of the human race, he was presented as though his origin was not human, as though he did not come from Adam. Why? For several reasons.

First because the apostle speaks essentially about the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, not of Melchizedek as a man. It was in the priesthood that Melchizedek was without father, without mother, without children, without beginning of days nor end of life. He did not inherit this priesthood from his father or his mother, and it was not inherited by his descendant as with the Aaronic priesthood. So this shows that Christ's priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek was not to be inherited according to a human genealogy. It was by a divine decision as the Lord swore according to Psalm 110:4. This also showed that the members of this royal priesthood would not have a human nature, but a spiritual one when they function as priests and kings. They will be new creatures, partakers of the divine nature.

Melchizedek's priesthood was presented as a continuous one, as it is written in Hebrews 7:3, "Melchizedek abideth a priest continually," or more precisely, without interruption to the continuity of his priesthood. (The Greek word *dienekes* translated "continually" means that the continuity is not interrupted according to Young's Concordance.)

With the Aaronic priesthood the continuity was interrupted because of the death of the high priest. That's why verse 23 mentions and they truly were many priests because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. This is also why this priesthood was handed down from father to son.

But in Melchizedek's priesthood, neither ancestors nor descendants were mentioned. That shows that the priesthood was not transmittable but was permanent and continuous. So it suitably represents the priesthood of Christ as the Apostle Paul points out in chapter 7, verse 3, by the expression but made like unto the son of God.

Christ's priesthood won't be interrupted in its continuity and won't be passed down to anybody because the Christ glorified, head and body, won't die. (Hebrews 7:24) He lives forever and consequently will be able to accomplish what was shown when Melchizedek blessed Abraham, which is the blessing of the entire world. This work of blessing will require the entire Millennial Age during which the royal priesthood will function as it is written in verses 17 and 21: Thou art a Priest for the Age, according to the order of Melchizedek. (Diaglott)

Even though the Lord will keep forever the title of high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, his function as such will last during one age, the Millennial Age, because it will be during this age that the goal will be attained, that is the perfection of mankind mentioned in chapter 7, verse 11. Perfection in this context is synonymous with everlasting life.

The depth of Paul's argument in this seventh chapter of Hebrews amazes us. For example, let's look again at Abraham giving tithes to Melchizedek. In this experience the apostle sees Levi, Abraham's great-grandson, paying tithes to Melchizedek. So he observes once more the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood compared to the priesthood of Aaron who descended from Levi (verses 4-10). In the same way but on a much larger scale, the

priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek is higher than the Aaronic priesthood.

Let us note that even though this superiority was foreseen, determined, and decided by God, it was no less deserved by the Lord, coming essentially from his work of sacrifice under two aspects:

Under the first aspect (and concerning him personally), the Lord was faithful and obedient in the work of sacrificing himself. He endured the most bitter disgrace and a most disgraceful death. That is why God resurrected him as a glorious spirit being, established him as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, gave him all power in heaven and on earth, bestowed upon him royal authority and established him as mediator of the new covenant, a most excellent covenant of which Jesus has become at the same time the guarantor. (Hebrews 7:22; 9:15) Moreover, by being in contact with an imperfect world under the influence of sin, the Lord could develop compassion and mercy which a high priest must have. (Hebrews 2:17)

Let us say at the same time concerning the members of the Church, that because they are faithful partakers of the sufferings of Christ, of the sacrifice for sins pictured in the sacrifice of the Lord's goat, they become joint heirs with the Lord, and participate in the glorified royal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek under the aegis of the Lord. That shows us that the royal priesthood is being made and developed during the entire Gospel Age through the way of sacrifice, and faithfulness and obedience under trial.

Under the second aspect (and concerning men), the Lord by his sacrifice gave what is indispensable for their salvation. He gave his blood, the blood of a perfect man, because the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4), and he gave his flesh, the flesh of a perfect man, a generator of life, because this flesh is the bread of everlasting life. (John 6:51)

This flesh and blood, otherwise called bread and wine, along with the royalty, power, glory, and immortality of its members, without question make the superiority and power of the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek and guarantees the success of its future work.

The Aaronic priesthood had only blood to offer, but it was the blood of animals which could not really make propitiation for the

sins of the people. One must emphasize that that priesthood did not have this particular bread to offer, bread that will allow those who will eat it to live everlastingly. (John 6:51,58) This bread was to come down from heaven and came from the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. Hence the powerlessness of the Aaronic priesthood, increased by the fact that its high priests were imperfect men and under the condemnation of death. (Hebrews 7:18,23,28) So a change was necessary. (Hebrews 7:12)

Let us add in conclusion that as the Aaronic priesthood began to function jointly with the establishment of the law covenant at Sinai after Israel's exodus from Egypt, So Christ's priesthood after the order of Melchizedek will begin to function jointly with the establishment of the new covenant when the Church is complete and glorified, and will dispense the blessing of life to everyone who desires it.

Glory be to God for his marvellous plan of salvation. Amen.

God Be With You-Bro. Michal Targosz, Poland

GOD BE WITH YOU! It is not easy to find farewell words. Perhaps when we are not close to each other, when we have not experienced many joys together, or many griefs, when we do not share our desires and goals perhaps then farewell words might be easy and flow more abundantly. Then it might be easier to stretch out our hand and convey some correct, well thought-out wishes. But we do not desire that kind of farewell.

In our Christian life we constantly give ourselves away. We reveal our hearts, our thoughts, and our feelings. We let those we trust look at us. We search for new friendships, and new faces, individuals who might amaze us. Often we want the adoration of others, but in reality we want something quite different: We want to be loved! We long for others to extend disinterested acts of benevolence, to do something for us spontaneously with no sense of duty. We want to trust. Even when in the dark, we grope for help. We wish our hands might meet a true heart, wisdom, subtlety.

God Be with You

Four words. And yet they may prove too many. It may be that even those four words will not come out when we want to cry. And why So many tears? Our hands behave as though they were not our own, So clumsy, So harsh and abrupt, when holding the hands of

others. Heavens have been opened to us, wonders So longed for and anticipated and there is too little time, it is too late, we cannot say everything at once, and we know we should not return with any unspoken words, and at last we understand what we have read hundreds of times, So clear and obvious and yet So hard to grasp: And they will know that you are my disciples by your love toward one another.

God Be with You

It is not easy to come down from the top of Jacob's ladder. It is not easy to look down and return to our everyday activities, and to wait for two more long, human years. It is not easy. How much zeal for the next few days there will be in the words which join us with the Father in prayer: O Lord! Thy Kingdom Come!

God Be with You

He knows about tomorrow. He knows the tomorrows of all of us. He sees how we miss each other. If his plan for this world is to still last some time, he will let us meet again. He will again give us this spiritual food which is our brotherly fellowship. For he is our Father!

Two years. For some of you it will be less, for some more. We feel, however, that this is something different than saying good-bye at a Sunday meeting in our ecclesia. Two years can completely change our lives. What will we be like at our next meeting? Will it be the same smile, the same cheerfulness? We don't know. But this uncertainty comes with hope. It will be well. It will be well. It will . . .

What if he told us of the future? What if we could see what lies a few months ahead? He did once. Paul of Tarsus, his apostle, learned about his future. Look! Paul is parting from his brethren. Not as we do today. We have the advantage of not knowing the future. Paul knew and knew it very well. How different is his farewell.

"From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the Church. When they arrived, he said to them: You know how I lived for the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to

house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Acts 20:17-25,36-38 (NIV)

Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. Coming to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, The Holy Spirit says, In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles. When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. When he would not be dissuaded we gave up and said, The Lord's will be done. Acts 21:8,10-14 (NIV)

Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? It would seem that the early church had a much stronger faith than we do. They had the apostles and many who walked with Jesus. Paul himself, a zealous champion of the doctrine of the resurrection, must have been sure that his next experience after death would be another meeting. Yet he does not hesitate to use the words, none of you will ever see me again. With everybody else he prays on his knees and they all cry and embrace because something is ending. Paul will be no more and they will be orphans.

There is nothing improper in those who believe in the promises of God to have human instincts and reactions. Before raising Lazarus, our Lord was moved three times. He saw Mary weeping and all those who were with her. He saw their helplessness and despair. He did not hide his tears. And the Jews said, See how he loved him! They were right. The gospel account tells us, Jesus loved Mary and her sister Martha and Lazarus. (John 11:5) Many brethren of Asia minor loved Paul of Tarsus. What this meant for

Paul, we find in Galatians: I bear you record that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me. (Galatians 4:15) Can we be surprised that this farewell breaks his heart?

Two other friends did not part any differently: David and Jonathan. Referring to Jonathan, the scripture tells us that his soul clung to David's and that he loved David as himself. David expressed his feeling directly: I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than the love of women. These two also had to part in their livestwice. The first time occurred when there was no place for David at Saul's side, when the king's unfriendliness, caused by jealousy, turned into uncontrolled hatred. The second time was when the bodies of Israelites covered the mount of Gilboa.

God Be with You

One more brief moment and we must say goodbye to each other. We leave behind not only these few wonderful days, but other kindred hearts that grow closer with each brotherly meeting. We are parting from a human being, the most precious thing given to us of those created on earth. We do not know the heavens. Our eye and ear has not known and it has not even entered our minds what the future holds for us. But it is in this future that our hopes and longings are centered. All this we see as if in a mirror or puzzle, through a fog touchable only by faith and trust. The only reality is another human being, though weak, fallen, imperfect.

Do you realize why our Lord emphasized our gathering together So much? It is not only our school here on earth. In this fellowship we find our cities of refuge. We find people brothers, sisters, true friends supports in difficult times. We find houses like the one in Bethany, where we may always turn, where we will always find rest, where we will be consoled when sad, and told the truth when we go astray. Yes, these are people from whom we can accept the truth about ourselves. All this is found when we assemble together, the cornerstone of which is Jesus Christ himself.

Please do not tell me I am exaggerating and that you do not need others. If someone does not need a warm feeling from someone else, he does not know God, as John teaches in his letter. And do not tell me that you love everyone around you, that it is obvious, and that showing brotherly love is a simple thing. Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth, are also the words of John. And if here, in this hall, there

has sprouted a little plant of human feelings, if these few days caused our hearts to soften, take good care of it. It is something ever so rare and hard to breed! One must give it a lot of attention and effort to prevent its death or dwarfing and to make it bring forth fruit.

God does not appreciate plants that do not bring fruit. A flower that does not turn into a fruit, that does not produce seed, is a flower of pride. It does not provide life. Of itself it dies and apart from a short moment of awe, it leaves nothing. But we are to meet again and bring something with us. What will that meeting be like?

If it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me. This is a beautiful testimony about the church of Galatia. You received me like an angel of God, like Jesus Christ. However, he added some bitter words which I did not previously quote: What happened to the blessedness you spoke of? What, then, happened with our blessedness, brethren? I trust the Lord will not require us to ask ourselves such a question.

God Be with You

And still one more crumb from the Master's table, a detail which is perhaps worth attaching to all the words heard and read here, worth taking along and preserving in our hearts until our next meeting. We read about it in the second book of Chronicles, chapter 34.

King Josiah reforms the nation. He is very young and inherits the throne in a difficult period in history. He is different from his predecessors, however. The Bible tells us that when he was 16 years old, he began to seek the God of David, his forefather. Josiah decides to rebuild the temple. He has already destroyed the strange cults in Judah and Jerusalem. Now he turns to the house of God. During this project Jehovah himself meets the young king. The workers find the book of the Law in the temple treasure. It is a shock. The scribe Shaphan reads it word by word to Josiah and he listens with apprehension. We do not know what is happening in this young heart. Meeting the true God ends with the king renting his clothes, a sign of repentance and a renewal of the covenant.

Many of us have again found the book of the words of God. We are not strangers, nor are we newcomers. Every day we attempt to cut out the pagan gardens from our hearts and to destroy the altars of our own desires. We came here to rebuild our temple and everything seems to be in perfect order. We are quiet, trusting, perhaps even self-confident and sure of the promises received. We

ARE different as we leave. We are now closer to the kingdom, more sensitive, more joyful, more excited and more humble. Here, in this hall, we have again rediscovered our old Bible. Our hands trembled again and tears came down. We received it from God's treasury. It lay in the midst of gold although it was covered by the gray stone of the every-day.

Others dug it out for us. Look around! Look at yourselves! Look at those joyful eyes full of tears! They dug it out. It was this brother who sits by our side, with whom we share a hymn book. It was that sister who translated a talk, or the one who brought us from the airport. It was also the one who is now in a hospital ten thousand miles away. He is thinking of us and he gave a few dollars for this meeting, as much as he could, for he could not afford to be here himself. It was they who dug it out for us and breathlessly ran to us, Look! we found the law of our God Jehovah!

Rent your clothes! It is time to renew your covenant! He makes it easier for us. At home the gray stone of work, cares, and desires will again cover everything. Here, we are free. Here, at last we are free! Separated from the New Jerusalem by the thickness of its door. God has spoken at sundry times and in divers manners. But now he has spoken through his Son. (Hebrews 1:1,2) Wake up, O sleeper! Get to work! Work on yourself and for others.

You all know what you are going back to. Don't let the gray stones bar the way to God's treasure again. There, in the midst of gold, is His Word, His Law your future. Do not trample what you have received through the work of many hands and minds. Do not trample what you have received through his grace.

In your hand, you are again holding your Bible. Have you ever seen a mother desperately cling to her child? In your hand, you are holding more than your own life. In this book, there is life and happiness for your children, your family, and all whom you love. You have this happiness back with you again.

I do not know what you are going through, what you have left behind, or how heavy your heart and conscience may be. There is always time. You can always say God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Do not think that only you are unworthy, that only you lack faith. Everyone who takes His word into his hand feels this. He asks, Lord, what do you want to tell me? Everyone looks for that friendly, wise, and patient hand. It is hard to believe. We look for help, advice, consolation, often abruptly and desperately, but we

do not see Him. We cannot find Him, just as we often cannot find ourselves.

Once upon a time a man went to war. Meanwhile his son was born. The war ended with the father in a prison camp and a long journey from his country. During the war his son lived on stories about his father and a small photo of him. But one day the door opened and there was commotion in the whole house: the father had returned. The boy stood in the middle of the room and looked at the stranger. He looked and looked. Then suddenly he turned around, ran to the desk, hugged the little picture, and shouted, This is my daddy!

The days of fatherly patience began. One evening the little one climbed into his father's lap. Everybody in the room became silent. It was so quiet one could hear the child's breath. He looked. He turned his head and looked at the photo, then back to his father, then back to the photo. He took his head between his little hands and looked closer and closer. Again he peeked at the photo, again at his father. His face shone with a big smile. He embraced his father and shouted with child-like joy, These are the same daddies!

This is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is in the pages of the gospel and our imagination. He is present in his parables and in his teachings. We are told about him by Paul, Peter, John, and James. We carry his picture with us though it be blurred, a reflection of our vision. We have learned of Christ Jesus. But there are moments and days in our life and I think these days are such that Christ stands at our door and becomes real in our life. Once we were told about him, but now he comes to us, holds our hand, and says Let's go. There are moments when we need no explanation, no words or pictures. Suddenly all that we found, learned, and strived to understand becomes simple and awesomely real.

I believe the Lord is in this room. I believe his divine spiritual heart is rejoicing. We look into ourselves. How different we are when he is with us, how everything becomes better and free of care. One would like to shout the words of Job, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. (Job 42:5) And one would cling to his stretched out hand and never let it go.

God Be with You

May He become your friend and stay in your home, not just in a picture in the Bible that we take off the shelf before a meeting. May He take you every night upon His lap. May He teach you to

live. May He tell you of the other, wonderful world of which all that concerns and saddens you is not worthy. Friendship with Him is peace and happiness, love and justice. It is freedom of care in the midst of cares. It is the New Creature in Christ Jesus.

God be with you, 'till we meet again.

Peace-Bro. Joseph Wozniak, France

DEARLY BELOVED brethren in the Lord, dear young people and all friends of Present Truth, may the peace of God be with us all! Today I am going to speak to you about Peace in general. We read in Isaiah 8:23,

Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

And in chapter 9, verses 1 to 3:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

This comparison signifies that, as in the time of Midian, Jehovah, by the intermediary of Gideon and his little band, specially manifested His power in striking down an immense army and in delivering Israel from oppression. Thus, in the end of this Gospel age, the glorified Lord and his glorified Church, the Little Flock, as antitypes of Gideon and his little band, shall deliver Israel through a similar manifestation of divine power; not Israel only, but also the entire world will be delivered from sin and death.

For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with

justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (verses 46)

Yes, the light shall shine in the dark valley. It was many centuries after Isaiah wrote this prophecy that our dear Redeemer, appearing among men, spent most of his time, accomplished most of his powerful works, and did the majority of his great miracles in these regions of Zebulun and Naphtali regions which at the time of the prophet Isaiah had been depleted of Jews and were occupied by emigrants of pagan origin. Because of this, these regions were called Galilee of the Nations.

These pagans were gathered together near the city of Samaria and were known as the Samaritans. Having learned of the hopes of the Israelites, they were inclined to claim a certain part of the blessings belonging to the people in the territory in which they lived. The Jews, however, considered them still as pagan, and wanted no relationship with them whatsoever.

Verse 2 of Isaiah 9 applies well to Galilee: The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. Thus the Lord declares: And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended [welcomed] it not. (John 1:5) Jesus was the light of the world. He was in the world, and the world received him not.

But we, dear brethren, should today understand that there exists in these words of the prophet a greater and higher significance, more profound and much broader. These words apply to all people of earth who have been favored during this Gospel Age, to those whose eyes have been enlightened by a right heart condition, so that we may know what is the hope of his calling and the riches of the glory reserved for the saints. May the eyes of our understanding be open!

The people of Galilee, in the time of our Lord's personal ministry, and, later, similar classes of poor people from other parts of the earth, have had among them a few representatives of peace and of true light. But always the light shown in the darkness and the darkness welcomed it not.

Our Lord predicted this at the time of his earthly ministry. But only a small number who trust in the Lord appreciate this peace now, this grand light at his second advent. For as the apostle declares, The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

These have the eyes of their judgment So obscured by false doctrines, by poor understanding and superstition, that they are incapable of seeing the glorious things that one may see only with the eye of faith, with the eye of understanding. That this prophecy is not limited to the people of Galilee only is evident by the end of verse 2: They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. The land of the shadow of death is the entire world, for the shadow of death has covered the entire world since the first transgression was committed in the garden by our first parents, Adam and Eve. Since that time the curse or sentence of death has been pronounced against our race.

The prophet David explained that the true people of God are blessed even though they find themselves in the present valley, living in the shadow of death. He declares, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. (Psalm 23:4)

It is to this class who are called by the Father, who walk with the Lord, who trust in him, that the true light shines now, and they reside in the Peace with God. They have it not, however, as brightly as the light of the Sun of Righteousness which will shine forth when the millennial kingdom shall be established, but merely as that of a little lamp. We are told that the Word of God is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. (Psalm 119:105)

This lamp does not shine for the world, but for those who form the peculiar people of the Lord, for those who have obtained the light of the revelation of God, and the light of illumination. All those therefore who walk in this valley under the direction and the protection of the Master of our salvation, see indeed in our Savior a grand light. We see a light that the world sees not. But thanks be to God, the time when the world shall see this great light is drawing near. The reign of Christ is not far distant.

As soon as the present work of the selection of the Church, the bride, the members of his body, shall be accomplished, the great Sun of Righteousness of which the members of the Church, changed and glorified, will form a part will shine on the world, bringing to it the light of truth, that message which will speak of mercy and love divine, and instruct in righteousness.

Those who will constitute the sun, Christ the head and the Church his body, will be the grand instructor of the world who will be awakened out of sleep by Christ. They will instruct mankind, lead

the obedient to full communion with God, and to perfection, and will destroy in the second death the unworthy and disobedient.

But, let us retrace our steps a little. How are we, the called people of God, to have this peace?

Peace with God

All those whom God has called must make a covenant of peace with the Most High because the covenant of God with us is one of life and peace. God is the author of our High Calling. He wants us to have faith in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to obtain justification, the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, no distinction exists between Jew or Gentile.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and they are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:23,24)

We must recognize that we are all sinners. We must recognize that we have placed our earthly life upon the altar. To obtain the one which is in heaven, the heavenly life, God sanctifies us as stated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24,

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

One must obtain peace with God. Jesus told his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (Matthew 16:24) The thought carried in the expression take up one's cross is strictly linked to the words renounce or deny one's self.

There is however a difference: self-sacrifice particularly relates to obedience and passive endurance for the cause of the Lord. Taking up the cross particularly concerns activity in the service of the Master, which we find contrary to our natural inclinations. Faithfulness in renouncing oneself is manifested by the courage and zeal in carrying one's cross; it is victory and triumph. We must equally offer our bodies, as the Apostle Paul states in Romans 12:1,2,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Let us give all we have in the service of the Lord. Let us reckon the thing thus, even if no recompense should follow our consecration. Let us not forget that God has attached great rewards and blessings. In Psalm 50:5 we have the prophetic assurance of divine blessings as it is written: Gather my saints together unto me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice!

Peace in Oneself

With regard to having peace in oneself, we are told prophetically, Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them because they have peace in themselves. (Psalms 119:165)

We should always pray more, at home, at work, in the meetings; our life ought to be a prayer to obtain grace, wisdom, and the fruits of the spirit. Opportunities of serving the Lord and the brethren permit us to grow more and more into the likeness of the dear Son of God.

Under such conditions, who can doubt that, according to the promise, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep such hearts and minds. (Philippians 4:7) Yes, this peace will in itself drive away one of the great evils that afflicts many hearts.

Peace in the Ecclesia

Jesus said, Blessed are the peacemakers [within the ecclesia or with one's associates] for they shall be called the children of God. (Matthew 5:9) We must love the truth and have peace among ourselves in the ecclesia where the saints meet in the same name (Jesus Christ), the same faith, the same hope, and the same walk.

Let us never forget that the meetings are in a holy place. It must be pleasant for all who meet there in the name of the Lord. It is he who has said, For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20) I will give them blessing, I will guide not only their steps, but their thoughts and their deeds as well.

In order that such meetings may produce fruits that are pleasing to the Lord, and that they may have salt in them, let us be at peace one with another. The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians 5:22,23,

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Indeed, God has called us all to live in peace among ourselves, be it at home among spouse and children, or outside the home. Living always in peace, let us never forget one thing:

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
(Romans 5:1)

"Therefore let us never forget to take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."
(Ephesians 6:13-18)

We must all have the spirit of prayer in all we say and do, that is to say, our hearts must be continually turning to the Lord to obtain his direction in all the affairs of life.

Peace between us and our Neighbors

We should conduct ourselves in such a way that the Gospel of our Lord may bring forth pleasant fruits in our circle of neighbors. Our daily life should be exemplary in order that those who see us may recognize the likeness of our Master.

We should not provoke misunderstanding or have a comportment that is unworthy of a Christian, the child of God, but we should always have a Christian smile for others, a good word of comfort for those who are dejected and dispirited in their lives. But let us

behave in a manner such that peace is always on our lips, in our deeds, and in our comportment.

In the world in which we live today, we see a prophecy being accomplished as stated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:13:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord So cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety . . .

The entire world speaks of it all powers, statesmen, the rich and the poor all speak of this peace, of a lasting peace through the United Nations, forgetting that sudden destruction cometh upon them; and they shall not escape. That time is now: peace was already discussed after the first World War and after the second as well, but today it is discussed differently. The Apostle Paul puts us on guard by telling us:

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as [do] others; but let us watch and be sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:46)

The Christian, as a disciple of the Lord and pupil in the School of Christ our Master, is in the process of being prepared for a place in the millennial kingdom, there to participate in glory, honor and immortality. That is why we see the necessity of repeated warnings in the Holy Scriptures that members of the People of God be watchful, that they sleep not, be not slothful nor overcharged with the cares of this life, but that they be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Let us watch, in the sense of carefully taking note of all the instructions that the Lord our God gives us in this school concerning the services that please him. Let us watch over ourselves, striving to walk as strictly and with as much attention to the pattern of the great Sovereign Sacrificer as possible.

Let us be sober, happy, and joyous in the Lord. Nevertheless let us be sober in the sense of seriously appreciating the opportunities and privileges that service to the Lord offers, So we don't let them slip from our hands in this evil time, by negligence, or by the covetousness of men. Let us never forget that we have three great

enemies that want, in their own way, to turn us away from this present truth and from our peace:

1. Our flesh, which demands much; but we must keep a close watch on it;
2. The world (with its covetousness), and the earthly life, and the things that our eyes see and that, perhaps, our heart wants;
3. Satan, the great enemy of the new creature, who lies in wait and follows us everywhere. He is like a lion waiting for his prey and like a serpent, a serpent of whom it has been shown how he seduced our first parents.

The Apostle Paul says:

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. (1 Thessalonians 5:7,8)

Returning to the prophet Isaiah (9:7),

Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Making no mention of the faithfulness of our Lord and his earthly ministry by which he was tested and proved worthy of the favors which were assured him, prophetically, as conqueror, this prophecy declares that the government will be on his shoulders. This is an ancient way of figuratively declaring that the authority and honor will be awarded to the Lord Jesus. This concept is noted even in earthly armies, whose generals carry epaulettes on their shoulders indicating the honor of their rank.

It is thus that our Heavenly Father has placed on our Lord Jesus the dignity and the responsibility of being the grand king who, in due time and as representative of the Father and as great Mediator, will reign during the thousand years to reestablish order in the world degraded by 6000 years of the reign of sin and death, to put down all insubordination, to destroy every enemy of righteousness and truth, and to elevate whosoever will be the friend of divine precepts.

Note that this authority, this right to govern, is conferred on our Lord before he assumes the different functions which will be set up later. Today few recognize the authority of this great Master of our salvation established by God.

In comparison to the great mass of mankind (even in Christianity), only a few the Church of the firstborn truly recognize him. These render him obedience and do not refuse to hear him, he who speaks from the highest heaven. For, dear brethren, few have the eyes of their understanding open and see the things others do not see. They have the ears of their understanding open So they hear and understand what others do not comprehend.

For all of us, our Lord is the representative of the Father. He is all in all, even now before the time when he will take his great power and reign:

1. Now, he is our King;
2. He will be King equally over the world, when he will establish truth and righteousness.

By the eye of faith, we see, recognize, adore, obey and follow him. The knowledge of the glory of God will eventually be for all the world, as it is written:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and [things] in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10)

The authority or government has not been placed on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus in vain even though our Lord has not claimed this authority for nearly 2000 years after his triumph and his ascension into heavenly places. God has fixed in His plan a proper time when the Son will take his great power and will reign in association with his Church, the little flock, who are now in the process of being gathered from the world during this Gospel Age. The time when the Lord will manifest himself to the world and to all people, his government, authority, and reign is represented in Daniel 12:1,2:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that

same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

Our Lord will not receive his authority in vain. When he obtains it, he will make use of it. One of the first works, we are assured, will be the suppression of evil not only by putting away Satan, the prince of this world who now acts in the hearts of the children of disobedience and who will be bound at the beginning of the Millennial reign, but also the suppression of all the works of evil.

That will be abolished as soon as the due time has come, and he on whose shoulders the power and authority have been placed will take to himself his great power and begin to reign. No further evil will be then tolerated, we can be sure. But obedience will be demonstrated by and be obligatory for those who want everlasting life. But those who will not submit to the law of obedience will die.

In those times all nations will gradually become acquainted with the Great King, whom God will have thus established on the throne of the earthly empire, to govern the people, to command them, to subdue them, to relieve them from sin and from death, and to place them in harmony with God as it was before sin appeared.

Christ, the great Mediator, Prophet, Priest, King, Judge, Seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed, will possess a variety of names. His character and work will be recognized from different points of view. He will be called Wonderful, because he in himself, better than all others, will manifest the character and nature of the Father. He will be a Counsellor, a professor, an instructor, an aide, a guide for the entire world. He will be a Mighty God, in the sense that he will have all power and all authority over humanity during the Millennial age, and always with his Bride, the Church.

The life of our Lord, which he will have at his disposition the life which he redeemed by the sacrifice of himself he will have in a measure sufficient to satisfy the needs of each member of the Adamic race. Each member of our race, as he gradually appropriates to himself the knowledge which will then fill the whole earth, will be able to obtain, through the glorified Christ, life to a much greater degree, even life everlasting that life lost by the disobedience of Adam and purchased by the sacrifice of Christ.

Prince of Peace is another title of our Lord. But this title will not really suit him until, toward the end of the Millennial age, he will have achieved:

suppression of all that is odious to divine justice;

suppression of all things to himself;

use of the rod of iron to beat down the disobedient, to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel;

destruction of the ungodly in the second death.

Only then will the introduction of eternal righteousness and peace be recognized, and the title Prince of Peace will be well suited to our great King.

The 9th chapter of Isaiah, verse 7, gives us another precious assurance. He tells us that this kingdom, once established by our Lord, will never be handed over from one to another. (It will be, at the end of the Millennium, rather returned into the hands of the Almighty, our God, our Father.) Then, as the Apostle Paul indicates in 1 Cor. 15:28, at the end of his reign of one thousand years, our Lord and his Church associated with him will give up the earthly throne.

Having achieved the work that the Father had given him to accomplish during the Millennial age, the Holy One of God, at the end of that age, when the world will be completely submitted to the divine law and entirely reestablished in the likeness of God, and all willful transgressors will have been destroyed, will then return the power into the hands of the Father. The prayer:

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. (Matthew 6:10-13)

Dear brethren, how magnificent is the Plan of Almighty God! It is not surprising that at the end of the execution of this beautiful plan full of love, blessing, and peace, one hears all creatures in heaven and on earth crying,

Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.
(Revelation 5:13)

We can say with the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:7, And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.