

Firstborn from the Dead-Bro. Fred Binns, England

THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND privileges of the firstborn in Israel are a very marked feature in the scriptures. They are singled out for our attention in many places and given significant prominence as an important type. These duties, which in the fulfillment of the type involve the generations that will be raised in the coming age, are quite considerable and suggest that we who are called to qualify as the antitype of this firstborn figure take our responsibilities very seriously.

According to the law, the firstborn had the right of being priest and king, that is of interceding for and ruling over their younger brethren; on him devolved the duty of Goel or Kinsman-redeemer, to redeem a brother who had become poor and sold himself to a stranger; to avenge his blood, to raise up seed to the dead, and to redeem the inheritance. To sustain these duties God gave the firstborn a double portion. These facts can be collectively gleaned from Exodus 13:2 24:5 Numbers 3:12,13 8:16 Deuteronomy 21:17; and 1 Chronicles 5:1,2.

Moreover an unusual transaction took place respecting the firstborn. We find it in Numbers 3:45 where the Levites were taken in their place. By so instituting the whole of the complex sacred service in this unusual way into the sole charge of the firstborn, the Lord made this one of the most important figures in the Old Testament.

The understanding, then, of all the particular features of the type should be a matter of the greatest interest to the antitypical firstborn, most especially as to how we may be properly fitted for this important role in the purposes of our Heavenly Father. Of course our dear Lord fulfills this purpose completely in himself. After all he is the true firstborn, being the "firstborn of every creature."*{Col 1:15}*

Firstborn from the Dead

However a most important and fundamental factor in the firstborn figure has to be understood before any one may enter into it. Christ does not fulfill the role of the firstborn as firstborn of every creature, but as "firstborn from the dead."

"He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."—Col 1:18

This quotation establishes the fact precisely. No less importantly it also shows that all who would enter into Christ as firstborn, must likewise be born from the dead. It also implies that the nature of the firstborn portion would have its own particular significance.

This is an important matter. We have seen that firstborns in Israel had important responsibilities to carry out, which was the point of the double portion. There was just no use in being invested with this responsibility and not being provided with the wherewithal to fulfill the duty. It therefore follows that the particular nature of this inheritance, and the assurance that it is a present possession, must be a matter of the greatest importance to the whole "Household of Faith." In the words of the apostle Peter, 1

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."—2Pe 1:10

The apostle John assures us of our standing as firstborns.

"Now are we the sons of God and... we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—1Jo 3:2

Glorious as this promise is, nowhere does the apostle suggest that the inheritance will be conferred irrespective of our faithfulness. Rather he warns, "little children keep yourself from idols."

Baptized into Christ's Death

The plain fact is that even when baptized into Christ and being led by the spirit we still remain firstborn of the creature. Our status as firstborn from the dead can only be realized when we become truly baptized into his death. Only when our consecration death into Christ is realized, do our present actions constitute a resurrected walk in Christ of the firstborn from the dead, with the assurance that we are in possession of the double portion.

I don't want to over-stress the negative aspect of what is a most beautiful figure, but we cannot pass over those unhappy examples of failure in the scripture that illustrate the importance of this matter to our calling as firstborn. They are numerous and of a most salutary nature:

* Adam, although a direct creation and not born in the usual sense of the word was certainly the head of his family. His was a signal failure.

- * Cain failed as the line for the promised seed.
- * Ishmael, being the son of the bondwoman, failed as the child of promise.
- * Esau failed as the inheritor of the blessing.
- * Reuben failed as the [progenitor] to the royal line.
- * Saul failed as the anointed of God.
- * Israel failed as the firstborn nation.
- * The elder brother of the prodigal failed in love. These illustrate the fundamental difference between the firstborn of the creature and the firstborn from the dead. Adam as the firstborn of every creature to his posterity ever fails in all his children. Christ, the second Adam, firstborn out of death, succeeds gloriously at every step of his work.

The comparison in this light is quite remarkable and absolutely fundamental to our understanding of the firstborn type. The firstborn of the creature never entertains the idea of dying. However noble he might be, there will always be a strong element of self-serving. His service as firstborn to his brother in need will always be partial, at best. On the other hand those born from the dead have made a total surrender of self and will always give unreservedly and at full cost for the needs of others.

Our walk then in this present life as firstborns is initially prospective, dependent for its success on total immersion into Christ's death, consciously looking to him that he may raise us to live the firstborn life in him. The apostle Paul's words are precise:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even So we also should walk in newness of life."—Ro 6:4

The sole objective of our present walk is to make the transfer from our earnest desire and sincere efforts, to fulfill the firstborn duties with their ingrained tendency to serve the self that causes us to fail, and pass into that perfectly submissive will of our Lord who never thought of the cost but continually gave and gave of himself. Happily the apostle's words not only tell us what we have to do, but also provide the key as to its successful accomplishment.

Raised by God's Glory

The verse we have quoted contain a most unusual expression. It tells us that Christ was raised by "the glory

of God."Why not the power of God? That would be more exact. Of course the apostle has chosen his words precisely for he wants us to understand that he is talking of divine life. Now that is fine until we come back to the words "even So we also should walk in newness of life."

Does the apostle really mean a resurrection life lived by this power? This is very difficult to accept, and our experience of failure confirms our doubts. Paul however understands the nature of this problem, and gives us his insight into it in his epistle to the Philippians. Writing to this church after a life-time of the deepest consecration and self-sacrifice, he calmly and candidly tells them that he is still not dead to self. His words on this matter are found in Philippians 3:7-17 but we particularly quote from verse 10 onwards:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended."

One could not find a more comprehensive admission of coming short. But Paul continues:

"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

So what then is the apostle's advice? Verse 17: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk So as ye have us for an ensample."Paul, and others walking in the same way, had found the key and we are told to "mark"or pay attention to their course of action and to follow it. So let's do so. Let us go carefully over this passage and mark every step of Paul's progress in Christ that led him to the key to the problem. Paul has shown how in the past he had learned to count all the things of this life as worthless and even to accept their loss. But now in verses 12 and 13 he shows that even this does not constitute being conformed to

Christ's death. He must press on from this, forgetting these gains in self-denial, to "those things which are before."

Christ's Resurrection Work

What crucial difference can attend future events that can bring the desired attainment in Christ? Is Paul simply saying that we just have to keep on in the same way faithful to the end? Surely there must be some new factor. There certainly is, but not in the experiences. It is in the resurrection work of Christ, for Paul has turned the whole concept of death and resurrection on its head.

In verse 10 the apostle does not say that he wishes to be conformed to Christ's death so that he may know or possess the resurrection power, which is the logical order. Just the opposite. Realizing that he has failed to "apprehend that for which he was apprehended of Christ" he has come to see that this true death and burial into Christ can only be realized by the resurrection power itself, can only be attained if brought under the potent overshadowing of the same mighty divine creative spirit that raised up Christ on that resurrection morning, not just to life, but to divine life.

We know that Paul after realizing his need of this final divine aid received its ultimate seal, the seal that belongs to the overcomer of Revelation 7:3. He writes to Timothy:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.... Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto ALL them also that love his appearing."—2Ti 4:6-8

The Earnest and Seal

This is the consummation of the work of the Spirit. But it is given first only as an earnest, a seal, but only a seal that we have been "apprehended of Christ" not that we have "apprehended." Gradually it opens up the word and gives us opportunities to enter into the fullness of Christ. If we are faithful to its leading, it will even bring us to accept the loss of all things, which is the best that the firstborn creature will ever attain. At this point we are ready to accept with the great apostle, our complete inability to enter any further into the baptism of Christ's death. It is here that we know our need of his resurrection power.

Sealed with the knowledge of the mighty working of the spirit, Paul was led into that final submission that knows nothing of self-pleasing and into the inheritance of the true firstborn of the spirit.

This wonderful inheritance of the firstborn is illustrated in many types and examples for it is fundamental to the work of the new creation. Milk of the word precedes strong meat. The leading of the spirit is followed with the filling of the spirit. The baptism of John is superseded by that of Christ. The small rain and the great rain of Job 37:6, and the early and latter rains mentioned several times in scripture, likewise all show this. And of course the many firstborn types center on this truth.

Ruth and Boaz

Now of all the figures of the firstborn from the dead that the scriptures afford us, the most perfect of all is found in the Book of Ruth. It is with the delightful imagery of this book that we will close. In this beautiful little book we are instructed in the law of firstborn in all its detail. Its chief character is Boaz through whom our dear Lord himself is perfectly portrayed as the true firstborn kinsman-redeemer. Ruth the Moabitess fills every particular of the true believer, faithfully demonstrating for us every step that the believer needs to take in the firstborn walk.

In returning with Naomi, Ruth demonstrates the Gentile's faith in the covenant relationship that God had established through Abraham. She also marks the first step of faith of every believer, and from then on as she enters into the land of Israel, she marks out the steps that we must take if we are to enter into the firstborn privileges. At the same time by this walk of faith in the God of Israel and love towards Naomi, she makes it possible for Boaz to find her and fulfill his kinsman's duties.

This gives us exactly the information we need. We see every duty we must perform, and, much more importantly, we see where these duties should end and, for our fuller instruction in spiritual things, that part which is exclusively the Lord's.

By chance the record tells us Ruth comes to the field of Boaz and seeks permission to glean. At the end of the day when the other gleaners depart, she "tarried a little in the house." {Ru 2:7} We might think that she would have been glad to return home to Naomi after a long day's toil, but not so. This one simple action is the turning point in her life.

Boaz was not in the field that day but came to his house from Bethlehem. If Ruth had gone home and not "tarried a little in the house," he would not have seen her. Hearing of her kindness to Naomi, the wife of his kinsman, he determines to bless her.

This is a crucial point also in our walk before the Lord as we glean in his harvest field. As we study his word and put into practice those covenant principles, what is it that catches his attention and marks us out for his special care? It is not sacrifice. It is the spirit of sacrifice that carries us beyond its letter. This is not always easy for us to detect, but there are simple tests that we may apply which will reveal to us our true standing in this matter.

The True Spirit of Sacrifice

How do we react when we find that we have been treated unfairly? Do we stifle the complaint? Yes, one hopes so. For instance, when waiting in line, do we find we resent someone pushing in before us but contain the impulse to retaliate? This is certainly sacrifice, but is it the spirit of the Lord? Or do we go a little bit further and make the incident an opportunity to witness to that true spirit of sacrifice that was the Lord's, blessing those who curse, suggesting, for instance, that if their need is so urgent that we would be glad to let them go before us. This is just a trivial example, of course, but exactly what would mark us out as a "Moabitess."

Noting then the "damsel," Boaz makes inquiry of all the good that she had done to Naomi and begins to specially bless her. That first day gleaning in the field of Boaz she had been blessed in an "earnest" or foretaste of the riches of Boaz. Now this blessing is added to. She may now drink from the supply of water set aside for the reapers, she may eat with them at their table, and Boaz himself reaches out a "morsel of parched corn" with his own hand. But more especially he ensures that the reapers let fall handfuls from the sheaves as they reap.

This is the witness of the spirit. When Ruth returns to Naomi that next night, Naomi recognizes that something extraordinary is taking place. So too if we, while being blessed in sharing the work of our Lord's field, just take that little extra step into the spirit of true sacrifice, we will be led with Paul and those others he holds out as examples to "mark," into the deeper apprehension of the working of the spirit. As the writer to the Hebrews had to point out to those he wrote, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." {He 4:9}

This deeper aspect of the firstborn life is also perfectly mirrored in this beautiful little type. Ruth had really shown in all that she had done for Naomi that true spirit of sacrifice, but we have to note that this had not, and never could, restore the heritage of Elimelech, Naomi's husband. They were still poor, the inheritance was not theirs. This is a fundamental truth of the utmost importance to the prospective firstborn. It did not lie within Ruth's power to obtain the blessed rest.

But there is a way in which we may be led to this rest and it is revealed to us in this wonderful Word, our antitypical Naomi:

"Then Naomi her mother-in-law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee."—Ru 3:1

And then Naomi gives us exact and precise instructions as to how our rest in Christ can be achieved.

"Now is not Boaz of our kindred... Behold, he winnoweth barley tonight in the threshingfloor. Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking. And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.... And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her. And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down. And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet. And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman. And he said... my daughter fear not I will do to thee all that thou requirest."—Ru 3:2-11

Of the washing, anointing, and changing of garment we have no need to speak. These are familiar figures. But the instruction to us not to make ourselves known to our antitypical Boaz until he had finished the harvesting of the barley is a little obscure even though we are aware of the significances of the barley and wheat harvests.

Christ the Firstfruits

The understanding of this most significant figure lies with the more familiar type of the firstfruits of the harvests. Christ is the firstfruit

from the dead, as we read in 1 Corinthians 15:20. "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Christ's offering was symbolized by the firstfruit offering of the barley harvest at Passover time, the Church's offering by the wheat harvest at the time of Pentecost.

The account in Ruth has already confirmed that both harvests were reaped, So the fact that we see Boaz still winnowing barley indicates that this was the final work of bringing in the first harvest. Naomi's instructions were quite plain: Ruth was to wait until this was done and that Boaz had both eaten and drunk and had lain down to rest. When she So does, she finds him "at the end of the heap of corn,"the work all done.

In all of this, So far, it is clear that Ruth's love toward Naomi and her God, her giving up of all things because of this love, her industrious labors in the harvest field, and especially her sweet character in respect to the house of Boaz, had been instrumental in bringing her to this point. But this was as far as she could go. The real source of blessing lay with the silent figure of Boaz.

This figure of Boaz at rest after the completion of his work is the entire basis of the firstborn inheritance. We have drawn it specifically to notice already but with the evidence of the type before us, we can now mark it out with certainty. We know, of course, that the Lord as the Logos in his office of firstborn of every creature with all the power invested in him, could not effect our change to new creatures. What is less obvious but implicit in the figures of scripture is that as firstborn of every creature he could not effect our prospective death to self either.

He could become flesh and die for us and purchase the lost possession, but without the winnowing experiences by which even his faith was tested, he could not have been heir of the "firstborn from the dead" inheritance.

"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."—He 2:10

The imagery of the "threshingfloor" wonderfully depicts the completion of the Lord's perfect ministry and his joy and satisfaction in its completion. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" {*Joh 4:34*} and "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne

of God. {He 12:2} "Set down at the right hand of the throne of God," our Boaz has "eaten and drunk" and has entered into the "joy that was set before him," seated at rest in his Father's throne. This is where Ruth found Boaz, "at the end of the heap of corn."

From the day she had made the momentous decision to leave all and follow Naomi, Ruth had listened to and carefully followed all the instructions of her mother-in-law. May the Lord grant that we have been as diligent. If we are serious about entering the "rest" that remains to the "people of God," Naomi's final instructions to Ruth should be of the utmost interest to us:

"And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do."—Ru 3:4

We have marked the place where he waits to bless us, at the end of the heap of barley. We wait to be blessed with Ruth when Boaz fills her "vail" with a measure of his harvest. But first we have the enigmatic instructions of our antitypical Naomi, to uncover the feet of the sleeping Boaz and lie quietly down.

It goes without saying that we need to understand the figure if we are to fulfill the reality. Happily the understanding comes easily to hand, for we have an abundance of scriptures—our Naomi of course—which brings this to us.

The Place of Blessedness

A concordance quickly reveals that the feet of Jesus is the place of blessing. References too numerous to mention here show supplicants at his feet make petition for help. This should not particularly surprise us. This was undoubtedly a customary form of supplication where the petitioner was in great need. The great difference with the petitioners at Jesus' feet of course was that they were the recipients of miracles.

This uncovering of the feet of Jesus reveals a wealth of spiritual teaching but we only need the one, of the many citations, which brings out the significance of Boaz lying "at the end of the heap of corn." This is found in Matthew 28:9, the occasion where the women who had been to the tomb were hurrying back to tell the disciples that the body of Jesus had been removed:

"And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him."

I have no certain idea why the women acted so. We have seen that kneeling at the feet of Jesus would not be an extraordinary thing in itself and it would be feasible to understand them grasping him by the feet while So doing. The thing that is really unique about this incident is that of all the many people that fell, knelt and worshipped at, or washed, anointed or kissed our dear Lord's feet, these were the only ones who touched the feet of the risen Lord. This incident stands entirely on its own. All before had certainly received of the power of the spirit, miracles of health in mind and body. More than this: even life from the dead. But all this work passed away. Lazarus returned eventually to the dust. All that they had received was by the firstborn of every creature. The women kneeling and worshipping had taken hold of the feet of the firstborn from the dead.

Thanks to the wonderful typical teaching of the Word, we have been able to mark the place where our Lord rested after entering into the blessing of his finished work. Today as we have meditated together on the instructions of Naomi, we have found the place where he lies at the end of the heap of barley. We have uncovered his feet, and here we are now resting quietly like Ruth in the silence of the midnight darkness at the feet of the true firstborn from the dead. We wait for him to wake for we know that Naomi has told us that when he does, he will tell us what we must do to obtain our inheritance.

What he will say to you, dear brethren, in the silence of your heart, I cannot say. This is as far as the written word can take us.

The Lesson for Us

We have shared together the passing inheritance of the firstborn creature. We pass on from "those things which are behind," as did Paul, and now "reaching forth unto those things which are before" as the apostle also directed, we can note his words elsewhere spoken on this matter to the Ephesian church:

"If So be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus."—Eph 4:21

What we have here then is a most wonderful and detailed description of the step that we should take as prospective

firstborns. By it we may discern exactly at what stage of the race for the prize we have attained and see before us every step that still needs to be taken.

Have we left all to come into the covenant relationship of the people of God? Yes, but even here there will have been some like Orpah who first said yes and then went back. Have we gleaned in the field of the Word? Why yes, certainly, and undoubtedly returned to our Naomi to learn that it is the field of Boaz and to learn something of our firstborn inheritance. More difficult to affirm unequivocally is that we have continued a little in the house of Boaz, doing good to those who spitefully use us, returning good for evil, and even more, actually overcoming evil with good—not just learning the Word of the Lord, but putting it into practice and living his life, abiding in his house.

This is what brings the "Moabite damsel" to the attention of Boaz who then sees how really serious she is in her care of Naomi. We know this is an important part in our walk in Christ. Only as he sees us putting his Word into practice is he able to bless us further. But perhaps this is so also, and we find new refreshing insights into his will for us, portions of his Word guiding us in difficult experiences. Perhaps we can see very special providences in some trial, his hand, as it were, putting forth the "morsel of parched corn," bread of life touched by the fire of experience.

All this, and the deepening understanding of the Word thrown down by the reapers at his command, is the growing witness of the spirit, but it is still only an earnest, not the final sealing. This is not measured out to us until we come down to the threshingfloor to see through the eyes of a "Moabitish damsel" her beloved, winnowing through the night.

Only as Christ sees us putting his Word into practice is he able to bless us further.

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; despised, rejected, acquainted with grief: bearing griefs, carrying our sorrows yet ignored, disesteemed, stricken, smitten of God, afflicted."—1Pe 2:23

"It Is Finished"

Boaz never rests, the flail falls relentlessly, the golden store of grains fills the threshingfloor. "Wounded, bruised for iniquities: chastised for our peace, beaten," falsely accused, "spat upon,

mocked. "Never murmuring Boaz toils until, as the last grain falls to the threshing floor, we hear his words, "It is finished."

Still the Moabitess waits. The words of Naomi are clear. Boaz, his strength renewed, his heart rejoicing, lies down at the end of the harvest store. The Moabitess walks quietly along the heap of barley towards her Lord marveling at it, "able to comprehend with all saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height"... of the love of Christ. *{Eph 3:18}*

We must wait patiently in "hope" with her if we are to receive a measure of the divine store of the love of Christ.

"Patience [brings] experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."—Ro 5:4,5

Christ speaks to us as we lie in supplication at his feet. "Fear not I will do to thee all that thou requirest."*{Ru 3:11}*

"Then he said, Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley.... And when she came to her mother-in-law, she told her all that the man had done to her. And she said, these six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law."—Ru 3:15-17

Naomi recognizes the sign. It is the seal of the overcomer, the second sealing, if you like, of the spirit. It is still an earnest of the reality in heaven, but a complete sealing, given to us while still in the flesh, a complete confirmation which all those who "love his appearing" recognize. But we are still in the flesh for the store in our veil of faith is just six

measures. We must attend still to the voice of Naomi. "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall"(verse 18). But Naomi recognizes the seal, "for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

Jehovah, the Almighty One—Bro. Bernard Boulier, France

THE TITLE OF OUR DISCOURSE is "Jehovah, the Almighty One." This title is expressed in French in four words. It is one way among many to describe our God. Alternatively we could say "Our

Heavenly Father,"which would describe God in a different and complementary way.

Notice that we've used these words in our opening remarks: Jehovah, Almighty, God, Heavenly Father. These are words or phrases which express the everlastingness, the power, and the heavenly nature of God. But have we in these words found a satisfying title? We don't think so.

Actually we have not mentioned an important qualifying term: Creator. To be even more complete it would be fitting to use other adjectives to express the qualities, the attributes, or the powers of God. It seems, therefore, that these words do not express in an appropriate way the divinity, the power, and the wisdom of God. They give us merely an idea that is general and incomplete.

Who is God? How should He be called? We are going to attempt to represent for ourselves who this unique being is, the one who is the origin of everything. We are going to search in the scriptures for images, as figurative as possible, to illustrate this subject. We will develop this topic in four distinct ways:

We will discuss the exceptional work of creation which reveals the power of God. We will determine the

names that are given to God and what they mean. We will cite the principal modifiers that the Bible uses and see how they apply to God. Then we will see what the Bible says of God, who He is, and how communication with God takes place since it by nature an impossibility with man.

The Work of Creation

We begin with our first point: the work of creation. Let's read some texts in Genesis, Psalms, and Isaiah that refer to creation.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."—Ge 1:1

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun."—Ps 19:1-4

"For thus saith Jehovah* that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah, and there is none else."—Isa 45:18

We extract a fundamental idea from these three texts: the one and only God is the architect of creation, which is an image of His glory. How can we picture creation? Men have tried using art to represent it. How have painters portrayed it? The most common image is a hand out of which gushes forth a multitude of things.

* In the King James Bible, the Hebrew word יהוה appears as LORD (note the small capital letters). The word Jehovah has been substituted in this discourse to make the translation from the French clearer.

This portrayal is far from reality because God does not have a hand and He cannot be compared to a magician.

In reality mankind encounters great difficulty in trying to portray this immense work. How can we possibly imagine it using human perception? As a clap of thunder? A Cataclysm? A blinding flash? Surely as none of these. How could our senses possibly perceive that which came before our creation? All these things were before us and we are the product of them. Just as a little chick cannot imagine what its development was like prior to hatching, So mankind is incapable of understanding the process which brought him to his intelligent and living state. Creation was an immense work which can be summed up by the first six days described in Genesis.

* First Day: light and darkness.

* Second Day: the appearance of the sky by the separation of the waters that were above and below the firmament.

* Third day: The appearance of the sea, by the separation of the dry land from the waters, and the vegetation.

* Fourth Day: the great lights (sun and moon) and the stars.

* Fifth Day: sea creatures, birds.

* Sixth Day: beasts of the field, then man. How did these events transpire? We understand them much better ever since recent scientific discoveries have succeeded in separating the phases of

the process starting with the formation of matter to an elaboration of systems more and more complex.

The book of Genesis begins with these words (Genesis 1:2): "The earth was only emptiness and chaos"(Zadoc Kahn). Researcher Hubert Reeves says in some of his recent writings, "In the beginning particles of matter are isolated and independent in a chaotic mixture."This disorganized matter is subsequently structured to form a stable system.

What are the heavens and the earth? Astrophysicists have identified nearby stars surrounding us as belonging to the Milky Way which contains 100-billion stars. The stars are similar to our sun which, as we know, determines the gravitational equilibrium of our solar system.

How can we comprehend the infinite power of God? One might consider the size of the heavenly objects that He has created. Our sun has a mass 330,000 times that of the earth. There are hundreds of billions other stars some of which greatly exceed its size. These enormous whirling masses composed of billions of suns are called galaxies. A billion galaxies containing billions of suns can be observed in the universe. These numbers and the immensity that they depict boggle the mind. God, who is the grand architect of the universe, truly has an unfathomable power.

We have just called to mind the formation of matter and the stupendous immensity of the universe. What would happen if we were to take a voyage in the opposite direction toward the infinitely small, toward those things microscopic, even unobservable with powerful microscopes? We know that a molecule is a combination of atoms. Scientists thought that the atom was the smallest particle of matter that could be isolated.

What have they been able to show since then? That the atom is made up of particles So small that 30 billion billion billion of them could be found in each human body. This microscopic scale is just the opposite of the overwhelming galaxies.

We see that creation viewed either from the infinitely large or the infinitely small presents an immense complexity with rigorous methods of functioning. Once again vocabulary is at a loss to express the great intelligence and wisdom of the creator of all these things. In all the areas of physics and biology we see that everything is marvelously organized!

What is man? He is a living being created by the Supreme Being. Our brain is made with matter that was in the crucible of creation; our body received the breath of life from the Creator. We have faith that all this existed. We can only imagine it, and this is only one of the aspects of the power of God.

Various Names Attributed to God

What name could we, who know Jehovah, give to Him? What name could possibly encompass all His attributes?

First let us see how God speaks of Himself: He is the unique one, the first and the last, the Redeemer. He is forever. Those who believe in Him are His witnesses. Let us read this in three texts from the prophet Isaiah.

"Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me."—Isa 43:10 "Thus saith Jehovah the King of Israel, and his redeemer Jehovah of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."—Isa 44:6 "I am Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me."—Isa 45:5

When God made Himself known to Moses, how did He identify Himself? In Exodus 3:14 we read, "I am that I am." This is a curious form of the present tense repeated twice. It seems to indicate that the past and the future do not apply to God. "This is my name forever; this is my memorial unto all generations."

The Hebrew translation of the name Jehovah is YHVH which permits two possible pronunciations:

יהוה or אשכנח. The closest etymological meaning of this name is the Eternal. Very likely it is for this reason that we find this name so often in the scriptures.

In the book of Exodus in the Old Testament God is called Adonai which means Lord and Master. In Psalms 110:1 this same name is used when addressing Jesus: "Jehovah said unto my Lord..." In the New Testament the equivalent of Adonai is Kurios which can have reference to either the Father or the Son. The context enlightens the reader.

The expression "Almighty One" can be found from the beginning, either as El in the singular (God) or Elohim in the plural. The plural is a form of worship. The plural subject of a clause can be followed by either a singular or plural verb according to the use. For example, "In the beginning God [Elohim] created the heavens and the earth." {*Ge 1:1*} The verb "created" is singular. But in Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." This phrase implies that the action is being done by more than one individual. This plurality can be harmonized by texts from the New Testament.

We read in John 1:3 that all things were made by the Word or Logos. This suggests that Jehovah put all power into the hand of the Logos so that he could bring about all things according to His plan and counsel.

The servants of God knew Him under the name Elohim. This name could be given to pagan gods which is why it was often preceded by El and a descriptive word. For example, El-Shaddai, which means Almighty God.

Jehovah calls himself by this name in Genesis 17:1, "I am El-Shaddai; walk before me and be thou perfect." He is also called by this name in Genesis 28:3, "[May] El-Shaddai bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people." This name is found in the relationship between God and the patriarchs.

Several texts express the everlastingness and authority of God. He can be called Father, King of kings, or Lord of lords.

"Unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible."—1Ti 1:17 "The King of kings and Lord of lords."—1Ti 6:15

In the Old Testament God is called the Father of Israel. In Deuteronomy 32:6 we read, "Is not he thy father that hath... made thee, and established thee?"

Who is His son in this text? It is Israel, as we read in Exodus 4:22, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." And in Deuteronomy 14:1, "Ye are the children of Jehovah your God."

Let us turn to the New Testament to find a deeper meaning of the relationship between the son, who is Christ, and the Father to

whom he shows complete submission. Jesus speaks of "my"Father and "your"Father.

"Go to my brethren and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God."—Joh 20:17

God is called Father. He is really is a patient and compassionate father as we see in 2 Peter 3:9,

"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."

He is a generous father:

"That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge."—1Co 1:5

And So we have seen that glorious names such as King of kings or simple names such as Father have been applied to God under various circumstances. In each one of these circumstances, glory, authority or compassion were successively exercised by God, and well characterize His universal nature. Let us now consider some titles the Bible gives to God.

Titles of God in the Bible

How can we give an appropriate name to God? His superiority is such that it is necessary to add descriptive titles. Among those that are associated with the name of God we find the Hebrew term YAHVEH-ELO- HIM in Genesis 2:4, which means "Almighty Eternal."

His power manifests itself in the highest genius of thought, planning, and implementation: the power of thought to create, to plan the time cycles for the rehabilitation of man, and finally the implementation which involves man. This power on behalf of His creation, man, permits God to offer everyone choices without imposing them, thus permitting the exercise of free will.

EL-OLAM means "God of eternity."The modifier "eternity"brings out the same meaning as the name Jehovah which we have already considered.

EL-HAI means "Living God,"or "God is"(the verb is in the present tense). He said of Himself, "I am."He will forever exist which is

brought out by the words "living" and "eternity." He has always been and will always be. The past and future tenses are not necessary for Him; the present suffices to express that He has always existed and will never cease to be.

The last title that we will mention from Hebrew is EL-GANA which means "Jealous God." This form of jealousy which applies to God cannot be compared to the jealousy that exists among men. God is jealous because he cannot be compared to another, and none other than He can receive praise and glory. In Exodus 34:14 we read, "Jehovah whose name is Jealous." This shows that God is jealous in the sense of not tolerating that man should imagine there might be any other God. In fact, if he turns to other gods, man becomes idolatrous, no longer worshipping

God offers choices to everyone; He does not impose them. God is jealous of His oneness. The term "jealous" is found in the second commandment. *{Ex 20:5}*

In numerous passages God has a modifier that adds a particular characteristic to His name. He is a rock which expresses strength, longevity, and immutability. "Trust ye in Yahweh unto futurity, for in Yah, Yahweh is a rock of ages." *{Isa 26:4, Rotherham}* God is lawgiver and judge as the apostle writes in James 4:12 (NIV), "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy."

In the Old Testament the prophet Jeremiah said, "But, O Jehovah of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart." *{Jer 11:20}*

And finally, in Psalms 119:137, "Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, and upright are thy judgments." And Psalms 111:7,8, "All his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness."

And So God is repeatedly described by the unalterableness of His judgments. Actually there are in the judgments of God, a fairness, a severity, and a balance that escape human comprehension.

The things of God are not improvised. They are prescribed. There is a specific time for everything. At the appointed time the patriarchs, the judges, the kings, the prophets, and the apostles accomplished the mission given to them.

The name of God can, on occasion, be associated with a common noun to form a compound name dedicated to a place, a building, or an altar.

YAHVEH-JIREH: "Jehovah will provide."*{Ge 22:14}*

YAHVEH-NISSI: "Jehovah, my banner."*{Ex 17:15}*

YAHVEH-SHALOM: "Jehovah send peace."*{Jud 6:24}*

YAHVEH-TSIDKENU: "Jehovah our righteousness."*{Jer 23:6}*

In each particular case when they were erected, a particular name was given to these monuments that expressed one of God's qualities, that enticed one to become associated with His name, or that simply mentioned one of His attributes.

Up to this point we have seen how the name of God is described and qualified. Let us now examine how God is spoken of in the scriptures.

What Is Said About God

God is a Spirit—he is, therefore, physically inaccessible to man.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—Joh 4:24

God is immortal and invisible.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever!"—1Ti 1:17

It is not possible to see Him face to face. We have confirmation of this in Exodus 33:20, "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live." Faithful ones like Moses who did see Him, glimpsed only His majesty after He passed by.

God is Holy. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."*{Re 4:8}*

What do we know about the throne of God? "Thus saith Jehovah, the heaven is my throne."*{Isa 66:1}* He dwells in high places, as we read in Isaiah 57:15,

"For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place."

The superiority of God is incomparable. He is Lord of lords, God of gods, King of nations, as we read in Deuteronomy 10:17, "For Jehovah your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty."

"Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them."—Ex 18:11

"Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Jehovah; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? For to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee."—Jer 10:6,7

His majesty is formidable:

"Out of the north a golden light cometh [Rotherham]: with God is terrible majesty. Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any that are wise of heart."—Job 37:22,24

His glory is like a devouring fire.

"And the sight of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount."—Ex 24:17

Extraordinary phenomena accompanied the presence of God.

"All the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking."—Ex 20:18

At this spectacle, the people trembled and stood afar off, as we read next:

"But let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

But God's intention in these manifestations was not to frighten the people. He wanted to communicate His precepts to them.

His works are based on justice. "Righteousness and justice are the establishing of thy throne." {*Ps 89:14, Rotherham*} "The works of his hands are faithful and just." {*Ps 111:7, Rotherham*}

The wisdom of God is great, his knowledge is perfect. Joseph, when he interpreted the dream of Pharaoh, and Daniel, when he explained the dreams of King Nebuchadnezzar, stated very clearly that they were inspired by the Most High. We remember the wise men and magicians who were consulted in vain. Pharaoh said to Joseph in Genesis 41:15,

"I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

And Daniel said to the king who was troubled by his dreams:

"But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."—Da 2:28

God makes Himself known unto the righteous, unto those who have faith in Him. "The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear him."—Ps 25:14

We see in conclusion, dear brethren, that God dealt and communicated with specific individuals who were worthy to receive His messages because they revered His name. His power always manifested itself through mighty and impressive events, and His interventions manifested His power, justice, wisdom, and love. Everything proceeds from these fundamental attributes and never deviates from them.

We titled this discourse "Jehovah, the Almighty One" and we see in conclusion that qualifiers, attributes, and manifestations of His power can be added to this name to better represent who He is.

We have seen that He is the creator of all things. For millennia men have studied the complexity of the systems that God created, yet they still cannot understand all their workings.

When He gave the breath of life to His creatures, and in particular to man, God already planned a future when man would experience all the blessings He had in reservation for him after the reign of sin and death. When God intervenes, it will be at the appointed time, without surprise, after having announced the event to those who have hearing ears.

Let us trust always in Jehovah, the Almighty One, for He is our salvation. Jehovah, the Almighty One, is our salvation.

From Sea to Sea-Bro. Teofil Brie, Romania

BELOVED BRETHREN FROM everywhere; I am glad that in these times we are able to participate at this International Convention, something which seemed impossible to me ten years ago. Then we rejoiced by faith just at the thought that the blessed time will come when, together with our Lord, we will meet all who have had the faith of Abraham.

When the brethren suggested that I prepare a discourse to present at this convention, I thought that I was not able. But I was encouraged by the apostle Paul's words: "Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." *{Eph 6:10}* I bring greetings from the brethren of the class in Dolu where I am a member:

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Since we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you."—Col 1:3-6

The kingdom of righteousness will extend "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" *{Ps 72:8}* and gradually the whole world will be full of the Lord's greatness for he will be the "King of kings and Lord of lords." *{Re 19:16}* This grand work of the kingdom will be possible because of the power of Jehovah which will be exercised by the new leader of the world, the Messiah—Christ, Head and Body.

Speaking about the blessings in which the people will then rejoice, the psalmist says, "He shall come down like rain on the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." *{Ps 72:6}* Rain that falls on mown grass produces a sweet aroma, pleasant and pleasing. The roots easily absorb the cool water and the grass grows again in abundance. Rain that wets the ground makes the earth a green and cheerful place. In this prophecy rain is a symbol of refreshing and cooling truth.

Early and Later Rains

In Psalms 84:6 the psalmist speaks about another rain which represents the blessings of Pentecost that came upon the Church after the offering of the sacrifice for sin for her (the Church) while

the later rain represents the showers of the Millennial blessings. Then mankind will be able to receive the rain of blessings because all that has hindered it from reaching their hearts will be swept away.

In the Gospel Age the Lord's people have received drops of blessings and truth, but the provisions for the future age will be abundant and universal. Joel says:

"And it will come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters."—Joe 3:18

He is trying to teach us that in the Millennial Age the truth will be available to everyone.

The Lord assures us in his own words that in due time the "true Light" will shine upon "every man that cometh into the world" {*Joh 1:9*} through Christ (Head and Body) "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." {*Ac 4:12*}

Resurrection of the Dead

Since So many people have died without being enlightened, they must first be awakened from the sleep of death. In this way Moses' prophecy in Psalms 90:3 by which God speaks to those who are in the grave will be fulfilled: "Return, ye children of men."

The resurrection of Lazarus described in John chapter 11 is a proof of the Lord's power. It is to us a witness of that power which will resurrect all mankind. Mankind will gather to learn the truth as told by the prophet Micah:

"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 of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."—Mic 4:2

The divine government established in Israel under the Ancient Worthies—earth's representatives of the Messianic Kingdom—will be the center of divine favor. Mankind will see that only by learning "of his ways" under the New Covenant made with Israel will they receive the desired blessings. Speaking about these Ancient Worthies Bro. Russell says:

"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?"—Volume *{Joh 7:15}* 4, page 626.

The Ancient Worthies will have direct communication with the spiritual phase of the kingdom (Christ and his Church) as the Lord had with the angels. They will transmit the law of the kingdom to man. Earth's affairs will progress for the better until everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know the Lord, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."*{Isa 11:9}*

Speaking about the connection between the heavenly and the earthly phase of the kingdom, the psalmist says:

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."—Ps 85:10,11

Learn the Truth, Speak it in Love

In this prophecy the earth represents organized human society which will learn the truth, speak the truth, and speak it in love. "Righteousness"[the heavenly phase of the Kingdom] will smile from above upon them until "righteousness and peace"have kissed each other. The effect will be a trial for mankind. Some will be glad to accept the Lord as their pastor and will come into the Lord's favor; the Lord will gladly give them everlasting life. Others under these same favorable conditions who manifest the foolish "goat"spirit will be separated gradually to a position of our Lord's disfavor.

Referring to those who will not submit to the law of the Kingdom the prophet Zechariah says:

"And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."—Zec 14:17

In this prophecy the word "rain" also is symbolic. It represents the divine blessings which will be withheld from those families who will not be in harmony with the Lord.

There no evil will be permitted as stated by the prophet Isaiah: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." *{Isa 11:9}* Under this iron rule all who will try to deceive, to lie, or to steal from others will be punished.

When the Prince of Peace will put in effect the law of righteousness and equity by an iron rule, mankind will learn that "righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." *{Pr 14:34}*

God's Law and Plan for Man

Finally they will learn that the law and plan of God are the best for all those concerned. In the end they will love righteousness and will hate iniquity. "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon." *{Isa 35:9}* In other words frightening hindrances will not exist which today stop those who want to abandon their sinful ways and follow after righteousness.

Because of different temperaments and of a greater or lesser degree of degradation, mankind will receive Christ and the law of his kingdom in different ways just as those who come to a knowledge of the truth today. Some will receive it quickly and others gradually, but each will have at least 100 years of favorable conditions under the complete light of the "Sun of righteousness." *{Mal 4:2}*

When they make mistakes, they will have to answer for them to a certain extent. Compensation together with repentance will be necessary before they can return again to harmony with God through Christ, their mediator. Mankind will receive all kinds of blessings from the new spiritual government. Then "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid"; *{Micah 4:4}* and "they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them." *{Isa 65:21}* Their wars will be something of the past and the earth will no longer be soaked with the blood of men; it will be cultivated for the blessing of mankind. Intelligence used until then for the manufacturing of weapons will be used for the production of farm implements. Then "there shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains [as a blessing of the Kingdom]." *{Ps 72:16}*

Thus we see that by the changes which God appointed, He has provided all that is necessary for His creatures, and He does So in a natural way. At the same time we know that he who will rule is he who changed the water into wine and with seven loaves fed "four thousand men, beside women and children."—Mt 15:38

The Lord's blessings will also bring people health and strength for "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing."{*Isa 35:5,6*} At the end of the Millennial Age "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick."{*Isa 33:24*}

Through the healings—and all the other miracles—which our Lord did during his earthly life, he showed what he will do in an incomparably greater measure during his kingdom. But just as the leper "kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"{*Mr 1:40*} had a faith in Jesus' power, all who will attain perfection in the Millennial Age will need to receive Christ as their Savior.

The Symbolic Mount of Olives

In Zechariah (14:4) we read, "the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley."Bro. Russell says in reference to this prophecy:

"The two halves of the mount of Olives signify the two parts of the Kingdom of God, distinctly separated according to a divine order or arrangement. The separation indicates no opposition between the two parts of the Kingdom. It is, on the contrary, for the purpose of producing the 'Valley of Blessing' between—to which all who desire divine aid may flee and find succor under the blessed protection of both the heavenly and the earthly phases of the Kingdom."—Volume 4, page 652.

The Lord will fill their hearts with peace and gladness, and the song on their lips will be a song of praise for the eternal God. For then the Lord will "turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."{*Zep 3:9*}

We can assume that after they have reached perfection there won't be accidents or catastrophes. Speaking about this time Bro. Russell says:

"Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act.... Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness."—Volume 1, pages 191,192.

This is the kingdom which was and is prayed for by all of God's children. Just as Jehovah, in His glory and honor, is first in their minds while praying, So their next thought should be the promised glorious kingdom which will bless mankind.

This is the kingdom which the Church now has the privilege to tell about and of which those faithful who are still on earth make up a part. Oh blessed little flock, how blessed a part you have. Be strong, don't be afraid, walk as representatives of the glorious King. The prophet Isaiah speaks about you saying:

"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

While the dead in Christ are already resurrected and glorified together with the Lord, the "feet" members of the body of Christ here on earth reflect a measure of the sublime glory of those beyond the veil.

The faces of these messengers radiate with this heavenly joy that fills their hearts when they fellowship one with another, with the Lord, and when they proclaim the glad tidings to all the nations (mountains) that the reign of Emmanuel has begun. The prophet Malachi also speaks about you:

"They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."—Mal 3:17

As an encouragement to the last members of the body of Christ who walk the narrow way of today's wilderness, the apostle Paul under the influence of the Holy Spirit wrote:

"The Spirit itself 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; if So be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."—Ro 8:16,17

A Crown of Glory

All the beauty and glory of the universe are made for the Father's pleasure. Therefore the Church is "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem."*{Isa 62:3}* Soon all the jewels will be with the Father.

The first that was set in this diadem was, without doubt, our Lord himself. Then the members of Christ's body—the apostles and the other sleeping saints—followed in 1878. After 1878 each consecrated one, as he finished his course, followed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."*{1Co 15:52}* These form the class with which the Lord has made an "everlasting covenant"*{Isa 55:3}* and which deserve the "loving kindnesses... unto David."*{Ps 89:49}* The Lord made a contract with the elect in the Gospel Age by which He could give them the holy promises that belonged to His beloved Son: The kingdom, power, and glory of the world to come.

David signifies beloved and the apostle shows *{Ac 13:34}* that this name in the Psalm (16) refers to our Lord—the beloved Son of God. Not only is the name David used sometimes in prophecies pertaining to our Lord, but even David himself many times represents our Lord, as in Psalms 22:1,17,18.

The "loving kindnesses" from the holy promises belong to our Lord, but the elect of the Gospel Age are invited to receive them together with him who was made David's King.

In the kingdom mankind will be Christ's inheritance in the sense that he will be given all power and authority to lead them up the highway of holiness as the Father Himself said: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen as thine inheritance."*{Ps 2:8}*

The Lord assures his people that the faithful will have the indescribable pleasure and blessing to share with the Lord Jesus in all the glories and beauty of God's creation, for

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."—Joh 14:21

Then every creature will come and worship and glorify him because he will be the Lord of lords and the King of kings, and every tongue shall wit-

ness that he is the Christ, a witness that will be to the glory of God the Father. As the Prophet Isaiah says:

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."—Isa 45:22,23

Times of Refreshing

The Apostle Peter speaks about this kingdom as "times of refreshing" and "times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." {Ac 3:19-21}

At the end of the Millennium, the Messiah will no longer be the mediator between God and man as he was during the thousand years, because this special work will have been accomplished. Then "shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." {1Co 15:28}

Seeing by faith these wonderful things for the kingdom class and the blessings which will come upon them in the future, who can still restrain themselves from not marching forward with joy and courage saying to Zion even now, "Thy God reigneth!"

In closing I leave you with Psalms 20:1-4,

"The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel."

Amen

The Spirit and Power of John Bro. Eugene Burns, USA

"And he [John] will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah."—Lu 1:17

BRO. DAVID STEIN SPOKE OF the "spirit and power of Elijah" as it applied to Elijah and the Elijah class. There were many great prophets in Israel, but none was greater than John. We are told in Matthew 11:9, "Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you more than a prophet." How could John be more than a prophet?

(1) He was the Prophet of the Most High to prepare the way for Jesus.

(2) He was an extension of the Elijah type, because the "spirit and power of Elijah" would be upon him.

Only John bears the title "Prophet of the Most High." *{Lu 1:76}* John isn't a person who just happened to be available when God wanted someone. John's birth was a divine miracle.

John's mission was to introduce Jesus. In Daniel we learn that Gabriel introduced the prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince. Gabriel is used whenever it would not be proper for the Logos to introduce a prophecy or announcement pertaining to Christ.

John was named before he was conceived. God took total charge of everything: his birth, his discipline, his name, his environment.

John's name means, "The grace or mercy of Jehovah." The mission of John was so great in "preparing the way of the Messiah," that no one on earth was suitable for the task. God, therefore, prepared John to be the special Prophet to introduce His beloved Son. God said, "He will be filled with the Holy spirit, even from his mother's womb." *{Lu 1:15}* So powerful was the Holy spirit in Elizabeth's womb, that when Mary came to her with the announcement she was carrying Jesus, we are told, "when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb for joy." *{Lu 1:41,44}* When she said this, "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy spirit."

John Was the Son of a Priest

Because John was the son of a priest, he would be entitled to special schooling. He could have become a doctor of the law with all the honors of that priestly office. However, God had a different plan for John. In Luke 1:80 we read: "And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel." So when the rabbis asked Zechariah about what rabbinical school John was to attend, they must have

been surprised to learn John would spend his days in the wilderness.

John lived on locusts and honey. The women of Israel "ministered of their substance" to Jesus, but not to John. {*Lu 8:2,3*} He wore no clothing that women made, but a coarse garment of camel's skins. John was obligated to no one. He lived off the land without buying or selling. He possessed neither land nor money. Like our Lord, he was poor in material things but he did possess the holy spirit. He represented God first, last and always. If he were here today, it is possible we might not allow him to enter here because of his coarse appearance.

When John began his ministry, he gathered many disciples. A problem arose when his disciples noticed Jesus and his disciples did not fast. John sent them to Jesus. "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" {*Mt 9:14*} We see the wisdom of John. He did not pretend to know what he could not explain. He immediately sent them to Jesus and they got their answer. In Matthew 9:15, Jesus says: "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast." This answer satisfied them.

The Pharisees had no trouble rationalizing the differences between John and Jesus. In Matthew 11:18,19 we read: "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a demon; the son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" So it was that they dismissed the testimony of both John and Jesus. How wrong some can be while thinking they are right!

John's Ministry Begins with a Millennial Age Prophecy

John begins his ministry preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins according to Isaiah 40:3-5, a Millennial age prophecy:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."—*Lu 3:4-6*

In this prophecy John becomes an extension of the Elijah type. It is the Church who in effect continues what John literally began. The

church preaches restitution, when every valley shall be filled and when the mountains will be brought low. It will be then that all flesh shall see the salvation of God. We see John cast in a larger role, representing the Elijah class of this Gospel age.

Because John came "with the spirit and power of Elijah," he had a tremendous effect. Whatever else he was, he was absolutely believable. Throngs from Judea and Jerusalem and those around the Jordan came out to be baptized—confessing their sins. Everyone baptized would become a proselyte who would encourage others to go out and hear John and be baptized. It was becoming fashionable to go out to John, so much that even "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees" came to be baptized. *{Mt 3:6-10}* They thought they could confess some minor sins which would make them look good in the eyes of the people. Imagine their surprise when John said,

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance, and do not presume to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Water baptism would not wash away their sins. John's words exposed their guilt before the nation. It was either repent and bear fruits of true repentance or the axe was going to be laid to the tree and cast into the fire. This is what the Elijah class was to do as stated by Malachi, and hence we see John as an extension of the Elijah type.

Is John Elijah?

John did such a significant work in his time that even the Pharisees wondered if he might be "Elijah which was to come." *{Mal 4:5}* Because John didn't just happen to be available. His birth was a divine miracle.

John had denounced them earlier, they therefore sent from Jerusalem to ask John, Who art thou? And he confessed... I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elijah? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.... And they asked him,

and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Isaiah, neither that Prophet?"—Joh 1:19-25

Does anyone have trouble understanding John's answer—"I am not"—regarding whether he was Elijah? So it is settled: John is not Elijah! Right? Wrong!

Jesus said, "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah [speaking of John] who is to come."*{Mt 11:14}* Again he says: "But I tell you that Elijah has come [speaking of John], and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."*{Mr 9:13}* Is John Elijah? He says of himself, "I am not." Jesus, however, says he is "Elijah if you can receive it," and also speaking of John he says, "Elijah has come." We must believe both testimonies because both are true.

John is not the true Elijah that was to come before the great and terrible day of the Lord with which the Gospel age ends. John is not actually the Church in the flesh or the fulfillment of the Elijah type in any way. However, John was Elijah in a very special sense. We believe John was a type or picture that applies during the period of Jesus' second advent. Jesus teaches clearly that we must study John if we would fully understand the Elijah type at the end of the age.

John therefore represents a class at the time of the Lord's return who continue in the "spirit and power of Elijah" even as Elijah manifested his powers in an earlier time by praying and shutting the windows of heaven from rain or dew, and praying again and bringing rain. Elijah's power did not disappear as the day of his departure came. It was maintained. John provides a close-up view of the true Church in the last days.

John's Life Pictures the Church's Closing Experiences

Examining John's life we can see another extended view of the Elijah class during the period of Christ's presence. In Reprints 3325 203325 and 3477 203477 Bro. Russell suggests that John preached for about a year in an unhindered manner after Jesus' baptism. That was a short time to have the enormous impact that he actually had on the people. It has been suggested that Herod requested John to come to his court to make suggestions for Herod to adopt. Then he would select the least objectionable reforms. Like a good politician, he hoped to score some political benefit with the people by a show of repentance. To Herod's surprise John denounced his marriage to Herodias. *{Mt 14:3,4}* Herodias had

originally married Philip, the oldest son of Herod the Great, thinking he would be the heir to the throne and she would then be queen. However, to her dismay, Antipas, the Herod of our lesson, secured the throne. Poor Herodias found she had married the wrong man. So she turned her charms on Antipas who then disposed of his wife and married Herodias. This was an adulterous marriage quite clearly forbidden by Jewish law.—Le 20:21

In Reprints 2621 202621 Bro. Russell observed that John was "supernaturally guided in the course he took." In Reprints 3326 203326 Bro. Russell muses that John might have exceeded his duty. Here, Bro. Russell was being careful lest the Lord's people take it upon themselves to boldly denounce specific people. We should not feel free to do what John did on such a personal level. However, as a type we see that the marriage of the antitypical Herodias (representing the Catholic church) to the financial and political kings of the earth after 1914 is a grave impropriety and it would be within the province of the John Class to reprove it. The Catholic church is seeking a closer union with the financial and political kings.

Elijah was taken by God in a whirlwind to heaven before Jezebel was destroyed. In the Elijah type Jezebel did not order his death. By contrast, John is put to death by the plotting of Herodias, the dancing of Salome, and the reticent actions of Herod who in his drunken state was tricked into ordering John's death. There is a difference in these two pictures. With John as a type of the "John Class" we see:

* Philip, the first husband of Herodias, pictured the pre-1914 kings. Their daughter, Salome, pictured Protestantism born and reared before 1914.

* Antipas Herod takes his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. This second marriage pictures the Catholic church in union with the political and financial kings in power after 1914.

* John the Baptist pictures the true Church of God who at the very end stands as a monument of reproof to the unholy union of church and state. While Herod does not like John, he fears he is a prophet of God and is only willing to place him in an aboveground prison where others can see he is not mistreated. Herod realizes it does not make much sense to kill God's prophets. However, after John denounces their marriage, Herodias is distraught and cannot rest until John is put to death. She sees John as a threat to her regal status. His stinging rebuke of her marriage must have caused the

nation to agree with John. The people believed John was a prophet of God and they did not like this union nor the mean spirit of Herodias.

Herodias was not offended while John was preaching repentance to the nation, nor even when he called the scribes and Pharisees a "brood of vipers." It is not the general teaching of the harvest message by the "John Class" that brings on their death. It is when John stands in the way of Herodias' illicit union that she becomes livid with rage and cannot rest until she secures his death. John's message must have created a climate that made Herodias have nightmares and sleepless nights about the possibility of being deposed. She pleaded with Herod to have John imprisoned and put to death. We read in Mark 6:19,20:

"Herodias had a grudge against him [John] and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe [in prison]."

So there was much tension in Herod's household. Although Herod didn't like John, he feared him. This was the same Herod who would not kill Jesus, but sent him back to Pilate.

Herodias was the one who felt threatened, not Herod. Herod did not fear anything John might do—except if he started riots. However, John was a preacher of repentance, not of political activism. Herod could live with that. Herodias was tormented in mind and heart even while John was in prison. She felt somehow that John was causing her to appear as a witch in Israel instead of the regal lady she hoped to be. Her adulterous marriage was not well received in the nation and she felt the cold and icy reception of the people. Her lust for blood was running high and her evil mind would stop at nothing.

Israel was always a very modest nation in custom and practice and held to a higher moral standard than the nations surrounding her. They had dances and singing, but most of this was wholesome and happy. Herodias decided to bring in the heathen type of entertainment to excite the king into yielding to her request. To show how very desperate she was she used her own daughter to perform an indecent dance on the birthday of the already over-wined and over-dined king. Because this was so totally unexpected, the king responded to Salome's dancing exactly as Herodias hoped. He promised "with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask." {Mt 14:7} Neither Salome or Herod knew what the request would be. Salome asked her mother for guidance. The

request she made was grim indeed. We are told Herod "was sorry." {Mt 14:9} As grotesque as the request was, Herod felt he had to comply.

Why Was Elijah Taken to Heaven While John Is Beheaded?

Bro. Stein has reviewed Elijah's life and death. Why is there a difference between Elijah and John? Although the spirit and power of Elijah is on John, we notice John does not have a mantle with the awesome power of Elijah. Jezebel is not the one to kill Elijah. Herodias is the prime power behind John's death. We think these two types of the Church's last days on earth show the position of true Church from two different standpoints—God's and man's.

Elijah, after using his mantle, is taken to heaven in a whirlwind by God. It is a majestic and beautiful exit from this world and shows how God moves to take His people home. But in the John type, the evil woman Herodias (the Catholic church) takes his life. God does not intervene. Even Jesus did not visit John before his death. Why? Jesus loved John. Because Jesus and John were both popular with the common people, Jesus feared if he visited John in prison, it might cause a riot. Jesus was constrained by circumstances. We believe this shows how Jesus will not at the end show any special favor to the "John Class."

When the imprisoned John sent his disciples to Jesus, they asked, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."—Mt 11:3-6

The lesson seems to be that the works of the harvest time will be the only assurance given to the John Class. There will be no special manifestations of favor by the Master for the last members departing this world. Bro. Russell said:

"John's work at the first advent foreshadowed the closing work of the Church at the second advent. These, the feet of Christ in the flesh—the feet of Elijah—announce the kingdom."—Volume 2, p. 253

John seems to die a lonely and forsaken person, just as Jesus died. The last members may feel a certain loneliness, and appear almost forsaken, being left to fall before their enemies. That is why we

need to see the experiences of both Elijah and John to get the full picture. From God's standpoint the last members of the Church are being taken to heaven in a majestic exit by a whirlwind and fiery chariot. But from man's vantage point, the last members of the Church fall before Herodias, Salome and Herod combined." We believe John's death is shown in Revelation 16:13-16.

"And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet."

The dragon represents civil power—Herod. The (leopard) beast represents Herodias (the Catholic system) and Salome (Protestantism). The waters drying up indicate the people would cease to support these religious systems. As the waters dry up the way for the Kings from the sunrising is being prepared. As the false religious systems lose power over the people, the time for the true Church to ascend in glory comes. These Kings from the sunrising will be like the righteous shining forth "as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." {Mt 13:43} That will be after the burning of the tares—not before.

In Revelation 16 we see panic among the religious systems, especially the Catholic church. She is compelled to utter frog-like teachings, along with the dragon and the false prophet. A frog is not wise nor powerful, but it puffs itself to look bigger and stronger than it is. So these three allied forces—the civil power, the Catholic Church and Protestantism—will utter their last croaks. Their message purports to avoid Armageddon, but in fact it is overruled by God to bring the nations to Armageddon where the last plague will destroy them. Then Babylon will be divided into three parts—made-up of

the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The alliance collapses as Christ divides and conquers. "Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." {Re 16:19} The true Church, after pouring out the seventh and last plague will be victorious in death. Just as Jesus seemingly fell before the powers of darkness, we see how by triumphing over the grave he arose invested with all power in heaven and earth. So the spirit and power of Elijah rests on "John" until he falls before his enemies, but like his Master, he will arise on the other side of the veil, joining forces with the Kings from the sunrising, and shining forth as the sun in the "Kingdom of their Father."

Christ vs. Antichrist

The whole story of Revelation tells of a fierce struggle between the true Christ and the antichrist. It shows the rise of the antichrist systems and how the true Church was in constant conflict with these Satanic forces. Thank God, as the story ends, we find the antichrist defeated; the "leopard like beast" of Catholicism and the "false prophet" of Protestantism are cast alive into the lake of fire. Satan is thrown into the "bottomless pit." They are overcome by the greater power of the King of kings and Lord of lords. We must never lose the vision of the Church triumphant. We shall triumph gloriously over the powers of darkness even though we may fall ignominiously before Herodias' cruel plotting. It will be victory through death. We are receiving a "kingdom that cannot be moved."

Hallelujah!

A Man Clothed in Linen-Bro. Ric Cunningham, USA

WE COUNT IT A RICH blessing to be here today. We bring the love and greetings of the Oakland County Bible Students in Michigan with whom we are associated.

Most of you will recognize "A Man Clothed in Linen" as a reference to the ninth chapter of Ezekiel. In chapter eight Ezekiel receives a vision of all the various abominations of idolatry being practiced by the Israelites in Jerusalem and even within the temple precincts. God was thoroughly disgusted with Israel's idolatry so He declared that in His fury trouble would come upon Israel and He would not hear their cries. This literally occurred in 606 BC when the Babylonian armies conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Antotypically we believe this vision applies to the period of the 1800s and represents Christendom. Four prophetic dates reached their fulfillment in that period:

- * The 1290 years of Daniel 12:11 ended in 1829 with William Miller and a rekindled interest in the Lord's second advent.
- * The 2300 years of Daniel 8:14 ended in 1846 with the formation of the Evangelical Alliance and the cleansed sanctuary class which was found outside of it.
- * The 1335 years of Daniel 12:12 ended in 1874 with the blessings associated with the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

* The 1845 years of Israel's disfavor ended in 1878 with the "Berlin Congress of Nations," resulting in the Jewish people

being granted much greater privileges in Israel than they had had for centuries. (See Volume 2, p. 218, and Volume 3, p. 260.) These dates are further corroborated by the time parallels of the Jewish and Gospel ages.

Bibles poured out in a flood in the 1800s. The Lord returned and knowledge increased. There had been no greater time since the first advent for spiritual growth. Yet how hardly would the Son of Man find faith in the earth when he returned. We can see by the small numbers gathered here, and by the spiritual loss in Christendom, that something has robbed the average Christian of his true faith in the Word of God. How did this happen?

That brings us to the ninth chapter of Ezekiel. That chapter tells us what was to transpire before the city received the Lord's fury. Let us read Ezekiel 9:1-7:

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. And he said unto them, defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city."

A great separating work was here described. A mark was placed on the foreheads of certain ones; others were slain or destroyed. Both works took place simultaneously.

Verse 2 says six men came from the way of the higher gate, "they that have charge over the city." The "charge over the city" denotes authority. Six had destroying weapons and one was clothed in linen. These seven men are those who had authority over Christendom in the sense that they came from the way of the higher gate, from the way of higher learning. They were teachers in Christendom. The Hebrew says they faced toward the north. Jehovah is pictured as residing in the north. They looked northward as they came into the court area and gathered around the brazen altar. We think this means that Jehovah, at the appointed time, allowed seven to be gathered together who would have authority over Christendom as teachers and who would come forth to spread their teachings. These teachings would either slay the one class, or would mark or spare the other.

They were gathered around the brazen altar in the court. That altar pictures the ransom sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. We suggest that the teachings of these seven surround, or concern the ransom sacrifice.

Verse 3 says that "the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house." This suggests the Shekinah glory which dwelt between the cherubim and pictures the presence of the Lord leaving the inner sanctuary and coming to the threshold, to the door facing the court where the seven were circled about the altar. This glory might well represent the return of the Lord Jesus from the heavenly courts where he had been retained during the Gospel Age. From his return to earth's atmosphere he began the harvest work. The harvest was indeed a time of separating. There is the gathering of the wheat and there is the gathering, bundling, and burning of the tares. Our Lord supervises that work. Revelation 14:14,15 picture him as a reaper returning with a crown upon his head and the sickle of truth in his hand.

We suggest that the man clothed with linen is Pastor Charles Taze Russell. He was the only one who was clothed in linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. {*Re 19:8*} Being clothed with linen pictures being clothed with righteousness. Because he is standing in the court, he would still be in the flesh and would need the imputed righteousness of Christ as a linen robe. He is pictured as ready to serve. The writer's inkhorn is at his side and the scribe's pen is in his hand. His work was to place a mark that saves a certain group from destruction. This is the equivalent of Luke 12:42-44:

"And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find So doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath."

We think Ezekiel 9:3 refers to his specific selection. The effect of present truth from his pen has "set a mark," has separated a specific set of people from the masses of Christendom.

We think that the word "men" is used to show a mature Christian. It does not mean males as such for the body of Christ is made up of both males and females. The word shows that the strong, the mature element of Christianity would accept the meat in due season and be favorably marked and spared from the destroying weapons that follow. When the gross errors of the dark ages were shown to them, they would cry and sigh over those abominable things. They would rejoice upon hearing the truth of the word of God, that our God is a God of love, justice, and wisdom.

Cleansing the Sanctuary

Consider the year 1846 when the cleansing of the sanctuary occurred. That was when the image of the beast of Revelation 13:14 came into existence with the formation of the Evangelical Alliance. Some 400 people representing different denominations gathered together in London and accepted a platform of ten doctrinal points upon which they agreed. Those who did not concur with those ten doctrinal points were to be considered outside orthodox Christianity. Three of the ten doctrines were the immortality of the soul, the Trinity, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. We know that those who disagreed with that doctrinal platform of error were really the ones whom the Lord considered a part of the cleansed sanctuary class. They had a favorable "mark" in their foreheads. They appreciated God's beautiful plan and that Jesus Christ, as a ransom sacrifice, was the very foundation of that plan. They "sighed and cried" for the abominations.

Bro. Russell was born in 1852 and was taught to believe all the usual "dark age" doctrines of the nominal churches. As a teenager he had his faith in the Bible shaken by an infidel friend who raised good questions that stumbled him. He saw that those erroneous creeds could not be harmonized with the Bible. When he was 20 the Lord led him to a humble gathering of Adventists, described by him as "in a dusty, dingy, basement hall." These Adventists were able to harmonize, to a certain extent, the prophecies of the Old

Testament with the testimony of Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament and this rekindled his faith in the Bible. So Bro. Russell set aside the creeds and studied the Bible, with a handful of other students, and with his mind unshackled. It was at this time that he saw the harmony of the Bible as never before. By 1872 he understood the ransom and restitution blessings for all as well as the concept of the two salvations—heavenly and earthly. He was immersed in 1874. From 1878 through 1881 Bro. Russell found himself caught up in a fierce maelstrom of doctrinal controversy regarding the ransom. This is the picture we have in Ezekiel 9:2 of the brazen altar around which seven men were gathered. Here was a seething caldron of controversy involving some of the very ones with whom he had studied and cooperated. In 1879 Bro. Russell started

Zion's Watch Tower as a defense for the ransom and announcement of the Lord's presence. He wrote Tabernacle Shadows in 1881 to defend the understanding of Jesus Christ as a ransom sacrifice. He defined Jesus' sin offering experiences and also how the church could share in those experiences by following in the Master's footsteps. These two great publications defended the ransom doctrine.

It was the due time for these things to be understood. Bro. Russell was the one who was called forth. If it hadn't been him, it would have been another. But it was him, and we're thankful it was. He placed a "mark" through these teachings. He said that if it didn't square with the ransom, it was error. How few in Christendom applied this simple, wonderful formula.

In the 1958 book entitled Where Else But Pittsburgh, a Mr. Swetnam records that Bro. Russell traveled over a million miles, delivered more than 30,000 sermons, and wrote over 50,000 book pages. At one time his newspaper sermons appeared twice weekly in 1200 newspapers and reached over 15 million readers. One of his opponents said that Bro. Russell's sermons had more readers than all the priests and preachers combined. What a wonderful work by the man with the writer's inkhorn.

We'd like to emphasize that it was the teachings, the message, that did this work, that set the mark. That is why we can still be marked even though the man himself is no longer with us. The instrument that did the marking was that message.

The Six Destroyers

After instructions were given to the linen-clothed man with the writer's inkhorn, the Lord turned to the other six and said, "Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly all [who do not have that mark]." The young, the old, and the children picture those who are weaker. It depicts those in Christendom, such as the tares and the underdeveloped wheat class, who are weak in faith. They were not like those who cried and sighed for the abominations. These, when they heard the harvest message, the truth, remained weak. They could not rouse themselves out of their stupor; they were not spiritually minded at all. So they were slain.

What was destroyed? We don't consider it as literal death. Rather it shows the destruction of faith in the ransom of Christ. It was faith that was destroyed by the work of the six.

Since we interpret one as being a man and the teachings he used to set a mark, the other six also represent the teachings of men. But these teachings had a slaying effect. Although undoubtedly directed by Satan, these are man's teachings. Here is one suggestion about who might be represented by these six.

1. Charles Darwin

wrote the Origin of the Species and proposed the evolution theory. The evolution theory teaches that we can determine the origins of life. It counterdicts the scriptural teachings of creation and the entire Word of God.

2. Robert Ingersoll

came to be known as the great agnostic. He was a popular orator who attempted to expose "problems" with the Bible, in the light of the dark-age creeds. He personally produced much skepticism in the Word of God.

3. Sigmund Freud

popularized a therapeutic practice called "Psychoanalysis." His 1913 book entitled The Future of an Illusion said "religion is a universal, obsessional neurosis of mankind. God, in short, is a creation of man." Because he believed science can take the place of religion and faith, he taught that mankind does not need a Redeemer.

4. Karl Marx

was an atheist who was the chief theorist of socialism and communism. His work Das Kapital was published in a series of volumes beginning in 1867 and laid the foundation for radical socialism. He taught that religion must be annihilated in theory and in practice because the ultimate salvation for man would be the communist revolution!

Through these four "higher critics," Satan was furiously attacking the Word of God, and he used perverted science and false education to do it. The masses of Christendom, in their spiritual lethargy, didn't understand that they were being overwhelmed and their faith destroyed.

5. Mary Baker Eddy

founded Christian Science. In 1875 she published Science and Health, with a Key to the Scriptures. She taught that sin, death, pain and sickness were simply imagined. "All is

life; there is no death." This was the claim of the serpent in the Garden of Eden suggesting the false idea of the immortality of man. Bro. Russell has well said, "Christian Scientists are neither Christians nor Scientists."

6. Madam Blavatsky

was a Russian occultist who in 1875 started the Theosophical Society. She taught that all of us are immortal and we don't really die. The Theosophical Society is the forerunner of the New Age Movement that is so popular today. Their spirit mediums are called "channelers" because they channel the communication from the fallen angels to their fellow man.

The handout we have prepared is a rare example of a secular source who acknowledges Bro. Russell's role as a defender of the word of God. There are further references from Bro. Russell's writings on this sheet for your consideration.*

The first four of these six represent "Higher Criticism" in the form of so-called "education and science." The last two represent Spiritism which attracts by a claimed secret inner power. These attracted the weak Christians and destroyed their faith by these teachings. It was the Lord who permitted these tests just as he allowed Satan to use the serpent in the Garden of Eden to manifest disobedience in Adam and Eve. This is the thought in 2

Thessalonians 2:8-12 (quoted with some corrections from the original Greek):

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his presence: whose presence is accompanied by the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be preserved. And for this cause God shall send

* This is reproduced on the next page.

Source: YEAR: Mid- Century Edition: 1900- 1950, p. 33, Baldwin W. Ward, editor. Published in Los Angeles by Year, Inc., 1950. (This represents an outsider's view of Brother Russell's ministry.)

For selected readings from the pen of Brother Russell see:

Evolution, Higher Criticism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Spiritism and other theories denying the Ransom (Volume 4, p. 66)

Most violent opposers of Truth—Evolution, Theosophy, Spiritism, Christian Science, Romanists, Protestants, Universalists (Volume 6, p. 629)

"Now in the Harvest, the Adversary is furiously attacking the Truth and turning everything scientific and educational into a weapon of destruction."(Volume 6, p. 658)

Also see Volume 4, p. 388; Volume 3, p. 167; Volume 6, p. 640; Reprint 2450, 5800, and 4613.

A HALF CENTURY OF CRUSADE ended when Mary Baker Eddy died in 1910. Her doctrine, that health is supplied by applying the preachings and healings of Christ, had spread throughout the world. The mother church was First Church of Christ, Scientist, of Boston.

FUNDAMENTALIST, SCIENTIST, ATHEIST engaged in a bitter feud. Bestselling author and evangelist, (c)Pastor^a Charles Russell (left) preached against the evolution theory of Charles Darwin (center) and atheism of Robert Ingersoll (right).

SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY tempered the times. Dan Beard of the Boy Scouts, YMCA's John Mott, and William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, brought Christian organizations world attention. Gen. Booth died in 1912.

MODERNISM TESTS RELIGION

A crisis in religion swept over Christian countries at the beginning of the century. Blown about by the night winds of science, speculations of liberal scholars, and the conscience of many clergymen, the crisis of (c)Modernism^a touched every church and left its mark.

Modernists questioned the Scriptures and renounced ancient creeds. For them, Darwinian science and modern knowledge disproved the Bible. From Rome came papal decrees charging heresy, hushing this storm within the Catholic church.

Fundamentalists took shelter in new formed churches: The Pillar of Fire, Nazarene, Pentecostal, the Assemblies of God, the Firebaptized Holiness Church, Seventhday Adventists. Liberals turned Unitarian and Humanist, and radicals became agnostics.

But the controversy had inspired many evangelists, and their burning zeal to convert sinners helped swell U. S. church membership from the 36,000,000 of 1900 to 52,000,000 in 1914. Immigration had increased Catholic ranks 62% but Protestants still outnumbered them 3 to 1.

The new movements weakened the importance of sectarian creeds and the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and others unified. Thirtythree churches formed the Federal Council of Churches of Christ (1908).

them strong delusions, that they might and should believe a lie: that they all might be judged unworthy who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Sifting and Testing by God

The Lord sifts and tests his professed children at the time of harvest, at the time when the Lord returns, at his parousia, presence. That presence would reveal the wicked Satan, the Papacy, and all his false systems, to those who have an ear to hear. But of course Satan would be doubly active with lying signs and

wonders which would accompany the Lord's presence. God allows Satan to offset the proper influence of the truth by distorting it with false teachings. In fact, this text says God sends these. He allows Satan to perform these lying wonders and miracles to sift and test those who do not have the proper faith in the Word of God and who will not receive the harvest message. The ones who are sifted do not love righteousness nor the truth. This is why the Lord said to the six, "Go out and smite." They used false teachings. The Lord wants to sift those who were not faithful, those who did not have the mark of a mature Christian in their forehead. There was a separation between those who had faith in the ransom and those whose faith could be shaken by the false teachings of these six.

After talking about the slaying of the young and the old, the women and the children, the end of verse six says, "begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house." These are those who are weak in faith—past their prime of life. They were supposed to be the teachers of the Word of God, yet remarkably it was the clergy class who were the first ones to advocate these various errors. In the late 1800s as the people were being enlightened from the doctrines of the dark ages, the clergy tried to adopt new teachings to keep their flock in their various denominational "sheep folds." Thus their true faith in the ransom was slain, destroyed.

Verse seven says, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain." The court shows those who should be believers in the ransom as represented by the brazen altar. Instead it is by this altar that a great slaughter takes place. Not only were the clergy the first to be slain, but those who professed to be Christians were also slain and it defiled Christendom. This continues to our day. The blind lead the blind, and both fall and are falling into the ditch.

Verses 8-11 of Exekiel 9 read:

"And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me."

The Time of Harvest

This is not a time for reformation. It is the time of harvest. The wheat are to be gathered, the separation takes place, and the systems are destroyed. Christendom will be utterly destroyed. The Lord will have no pity; He will not spare it. The "house of Israel" in this prophecy represents Catholicism. Judah represents federated Protestantism. These are the two religious parts mentioned in Revelation 16:13 as the beast and the false prophet which are aligned with state government, and which will be destroyed.

The land is full of blood, the blood guilt of Christendom. It is caused by the teaching of God-dishonoring doctrines such as evolution, spiritism, and in some instances even reincarnation. The clergy act as though they don't believe the Lord cares. They lack belief in the reality that the Lord is present and will soon pour out his judgments. In verse 11 the man clothed with linen says, "I have done as thou hast commanded me," a phrase which shows that the message will assist in sealing the 144,000. Then follows Ezekiel 10:2,

"He spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in my sight." "And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city."—Eze 9:7

Scattering Coals of Fire

We would liken the scattering of these coals of fire over the city as being the same as the seven last plagues that come upon Babylon, Christendom, to destroy her, after the separating work of wheat and tares has taken place. In Volume 3,

Thy Kingdom Come, page 135, in the "Work of Harvest" chapter, two of the summaries read, "The Casting off, Gradual Fall and Final Destruction of Babylon—The Sealing of the Servants of God, before the Plagues Come Upon Babylon." On page 166 Bro. Russell writes: "Thus the classes are to be marked and separated before the plagues come upon rejected, cast off Babylon." These coals of fire bring to mind the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the fiery judgments of the Lord of those perverse cities. It also brings to mind Revelation 18:8 where it says that the harlot, the city (mystic Babylon, Christendom) shall be utterly burned with fire. This is the effect that the pouring out of the seven last

plagues will have upon Christendom. But it doesn't come until after the separation has taken place.

We think there is something about the man in linen who gets these coals of fire that is worthy of note. The seven last plagues are hard, revealing truths that are contained in the harvest message that will be poured out upon Babylon in such a way, and at just the right time, when the social, economic, and religious environment is ripe So that people will recognize how iniquitous these systems have been, So that the discontented masses of people will rise up and pull these systems down. Revelation 18:20,21:

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

We think that's the relationship the man clothed with linen has with these coals of fire which shall eventually destroy the city.

It is important to appreciate the agents the Lord uses. He used human prophets to guide and direct Israel. He used human apostles to establish the church. He used human agents as the seven messengers. In Revelation 1 those messengers were in his right hand. If the Lord holds these seven in his right hand, he has confidence in them. They are his messengers, they carry his message.

In the message to Laodicea, {*Re 3:20*} the Lord states that "he would 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." Since our Lord's return in 1874, he has been using time prophecies and signs of the times to attract the attention of the faithful. Those who respond are greatly privileged to partake of the spiritual meat or bread now provided during this harvest time.

"Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find So doing."—Mt 24:44-46

The meat in due season is the truth needed to protect and strengthen the faith of the saints during the Lord's parousia from the errors of infidelity, evolution, higher criticism, false doctrines,

spiritism, occultism, materialism, and all lying wonders and deceptions. These truths are supplied to us by our returned Lord through his appointed servant, or human agent, the wise and faithful servant, Pastor Charles Taze Russell. Let us continue to appreciate how and where we can "sup" with our Lord in the most satisfying and nutritious way—in the Word of God, using the provided keys, the writings from the man clothed in linen with the writer's inkhorn by his side.

May the Lord overrule anything said amiss.

Justice: The Foundation of Jehovah's Throne—Bro. Ioan Galis, Romania

I AM VERY HAPPY TO HAVE THIS wonderful privilege of meeting brethren from many countries and learning wonderful lessons from our heavenly Father's plan. I appreciate the concern of the brethren throughout the world for the brethren in Romania, by organizing this convention in our vicinity So we can attend it in as large a number as possible. I bring the greetings of the brethren in Romania and especially of those in Ruginoasa, the ecclesia to which I belong, and also of the area called the Valley of Almas.

Since one of the attributes of God's character is justice, all of the laws of His government are founded on justice. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne."{*Ps 89:14*} "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful."{*Ps 119:137,138*}

The Meaning of Justice

According to dictionaries, justice is a moral and judicial principle which requires respect for everyone's rights, to not depart from the truth and from reason; to be just, true, reasonable.

Man was created perfect, in the image and likeness of his Creator. When subjected to a test of obedience, he fell. Divine justice could not rightfully forgive a sinner, So it sentenced him to death. God could not have a relationship with a sinner either directly or indirectly, except through a mediator, and only after justice was satisfied. Therefore, through Jesus' sacrifice, God provided for the salvation of sinners from the penalty of death, reconciled them with Himself, and gave the gift of everlasting life.

This is wonderfully represented in the Most Holy by the two cherubim on the Mercy Seat, which represent power and love. They look downward, to justice, until it is satisfied; then they fly to restore and bless mankind.

God justly requires His creatures to practice righteousness. But man's great fall from the image of his Creator, and the ruin caused by sin in its many forms, measurably hinders man from practicing righteousness. Even though in some people's character righteous principles have remained to a significant degree, yet unfavorable present circumstances under the reign of the prince of darkness do not permit them to properly manifest them.

In spite of unfavorable circumstances, there were people throughout the ages that proved they loved righteousness by their way of living. And God loved and approved of them. To one of these God manifested His friendship, sharing with him His thoughts, saying:

"Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."—Ge 18:17-19

Abraham—like all of the fallen race—was imperfect; but since he believed God, he was reckoned as righteous. {Ro 4:3}

"[Moses] when seeing one of them [i.e., a Jew] suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed."—Ac 7:24

Likewise Moses gave justice to the daughters of Jethro. When "the shepherds came and drove them away... Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock." Afterward their father asked,

"How is it that you come So soon today? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock."—Ex 2:17-19

It is written of David,

"And David reigned over all Israel, and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people."—2Sa 8:15

The Meaning of Righteous

The word "righteous" means without deviation, without secrets. Daniel, a man greatly beloved of God, was without deviation and without secrets.

"Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God."—Da 6:4,5

God through Moses gave the Law to the people of Israel, a Law which was right and perfect. But even though the people committed themselves to keeping it, they could not. This proved the inability of imperfect man to live up to the divine standard. They were reprov'd many times through the prophets who told them they were trespassing justice.

"None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth; they trust in vanity, and speak lies.... The way of peace they know not, and there is no judgment in their goings."—Isa 59:4,8

God admonished them to lead a righteous life by saying:

"Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother.... But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder and stopped their ears that they should not hear."—Zec 7:9,11

God would not listen when they called, but He...

"scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through, nor returned; for they laid the pleasant land desolate."—Zec 7:14

Although some of the noble people of the past were commended for striving to live righteously, nevertheless perfect righteousness was manifested only in our Lord Jesus. The apostle Peter says,

"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."—1Pe 3:18

During his earthly life, our Lord did appreciate those who loved to practice righteousness and rebuked those who did not. He entered the house of Zacchaeus and abode at his house even though "all murmured saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."{*Lu 19:7*} Jesus did that because he could read Zacchaeus' heart, who...

"stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."—*Lu 19:8*

He rebuked the Pharisees, telling them they "tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God";{*Luke 11:42*} they "omit the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith."(*Matthew 23:23*)

The Lord Jesus teaches us that the spirit of the divine law consists in two commandments: "To love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"and "to love thy neighbor as thyself."{*Mt 22:37,39*} These two commandments are required by justice. Every human being should feel a responsibility to keep these commandments according to his ability.

But Jesus gave Christians a new commandment: To love one another as he loved them. {*Joh 13:34*} And he loved us So much he gave his life for us. He therefore did more than Israel's Law required.

Since the promise to the saints is that we shall be like him, are we required to do less than that? The Lord Jesus says:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."—*Joh 15:13*

And the apostle John:

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—*1Jo 3:14*

At the beginning of our walk perhaps we found it difficult to attain the standard required, thinking that we have So many weaknesses and shortcomings compared to our Lord who was perfect.

In the great apostle Paul and in all the apostles we have wonderful examples of transformation into the model that is our Lord Jesus. Paul tells the Thessalonians that they "are witnesses, and God also,

how holily and justly and unblameably"he behaved himself among them. {1Th 2:10} Before Festus he could not be charged with any unrighteousness. He says:

"To the Jews have I done no wrong, ... For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die."—
Ac 25:10,11

In spite of all our strivings to live righteously, we realize that So many times we fail. Even when we do our

best, we are still "unprofitable servants." {Lu 17:10} Since we cannot be actually perfect, our Lord, through the Father's arrangement, imputes to us his own righteousness and reckons us as perfect. Brother Russell, in Reprints pages 5518 205518 and 5519 205519, says:

"Amongst the Lord's people there is nothing more important than that they should learn to be very just. While it is right to be loving, kind, generous, yet justice is the very foundation of character. All love and kindness not based upon justice are neither satisfactory nor pleasing to the Lord. In dealing with others, a child of God will not think, What will my fellow-men let me take from them? but, What are the rights of others, and what would my heavenly Father have me do? It is very natural for one to recognize his own rights, in any matter, but the fallen nature does not So quickly perceive the rights of others.... It is the duty of the new creature to bring the body into such subjection that justice shall rule in every act and word, and So far as possible in every thought.... Whoever thinks unjustly will act unjustly in spite of endeavours to the contrary.... Our first concern, then, must be for the heart—that its affections and dispositions may be wholly under the control of grace divine; that every principle of truth and righteousness may be enthroned there."

We Are to be Righteous

In our usual dealings with family, neighbors, and co-workers, we must be recognized as righteous people even if we have to suffer because of it. In this connection I would like to tell you of an experience I had under communism. It was customary in all branches of activity to report to the government higher achievements than were actually attained. This was true of the unit in which I worked. When I was asked to make such reports, I refused. As a consequence, only with much difficulty would my supervisor give me the free days to which I was entitled. He would

ask why I needed free time and I would tell him I had to go to a funeral or a meeting.

In view of the future work of raising up mankind, a work for which the Father is now preparing us, how grateful are we to be for the various experiences He sees fit to give us!

In our relationship with others, we are first of all to demand correctness from ourselves. It is only when we deal with incorrect people that we can learn to hate iniquity, or even teach others to be right. The apostle Paul instructs us that we should be an epistle of Christ "known and read" by all. {2Co 3:2}

The Importance of Action

Along this line, we have the saying, "Actions speak louder than words." It is a special blessing to see the fulfillment of the apostle's teaching in the lives of the brethren.

I would ask your permission to again relate an experience, this time of a brother who worked with me. As was customary under communism, during work the brother asked permission to go buy something at a shop. His supervisor said he would permit it, but if he were asked, he was not to say he received permission from the supervisor. The brother said he would go only if he could tell the truth. During this discussion the phone in the room was connected to the director of the operation. He appreciated the attitude of the brother and said, "If every employee were like that, I could run this unit from my home."

Certainly our dealings with others depend mainly on the way we regulate our conscience by the Word of God. The keeping of a pure conscience and a moderate consideration of one's self is essential to our spiritual progress. It would be a thoroughly reprehensible matter to violate the moral, physical, and intellectual rights of the brethren, either individually or as a class. In fact to violate someone's rights means to wrong him, to steal from him.

A special responsibility in this matter is carried by the elders, in their capacity as overseers of the interests of the ecclesia. We are very grateful to the Lord because he found it proper to call our attention to these things through "the wise and faithful servant," Bro. Russell, things that are part of the "meat in due season for the household of faith." In the article entitled "Danger in Spiritual Pride," Reprints page 5957 205957, he says:

"The ignoring of the golden rule is manifested every time an attempt is made to coerce the class, either in the election of its servants or in the ordering of its meetings. The regulations of the Lord's Word are known; the residing of the authority in the class is recognized, and when an elder attempts to twist or turn or alter this, he is not doing to the others as he would be done by. He has a right, as one of the class, to his own opinion of the Lord's will on any matter. He has the right to express his judgment. But he has no right to hinder others from the expression of their judgment; and every such interference is a violation of the golden rule as well as a violation of the law of love and a violation of the first commandment—to honor God; for it is setting aside the divine arrangement provided for such matters."

Dear brothers and sisters, let us strive more and more to practice justice So we may be pleasing to the heavenly Father. As it is written:

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."—Mic 6:8

By practicing justice we have rest and peace during the present life. And upon this depends even the reward promised to the overcomers.

"Justice for the People"

We are living in the Laodicean period, a name which means "justice for the people." Under the sound of the seventh trumpet which is proclaiming liberty, people are recognizing the rights that were denied to them for six thousand years. As we look around us we see people throughout the world claiming their rights. Many, in their ignorance and selfishness, claim even more "rights" than are proper for them.

The great time of trouble, which is now in progress until its culmination, is preparing people's hearts to receive the good seed of Truth. The symbolic fire of the Lord's anger and jealousy will destroy the present systems and institutions, as the prophet Habakkuk describes it:

"Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck."—Hab 3:13

But all this destruction does not mean the destruction of the people. The prophet Zephaniah (Zephaniah 3:9) shows that the people will

survive and will receive "a pure language," that is, a pure message of the Truth.

The Reign of Righteousness

Under the rule of the rightful King, the reign of righteousness will begin. It will fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 26:9, "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Also in Isaiah 42:4, we read: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."

When the Prince of Peace will take over the leadership and enforce the laws of justice and equity under an "iron" government, all will learn that righteousness ennobles people, but sin degrades them. They will see that the long period of the permission of evil makes divine justice shine forth in its true value and beauty, and they will therefore appreciate the plan chosen by God.

Every righteous work of a man that attains perfection will be counted as a sacrifice. This is what the Prophet David tells us:

"Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering."—Ps 51:19

But mankind as a whole will reach that standard only at the end of the Millennial Age. At that time they will be tested by letting Satan loose for a little season. Those whose hearts will not be in full accord with the righteous laws of the kingdom will be destroyed from among the people. Those found worthy of everlasting life will be able to rightly say in the inspired language: "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments!" {*Re 16:7*} Then there will be the fulfillment of the prophetic words of Psalms 85:11,

"Truth shall spring out of the earth [the earthly phase of the Kingdom]; and righteousness shall look down from heaven [the heavenly phase of the kingdom]."

"And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; for God is judge himself."—Ps 50:6

Now in closing I want, dear brethren, to express my gratitude to our Lord Jesus personally, for the wonderful light which by the Father's grace he has brought to us during his second presence. Through this light we may know clearly the plan and character of

our heavenly Father. From this light I received the inspiration to prepare this discourse. Therefore, together with the prophet,

"I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness; and will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high."—Ps 7:17

I close then, beloved brothers and sisters, with the desire to meet again as soon as possible; if not here, then on the other side of the veil where "His countenance doth behold the upright."{*Ps 11:7*} Amen.

Sons of God-Bro. C. George, India

BELOVED BROTHERS AND sisters gathered in this great International Convention: at the outset I greet you all in the most precious name of our Almighty Jehovah and His Son and our redeemer the Lord Jesus Christ!

I bring greetings to you from all your brethren in India and special love and greetings from your brethren of the Wellington ecclesia to which I belong. Our class consists of about 40 dedicated brethren who zealously strive to do the will of the Almighty.

I deem it a great privilege and a blessing of divine providence that has enabled both my wife and I to participate in this great convention with brethren of that one faith.

The thoughts I would like to share with you on this occasion are entitled "Sons of God."

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Ro 8:14

The Meaning of "Son"

The word "son" denotes the male offspring of parents. The first and only begotten son of God was His very first creation, the alpha and omega, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is evident by God's word in Psalms 2:7, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Not only is Jesus His Son, but he is also the firstborn of every creature. This is evident from Colossians 1:15, "Who [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature."

Other heavenly creatures—angels, cherubs, and other celestial beings—are also referred to as "sons of God" as we read in Job 1:6,

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD."

The human race was the handiwork of God through his only begotten son Jesus. Adam, our first human father, was the "son of God" by virtue of his creation. This is evident from Luke 3:38, "Adam, which was the Son of God."

The creation of Adam is described in Genesis 2:7,

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

However, Adam disobeyed God and was condemned to death as a willful sinner. He was, in effect, disowned by God. He lost his filial relationship with his heavenly father as described in Genesis 3:17-24. In Genesis 3:23,24 we read,

"Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden.... So he drove out the man."

Thus man lost his sonship with God. Justice is an important attribute of the supreme being. According to His word he punished Adam and his race because of his disobedience. He thereby displayed justice. Together with justice, love is an everlastingly wonderful attribute of God. Though man disobeyed His word and lost a relationship as a son, God chooses a son from the race which came from Adam who sinned. Jesus Christ, who later was to give himself as a ransom price for the sin of Adam, was born as a human being in the lineage of Abraham, the "Father of the Faithful." We read this in Galatians 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ."

God's Chosen People

From the line of Abraham God chose His very own people, the Israelites, whom He addresses as "my son." In Exodus 4:22, God instructs Moses to tell Pharaoh, king of Egypt, "And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." Here we see that God not only says that Israel is "My son," but He also says Israel is his firstborn—a very great privilege for Israel.

Just as Adam lost his sonship, the son "Israel" chosen from his descendants also lost their sonship through disobedience and the non-fulfillment of their Law covenant. Even though Israel lost their sonship and became scattered as a nation, they still claimed their position as "sons of God." But Jesus Christ rejects their statement by saying they have lost their sonship and had not even recognized him as the son of God. They had listened to and were doing the will and works of God's adversary, the devil.

"Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."—Joh 8:41-44

This shows that sonship with God on the part of any of Adam's descendants requires not simply a natural fleshly relationship with Him, but this relationship in turn requires that the "sons" keep faith with God by manifesting His qualities, by obeying His words, and faithfully serving His purpose and interest.

Adoption as Sons of God

Christ redeemed us from the bondage of sin and death through his supreme sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. He has inducted us as "sons of God" through adoption into God's family. This is evident to us from Galatians 4:5,

"To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

After being formally adopted as sons of God, the adoption becomes complete only when we are "born again" as expressed by our Lord Jesus:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—Joh 3:3

What does the phrase "born again" signify? It signifies a "rebirth in Christ" as a new creature.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."—2Co 5:17

The rebirth of a new creature in Christ completes his adoption as a "son of God." As an evidence of our adoption we are filled with God's spirit and are privileged to address Him as "Abba, Father."

"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."—Ro 8:14,15

As Christ overcame and conquered the world, we are also to conquer the world in our daily life which is to be an example. After conquering the world by being faithful unto death, we receive the full realization of sonship by being resurrected as "spiritual sons of God."

The Witness of the Holy Spirit

After having received full adoption into God's family, the holy spirit of God itself bears witness that we are his children. We read in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." This means that as a result of our acceptance into God's family, our mental and emotional inclinations respond positively to the expression of God's spirit through His inspired word when it speaks about the heavenly hope.

Many do not know whether they have the spirit of the Lord or not. Others feel they have full assurance of such knowledge and claim they have the witness of the holy spirit citing their happy feelings as evidence. When all men speak well of them, when health is favorable, when they are financially prosperous, when friends are numerous—they feel happy. However, when they experience reverses, they feel unhappy and lose what they thought was a "witness of the Spirit."

A man's mind or spirit may be known by his words and conduct; and so we may know God's mind or spirit by His words and dealings. The testimony of His word is that whosoever cometh unto Him is accepted. Hence the first question to be asked by those who are seeking a witness of the spirit respecting their sonship is, "Was I ever drawn to Christ, to recognize him as my Redeemer, and through whose righteousness alone I could have access to the heavenly father and be acceptable to Him?" If this can be answered in the affirmative, the next question would be, "Did I ever fully consecrate myself—my life, my time, my talents, my influence, my all—to God?"

If this question can also be answered in the affirmative, the inquirer may rest fully assured that he has been accepted with the Father in the Beloved One, and recognized by Him as a son. And if, when scrutinizing his own heart's desires and sentiments, he finds it still trusting in the merit of Jesus, and still consecrated to do the will of the Lord, he may allow the sweet confidence and peace, which this thought of harmony and relationship to God brings, to fully possess his heart.

Different Planes of Sonship

The heavenly arrangement has been devised in such grandeur that sonship has been fixed at different planes. In the beginning we see that our Lord was the supreme creation of the Almighty, the "only begotten son." Hence he was in the highest plane as a son next to God. We then see the angels, cherubim, and other heavenly creations who serve God and who are also "sons of God." These belong to different planes in the heavenly order. Then we see the "adopted sons of God" who are chosen from earthly beings and who are also on different planes according to the "extent of their sacrifices."

Here we draw a comparison to the priesthood reflected by the sons of God. We see the earthly order in the Aaronic priesthood and the heavenly order in the Melchizedek priesthood. In the Aaronic priesthood there was a repetition of typical sacrifices year by year. But that did not abolish original sin; it merely covered or condoned it for the year when they were offered. On the other hand the Melchizedek priesthood shows the "better sacrifices" of Christ sacrificing his life for the redemption of man from sin. This priest of the Melchizedek type sacrificed his life and was glorified to become a priest to bless the world, and is empowered by his kingly office to bestow priestly blessings.

When we look at the real Melchizedek in Abraham's times, we see that indeed he also was a priest who blessed Abraham:

"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."—Ge 14:18,19

Here is a clear distinction between Aaron and Melchizedek. Though both were priests, Aaron confined himself to only offering sacrifices and the performance of priestly duties as a "son of God." However, apart from the performance of any priestly duties

he may have had, it was as a king that Melchizedek blessed Abraham. To this "order" our Lord has become the "Royal Priest."

The Highest Plane of Existence

So regarding sonship, the highest plane constitutes the "royal priesthood." We, the privileged who sojourn during the Gospel Age, are invited to that great calling. That calling as the "children of God" ensures that we also become joint-heirs of Christ in glory. This is evident in the first part of Romans 8:17,

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

Apart from this heirship, these jointheirs of Christ are also addressed as a royal priesthood.

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."—1Pe 2:9

To attain this royal priesthood and position as "sons on the highest plane," we are to follow the footsteps of our Master in dedicating our lives daily as "living sacrifices." The apostle says this very clearly in Romans 12:1,

"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."

This sacrificing is not an option but a duty on our part when we claim joint heirship with Christ as children. Returning to Romans 8:17,

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if So

be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

The reward for our suffering is the honor to rule with Christ as part of the royal priesthood. This is indicated by the apostle in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

Thus this privilege of joint-heirship in the royal priesthood lifts us not only to the position of "sons of God" in the spiritual plane, but we become also "immortal sons" in the glorious body—the highest plane of sonship. The apostle tells us in Philippians 3:20,21,

"We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

One Family of Sons

And so, dearly beloved brethren, we are gathered in this great assembly as "sons of God." We come from different nations, far and wide. However, our "sonship in Christ" has united us on this occasion and, according to divine leadings, makes us one family. The apostle explains in Galatians 3:28,

"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."

In this fellowship it is indeed wonderful to behold that we, the "peculiar people of that one faith," have been adopted as "sons of God" into His family. The holy spirit is also witnessing to our sonship. Let us pray to God Almighty for His continued blessings and guidance as we strive to attain glory as joint-heirs of His only begotten son in the Melchizedek order, the "royal priesthood."

The Gathering of the Nations-Bro. Len Griehs, USA

THIS IS NOT A DISCOURSE about this international convention. Our "gathering of nations" in convention no doubt is looked upon favorably by the Lord as we encourage one another and as we discuss the truth as we know it in our individual parts of the world. The gathering of nations to which I am referring is NOT looked upon favorably by God, even though He is the one who is behind it. This gathering of nations is mentioned in prophecy as leading up to the time of the end, the time preceding Jacob's Trouble. This gathering precedes a display of God's power in delivering the nation of Israel at the close of this age. Let us read about this gathering in Zephaniah 3:8,9.

"Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until that day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."

What is the nature and purpose of the gathering of nations mentioned in this text? It is unlikely that it refers to a physical location since many nations scarcely have room for their own population! The word for "gathering" is number 622 in Strong's Concordance. It is the Hebrew word אָפַח (acaph), meaning "to put all together." The Hebrew word is related to the name of David's chief musician, Asaph, who was a "collector" of songs. Likewise the "gathering" of nations refers to a "collection" of the nations in a common cause or interest, displayed in a way that makes them so interdependent that they are willing to compromise their individual ideals for the sake of the interests of all. This interdependency makes it possible for a disaster in one nation to cause major disruption to all. It describes our world today.

We are living in a world of rapid and dramatic change. Many things have occurred that I would not have believed would happen in my lifetime. For example: Nelson Mandela becomes the president of South Africa after being in prison for most of my lifetime; Yitzak Rabin and Yassar Arafat jointly receive the Nobel peace prize after decades of fighting; and, perhaps the biggest of all events that has affected so many of you here in this auditorium, the fall of what was called the Soviet Union. How difficult it is for any of us to accurately predict the changes that could occur in the world. When we look at a prophecy and believe that it is in the far distant future, we must be cautious. Things can change dramatically and rapidly. That's why Jesus reminded us to "watch and pray."

The modern world that has emerged in this century has witnessed an emergence of common world interests through a desire to share in prosperity and economic gain. This is the major driving force in the leaders of the nations emerging from the fall of the Soviet Union. Peoples who were suppressed by long centuries of despotism now want economic prosperity and they expect their leaders to secure it for them rapidly. Otherwise those leaders will be replaced quickly. Today's major wars are generally not being fought with guns and tanks, but with trade sanctions and tariffs. They are being fought to protect the economic and investment interest of nations. Empires such as the United States, Japan, Viet Nam, and Korea have shed much blood on many battlefields for the cause of democracy or communism or socialism. Today, within the lifetime of many of those who fought on those battlefields, these nations now sign agreements for common trade and guarantee of loans and investments to have a share of economic security. Access to world capital through strong competitive positions far outweighs the ideals that were once important enough

to justify the slaughter of innocent men, women and children, or the death of men and women who defended those ideals. Is it any wonder that today's youth objects to being forced into a nation's army? They see that lives given in war mean little when the taste of economic prosperity comes. The Lord's Great Army described in Joel chapter 2 will be made up of many of these dissidents who will not be willing to sacrifice their lives So that others can prosper!

Today it is evident that the peoples of our modern world no longer want strong military leaders. They want leaders who will provide them with economic independence and personal prosperity. This common goal of promised prosperity "gathers" the nations in a far more efficient manner than any common cause of idealism. Mass communication advances this cause by reporting on the great disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots." This gives the "have-nots" an even greater desire to advance and causes great distress among the people.

Nations in Distress

In Luke 21:25-27, Jesus describes the transition of this present evil world into God's kingdom through a catalogue of events which, though highly figurative, gives us a framework for determining the fulfillment of biblical prophecy in the events of our day:

"And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in... great glory."

The words in bold are important to our discussion. The word looking, from Strong's 4329, expresses the thought of expectation of infliction, thus apprehensiveness. This is how the New International Version translates it into English:

"On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world."

The Greek word for "perplexity" means "at a loss for a way," or "without resources."

It is not God's intervention in the world's affairs that makes men faint, but it is what they see happening in the world prior to that time that brings them distress!

In Volume 4, The Battle of Armageddon, Bro. Russell suggests that promised prosperity is the driving force behind the gathering of nations. In his 1897 forward, he says,

"The majority of the poor and the middle class prefer peace at almost any price.... The masses will seek relief through the ballot and the peaceful readjustment of earth's affairs for the elimination of evil.... The crisis will be reached when the hitherto upholders of the law shall become violators of the law and resisters of the majority as expressed by the ballot. Fear for the future will goad the well-meaning masses to desperation."

In the 1916 forward he writes:

"We see that the large nations have been fearful of each other's prosperity."

In his discussion of this prophecy in chapter 7 of Volume 4, Bro. Russell makes these predictions based on observations from his own day:

1. Technology would So increase the ability of the nations to increase their output that manual labor would take a lesser role;
2. This would lead to a common level all over the world and an equal status among nations of the world;
3. No government would be able to legislate wages and profits because the sources of capital would seek the most profitable areas of the world in which to do business;
4. This would lead to a change in the economic levels of all people throughout the world;
5. The interests of trade would follow wars between nations;
6. Distress and division of the nations will be built upon the economics of supply and demand for the world's goods;
7. Selfish pressure among the nations will grow stronger and demand will increase until a collapse emerges;

8. The conditions will be universal and the momentum will be beyond human power to regulate. These observations which Bro. Russell outlined before World War I are even more relevant in our world today. We look at the threats in our world coming from places such as Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, and we miss the subtleness of the change in the world. The expansion of global trade and telecommunications has dramatically increased the world's ability to move information and resources. For the first time in modern history the world is not being run on the traditional concept of a "balance of power." Instant global communications allows capital to flow globally, and has significantly reduced the role of the former "nation states." The nations are rapidly gathering into one united effort to bring peace and prosperity. What a fulfillment of this scripture in Zephaniah!

The Gathering Today

Woodrow Wilson, American President and historian, wrote that the world before 1914 "had in fact become at last a single commercial community." This is even more true of our own day. When the financial crisis in Mexico brought that nation to the brink of collapse, Poland's emerging economy was impacted! Money and wealth moves around the world in unprecedented fashion. Today there are over 100 regional arrangements for conducting trade. Over half of all the trading in the world now occurs through one of these arrangements. Many of us here have been personal witnesses to the development of European unity. From six members in 1958, the union has gone to 15 members, and within five years there will be 24 members. Emerging from this is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, composed of 25 countries, with the stated purpose to "attain the highest possible growth of member countries' financial health, expand trade on a non-discriminatory basis, and to expand employment." Thus what would have been the purpose of one nation, is now a united effort for 25! The Confederation of Indian Countries involves seven of the northern states of India, and is aimed at removing the barriers which prevent India's millions from sharing in the economic prosperity of the world. The Asian countries of China, Hong Kong and Korea are quickly becoming an important trading bloc.

The World Trade Organization

Perhaps no better example exists today of this gathering than the newly formed and more important World Trade Organization. The World Trade Organization, which emerged in April, 1994, following the ratification of the General Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade, will be a powerful multilateral organization when fully enacted. It is empowered to monitor global trade agreements and to resolve disputes among member nations. The conference at Marrakesh, Morocco, resulted in 125 nations finalizing agreements which had been under negotiation since 1986. This is the most ambitious agreement tying together the common economic interests of the world since 1947. This agreement came into effect officially on January 1, 1995. While this agreement focuses on trade of hard goods between nations, future areas of discussion will center on services, investments, government purchases, research subsidies, patents and telecommunications. Indeed a most powerful gathering! Let us turn to just a few other examples.

World Bank

The World Bank was established in 1944 to assist European postwar recovery. In 1949, after the Marshall Plan absorbed this role, the focus shifted to loans and technical assistance to promote the balanced growth of international trade and economic development, especially in underdeveloped areas. The World Bank gave rise to the International Monetary Fund and the International Finance Corporation (1956) and finally the International Development Association (1960). This has become the single most important lending agency in international development. In 1990, over 159 nations had increased borrowing from \$7 billion to \$15 billion. The increase in commitment to the bank from lending nations has risen from \$85 billion to \$171 billion. While this is hardly enough to concern lending nations whose gross national product is in the trillions, the bank played a significant role in providing solutions to Third World debt problems in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It will likely do even more for emerging nations such as China, which is only now coming out from millennia of suppression and poverty.

United Nations

The United Nations (UN) was founded at the close of World War II to maintain international peace and security. Although it has not often proved capable of preventing military conflict, it has expanded its functions and membership to become an influential force in economic aspects of international relations. The Economic and Social Council under the supervision of the General Assembly of the UN, recommends ways to improve economic and social cooperation. It was originally made up of only 18 member nations, but today has expanded to over 50 member nations, with growing interest.

During the 1980s the fortunes of the United Nations seemed in decline. The UN itself was in financial difficulty with even the United States refusing to pay its share of the organization's expenses. By 1990, however, the UN had been revitalized through the end of the cold war, which held out the promise of the sort of cooperation among the great powers of the world that had been the original basis for the organization's charter. The UN has played a much more prominent role in today's world since U.S. President George Bush proclaimed a "new world order." Since 1990, the UN's peacekeeping role in the world has expanded significantly. At the fiftieth anniversary gathering in Copenhagen in 1995, a commission on global governance was created which establishes an Economic Security Council to take on the problems of the New World Economy.

Failed Efforts of Economic and Social Reform

History shows that no one man, company, country, or nation can change the present order of society. It reveals many well-intended but futile efforts. Social programs around the world have aimed at redistributing wealth from the "haves" to the "have-nots." Those in control, however, have abused their power and have done little to help the "have-nots" advance.

These programs were confined and limited geographically. They produced nations which limited individual freedom and converted gain into a push for military domination and power. While many students of the Bible in the early twentieth century believed such programs were signs of the fulfillment of prophecy, their failure to bring the expected outcome was largely due to the limited scope of such programs. Prohibition, welfare, antitrust laws, and other similar programs were confined geographically to single countries. However, today's movements encompass nations and peoples from throughout the developed and developing world. Each nation has given up some of its sovereignty in order to achieve a common interest of equal economic status in a new world order.

What does common economic gain mean for the nations?

Bankruptcy of one nation no longer impacts that one nation. Investment dollars to finance that debt come from far across the world. Economic failure would impact not just the financed country but all loaning countries as well. Similarly, an investment in the capital of a country to promote economic growth links the progress of the recipient with the wealth of investor countries. Failure of the emerging country to fulfill its economic expectation

can result in the loss of funds to support social and economic programs in the benefactor country and thus cause severe hardship for the peoples of that nation.

Gathering Against Israel

There is one last piece of important prophecy related to this gathering of the nations. Although Zephaniah does not mention it in his prophecy, we know from Ezekiel 38 that there will be a final deliverance of Israel from a worldwide alliance of nations against it. That is God's real reason for gathering these nations. Verse 12 of Ezekiel 38 tells us that these nations, led by one called Gog, will descend upon Israel "to take a spoil." It is during this battle against Israel that God delivers his earthly people and inaugurates his kingdom. Precisely what this "battle" is and what this "spoil" is we do not know. However, it could very well involve severe economic war against Israel to sacrifice it for the rest of the world's desires. Within the past year, and for the first time, Israel has become dependent on the rest of the world to supply its arms for protection. It is no longer making its own weapons. Perhaps this may help us understand why it cannot withstand those forces coming against it. We are unclear on this part of the prophecy, but we do know that it plays the final role in the overturning of this world. And it is the real purpose of this gathering of the nations. It is God's way of turning His people Israel to recognize the true Messiah. What a glorious prospect that will be and what a cause for our joy in seeing this scripture coming to fulfillment in our day!

The Moffatt translation of Psalms 82:5 describes the situation emerging in our day in the words, "senseless and ignorant, they blindly move till the world shakes to its base." The concept is explained by one commentator as the world "is tottering to fall."

It is only the Lord's power and in the Lord's way that the world's direction will change to a perfect system based not upon personal gain but upon love and justice. To introduce this system, present conditions must be entirely overthrown. God cannot put a new patch on an old garment or pour new wine into an old wineskin.
{Mt 9:16,17}

God's Promise For a New World Order

When God delivers His people, He will establish a new world order not based on selfishness but on equality. Isaiah describes this new world order and its leader:

"And there shall come forth a rod 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. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of this eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of this mouth, and with the breath of his

lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."—Isa 11:1-5

Of course this describes our Lord in his role as judge of the people, and restorer of life. When Jesus assumes this role, men will achieve true equality and end their struggle to reach that goal. The elimination of sin will ease their way in finding that true happiness does not come from the accumulation of wealth, but in the celebration of life! Isaiah later draws a picture which gives God's purpose in gathering the nations. It is the final picture I will give you today. Let us read it in Isaiah 60:13.

"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious."

We know in the scriptures that trees often picture people. Here the prophet describes a gathering of the people, or nations, not to shake them, but now to bless them.

Brethren, we can be part of that blessing. Let us do all we can to fulfill our commitment to God So that we can rejoice from above when this earth is made the glorious place it was intended to be.

Amen!

When God delivers His people, He will establish a new world order not based on selfishness but on equality.

The Past Is Prologue-Bro. Carl Hagensick, USA

ETCHED OVER THE FRONT door of the National Archives building in our capital city of Washington are the words of our title: "The Past is Prologue." In that building are preserved the historic documents that go all the way back to the very founding of

the United States. The etching over the entrance is to remind us that these documents only reflect the past, and that this past is only the prologue, or foundation, for the future.

Our Rich Past

We, too, have a past—a very rich past. In one sense our past as a movement goes back to the ministry of Brother Charles Taze Russell, beginning in 1879. In a much larger sense it goes back to a far richer ministry—that of Jesus and his twelve apostles nearly two thousand years ago. In a still larger sense our roots are found in a small garden on the banks of the Tigris where our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created. And in the largest sense of all it goes back eons into the past of eternity when God himself laid out a magnificent plan for creating a universe and populating it with humanity, all in willing compliance with his beneficent laws. That, my dear brethren, is our past. That is our roots. But that is only prologue, for the future is longer than the past—it stretches out to eons of eternity before us. As one of our favorite hymns phrases it: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; we've no less years to sing his praise, than when we first begun."

But none of these pasts is the past we are talking about today. Now we look at a very recent past—one that only goes back to the year 1982. That was the year of our first International Convention of Bible Students. It was held in Kufstein, Austria and about 250 attended. How many of you here today were there fourteen years ago? Please stand.

On seven more occasions since then we have gathered together in these conventions. From countries throughout the world we came together every two years—to Kufstein and Obsteig in Austria, to Willingen, Germany, on to Deuteronomy Bron, Holland, then back to Willingen and on for two gatherings in Poitiers, France. And now here we are in Miskolc, Hungary. How many of you have been at all eight of these gatherings? Please stand.

You notice I did not arise. I had to miss those two in Poitiers, and how hard that was not to come and see you all once again. How very thankful I am to be able to be back with you this year in Hungary.

————— BIBLE STUDENTS

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

Year Location

1982 Kufstein 1984 Obsteig 1986 Willingen 1988 Deuteronomy
Bron 1990 Willingen 1992 Poitiers 1994 Poitiers 1996 Miskolc

Since I am getting personal, I am going to go back to 1980. My wife and I had the privilege of entertaining Brother Bob and Sister Marion Robinson and Bro. Fred and Sister Ivy Binns of England. At the same time Brother Daniel Kaleta and two twin sisters, Ewa and Malgosia Pieczonka of Poland were spending an extended period of time in our home. The fellowship was wonderful. We were rejoicing in learning about how the Lord was working with us, each in our own country and culture. A wish was expressed: "Wouldn't it be nice if once, just once, brethren from all over the world could gather together to enjoy such rich fellowship?" Bro. Robinson's immediate response was, "Why not?" Brother Kaleta is with us this evening. Maybe he can relate the feeling of that evening in his own words.

(Bro. Daniel Kaleta)

Our First Committee

A committee was soon formed: Brothers Binns of England, Adolphe Debski of France, Lutz Ruthman of Germany, Adam Zieminski of Poland, and Hercules Gonos of Greece. Bro. Debski, can you tell us a little about your feelings at that time?

(Bro. Adolphe Debski.)

A site had to be located. Austria was chosen as the country of choice because in the political situation at the time, it would be the most accessible western country for our Polish brethren. We knew of very few Austrian brethren, but we did know our Brother Peter and Sister Esa Keetman of Bavaria. They were close friends with the brethren DeCassian in Kufstein whose son operated a hotel. He immediately put us in contact with a larger hotel that had a convention facility and we were ready for our first gathering.

We waited... and prayed... and planned... and prayed... and watched... and prayed. Finally the big day arrived. Brethren began streaming in from Holland, from Belgium, from France, two bus

loads from Poland, from England, from America, from Canada, from Denmark.

What a wonderful time we had. We talked together. We laughed together. We prayed together. We heard God's Word together. We ate together. We testified together. We cried together. We did... we did So many things... and we did them together!

We did them together... and a few days before most of us had not even known each other. Brethren from the United States had only a vague knowledge of most of their European brethren. Even many of the brethren from European countries had only limited fellowship with brethren from other European countries. None of us even knew of our Romanian brethren. Few of us had met the dear ones from Brazil, from Argentina, from Nigeria, from India, or from Japan whom we have met at these conventions.

As conventions go, Kufstein was not perfect. The translation system was homemade and rather primitive. Sometimes translators needed to almost shout to each other to provide third-hand renditions—from English to German to Greek, for example. Accommodations were widely spread apart. Food service was slow. We could not speak each other's languages. Much time was spent in just smiling at each other or seeking a third party to help us communicate. But we were together. Together we spoke one common language, the language of the spirit, the language of the heart—a "pure language."

It reminded me of the feasts of ancient Israel. Three times a year the Israelites were to come from all of their tribal homelands to worship together in Jerusalem. As they would travel, joined by more and more pilgrims from each village they would pass, they would sing together. It is supposed by many that the Psalms of degrees (Psalms 120 to 134) were the songs they sang as they progressed along their journey.

Close your eyes for a moment and picture them as they near the end of their journey. By now each road would be filled with thousands of people coming up to Jerusalem to worship together. As they began topping the high hills surrounding their destination they would see roads wind-

Bro. Carl Hagensick ing over the other hills. All were thronged with pilgrims on their way to the holy temple. It is then they would have lifted their voices together in the next to last of these psalms,

the 133rd Psalm, and sang as one nation, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

My beloved brethren, cast your eyes now about this room. Look at your brethren whom you love, your brethren with whom you have worshipped together this week. And now, let us join our voices in unison, each in our own language, and repeat the words of that Psalm—that psalm which was the theme text of our first convention in Kufstein:

(Brethren in unison)

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Do you remember... brethren, do you remember... how we said good-bye at Kufstein. We sang the familiar words of that sad parting hymn, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again." Tears were in our eyes. There was a catch in our throat. Then someone... I don't remember who... but someone took out their handkerchief and began to wave ... and soon scores of handkerchiefs, which we so often use to wipe tears from our eyes, became love's sweet banner waving a fond farewell to brethren we had come to love so dearly.

Do you remember—brethren, do you remember—the songs we sung? I can still see our dear Brother Felix Pilarsky urging us on at Kufstein: "Sing louder, brethren, sing louder." Then there were the choirs. Voices from all of the countries blended together, somehow losing their accents, as they sang in sweet harmony, songs of praise to our God.

Do you remember—dear brethren, do you remember—the dear faces that we looked forward to seeing at the next convention but who were not

there? They had already preceded us to the grand convention beyond the veil. Do you remember Brother Ferezes of Greece... Brother Dimitr Kopak of Poland... Brother Bob Robinson of England... Brother Spiros Pates of Germany... Sister Edith Hasselgard of Denmark... Brother Eugene Michalyca of Canada... Sister Amy Bateman of the United States... Brother Edouard Pilarski of France ... the list goes on.

Do you remember—my brethren, do you remember—the thrill of seeing new faces from countries we did not even know contained

brethren? Brother and Sister Ajise of Nigeria... the brethren from Japan... Bro. Bertoldo Fonsaca of Brazil... Sister Wanda Walczak of Australia ... Brother Joseph from India... Bro. Timo and Sister Sirpa Nordman from Finland...Brothers Avel and Miro Lupsor from Argentina with their wives, Sisters Erlinda and Marucha and their daughters Miriam and Cristina... the brethren from the Ukraine and Moldova, the joy of discovery of the thousands who had survived under difficult conditions in Romania. "Precious memories, how they linger, how they fill our souls with joy."

Do you remember—how well I remember—the meetings we had with the brethren from these countries to hear their stories and to see how the Lord had been leading them every day in circumstances that were as strange to us as our circumstances were strange to them? The brethren from the Ukraine... from what was then East Germany... from Romania. We are going to ask Sister Betty Precup to give us her memories of her first International Convention.

(Sister Betty Precup)

Why? Why, brethren, did we do this? Why was it So important to come together?

First, we came to worship God. We worshipped him in song. We worshipped him by testifying of his goodness to us. We worshipped him by listening attentively to lessons from his word. We worshipped him by becoming more familiar with other of his children, our brethren.

Second, we came to share our views and experiences. We have each been studying the Lord's word in our own way. We have shared a common vision through the writings of Pastor Russell. We have each sought to apply principles of truth in our individual lives. Yet we are different and unique. The Lord has planned it so. No two members are alike. As we share our thoughts on the Scriptures, as we share our experiences in life, we each grow stronger because our vision is broadened. We begin to see a larger picture than what we had seen before.

Third, we have come together to share our resources. The Lord has given us each certain talents, certain spiritual gifts. As the miraculous gifts of the spirit in the early church were not to be used individually, but each was dependent upon the other (as the gift of tongues was balanced by the gift of the interpretation of tongues), So we came together to seek new ways of co-operation.

In some cases the needs were financial and temporal. In more cases we were able to supplement the talents of others. We have found new ways of spreading the gospel through closer co-operation. We have found new ways of comforting the broken-hearted by sharing our mutual woes. We have found new ways of encouraging our youth by working together as one family—the family of God.

Fourth, we have come together more and more because we have grown in Christian love for each other. Correspondence flies across country boundaries. Regional conventions have sprung up between neighboring nations. Many of us have traveled to each other's countries to continue the rich fellowship which began here. In the last few years a rich complement to this convention has been International Youth Seminars where our younger members can share in the close ties of Christian love which has so enriched the lives of all of us. But, the past is prologue!

Where Do We Go from Here?

When Israel was fleeing Egypt and found themselves trapped between mountains on both sides and the Red Sea in front of them with the onrushing Egyptian army closing in from behind, they asked the same question. The answer the Lord gave Moses to give them is the same answer he gives us today. We read that answer in Exodus 14:15: "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."

With outstretched rod Moses lifted up his voice to the frightened Israelites and pointed to the sea in front of them. With a clear and loud voice he gave the command, "Go forward!" And forward they went. And as they went the sea parted to make way for the wave of people and wagons and possessions and herds and flocks.

Just as surely the Lord is commanding us today, "Go forward!" When you return home you will face your own "Red Sea" experiences. You will find those times when, like Israel of old, you feel trapped with no way to go. The Lord will not change his command to you. It will surely be, "Go Forward!" He will divide the sea for you. He will be whatever you need him to be. He has promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Take with you from this convention the strength the Lord has given through the discussions of his word, through the inspiration of the music, through the spiritual fellowship of your brethren, and through the assurance of his presence and he will surely be, as he was to Abraham in Genesis 15:1, your "shield and great reward."

What about the associations we have made this week, both new and old? We build upon them. We continue our communication. For most it will be by mail, for others it will be by phone or personal visits, for still others in our technological age it will be by electronic mail. Whatever the means it will be as predicted in Malachi 3:16, "then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another."

A Book of Remembrance

The prophet continues, "a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." Pr 10:7 speaks similarly when it says, "the memory of the just is blessed." Not only are our personal memories, including the sweet memories we store up from conventions such as this, blessed and precious to us, but the memories which others have of their fellowship with us will be a blessing to them as well.

Yet the meaning of our text in Malachi is deeper. It is not our personal book of memories, but it is a book of memories that is laid up "before him"—before Jehovah himself. God has no need of books. He has a memory that never fails. But in this analogy he conveys to us that our very conversations are recorded in the mind of God himself. As we read in Matthew 12:36,

"But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Did we speak idle words this week? They shall be remembered. Did we speak profitably one to another this week? That, too, shall be remembered. Not only will God remember the words you speak, but he will remember you... and you... and you! He will remember all his faithful ones in the resurrection. And what a blessing to be living now, now when that resurrection is instantaneous, "in the twinkling of an eye." {1Co 15:52} No wonder Paul said, "comfort one another with these words." {1Th 4:18} Malachi continues:

"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."

The word here translated "jewels" is elsewhere translated as the Lord's "peculiar possession," his "precious treasure." Look about you now. Look closely at each other. Look as you would look at

beautiful diamonds in a museum. Look as you would look at the gems of a royal crown, because that is how the Lord looks at them. For the past week we have been dwelling in a repository of the Lord's own treasure.

But let's go back to the "book of remembrance." There is still another level of remembrances to be considered. Not only is the Lord asking us to remember our experiences at these precious gatherings, he is asking us to remember all of our experiences. Not just remember them to expand our memories, but remember them for a purpose. Each of life's experiences is for the purpose of teaching us lessons in the school of Christ, lessons which we will use in our future work of assisting our Lord in educating the thousands of millions of mankind in the laws of righteousness.

This is why Malachi concludes this section of the prophecy in verse 18 with these words: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

Precious Memories

As part of the great sympathetic High Priest, as part of the greater than Moses, as part of the mediator of the New Covenant, we will need these precious memories of all our experiences—the tragic and sad as well as the thrilling and happy ones—for our future work when, as the Bride of earth's new King, we will help him complete the work of atonement by bringing all mankind back into harmony with God.

As one of our American brothers has so beautifully phrased it:

"But oh, the grandeur of the work,
For this one here and there,
To join in lifting up our race,
To wipe away of sin each trace,
To make of earth a perfect place,
Put glory everywhere."

An accurate translation of the Greek of 1 Peter 1:9 puts it this way:
"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of souls."

So, my dearly beloved brethren, we have come to the end of a lovely week,

an unforgettable week. Let's etch it deep in our memories where we have similar etchings of past conventions—both International and local gatherings.

Farewell

As we leave, with sad farewells, let us also remember that this week, like all other events of our lives past, is but a prologue. It is a foundation. It is a building stone for our future work, a work that will last forever with our Lord and forever with each other if we but remain faithful to our consecration vows.

May we each resolve to do so. And so, my dear brethren, farewell. May God bless you, each and every one. We look forward to seeing many of you in the future on this side of the veil. We look forward with even greater anticipation to seeing all of you in that great universal convention when we will be personally with the Lord. Until then:

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

And don't forget the next verse:

"So shall they put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."(American Standard Version)

"God be with you 'til we meet again."

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

What Is Man? -Bro. Henryk Kaminski, Poland

LET US CONSIDER A QUESTION that has intrigued many thinking people for ages. Look at three places in God's Word where this question was asked. The question "What is man?" was pondered by David, Job, and the apostle Paul.

David's Question

These are the words of David:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the

beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"—Psalm 8:4-9

Is David, in writing these beautiful words, describing man as we know him today, someone imperfect?

We find similar words proclaiming the glory and honor of man created by God in Genesis 1:26,27:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Then God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

When David declares the glory and honor of man under whose feet the whole earth is subdued, David like Moses is describing a perfect man. A perfect man is a living soul, made from the dust of the ground and the

breath of life. {*Ge 2:7*} A perfect man is a man and a woman together:

"Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created."—Ge 5:2

Perfect man is a man directly created by the Creator of the universe—"after our likeness and in our image."

Why are the words, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" in the plural? The creation of man was an act of our heavenly Father and His only begotten son, the Logos, the first creation of God. The apostle John talks about it in John 1:1-3:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

The apostle Paul supports this in Colossians 1:15,16:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or

dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

What does it mean to be created in God's image? Image, or in other words picture, represents His reflection. The perfect man reflected character qualities of his Creator, the heavenly Father, and His son who is the image of the invisible God. The qualities that govern God's actions are wisdom, power, justice and love.

God's wisdom designed a plan for the creation of the universe and a plan for the salvation of mankind.

The power of God created the universe and is executing the plan of salvation through resurrection and restitution. God's justice sentenced Adam and Eve knowing that the sentence would be fulfilled. God's love thought out the plan of salvation for all mankind to restore man to the perfection of the first man.

All these qualities were placed into man—a perfect man—by God. Similarly the actions of the perfect man would also be controlled by wisdom, power, justice and love.

Wisdom gave man an understanding of truth and the ability to understand the Creator, His laws and actions regarding creation, and His plans toward earth and man. Power provided man with a free will to govern himself and to make his own decisions. Justice gave man a clear conscience toward God and other men. Love gave man the most marvelous, the warmest, and the most beautiful thoughts of praise and glory for his heavenly Father.

Love also produced the feeling of oneness for another human and love toward his neighbor.

"Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created."—Ge 5:2

What does it mean to be created "after our likeness"? The answer to this question is found in the same verse, Genesis 1:26. After the words "Let us make man after our likeness" we read:

"And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

God Himself speaks with the same words to the perfect man:

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."—Ge 1:28

The first perfect man was created by God to be the king of the earth. He was to rule the earth like God ruled the universe. This reign had to be based on the harmonious cooperation of all God's attributes: wisdom, power, justice, and love. This perfect man crowned with the glory of God could only be known from the description in the holy scriptures. We are all sinful and imperfect.

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."—Ro 3:10,23

Imperfect man lacks God's glory, His sonship. Man lost perfect humanity which is "the image of God" and "God likeness."

Imperfect man sins and is under the influence of sin. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." {Ps 51:7} Sin influences all the qualities of character. Under the influence of sin man is not able to learn truth by himself; instead he is exposed to error and false ideas. Sin destroys man's wisdom. Under the influence of sin man lacks a strong will, is unable to master his flesh, his thoughts, and his actions. Sin destroys strength in man. Sin removes the sensitivity of conscience, the sensitivity to his actions toward God and other men. Sin destroys justice in man. Sin weakens feelings towards God and other men. Sin destroys love in man. The wages of sin is death. The scriptures teach:

"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—Jas 1:15

This was God's instruction to the first man:

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, 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 thou shalt surely die."—Ge 2:15-17

The first man sinned and transgressed the law of God. One man brought sin into the world, and sin conceived death.

"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."—
Ro 5:12

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness."—Ro 1:18

God's anger reveals itself in the death sentence:

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."—Ge 2:17

"Dying" does not mean just breathing your last breath. Different imperfections, sufferings, diseases and handicaps, mishaps and weaknesses are the result of the death sentence. The whole man, his intellect and his body, are under the sentence of death. Man constitutes a "living soul."

Job's Question

Job considers the man who is imperfect, sinful, suffering and dying when he asks, "What is man?" Let us read the second place in scripture where the same question is asked:

"What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle? I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, So that I am a burden to myself? And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be."—Job 7:17-21

Sinful, fallen man, who is a burden even to himself, is not left alone by God. Justice sentenced man, but God's love prepared a corresponding price, a life of a perfect man for a life of a perfect man:

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—1Co 15:21

God's justice is revealed in Christ Jesus.

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."—Ro 3:25

The heavenly Father's heart covers sinful man. God's love prepared a plan for man leading him to perfection; God's love offered His only begotten son on behalf of sinful man.

"For God So loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—Joh 3:16

To satisfy God's justice and to fulfill an offering of love, God's son was created a perfect man, as was the first man, Adam.

"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."—1Co 15:47

The Lord Jesus is called the second Adam not only because of his perfect humanity. Jesus will provide perfection to mankind, the perfection which was lost by Adam due to his disobedience.

"The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit."—2Co 15:45

All the people who believe in Jesus Christ and are obedient to him will receive perfect humanity. They will be restored to the glory of God's sonship, the glory which was lost by Adam. They will become men "in God's image and after His likeness." It is this type of man, brought back to his first state through Jesus Christ that the apostle Paul speaks of when he considers the question "What is man?"

Paul's Question

Let us read the third place in scripture where this question appears:

"But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him."—He 2:6-8

Undoubtedly the apostle Paul makes reference to the words of David and not to the words of Job. Here is no talk, as in Job, about the sinful state of man who is a burden to himself. To the contrary, the glory and respect that crown a perfect man are mentioned with man's reign over the earth as directed by God—"putting all things in subjection under his feet."

This glorious, perfect state does not belong to man now, although God's son, the perfect man Jesus Christ, paid his life as an offering. The apostle Paul notes this in the words of He 2:8: "But now we see not yet all things put under him."

What kind of work, what kind of a process, must take place before the glory of man's sonship will be restored and man will again be in the image of his Creator?

For man to regain his glorious perfection, the atonement between God and man is necessary. Man lost oneness with God. He ceased to be in the image of the Father once he disobeyed and broke God's law. God's justice had to be satisfied and an offering of a perfect man had to take place to atone for man.

"For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross..."—Col 1:19,20

God himself is the author of atonement. The words "for it pleased the Father" testify to this conclusion. The words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:18 confirm this statement:

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ."

This verse also points out by whom reconciliation is made. Reconciliation is through Jesus Christ "who came to give his life a ransom for many." {Mt 20:28} The apostle Paul explains:

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—2Co 5:21

The words of the prophet Isaiah confirm this:

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... 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. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned

every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."—Isa 53:4-6

If God is the author of atonement and Jesus is the mediator, who is to be reconciled? Man is to be reconciled with God. God has prepared the work of reconciliation for the all of mankind.

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."—2Co 5:19

"Let us [Father and son] make man in our image."

The Reconciliation Process

What is man's part in the process of reconciliation? God has created man in His image and gave him power, free will to govern himself and make his own decisions. Man needs to use this free will in the process of reconciliation with God.

When will man show the willingness to be reconciled, to take advantage of the atonement that God has prepared? For those who hear His voice now, reconciliation is possible, before the end of the age of faith and the beginning of God's revelation of power by the resurrection of all mankind.

"For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son; much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by his life."—Ro 5:10

A special reward is prepared for those, called the Church, which is immortal life. This special opportunity is given to us by grace, a gift by the death of Jesus Christ and through God's power.

"Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in Christ Jesus before the world began."—2Ti 1:9

Faith and a full consecration of our lives are the conditions for our reconciliation with God as we take advantage of the grace of justification in Jesus Christ. Faith in God, our Creator and the author of atonement, faith in the ransom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, and faith in the grace of the high calling is necessary.

Consecrating your life in the service of the Lord means giving up your own will. It means giving up the right to life on earth; it means the death of your will.

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even So we also should walk in newness of life."—Ro 6:4

Those who hear these words are encouraged and admonished:

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."—2Co 5:20

Those who are being reconciled now experience an endless source of joy and glory in this life.

"And not only so, but we, also have joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."—Ro 5:11

The infinite love of God and the grace given to us through the sacrifice of our Redeemer are the basis for our joy in atonement now and in the future.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation."—2Co 5:18

All who are faithful unto death, the whole church, the royal priesthood with Jesus Christ the high priest, will have a part in the ministry of reconciliation. Those who suffer in the present time with Christ will share his future glory. They will participate with him in the great and glorious ministry of the Millennial kingdom, in the work of atonement whose purpose is to bring man back to perfection.

"And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; is So be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."—Ro 8:17

The Ransom for All Mankind

When will the rest of mankind, those who do not listen to the message of reconciliation now, demonstrate their willingness to be reconciled? When all the members of Christ's Church finish their

sacrifice, the Church will be glorified, and the ransom which is applied on behalf of them will be applied on behalf of the whole world.

Symbolically this is shown in the tabernacle types, when in a moment the blood of the Lord's goat is carried beyond the second veil into the Most Holy and the mercy seat is sprinkled with it. Then the opportunity of reconciliation will be given to every man.

The work of atonement will be preceded by the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of everyone.

"For as in Adam all die, even So in Christ shall all be made alive."—1Co 15:22

Afterward (as God speaks through the words of the prophet Joel),

"I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."—Joe 2:28

All the saved will receive perfect humanity. They will become the image of God on earth. They will reflect all His harmonious attributes: wisdom, power, justice and love. Man will be crowned with glory and honor with God's sonship. Man will regain God's likeness as he will be over all God's works on earth.

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them and be their God."—Re 21:3

The Prophecy of Jonah-Bro. Piotr Krajcer, Poland

DEAR BRETHREN, THE TOPIC of our discourse is the Prophecy of Jonah. It is interesting to notice that compared to other prophecies, the prophecy of Jonah can be summarized in one sentence: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." {*Jon 3:4*} The remaining part of Jonah's book concerns his life story. Because of this, some deny the prophetic character of this book. But is that really so?

The Meaning of Jonah's Name

The name Jonah comes from the Hebrew word Jona which means dove. It is difficult to determine if the name was given to him because of his gray hair or because he was as calm as a dove.

Maybe his name had a symbolic meaning, as frequently occurs among the Lord's people. Jonah was the son of Amittai. Another account about a prophet by the same name is found in 2 Kings 14:23-25.

"In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher."

From this passage we learn that Jonah, son of Amittai, prophesied in the time of Jeroboam, the son of Joash. This king of Israel restored the borders of Israel from Hamath to the

sea of the plain and fulfilled the prophecy of Jonah. The identical name of the prophet's father mentioned here makes us conclude that it was the same Jonah. This short quotation provides us with much interesting information. Jonah was a prophet who prophesied in Israel. He was born in the Galilean city of Gathhepher which is situated close to Nazareth. What a coincidence that in this city lived Jesus who was also called a prophet from Nazareth. *{Mt 21:11}* So probably Nathanel was wrong when he stated, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" *{Joh 1:46}* Jonah also came from the area of Nazareth.

The prophecy of Jonah found in 2 Kings is related to the restoration of the borders of Israel. What nation wouldn't like a prophet preaching the restoration of its own borders? How much more is a prophet appreciated when the fulfillment of his prophecy occurs during his lifetime. Human nature loves good, fulfilled prophecies.

The prophets of God were persecuted because they usually pronounced bitter truths, called for repentance, or announced coming punishments. In doing this, prophets often suffered. To illustrate this we cite the example of Elijah and Jeremiah. On the other hand, Jonah was an acclaimed prophet of Israel because not only did his prophecy foretell the pleasant event of the restoration of the old borders of Israel, but it was also quickly fulfilled.

To this prophet Jonah, God directed his words:

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."—Jon 1:2

Why a Message to Nineveh?

Rarely did Almighty God send His prophets to nations other than Israel. Their missions were usually limited to the area of the promised land and the nation of Israel (unless one considers Ezekiel, Jeremiah, or Daniel who were captured along with the entire nation and moved to another land). Why was Jonah given a mission to proclaim the destruction of Nineveh, the capital of an unfriendly Assyrian nation? Why did God commission Jonah to give this message? What was His intention?

These questions certainly puzzled Jonah before he made a decision to rebel and go against the Lord's will. Jonah refused to fulfill God's mission. Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah decided to go in the other direction. He went to Joppa and boarded a ship which was sailing to Tarshish because he wanted to escape from the Lord's presence. Tarshish was probably a Phoenician colony in Spain. According to the Israelites, Tarshish was located at the end of the earth. Jonah wanted to escape as far as possible from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah made a questionable decision. First of all, why didn't he want to fulfill God's will? The answer most often given is that he was afraid of the reaction of the Ninevites. Prophets frequently faced life-threatening opposition to their bitter words of truth even in their own countries. Even more, this mission in a hostile country could have cost Jonah his life. Our Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." {*Lu 11:47*} What did Jonah expect to happen in Nineveh? Was he motivated by fear when he decided to flee?

Another question to consider is what God's reaction might be to this clear case of disobedience. Let's refresh our mind with a story from 1 Kings 13:21-24.

"And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto

the sepulchre of thy fathers. And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase."

Didn't Jonah know this story? Wasn't he aware as a prophet of God that it is impossible to escape from Almighty God?

Brethren, is it possible to flee from the presence of the Lord? We all know it cannot be done. God sees everything. He knows each step we take and can always reach us. But don't we, brethren, sometimes forget this? Don't we sometimes think that if others cannot see something, God cannot see it either? If we always remember that God knows everything, we would avoid many sins. Obviously, none of us when seeing a police officer would knowingly commit a moving violation. However, when we do not see anyone around us, we sometimes exceed the speed limit. Is this also true regarding the Lord's commandments? We know he sees everything.

Jonah boarded the ship and went to Tarshish.

"But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, So that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep."—Jon 1:4,5

The sailors tried everything to save the ship. They threw away unnecessary cargo to lighten the load. When all these attempts failed, they started to ask their gods for help.

Dear brethren, have you ever experienced a storm at sea? Is it possible to sleep when large waves are rocking a ship? Let us realize that Jonah did not board a modern ship but probably a small wooden boat which was like a tiny, hollow, nut shell. Despite this Jonah slept soundly. The shipmaster came to him, and said unto him,

"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if So be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."—Jon 1:6

This reminds us of another storm at sea where sailors asked for help from a man who was not a sailor and who also slept soundly:

"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."—Mt 8:24,25

The seamen soon found that the storm was not a normal meteorological phenomenon, but rather was sent by gods. So they decided to cast lots to find who was to blame for this storm. Jonah was selected and the seamen asked him:

"Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?"—Jon 1:8

Jonah's Reaction

Jonah answered without hesitation: "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land."*{Jon 1:9}*

He explained further that he was fleeing from the Lord. When the sailors asked, "What shall we do?" Jonah answered: "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; So shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you."*{Jon 1:12}*

Would you say this was the reaction of a fearful man? If Jonah wanted to save his life, wouldn't it have been better for him to find another explanation? Jonah's straightforward and courageous answer argues against our earlier supposition that fear motivated his rejection of a mission to Nineveh. Jonah was ready to die. He even asked the sailors to throw him into the sea. So it was not fear that motivated him not to accept God's mission.

The behavior of the seamen was quite unusual. At first they tried to determine why the gods created this furious storm. When they found the guilty prophet who acted against the will of God, they did not want to go along with his advice even though they were risking the ship. The death of one man could have saved the entire crew and ship. But they courageously worked to row the boat out of the storm and tried to avoid killing an innocent prophet. When their efforts failed, they faced the inevitable and threw Jonah from the ship. Before they did this, however, they prayed to God with these words:

"We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee."—Jon 1:14

"Lay not upon us innocent blood." Can you associate these words with another event that took place many years later? Similar words were uttered at a later time: "Consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not." {*Joh 11:50*} One man, Jesus, through his death was supposed to save the nation, but when Pilate washed his hands saying, "I am not guilty of the innocent blood," the Jews cried, "His blood be upon us and our children."

These are two similar situations. A man must die to save many and someone has to execute the sentence. Gentile seamen cry unto God, "Lay not upon us innocent blood." Reverent Jews cry, "His blood be upon us and our children." God did not punish the gentile sailors. Would God have punished the chosen people if they had done similarly?

This is an important lesson against predestination. Some say that God forces a person to perform a crime only to punish him or her later. It was obvious from the scriptures that Christ was supposed to die and someone had to execute the sentence. The gentile seamen had to execute Jonah otherwise they themselves would have died. It seems they had no choice; they had to kill him by throwing him into the tumultuous sea. However, they cried to God, "lay not upon us innocent blood." Did God lay upon them the innocent blood of Jonah? Was Jonah's blood shed? No, Jonah did not die. Possibly God heard the pleas of those men and their prayers saved the life of Jonah. We don't know. Perhaps their supplication changed God's plans for Jonah.

A Lesson for Us

The lesson for us is that even in the most difficult situations, when we think there is no good solution and we have to go against God's righteousness, we should ask God for help and forgiveness. We should show that our heart is not willingly committing an evil thing. God will certainly help us and find a solution we could never imagine. God will send us a "fish" which will save us from sin in the same way as he avoided bloodshed in the case of the seaman and the prophet Jonah.

Jonah found himself in the belly of a large fish. He was ready to die, but what happened next surprised him. Then he began to analyze his past behavior. Was there any good reason to rebel against God? He prayed from the belly of the fish using the words from Psalms and cried for deliverance. He spent three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. This was considerable time for thinking, and there Jonah made a vow unto the Lord:

"But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."—Jon 2:9

We don't know precisely the subject of this vow, but soon after Jonah made it, the Lord commanded the fish to spew Jonah upon the shore. We can only speculate that Jonah promised obedience. So after Jonah received the second order, he went to Nineveh without hesitation.

The great city of Nineveh, according to biblical records, was a city of three days' journey. Some question the truthfulness of biblical records because, according to recent excavations in Nineveh, if you draw a line from the gate of Assur to the gate of Nergala, the two most extreme points of the city, its length would be a distance of approximately three miles. However, if we consider Nineveh as the area outside the walls of the city, covering the area of the so-called Assyrian triangle from south of Chorsabad and north of Nimrud, the size of this area is 25 miles. The biblical record is reasonable.

The prophecy of Jonah was, "In forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown." We can not find any records which show that Jonah called the Ninevites to repentance. He only declared their destruction. But the Ninevites believed God, covered themselves with sackcloth, sat in ashes, and every man fasted, even the cattle. The words of the royal decree prove that Jonah did not call for repentance:

"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"—Jon 3:9

There is no assurance in these words, only hope that their repentance would be accepted. God, seeing their repentance, had mercy upon them. Let us notice that in the royal decree, words from the book of Joel were quoted:

"Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God?"—Joe 2:14

This quotation proves that God had mercy when He saw their repentance. We recall that the prophecy of Joel refers to the Day of the Lord. Verses 12 and 13 describe a time prior to this day of gloominess and darkness. The Lord says,

"Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments."

This setting is quite similar to that of the prophecy of Jonah. Although punishment is mentioned, the way of escape is indicated through renewed devotion. The punishment could be nullified if sin was abandoned. We learn what their sins were from the words of the royal decree:

"But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."—Jon 3:8

Brethren, can you see the similarities between this event and the evil ways of contemporary society?

Let's go back to the story of Jonah. There we notice that the Ninevites did not convert and did not believe in the only God, Jehovah. They simply gave up their evil ways, wrong doings, and the violence that was in their hands. God had mercy upon them. What was Jonah's reaction? Shouldn't he have been proud that after just one day of preaching he brought the entire city to repentance? Which religious group would not wish for such a preacher? But this made Jonah unhappy. Unfortunately there is more. Jonah was angry at God because the Ninevites repented. He was ready to die. Why?

Jonah preached of the coming destruction of Nineveh, not repentance. If Nineveh was not destroyed in forty days, Jonah was in jeopardy of being declared a false prophet.

"When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."—De 18:22

Up to this point Jonah's prophecies were fulfilled. Perhaps now his sense of honor and pride caused his anger and desire to destroy Nineveh. We can deduce this from his prayer:

"I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."—Jon 4:2

Jonah here mentions that his escape from his mission to preach to Nineveh was motivated by the possibility that Nineveh would be spared. Jonah did not agree with this and did not want to contribute to the saving of Nineveh, especially since it was the capital of the enemies of Israel and threatened their independence. Jonah was positive that the destruction of Nineveh would bring safety to Israel and would protect the chosen nation. We acknowledge that such thoughts correctly anticipate future events because later Assyria did destroy the kingdom of Israel. The Jews were removed and never returned to this part of the promised land. The kingdom of Israel was never restored. From this point forward, all the promises regarding the chosen nation focused on the smaller kingdom of Judah with its capital at Jerusalem.

Perhaps Jonah's refusal of this mission was an attempt to prolong the history of his nation. However, the reason for the destruction of Israel was idolatry and disobedience of both the nation and the Israelite kings. Assyrians were only a chastising rod in the hand of God. This thought may be helpful in understanding why Jonah refused to go to Nineveh.

God's Mercy Revealed

The fourth chapter of the prophecy of Jonah is a display of the great mercy of God. Jonah, in arguing with God, said:

"I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."—Jon 4:2

The mercy of God can be shown not only toward Nineveh, but also toward Jonah. Jonah was angry at God, he was even angered to death. But God forgave Jonah and did not reject the prophet, but gently asked him twice: "Doest thou well to be angry?"

God wanted to convince Jonah, and all of us, that He cares for every creature. The fact that one group or class was selected for a specific mission does not diminish the love of God toward the rest

of His creation. Only our human love is selfish. God covers everyone with His love which makes God So different from a human being.

Although at the time these events took place, Jews had the exclusive favor of God, God showed His mercy and compassion towards gentile Nineveh because He noticed something valuable in their hearts. Jesus said,

"The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here."—Mt 12:41

Today, we should remember this lesson. Although, the Gospel Age is an age of special favor toward the Church, God does not forget about others.

Considering the symbolic meaning of the book of Jonah, we refer to the words of our Lord:

"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; So shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."—Mt 12:39,40

The sign of the prophet Jonah—"the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights"—immediately brings to our mind the death of the Lord. The only difficulty arises when we try to calculate these three days and nights. If we assume that Jesus died Friday night and was resurrected Sunday morning, this gives at most two nights in the grave. We may attempt to count this time in the grave from the moment when the power of darkness came and our Lord was imprisoned:

"When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness."—Lu 22:53

Another explanation suggests that the "heart of the earth" is not the grave, but rather the holy land where

Jesus spent three years of his mission. Prophetic interpretation substitutes a year for a day which would give us three full days [years].

The gospel of Luke explains the sign of Jonah from a slightly different angle:

"For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, So shall also the Son of man be to this generation."—Lu 11:30

In what sense was Jonah a sign to the Ninevites? Was he boasting of his three days in the belly of the fish? The sign of Jonah unto the Ninevites was the prophecy about its destruction. Was the mission of Jesus similar? Let us recall the words written in Matthew 23:35-38; 24:2.

"And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."—Mt 24:2

The mission of our Lord has three important stages: baptism in water, receiving of the holy spirit in the symbol of a dove, and the shedding of blood—his death.

"And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."—1Jo 5:8

Similar pictures can be found in the prophecy of Jonah. Upon his own request, Jonah was thrown into the water, which can symbolize baptism. {1Pe 3:21} Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish, which may symbolize death. And finally the name Jonah means dove which corresponds to the third symbol of the holy spirit.

The prophecy of Jonah is a source of another important lesson. God appreciates people with their own opinion. This was the case with Jonah. God could have destroyed him for his disobedience, but instead He decided to do everything possible to convince Jonah. Apparently God wants courageous and uncompromising people to serve Him even though they are sometimes stubborn. Such people must go through many experiences. If our path crosses the path of another stubborn individual, we should not reject them because through this experience, God is working on their character.

Contemporary Lessons from Jonah

It is interesting to look for a more contemporary lesson based on the prophecy of Jonah. As we mentioned earlier, the story of Jonah, corresponds to the time before the Day of the Lord. Notice

also that the Bible Student movement preached words similar to those of Jonah. These were words predicting the destruction during Armageddon which would occur after the symbolic forty day/years ended in 1914. As we know, not all the expectations for this day were fulfilled. Some were quick to point to this false prophecy from our movement. Can we accuse Jonah of the same unfulfilled prophecy?

When we read the volume entitled

The Battle of Armageddon, we see that the main reason for the coming destruction was the lack of justice and the abundance of riches in a small minority at the cost of starvation of large numbers. Isn't this similar to the evil ways and violence of the Ninevites? However, the Ninevites avoided punishment because they changed their behavior. Has anything like that happened in our age?

From 1874 until 1914 the world changed in many ways. Although unknown before, new laws and social arrangements were introduced to improve the lives of the poor. These include the eight-hour work day, pension and health plans. These and other changes transformed the lives of nations. Socialism and other ideologies attempted to improve the situation even more. It seemed as though God gave man another opportunity to eliminate evil and injustice.

Today after 100 years, we can still observe that evil and injustice were not eliminated despite undisputed improvement in the lives of nations throughout the twentieth century. Although the conditions of life compared with the nineteenth century are much better, disappointment continues to grow. It is growing in connection with increased knowledge and an unsatisfied appetite for justice resulting from the light of the truth announcing the coming kingdom of God.

Although, the destruction of Nineveh did not come after 40 days, as had been predicted by Jonah, the prophecy was fulfilled around 612 BC. Similarly, we believe that the current order of things will come to an end in due time.

It is worth noting that some movements with roots in the Bible Student movement took a position similar to Jonah, and waited for the destruction of wicked people. However, God has a different plan for humanity. He is gracious and compassionate, patient and merciful:

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."—1Ti 2:4

Amen.

Elders in the Ecclesia-Bro. Adam Kubic, Poland

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN in our Lord Jesus. Peace be unto you. From the words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans it follows that all who have sacrificed their lives to serve our Lord God are servants of each other. The apostle wrote,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—Ro 12:1

These sacrificed ones create a certain fellowship of brothers and sisters, and because of this fellowship, we have fellowship with our Lord Jesus and our Father in heaven. We are to create the fellowship that the apostle Paul described in his first letter to the Corinthians 1 Co 12:12-27.

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."—1Co 12:27

"And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."—1Co 12:21

What does this mean? I think, dear brethren, this means that we are each other's servants. This mutual service requires our close dependence on one another. My desire is to reflect upon a particular kind of service, one that is entrusted to selected individuals according to the will of the members of the Lord's ecclesia.

In Acts 14:23 we read,

"And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

In the Gdansk Bible, from which I am reading, it is difficult to understand just how elders were selected or determined in Iconium, Lystra and Antioch. Did the apostle Paul, with Barnabas,

determine or ordain elders in those ecclesias, or was this done by votes of the believers?

A help in understanding these words comes from a Polish translation of the Greek-Polish New Testament. The first words of this text read: "ordained by stretching forth hands." We can accept that the elders in those ecclesias were ordained by a vote through the stretching forth or raising of the hand.

The question arises: For what reason were elders ordained? Are elders in ecclesias expected to perform similar tasks as elders in Israel? We remember that from the time of Moses, elders in Israel fulfilled an important function: they resolved quarrels, conducted trials, and made decisions in the political life of the nation. With the passage of time elders in Israel began to enact and interpret new laws; they even created new laws which greatly overextended the law given by God. One example of such a law instituted by elders was the ceremony of washing the hands, which we read about in Mark 7:3.

Let us try to answer these questions:

1. Was the election of elders in the meetings of the early church by commandment of the Lord?
2. What tasks were the elders to carry out in the meetings?

The Function of Elders

Elder, bishop, overseer, pastor—these are descriptions found in the Book of Acts and in the epistles of the apostles. The apostle Paul in addressing the elders at Miletus said, "The Holy Spirit hath made you overseers." This is found in Acts 20:28. In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul wrote,

"And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."—Eph 4:11

For what purpose? The apostle continues,

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."—Eph 4:12

I think that the apostle in these words described a very important function of elders in the ecclesias. It is the preparation of the saints for service. After all, the best teaching is by example. Therefore, in

this way, by their own service in the Church, the elders teach believers about service. If the teaching is to be effective, it must be supported by one's own life. An elder must be an example of all that he teaches. This is very important because an elder has to teach the work of upbuilding the body of Christ.

Who then, can be an elder? I think that if the Lord God through the holy spirit establishes elders, no elder then should be elected who has not gained the acceptance of the ecclesia, an acceptance demonstrated by the raising of hands.

The Qualifications of Elders

What role, besides the election, must the ecclesia fulfill? I think that in electing an elder as its servant, the ecclesia is responsible to determine that he possesses the necessary qualifications. No one can remain an elder who does not meet the conditions given by the apostle Paul, who wrote,

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour,

given to hospitality, apt to teach. Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous: One that ruleth his own house, having his children in subjection, with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil; Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."—1Ti 3:1-7

The apostle Paul wrote those words in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. In his letter to Titus he wrote,

"A bishop... as the steward of God, not self-willed... holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."—Tit 1:7,9

We learn from the words of the apostle Paul that besides the moral principles binding upon every one consecrated to God, elders must possess the capacity to teach, to convey a thought, and to admonish. He also must not be a man of wavering opinions. This same apostle admonished Timothy, who occupied an important position in the Church,

"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."—1Ti 4:12

We realize from these words what a great responsibility rests on those who, by their vote, elect elders, and also on those who are elected. Elders should instruct the ecclesia through teaching and admonition: overseeing the believers as a shepherd attends his sheep. As the apostle Paul wrote, elders of ecclesias should be "Holding fast the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." This means that elders, as servants, must have a fundamental knowledge of the Truth, and have an upright, sober life, in accord with the truths they preach have pure intentions. One who teaches should not be susceptible to such temptations as introducing his own wisdom, desiring to control the class, or preaching himself. The apostle Paul admonished,

"And if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness: He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings."—1Ti 6:3,4

A teacher in the church of God must be sure that the opinions expressed by him are truths which come from God, not his own thoughts.

How wonderful it would be if we could say of all the servants in the Church that while they teach love according to Christ and the apostles, they should try to imitate them. How wonderful it would be if we as elders, servants of the ecclesia, would first do and then teach; convincing all who disagree by using all of God's truth, but also through the example of our lives.

Admonition by elders of the ecclesia should not be to cause a fellow brother to be humiliated and demeaned. The main object should be to identify the error, and to turn the erring one from the wrong path. Nor should angry and condemnatory words be used. To be able to admonish properly is a good trait which every elder in an ecclesia should try to develop.

Elders should also be able to resist falling into a condition of self-satisfaction which leads to pride. Pride is destructive, not only for an elder, but for every Christian. Elders in an ecclesia must take special care to watch themselves so as not to allow the spirit of

conceit and spiritual pride into their hearts. Let us remember the words of King Solomon,

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."—Pr 16:18

This is a great danger for servants in the Church because a servant in the Church must distinguish himself by a demeanor which is neither overbearing nor proud, nor arrogant. Such a demeanor denotes a deep consciousness of responsibility before God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and before the household of faith. An elder must be characterized by deep humility. Having in mind the criteria for elections outlined by the apostle Paul, we should remember how very important it is for the Lord's ecclesia to pay close attention to who is chosen.

The members of an ecclesia should not look at outward appearance, eloquence, material possessions, or family connections in the candidates for eldership. For servants of the Church only those of a humble heart must be elected, those who have a very good knowledge of the truth and who demonstrate a sincere desire to serve the Lord and the brethren. For this reason, I emphasize again, dear brethren, the great responsibility of those who elect brothers for the position of elders, and of those who receive this honorable service.

Service for the brethren should be willing and from a sincere heart, performed with joy, as the apostle Peter wrote,

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."—1Pe 5:1-3

The work of elders in the Church should be a service, but not a lordship; a service done willingly for the glory of the Lord, and not for personal glory.

The work of elders in the Church should be a service done willingly for the glory of the Lord.

The Seriousness of Eldership

Dear brother elders in ecclesias of the Lord: Do we take into consideration the great responsibility which has been placed upon us by the brethren? Do we remember the words of James?

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation?"—Jas 3:1

And, especially, we elders cannot forget that we will have to give an account for every word.

Let us keep in mind the words spoken in our discourse and compare them with our daily lives. The Lord's ecclesias are charged with the supervision of the work of their servants—with what they teach and how they live.

An accusation against elders must be done in accord with the advice of the apostle Paul:

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses."—1Ti 5:19

These words tell us that an ecclesia can admonish an elder if there is cause; in extreme cases an elder can be removed from service if he should begin to preach error or cause division among the brethren. An ecclesia must not, when noticing signs of spiritual weakness in an elder, avoid action. In such a case the whole ecclesia would be in danger. In the ecclesia-elder relationship it is always necessary to take into consideration the good of the whole class and not the good of the elder.

A careful consideration of these facts shows the importance of properly electing acceptable class elders, their proper work in the ecclesia, and their joint work with the ecclesia: mutual understanding, admonishing, and serving one another.

All of this is with one object in view, as the apostle Paul wrote:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."—Eph 4:12,13

Amen.

The Time to Favor Zion-Bro. Marius Kwarciak, France

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN in Jesus Christ our Savior. It is a great joy and privilege to be here with you at this convention. We all hope that this first International Convention in central Europe will bring us numerous divine blessings and comfort.

Each Christian by studying the holy scriptures acquires a good knowledge of history, especially the history of God's chosen people, Israel. The past experiences of these people give us instruction and lessons, as the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:11,

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The History of Israel

Let us follow the suggestion of the apostle and examine the history of this nation, not just the past history found in the Old Testament, but also that which has occurred more recently. To know the details of the life of this people is to know the details of God's plan of redemption for all humanity.

Frequently contemporary history is also written in the Bible by means of different prophecies. Every student of the Bible who is stationed at his observation post like a watchman, *{Isa 21:6-12}* observes the events in the world and compares them with the scriptures. This work of comparison permits us to place ourselves on the stream of time, as well as on the divine calendar. Certainly the best vantage point for us, the best guideline, is found within the nation of Israel itself. It is in this direction that we now turn our attention.

The State of Israel

The state of Israel has been in existence for 48 years. Its creation in 1948 and its survival are part of the numerous miracles in our day. We are aware that the destiny of this nation lies forever in the hands of God because they are His people. Although 1948 is strongly engraved on the pages of history, God started to specially interest himself in these people many years before.

God never forgot this nation. Numerous prophecies spoke of the predetermined time when He would grant favor to His people. In Psalms 102, which constitutes a prayer of repentance, a prayer for

the reconstruction of Zion, the psalmist David speaks to us of this favor in verses 12 and 13:

"But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations. Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come."

I would like to entitle this discourse, "The Time to Favor Zion."

If we attentively read this marvelous Psalms 102, we can see that king David had a good vision of the future. He prophesied that a day would come when the nation of Israel would stop receiving divine blessings, would be rejected by God.

"For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping, because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down."—Ps 102:9,10 After this time of disfavor, God was to have compassion on His people and rebuild Zion, as it is written in verses 16 to 18:

"When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD."

The words of this psalm teach us that in the plan of God, time is of great importance. Nothing happens by chance, in one moment or in another. God would favor these people when the appointed time was to have arrived. When was this time fixed by God? The Bible answers this question through numerous prophesies. It is also true that many of these prophesies have a double application. The first one concerns the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity; the second to the final regathering. Among the prophesies often cited which speak of favor toward Zion, there is this one in Jeremiah 16:14,15.

"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers."

In these verses the prophet Jeremiah says a time will come when the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt will no longer be used as a reference. The God of Israel will no longer be known among the

nations as the one who brought his children out of Egypt, but as the one who accomplished a much greater miracle: He has liberated his people from "the land of the north and from all the lands whither he had driven them."

The Double

The return of the Jews to their own land, to the land of their fathers, is taking place in our own time. The state of Israel exists and numerous

Jews have regained this land. They come from every continent, but mostly from those countries in the northern part of the globe. Their return began at the end of the time of the Jewish "double" for their iniquity as noted in Jeremiah 16:18,

"And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable and abominable things."

The liberation of this people, their time of favor or grace, must begin after the expiration of this double. "And first I will recompense... double," the prophet says. The word "double" comes from the Hebrew word *mishneh* and means a second portion, a repetition. It is not a doubling of time, or a time twice as long as that mentioned. This word means that the time of their national disfavor must be a repetition of the time of their national favor, implying the same duration.

The Hebrew word *mishneh* is quite close in meaning to the word *kephel*, used in Isaiah 40:1,2.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably 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."

The word *kephel* means double in the sense of something that has been folded over upon itself (like a sheet of paper folded in two).

Without going into all the details, we note here that this "recompensed double," the time of disfavor, began with the death of Jesus. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." {Mt 23:38} Just as their period of favor lasted 1845 years—from the death of Jacob to the death of Jesus—so also their period of disfavor lasted

another 1845 years—from the death of Jesus until the year 1878 (33+1845= 1878). This is a beautiful illustration of this word double. The death of our Lord Jesus constitutes the axis of symmetry, the most important moment in the plan of God. His death on the cross changed the destiny of the Jewish nation and of all humanity. The fall of this nation after the crucifixion of the Lord was gradual. Until the year 70 AD, it slowly lost all its religious and national privileges. Then in 70 AD, after the destruction of Jerusalem by the army of Titus, Jews were dispersed among all the nations of the earth.

During the following nearly nineteen centuries, the Jews have been displaced from one country to another, rounded up, pursued, persecuted, bereft of rights and laws. Throughout this time the prophecy of Jeremiah 29:18,19 has been fulfilled:

"And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD."

This picture of the wandering Jew, rejected and humiliated among all the nations, will remain vivid in the consciousness of humanity.

But God never forgot His people. The one who dispersed them will Himself be the one to gather them back:

"And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive."—Jer 29:14

The end of the nineteenth century in the year 1878, as we already mentioned, was the termination of the "double" upon Israel. The period of disfavor ended and favor began to be shown to them.

The beginning of this return of favor was quite insignificant. Nothing called the world's attention to the changes happening to the Jews. On the contrary, the Jewish people were in a very difficult period of their history at this time.

Israel's Gradual Restoration

Let us compare this to their liberation from Egypt. When Moses was called into God's service, nothing immediately changed for the Jews. A bit later they were treated even more harshly by the Egyptians. The first three plagues affected the land of Goshen with its Jewish population just as it affected Egypt. After at first accepting the leadership of Moses and Aaron, {Ex 4:31} the children of Jacob somewhat later, after experiencing a worsening of their condition, no longer wanted to hear any more about their liberator.

"And Moses spake So unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."—Ex 6:9

In addition to convincing Pharaoh, Moses also had to persuade his own people to leave Egypt. The liberation of the chosen people from Egypt was thus a task neither quick nor easy for Moses.

Consider the Jewish calendar. In their system each day of 24 hours begins in the evening at night. Similarly the day of Israel's liberation from Egyptian captivity began with a night of persecution and suffering. Here, as in many other places in the Bible, night represents sin, the influence of evil. Of course, Egypt was, in the final analysis, more seriously affected by the plagues. But the children of Abraham also sustained chastisement, So that they might follow their liberator and believe God—Jehovah.

When God's fixed time arrived, He turned his face toward His people. Thus began the day of liberation of the Jews from their captivity in all the lands where they had been driven. What is surprising is that during 18 centuries Jews were never preoccupied with the thought of returning to their land. No-one raised this question, neither after the Spanish persecution nor after oppressions in other countries of the world. The idea of returning never came into their mind because God's fixed time had not yet arrived.

At the end of the nineteenth century all that changed because the divine time clock struck—the time to favor Zion. The Berlin Congress of Nations in 1878 granted the Jews greater liberty and better conditions in Europe. The Jews in Palestine, under the domination of Turkey, obtained the right to buy land, to be landlords, and to construct homes. This was a very positive sign, but at the same time other negative events were appearing on the horizon.

As in the ancient days of Egypt, Jewish liberation was neither quick nor easy. "Liberation day" began with a night of terror and a renewed outbreak of persecution. In Russia, Romania, Poland— wherever they were to be found in greater numbers—pogroms and massacres of the Jews occurred with greater intensity. For no good reason hundreds of Jews were killed and their neighborhoods devastated, just because they were Jews. By the end of 1881 the horror of the pogroms, atrocities, and persecutions led to Zionism.

The Zionist Movement

This name is already quite significant. Zion, one of Jerusalem's mountains, was always the symbol of the national Jewish hope. During nearly 19 centuries of dispersion throughout the world, the Jews prayed, "Next year in Jerusalem," next year we will return to Zion. But this remained just a prayer because in reality few ever really returned to Zion before the end of the nineteenth century.

Zionism was a great movement which had the establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine and the return of the Jews to that land as its goal. Four gifted men created this movement, then brought it to its conclusion. These four are well known by all: Pinsker, Herzl, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion. We are not going to analyze the lives of these four even though their story is quite interesting. But I would like to share a few details with you So we might better understand the progressive return of favor upon the chosen people.

Leo Pinsker

Leo Pinsker, a Jewish doctor from Odessa, is considered by historians as a predecessor of the Zionist movement. The violent persecutions of Jews after the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881 caused him to publish at Berlin in 1882 a book with the evocative title *Auto-Emancipation*. In this book he describes the deplorable situation of most of the Jews and he tries to revive the national spirit in his brothers in a provocative way.

He writes about one Jew who was chased and persecuted, that he was considered...

"by the living as though dead, by the citizens as though foreign, by the settlers as though a vagrant, by the rich as though a beggar, by the poor as though an exploiter, and by every class as a detestable competitor."

Frequently, and even more so today, we see that this description still holds true. Anti-Semitism in certain countries has not gotten any weaker than it was at that time.

Pinsker reproaches the Jews for lacking national pride and for their general mental resignation. He proposes the creation of a land for them. He suggests acquiring a land for the Jews upon which they can become a nation. He attaches little importance to geography but emphasizes the importance of bringing to it their most sacred possessions: the idea of God and the Bible.

Auto-Emancipation clearly emphasized that the Jews must liberate themselves, by their own effort, and that no one would help them in this work. We can see that even if Pinsker did not understand the plan of God, he had an important role to play in preparing the Jewish people for their return to Palestine. The Bible is clear on this subject. Israel must be brought back to their own land, to the land of their fathers, to Palestine, and not elsewhere. "I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers," says Jeremiah (in 16:15). To revive these people, to restore their pride and national cohesion, was not an easy thing.

Pinsker's book found little support among his co-religionists. Perhaps, as in the time of Moses, "they hearkened not for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." "To accomplish his designs God uses different instruments, quite often men whom He prepares in advance for their mission. At the right time God uses such people to accomplish even the least of His plan. From this point of view, Leo Pinsker was a small cog in the enormous machine which is the plan of God.

But the time to show mercy to Zion had come. It was necessary to make the sons of Jacob understand that their heritage was Palestine, that it was time to return to Zion. In the prophecy of Isaiah, we can read God's affirmation that the entire nation must be freed, must have the opportunity to return:

"Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."—Isa 43:5,6

To make this message heard throughout the entire world, God raised up another man: Theodore Herzl. The story of this man is truly astonishing.

Theodore Herzl

Theodore Herzl was born not far from here, in Budapest in 1860, into a rich and liberal Jewish family. In Vienna he studied law but quickly came to prefer literature and journalism. He wrote numerous theatrical plays, and became known as a brilliant journalist. Herzl led a good middle-class life and considered anti-Semitism as something impossible to overcome save by the disappearance of the Jews. Until the age of 35 he preached the assimilation of Jews into their host country and even proposed mass conversion and infant baptism.

These are the surprising ideas that one might never associate with Herzl. But, oh yes, he really declared them. What happened in this man's life to transform him from a quiet bourgeois into a militant, a creator of Zionism? Indeed, something did happen.

At the end of 1894 Herzl was in Paris as a reporter for the Austrian newspaper *New Free Press*. It was at this time that the Dreyfus Affair broke out in France. Although today we are accustomed to all kinds of political and financial upheavals, at that time the Dreyfus Affair shook all of France.

Here in a few words is what happened. Alfred Dreyfus was born in Mulhouse on October 9, 1859, into a rich, industrial Jewish family. [This story is particularly interesting to me because I live nine miles from Mulhouse in Alsace.] After France's defeat in 1870, Alsace was annexed by Germany. Dreyfus moved to Paris where he did brilliantly in school—he graduated from the polytechnic school—and joined the French army as an officer. In October 1894 in a shady piece of espionage business between Germany and France, Dreyfus was suspected of treason. Being born in Alsace to Jewish parents was cause enough for him to be found guilty as charged.

Condemned to disgrace and deportation, he was first sent in 1895 to Devil's Island in Guyana. All of France became enflamed over this affair and soon all Jews were being accused of treason and of conspiring against the Republic. France became divided into pro-Dreyfus and anti-Dreyfus camps. The press, equally divided, maintained a climate of hate and xenophobia. After numerous appeals and many years of investigations, Dreyfus was vindicated and reinstated into the army in 1906.

In 1894, at the start of this uproar, Theodore Herzl was forced to revise his thoughts on Jewish assimilation. Being a journalist and

with all information at his disposal, he could not remain indifferent. The rise of anti-Semitism throughout the world made him understand that assimilation was not possible. A great change occurred in his life. He himself said, "I think that for me, life has come to an end; universal history has just begun."

In June of 1895 he buried himself in his Parisian hotel room and wrote a book that would make history: *Der Judenstaat* [the Jewish State]. "The national characteristics of the Jewish people cannot, will not, and must not disappear," he wrote. "The Jewish nation must rise up on the land of her ancestors." To attain this objective, he proposed the creation of two organizations: a Jewish society which would establish cultural and political foundations, and a Jewish company which would supply the financial means and economic mechanisms to bring them about.

The publication of *Der Judenstaat* marked the beginning of Herzl's Zionist activities. During the remainder of his life he endeavored to make it a reality. He met numerous governmental heads of state, Pope Pius X, emperor William II, business men and Jewish financiers. Each time he tried to convince them and interest them in this project. He succeeded in gathering the Jewish community to support his great dream.

In Basel [Switzerland] on August 29, 1897, he organized the first Zionist Congress. The world Zionist organization was created and he was elected its president. At the end of this Congress, on August 31st, Herzl wrote words which proved prophetic:

"At Basel I founded the Jewish state... in 50 years it will become clear to the entire world."

Fifty years later to the day—August 31, 1947—a special United Nations inquiry commission placed before the General Assembly a report proposing that Palestine be divided into a Jewish State and an Arab State. It was adopted three months later.

Yes, we can truly say that the story of Theodore Herzl is exceptional. In reading his biography one can perceive a certain similarity to the story of the Apostle Paul. Before the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus, Paul persecuted and imprisoned Christians—"made havoc of the church" as we read in Acts 8:3 and 9:1,2. Why did God permit this? The Apostle Paul was chosen by God "who separated [him] from [his] mother's womb". { *Galatians 1:15* } Why should his life unfold in such a

complicated way? To bring the gospel to the Gentiles, could not God direct this man's life in less dramatic fashion?

These are questions man asks, but we know God reasons differently. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." *{Isa 55:8}* God supervised the life of the Apostle Paul from his tender youth. This would guarantee perhaps a greater love and zeal on the part of this apostle. "But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." *{Lu 7:47}* In Paul's case, God had forgiven much. After his conversion he became one of

The Zionist movement was a "net" which brought the "fish" toward the land of their fathers the most dynamic and zealous servants of the Lord.

He was to accomplish an exceptional task: to bear the name of the Lord "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." *{Ac 9:15}* To this end, God permitted the experience acquired in the first part of Paul's life (which was partly negative) to be of use in the accomplishing of his mission. God permitted evil for the fulfilling of the greatest good.

Theodore Herzl was certainly a most able man, the best prepared to accomplish this part of the plan of God. Even if at the beginning, with his ideas of assimilation, he did much evil to the cause of the Lord, in the second part of his life (lasting only eight years) he performed an enormous work which led to the creation of the State of Israel. To open his eyes, to get him to walk in a way harmonious with His plan, God used the Dreyfus Affair.

Fishers and Hunters

Since the time appointed to favor Zion had come, God used his own methods So that his mercy could be exercised upon His people. To bring back His children from the land of the north and other lands, God at first utilized fishers, and then hunters:

"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 from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks."—Jer 16:16

Leo Pinsker, Theodore Herzl, and the other men of the Zionist movement fulfilled the role of fishers. If one speaks of a fisherman, usually one sees a fisherman with a fishing pole. It

seems to me that this is not appropriate with this prophecy. It is better to use the image of a fisherman with a net. Fishing with a fishing pole is relatively recent and is not mentioned in the Bible. A net, when it is in the water, does not kill the fish, but when pulled by a fisherman, it ensnares or makes fish go in one direction. The Zionist movement was this net which brought the fish—the Jews—toward the land of their fathers.

After the fishers, God used hunters to accomplish the same work, but in a blood-shedding manner. A hunter wounds or kills his prey, but sometimes just his presence causes the game to flee. During the second world war the Nazis exterminated six million Jews, and also caused a great number of them to flee to Palestine. The genocide of this people altered, at least for a little while, the sentiments of many of the world's nations and made possible the creation of the State of Israel.

Since 1878 God is showing favor to this special people. Even if today we would like to see more blessings poured upon Israel, we should also remember that the 1845-year period of favor, from Jacob to Jesus, was not always uniquely favorable to the Jews.

During that period, though called a "time of favor," the deportation to Babylon and numerous wars occurred. For their unfaithfulness God chastised them and permitted sometimes quite grievous experiences. Yet this was still a period of favor.

Today favor is gradually being granted to this people and we ought not to be astonished by their difficulties. We know, based on the holy scriptures, that Israel is yet to be severely tried by "Jacob's trouble." This will be the ultimate experience to bring them to God and Jesus.

Dearly beloved brethren! As long as Israel has not obtained all favor, as long as the Jews have not acknowledged "the one they have pierced", { *Zechariah 12:10* } we can be sure that the Church is not complete. This should encourage us to work harder to make our calling and election sure.

Our Relationship With Israel

We also have an important role to play with respect to Israel. We must console and encourage her according to that written by the Prophet Isaiah (40:1,2): "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

When the time for compassion on Zion came, the Bible Student movement gave such consolation. Numerous public meetings directed toward the Jews were organized in the United States and other countries to encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine. Brother Russell, by his many articles in the press and by his discourse in New York's Hippodrome, where 4,000 Jews gathered, clearly showed them that the time for their return had arrived.

We should also follow this example and tell the Jews that their punishment has ended, and that the many prophecies concerning them have been fulfilled. It is the time for them to turn toward God. We must not try to convert them to Christianity, but point them to the promises that are

theirs. God will make a New Covenant with them which will eventually extend to all mankind. *{Jer 31:31}* We should show sympathy to these people, especially now when anti-Semitism is growing, when blasphemies and provocations are on the increase.

We must console them and "cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished." We should bring a message of peace and comfort to this nation. Like the watchmen we should lift up our voices and announce the good tidings:

"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! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."—Isa 52:7,8

Seeing Is Believing

With our own eyes we see the return of the Lord to Zion. Let us rejoice at this return and the blessings which will soon flow out to all people. We know that the return of favor to Israel is the work of our Lord Jesus at his second presence. It is he, as, the arm of the Lord, who is doing all this.

So let us, brethren, mutually encourage and help one another in the good fight of faith So that we might be found victorious in our present trials, and be allowed to sing to Israel verses 5 and 6 of Psalms 128:

"The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

May God bless us all. Amen.

The Highest Interest of the New Creation-Bro. Andriy Laybida, Ukraine

DEAR BRETHREN IN OUR Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. With great joy we received the news that the International Convention would take place So close to home. Just a few years ago this would not have been possible, and our prophetic expectation of events in this part of Europe was somewhat different. We expected that the disintegration of such a great empire would speedily bring with it insurmountable hardships for the whole world. Therefore we were waiting—and we are still awaiting—great trials and the fulfillment of the progression of events that are connected with the symbolic last days of the life of the greatest of the prophets, John the Baptist.

We have seen many prophecies fulfilled before our eyes, and still others have become far more understandable. At last our Lord has given us a deeper appreciation of the prophetic order of events as written by the faithful servant, Brother Russell, in the fourth volume of *Studies in the Scriptures*. The events that the faithful servant wrote about at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one, are today quite commonplace in post-communist countries.

Blinded by the 'god of this world,' people are looking for the solution to their own problems in free market relations, which someone very accurately compared to a ship without a rudder. We believe that shortly the swelling sea of human passions will swallow up everything that has not been guided by the strong hand of the Lord and does not have a sure anchor of faith.

Today as the mountains [strong kingdoms of the world] are falling into the depths of the sea, we see how they are losing their former greatness, becoming ordinary islands—less proud and less self-assured than previously because to a significant degree they are controlled by the rebellious influences of the masses in general.

Comparing current events with what was foreseen by the faithful servant, we are better able to notice these perils, temptations, and deceptions which lie in wait for the Lord's people, So that we would not 'be ignorant of his [the Adversary's] devices.' We are

beginning to realize that the hardships which brethren in Romania, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, and perhaps other countries, have suffered over the last ten years or so, really have been under the wise Father's direction and are only preparatory to still further trials which accompany greater freedom, capitalistic relations, wanton ecclesiastical power, flattering Protestantism, and the utterly feeble human organizations looking to secure for themselves a better future.

For many years the prayers of the brethren have helped us to stand in the truth, in the faith, to endure forced isolation. Today we once again ask for your prayers that we may guard our faith, So that in the time of the 'increase of lawlessness' our love would not become 'lukewarm.' When ye see these things, lift up your heads because you know that the kingdom is nigh. {Mt 24:33}

We are standing on the threshold of a new order of things. Soon, upon the ruins of evil, Christ's kingdom will begin the work of turning men back to harmony with God. Most of our brethren have already finished their work on this side the veil, and we rejoice that for their faithfulness, which is a great example to us, they attained the first resurrection.

From the days of the apostles, the holy spirit descending from the Head of the Body, the glorious Lord, began to come upon all fully consecrated members who entered under this anointing and manifested the choicest fruits of the spirit: love, joy, holiness, and deep humility. I look at you who have come together from all corners of the globe, full of faith, and fervor, untiring 'workers' in the 'vineyard.' Today's workers have to accomplish in one hour as much as our brethren before us did over a greater period of time. It impresses us deeply that we are witnessing with our own eyes the end of the most wonderful period in the history of man—the selection of the bride for the only begotten Son of our God. The fact that today the high calling is still gathering willing ones to enter the narrow way of full sacrifice is strong evidence that the door of favor of the Gospel Age is still open, and no human hand can shut it.

Present-day Conditions

As new creatures in Christ Jesus we keenly feel the smallest changes in our surroundings. The course of events in the world, and especially for us in the Ukraine, gives us much to think about. For several years since the 'iron curtain' fell, we enjoyed considerable freedom and were able to carry the truth openly to all

who had been deprived of it for a long time. Today, conditions are gradually changing. We see this not only in the hundreds of new churches and the annual celebration of religious holidays, but also in the growth of the dissatisfied masses, religious fanaticism, and the rebellious attitude toward any viewpoint differing from the traditional. On every level civil and religious hierarchies are conducting debates about the quickest way to attain agreement, not only between the long-standing hostility between Catholic and Orthodox churches, but even about returning the followers of the Protestant denominations to the bosom of the mother church. As one Catholic bishop acknowledged, from the standpoint of his church there is no excuse for the ecumenical process to be moving so slowly. In the words of one of today's officials of the Roman Catholic Church, the best gift for the whole world of mankind at the threshold of the third millennium would be a successful attainment of the ecumenical process.

Even today we are encountering much opposition from those who strongly desire the return of the middle ages, only with a more alluring face. All this should strengthen us in our conviction that those difficulties referred to here, and also the present and future difficulties not mentioned here, are increasing and will continue to increase. To 'those who love God and are called according to his purpose' all such trials will be more opportunities to prove their loyalty to the returned King of Kings.

'And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.'—1Jo 2:17

God's general purpose consists of this: that 'in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on the earth.' This 'mystery of his will' he has made known to us 'according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself'. { *Ephesians 1:9,10* } The great honor of being acquainted with the truth, of which, in the words of the Apostle Paul, we are honored by grace, should fill our hearts with thankfulness and respect.

When we read, that He gave unto us 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling', { *Ephesians 1:17,18* } we understand that His purpose was to show His great mercy to us. The will of the Father was not only to 'beget us with the word of truth' and instill in us the hope of a future inheritance with His Son, but also to cause us 'to will and to do' { *Php 2:13* } to make us 'a kind of firstfruits of His creatures', {

James 1:18 } 'firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb'. { *Revelation 14:4* }

For those who are able to appreciate it, the will of God [His law] is the highest gauge and standard of goodness and blessing for all beings. The foundation or basis of God's law is justice, detailed and absolute; the essence or substance is love. Mercy is an outward manifestation of love. In due course, after our Lord brought us to an understanding of the truth through great favor and mercy, we realized that it was preceded by a great act of love, about which the Apostle John wrote:

'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' —1Jo 4:9

Having become new creatures and having received the spirit of sonship, we have not only attained peace with God which passeth all human understanding, but also have entered into the family of God on the highest plane of existence. Henceforth the Father counts us as those who are fully cognizant of His requirements, and this carries with it full responsibility for their fulfillment.

Henceforth if we do His will, we will receive the greatest blessings intended for His sons. But non-compliance eventually brings the greatest disfavor. Let us remember that the matter of the execution of God's will in relation to man was given to the Logos as an expression of particular confidence and as a favor concerning the future great reward for complete obedience, humility, and consecration.

The Preeminence of the Son

Desiring to keep His only begotten son on the highest plane, the Father always gave him preeminence in the outworking of His plans, So that he would continue to be preeminent. Surely, many angels desired to provide the ransom-price. But this act would constitute the greatest test, the greatest manifestation of loyalty to God. The one who would give his life would be worthy of the highest reward, above angels, principalities, and powers.

'Wherefore God hath highly exalted him [after his resurrection], and given him a name which is above every name.'—Php 2:9

'And whosoever shall exalt himself [for example, Lucifer in his pride], shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.'—Mt 23:12

‘He... is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.’—Co 1:18, 19

Therefore, if for his faithfulness in carrying out the Father’s plans our Lord received great glory, honor, and immortality, then also for his followers who walk in the path of self-sacrifice, the Father has blessings in reserve which will reward all present hardships and trials. Even angels—‘ministering spirits’—are sent forth ‘to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.’ {*He 1:14*} The outworking of God’s will in us is a great privilege and at the same time a great responsibility on our part.

This is, first of all, a work in ourselves, and then a work among the world. Let us remember that it will be successful only if it is carried out in accordance with the will of the Creator. We know that not one jot or tittle of God’s plan will pass away unfulfilled. Diligence is required of us so that the little part of God’s plan entrusted to us is done in the best possible way. If we are careless in our duties, this ‘talent’ will be given to another and we will be left only with the bitter feeling of lost opportunities and privileges.

When we neglect our own consecration—the work in ourselves such as laxity in prayer and in the study of God’s will from the fountain of His word—the result will prove to be even more lamentable. At best, we will receive life by grace, the path to which will include great trials in life and a compulsory humbling. But now we feel great joy when we hear or read about your zeal in the truth. Until recently we did not have such far-reaching opportunities for comparing ways of life nor of appreciating the efforts of the brethren to do the will of God in today’s unfavorable conditions.

Laodecian Tests

It has become evident that under present conditions of freedom, democracy, and the increase of both good things and immoralities, it is much harder to keep our faith and to stand in the truth.

Capitalism with its enticements draws one further from the truth, even more than the various restrictions and difficulties of totalitarianism. After all, it is these conditions which were meant to constitute the tests of the Laodecian period, the last stage of the development of the Church. Therefore let us be very careful not to get caught up in ideas of any kind for the betterment of society. Let us not show open support for, or aversion to, one form of rule or

another, to this or that government leader, to this or that method of leadership. Let our concern be this: that we find ourselves in the favor of our King, that we are doing His will, and that we are waiting for the righteous order of God's kingdom. Let us remember His favor to us.

Our citizenship is in heaven and all our steps should be in that direction. Having consecrated our lives and having set out on the path of sacrifice, we have begun the long road of self-denial, the doing of God's will. In contemplating the past we see, step by step, how the Lord directed our life in answer to our fervent petitions and sincere prayers to the heavenly throne of grace. Actually this work in us began long before we made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Even in the beginning, while our eyes were turned to the crucified Lord and we were feeling the depths of his love, we felt a great thirst for God's word.

Our life has become a constant learning process: weighing each step, conscious of our own mistakes, and of God's unerring truths. Gradually, as we saw His leading in our affairs and His daily care, the beginnings of our peace with God acquired completely new features. Our determination grew to give everything to the Lord, withholding nothing: time, material goods, dreams, and hopes. At last a straight path was revealed before our eyes. The goal of our life became clear, and faith and love took the place of our fears.

Once we saw this further step, we rejoiced that the impulses of our heart found the grace of God thanks to the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer. Love toward God and faith in the promises of a heavenly inheritance have added assuredness to our sacrifice, filled us with joy and with a desire to open our hearts to the brethren; to say, as Rebekah did, before heaven itself, 'Yes! I will do your will.'

This step was accomplished at a certain period of our life, a step which is an important, inalienable work in us required by our Heavenly Father from each one who longs to be His son and joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Having made our covenant, the Lord God does not work with the old man, but with our new mind which, due to a great transformation, is able to become the basis for the beginning of a new being, a new creature. As we see, the fruit of this work is considerable.

New Creatures in Christ

Having received the grace to understand the truth, we did not neglect this grace, we did not take it in vain. Therefore the call to enter the narrow way was the next revelation of grace. Recognizing us through the begetting of the holy spirit as new creatures in Christ Jesus, the Father, through His Son, has continued in us a still greater work which is now able to make us worthy to receive the divine nature in the first resurrection. The apostle writes that He has already 'resurrected' us, lifted us up to newness of life or, in other words, has begun our resurrection.

As new creatures we became members of Christ in spirit, anointed to the rank of kings and priests. We became part of the Royal Priesthood although we will remain members of Christ in the flesh until our sacrifice is complete, filling up that which is behind of his afflictions, laying down our lives for one another, in order that this wonderful building will be completed as quickly as possible and be 'filled with glory.' This next period of life, as we see, particularly requires full submission of oneself to God's word: in deed, in word, in behavior, in dress, and in diet. The prophet Isaiah writes *{Isa 66:5}* that we have to tremble at every word of the Lord.

Having put ourselves under God's providence, we believe that the Lord, through his messengers, will direct our steps where we are seen to be deficient, whether through ignorance or weakness of the flesh. The apostle says that when we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, first with the Heavenly Father who has called us His children and who requires complete obedience, and then fellowship with the brethren. As we remember, the merit of Christ was applied on the day of Pentecost once for all of the faithful of the Gospel Age. At that time the sacrifice of the entire Church was presented and accepted by the Father, and the entire Church was anointed with the Holy Spirit which, with the Father's full authority, descended from the glorified Lord Jesus, the Head of the Body.

Each one who honestly does God's bidding will have a part in all of these blessings. Thus the blood of Christ cleanses him from all sin. *{1Jo 1:7}* Whoever remains at the fringes of brotherly fellowship cannot expect fullness of blessings; more than this, he loses those blessings he already has. This work of developing character into the likeness of Jesus Christ continues as we learn to gently, lovingly relate to those who consider us their enemies, until our 'first love' becomes predominant, most evident, maturing into the best fruit of the Spirit. Although at first glance it may seem that the successful development of character rests mainly with us, let us remember that it is 'God which worketh in you both to will and to

do of his good pleasure' {*Php 2:13*} because it is His plan, and because from the time when we first gave our heart and mind to Him it has been His work in us.

Harvest Work

Another equally important work of the Church is the work in the world. As representatives of the king of glory, we have to be living epistles, known and read of all men, reflecting the love, greatness and holiness of the Lord God by our words and godly lives. The anointing which we have received from our Lord also implies the spreading of the glad tidings to the whole groaning creation.

Witnessing about the imminent kingdom, the hope of the resurrection, the return of paradise, the recognition of a loving God, is closely connected with the work of serving the Church itself, the harvest work of the Gospel Age. Which work is more important? Both pertain to the initial stages of the second presence of Christ, to the harvest at the end of the Gospel Age. Therefore the matter of harvesting is more important. The object of the whole age was to select the Bride for the Lamb of God and So the matter of gathering ripe wheat is first in importance. Let us remember that the present harvest is progressing under the careful supervision and direction of the present Lord of the harvest, the Great Reaper. Our Lord sends his angels, harvest workers, to every part of the world to gather the ripe wheat. Gathered together, the brethren continue the work that has begun, and because of their zeal and enthusiasm carry the news of the imminent kingdom to those who have ears to hear.

Looking at the beginning and the continuing of harvest work in the Ukraine, in Moldova, and in Russia, we see that there must be both ripe wheat and willing reapers. In those areas where the wheat is not mature the Lord permits certain trials, So that each one whose desire is to remain as wheat would be able to demonstrate with his life and careful study of the word, the right to be gathered together initially with the Lord's people, and finally gathered into the heavenly garner, beyond the 'second veil.' The Lord is looking for those who worship Him in spirit and in truth, in the proper condition of and in the proper understanding of God's truths.

The Ukrainian Harvest

The harvest work in the Ukraine had its beginnings in the 1930's. While leafing through old books, we came across convention reports for the years 1933 and 1934. There were from 300 to 400 brethren from western Ukraine and eastern Poland at those

conventions. The brethren arrived in wagons and by bicycle. Sometimes such a trip took a few days and required a stop along the roadside to sleep. Today we are very pleased to read and hear about the zeal and love toward the truth and to God which urged our brethren on in journeys of several hundred kilometers through rain, wind, snowstorm, and heat wave, to spend a few days, or even a few hours, with those of loving hearts. Since the 1930's, over a half-century has passed. Time has brought many trials and all kinds of hardships. Numerous families of Bible Students were transported to the Siberian taiga where in severe cold and without any personal belongings they had to start life all over again. Many perished. Many others carry in their hearts unhealed wounds from the loss of parents and children. Yet even in those cruel living conditions, the brethren were able to not only keep their faith, but also to share the precious truth with many listening ears.

Today we are associated with brethren in Russia who have an understanding of God's word through a certain brother from the Ukraine who was deported because of his faith. The war also brought with it great hardships: concentration camps with their heinous mechanisms for the destruction of millions of lives; the forcing of many to be transported to Germany to work; working in occupied territories from dawn to dusk when the slightest disobedience could mean the loss of one's life; hiding from arrest; pillaging; wasting hunger; exhausting hours of waiting for the next artillery bombardment to cease; persecution from those who called themselves Christians; prison and death by firing squad for refusing to take up arms; torture—all of this took place.

There are no spoken or written words that can convey the difficulties of that time when all was permitted by the Lord's will, and where the Lord's will was to endure these hardships. Returning from exile, the brethren helped to put ecclesias together, helped to gather those who were scattered in all directions by the war. Other difficulties occurred: persecution for reading the Bible and *Studies in the Scriptures*, the opportunity to get only low-paying jobs, ridicule in the press, at work, at school, and among neighbors. After some time brethren from Poland began to visit us. The Lord permitted us to have a deeper understanding of the truth of His word.

A great blessing came after so many anguishing experiences. God sent untiring harvest workers who worked and still work very hard so that we would have a better understanding of present truth. There were still other hardships. Certain viewpoints arose that Christ had not come a second time. Divisions began. The rejection

of the second presence of Christ caused a challenging of other fundamental doctrines: the resurrection of the Church, the restitution work of Christ, the beginning of the antitypical Jubilee and therefore the blowing of the seventh trumpet and the work of the seventh angel, the faithful servant. Fervor over chronological dates regarding the end of the Gospel Age also arose. That which began with the denial of the second presence of Christ resulted in the abandonment of truths and, even worse, the acceptance of teachings which anyone of sound mind would not agree with.

Today we are thankful to the Lord that after So many years of forced isolation, we are able to know So many brethren from all over the world. This is obviously a great sign of the times and it testifies that the path of the Church must end soon. How pleasant it is to recognize that the same truth in which the Church in the days of the apostles rejoiced, has permitted us an understanding of the second coming of the king of glory and enabled us to stand in the most severe testings and siftings, and which today gives us assurance of the nearness of the establishment of Christ's kingdom.

We Are Children of the Day

The sunlight of the new day gives God's children a realization that the night already is over, that the dark clouds which are gathering around are carrying fear and despair only to the world, and that eventually the world will see who really are conquerors in the midst of these clouds. We are children of the day and have arisen for work long ago. Good reapers arise early in the morning and work all day So as not to be slothful. Those who sleep, sleep in the night, drunk with the wine of false doctrines, fatigued with daily problems and the gratification of the flesh. If we have entered into this harvest, let us work while it is still day. Dear brethren, let us not think it strange that there are different conditions in various parts of the world and that consequently even the trials of the Lord's people are somewhat different. When we consider the trials and testings of individual brethren, we see that each of these brethren, and each of us, will receive that which is most needed for the gradual growth of our characters into the likeness of our Redeemer, independent of surrounding circumstances. All these testings should cause us to develop the best attributes of Christ: love, gentleness, humility, joy, and peace. In the most difficult times we always remembered in our prayers our brethren throughout the whole world though we could not even imagine the true condition of their lives.

The latest events in the world attest to the fact that we are very near to the establishment of God's kingdom. Today more happens in one year than during a few hundred years in the past. To study all the prophecies pertaining to our time, it is necessary not only to understand the doctrines of the scriptures, but it is also necessary to gradually, day by day, enter into their spirit through prayer.

Since the apostle says that the prophets wrote for our benefit, upon whom has come the end of the age, then the largest part of these prophecies were to be fulfilled in the end of the age, during the harvest. Will the gathering of the last members of the Church be a clearly marked event, easily noticeable? We think not. The Church has to meet these hardships and great trials while fully engaged in the Lord's work. This will also mean careful study of the prophecies of God's word. Evidently every one of the Lord's faithful people will have this understanding which will help him be filled with the spirit and to endure the most difficult problems of our day. Let us be careful that the events of the Lord's day do not become great pitfalls of our faithfulness, but rather will be sure signs on the way to the higher honors of the kingdom.

Our Lord's Memorial

By partaking of the wine during the memorial of the Lord's death, which other scriptures figuratively show as drinking the blood of our Saviour, we appropriate to ourselves his life. Whoever properly understands the matter of sacrifice appropriates the blood [life of Christ] which gives him justification, and then the privilege of sacrifice. Whoever does this unworthily also takes upon himself the blood of Christ, his life; however, for him this means he is guilty of Christ's death because drinking of blood brought guilt or responsibility for the death of a person. We, on the other hand, are aware of the responsibilities to fill up that which is behind of the death of Christ because we are the members of his body and consequently have a part in his sacrifice. His death signifies our death. We have consecrated our lives So we might die, and we must do all that is necessary So that our sacrifice would end quickly in death. Faithfulness for each of us in our own sacrifice will hasten the completion of the sacrifice of Christ.

Each one of us is responsible for his own death. The sooner this death comes, the sooner will be the blessings. When we drink to the bottom of the cup the Father has poured for us, we will receive a crown of life—the greatest symbol of overcoming—and with it, everlasting joy and unfathomable greatness of heavenly glory with the Saviour of the world who is on the Father's throne.

May this hope always be with us. Amen.

Be Mindful of the Words Which Were Spoken Before- Bro. Jean Liberda, France

DEARLY BELOVED BRETHREN in Christ, the thoughts I would like to share are entitled 'Be mindful of the words which were spoken before,' words spoken by the apostle Peter:

'This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.'—2Pe 3:1,2

Hearing the Word is not Enough

Those among us who have known the Truth through the years, those who have consecrated themselves to God and are walking in the footsteps of the Master, our Supreme Model, certainly know these exhortations which the apostle Peter gave and which were addressed to the church in general. But it would be an error to know these exhortations and words and not put them into practice. James tells us in his epistle:

'For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.'—Jas 1:23-25

The apostle Paul also exhorts us to this end in He 2:14,

'Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.'

He further tells us that the...

'salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will.'

In Colossians 3:2 the apostle Paul tells us again,

‘Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.’

In this text the apostle is speaking to Christians, those who day after day make every effort to set their affections on things above. To set one’s affections on heavenly things is a task requiring great perseverance; it requires great effort because good affections tend to fade away.

We have only our old mind for thinking and reflecting, and it inclines itself toward the flesh. That’s why it’s necessary to continually set and reset our affections on things above until they become sufficiently anchored, fixed, and established there.

We should never forget that heaven is to be our eternal home, not the earth nor the flesh. All the precious promises are heavenly. Christ our dearly beloved king dwells there. We ourselves are likewise preparing to enter heaven beyond the veil. The glories of that most holy place are already ours by faith. Very soon they will be a reality if we hold fast, if we continue to be faithful to our covenant with God. We know this because the word of God announced it aforetime. We can read about it in John 14:14,

‘Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.’

Dearly beloved, it is by remaining interested in spiritual things, by informing ourselves and studying the holy scriptures, by asking the Heavenly Father for help through our Lord, that the understanding of these things announced aforetime is given to us. We must nonetheless persevere, because only a studious Christian who perseveres in the study of the word of truth can expect to find the narrow way of divine approval and acceptance.

As we have already said at the beginning of these remarks, the apostle Peter, in his second epistle, reminds us of the need to grow in the fruits of the spirit. He recounts in 21:1618 the vision he had of the future kingdom when he was with James and John on the holy mountain. He shows how important it is for us to study prophecy. He warns us of the presence of false teachers among us. He calls to mind the condemnation and punishment which came upon the disobedient angels, the catastrophe which destroyed

Sodom and Gomorra because of their corruption, the destruction of the wicked in the flood during the time of Noah. Heof the wicked course of Balaam and the consequences which resulted from it. He tells us also that some among the brethren were following the same course as did that false prophet. However, he says finally that things will change, that evil will not always triumph.

A great change will occur, he says, which will make way for other developments in the divine plan, one being the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth, and all this So that we may keep in mind that these things were prophesied aforetime. Take as an example the words of the Creator through His prophet when He tells us:

‘Remember the former things of old:

For I am God, and there is none else;

I am God, and there is none like me,

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done,

Saying, My counsel shall stand,

And I will do all my pleasure.’ —Isa 46:9,10

Since God tells us that He has a definite, fixed purpose and that all His plans must be accomplished, it behooves us, His children, to diligently inform ourselves of all His plans, So we can be found to be in harmony with them.

Thus we see that the apostle Peter, by his warnings, alerts the members of the church living in the last days, a time also called by the apostle the ‘Day of the Lord.’ He also says many things will change. Peter says that this great change will occur suddenly. It will be a radical change like that which occurred in the days of Noah. It will be a catastrophe.

People who might appear to be godly without possessing true godliness will mock those who speak of a coming time of trouble. {2Pe 3:3,4} Later in verse 10 the apostle speaks of a great conflict: ‘The heavens,’ he says, ‘and the earth shall be burned up and consumed; the elements shall melt with fervent heat.’

How are we to understand that heavens will be burned up, that the earth will be consumed, and that the elements shall melt with fervent heat? And all this, let us not forget, are words spoken beforehand.

Most Christians think that the fire in this text is literal, and that the heavens and the earth and the material elements they contain will actually be consumed. But as we have understood for many years, this prophecy can perhaps be interpreted more logically. We even see that it is in the process of actually being fulfilled. The great time of trouble which is to follow closely the second coming of Christ will not be like anything since nations existed, as it is written:

‘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.’—Da 12:1

In figurative language the scriptures describe it as great waters which carry the mountains into the midst of the sea. *{Ps 46:3,4}* This is why we are without fear when the earth is overthrown and the mountains stagger in the midst of the seas, when the waves roar and foam, lifting themselves up until the mountains tremble. These symbols teach us that the governments of the earth will be overthrown, swallowed up by the furious sea of men’s unbridled passions. In another symbol, these times of distress are represented by a great whirlwind sweeping away everything in its path. In other texts they are compared to the four winds of earth, *{Re 7:13}* to four winds and fire, *{Isa 66:15}* to a whirlwind, *{Jer 4:13}* and to a tempest. *{Jer 23:19,20}*

In all of this it is the Lord’s anger that is demonstrated. *{Zep 3:8}* This period is called ‘the day of vengeance of our God’ or ‘the day of anger.’ But those who dwell only on the thought of anger, or suppose even that a certain divine malevolent power is implied, are seriously wrong. God has established certain laws and He enforces them. Those who are contrary or who do not respect these laws for whatever reason, receive the chastisement for their own conduct. And this will all occur in the great time of trouble.

God’s Counsel to Men

The benevolent counsel of God toward men has continually been rejected by them until now (except for a small number who are consecrated to the service of God). And as we have seen, God for

His part permits them to follow their own way and renounce Him and His instruction. We are told by the apostle Paul:

‘And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.’—Ro 1:28-32

We see today all that the apostle has written is in the process of being fulfilled as never before.

A wonderful thought is given to us in Volume 1 where the author tells us that if men had followed the instruction of the Lord, it would be a positive influence upon them. But as usual, they follow only their own wills; they receive little benefit from the instruction of the scriptures, So the distress of the day of the Lord comes as a consequence of their negligence.

Moreover, one can say that the anger of God is as much the result of contempt for his laws as it is the wages of injustice. Nevertheless, seen from another point of view, this trouble being poured out on the world is only the natural or expected outcome of sin foreseen by God and against which His instructions and messages could have protected men if they had but listened.

We know the message of God to the church has been and remains that written in Romans 12:1, ‘present your bodies a living sacrifice,’ and this, the little flock has been doing. But the message for the world has been,

‘Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.’—Psalm 34:13,14

Few have bothered to follow either one of these instructions or messages. Only a little flock practices sacrifice. But as far as the world is concerned, though it may proclaim, ‘Honesty is the best policy,’ it generally neglects to practice it. Mankind usually listens to the voice of avarice: ‘Grab what you can of riches, honor, and

power available in this world, disregarding the means you use to obtain them, and no matter who might lose by your gain.’

In other words, the distress of this day of the Lord would not come—or would be less—if the principles of the law of God had been even a little followed by imperfect humanity. This law is summarized by the words,

‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and ... thy neighbour as thyself.’—Mt 22:37,39

But because the depraved fleshly spirit of the world, far from submitting to it, opposes the law of God, this distress comes as a natural consequence, just as harvest follows sowing. The apostle Peter tells us:

‘The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.’—2Pe 3:10

In order not to be surprised by the Day of the Lord, the members of the church must have their loins girded and their lamps lit as the Lord states in Luke 12:35. And as this parable of the Lord puts it, be...

‘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.’—Lu 12:36,37

We Must Watch and Pray

Already here in this parable the Lord tells us what we must do: watch, pray, and be in communion continually with the Lord. Our loins must be girded, which is to say, always active in the service of the Lord.

Since we have been begotten by the Holy Spirit, our lamps are lit and our thoughts, our studies, our time are given to spiritual things. And because the Lord in the parable says he will gird himself and will serve his servants, we think it means that he will instruct the members of his church by giving them spiritual meat in due season. {Lu 12:42}

The thoughts we have brought out and which find their accomplishment during the Day of the Lord, the time of trouble, are symbolic. The heavens represent actual religious or ecclesiastical institutions. The symbolic fire extends itself to social institutions, to the present order of things. Religious organizations, we think, will be destroyed first, as indicated by the scriptures.

The fire, which here is always symbolic, will then overtake social and industrial organizations: associations, capital, work, business. The fire will consume the entire modern financial edifice (the banks). It will also consume the political, religious, and industrial organizations. Everything will be dissolved and consumed. All will be dislocated, scattered, swept and carried away.

Let us never forget the biblical teachings that the great time of trouble has the simple objective of sweeping out and disposing of the religious, social, and political organizations whose basic functioning is absolutely corrupt and unjust. God, however, wishes to establish Messiah's reign upon the ruins of this world for the benefit of humanity. Therefore, we should be glad for the coming trouble because we see it is necessary.

Knowing the Plan Brings Comfort

How greatly such knowledge will comfort and ease the spirit of many, especially of those who are frightened when they see these events approaching with growing speed, particularly if they do not know all the benefits which will come out of this state of affairs. Such people are aware that the whole world will have to face revolution and anarchy; they do not see the silver-lined dawning which follows the dark clouds of the time of trouble.

We have already entered the time of trouble predicted long ago. This time of trouble is becoming more and more intensified until it reaches its culminating level, that is to say, the great trouble predicted by Daniel (12:1) and by our Lord in Matthew:

'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.'—Mt 24:21,22

Since we understand that all these things must be dissolved, what should be our field of action? How should we conduct ourselves,

those of us who hope to be a part of the mighty government to be established over the entire earth, and which will have for its head Jesus Christ, the king whose rightful sovereignty this is?

We must be aware that if we want to be a part of the class who will govern the earth for a thousand years, we must renounce our ambitions, our earthly goals, and everything associated with the present order of things. We must understand the great difference that exists between the present order and the new order which will soon be established, and having understood it, we must act accordingly.

While we await the new dispensation, let us do good to everyone, at every opportunity, especially to the household of faith, our brethren in Christ. As faithful children of the supreme king of the universe who will place His kingdom into the hands of His dearly beloved son, we offer this prayer to him:

‘Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.’—Mt 6:10

We are filled with joy because we have the assurance that our prayers will soon be answered. Our life must be in accord with the content of this prayer. The apostle Peter asks, ‘What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?’ {2Pe 3:11} Peter puts this solemn question to each one of us. It is very real.

Let us remember and keep these precious words in our heart because we stand in the presence of the Supreme Judge of the whole earth. These exhortations and encouragements were given to the church more than 19 centuries ago and, according to God’s plan, are of benefit to all the disciples of Christ during the Gospel Age. They are especially directed by the holy spirit to the members of the church who live at this Day of the Lord.

What incomparable favor has been granted to true Christians who are living now. This favor is not granted to the people of the world, nor to the numerous nominal disciples of Christ because they do not know the deep things of God. ‘And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation,’ the apostle Peter tells us in 23:15. These words, which the apostle penned at the end of his letter, should encourage us, comfort us now in this time of waiting, which will certainly not be long if we believe that we are living in the last phase of the harvest which is the end of the age. The Lord, in fact, tells us in Matthew 13:39, ‘The harvest is the end of the

world'; it is the hour that brings closure to the times of the Gentiles.

Some have received a knowledge of the truth and have consecrated themselves to God only recently—ourselves, for example. How much more grateful are those disciples of Christ, who have understood these precious truths for many more years because God in His mercy has granted them a little additional time to make their calling and election sure? A few of these last ones are perhaps not yet ready!

This is why, dearly beloved, while awaiting these things—the overthrow of this present order and the establishment of the kingdom of God's dearly beloved son—we should work to be 'found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless' as the apostle tells us in 2 Peter 3:14.

In conclusion I would like to read the beautiful verse which describes the last members of the church:

'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

It is my most sincere desire that we might find ourselves among the feet members, publishing peace and bringing good tidings, So that we may receive a place at the feet of our Lord with all the other overcomers.

Thank you for hearing me So patiently.

Amen.

Distractions, Deceptions, Doubts, Disappointments-Bro. Joseph Megacz, USA

DISTRACTIONS, DECEPTIONS, doubts, and disappointments are four tools of the adversary. Satan can use all of these against us if we are not prepared to defend ourselves. Let's consider each of these four weapons of the devil.

Distractions

Writing to the brethren at Corinth, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:35,

‘And this I speak for your own profit... that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.’

In this chapter Paul is counseling the brethren about marriage. He suggests that the unmarried state is preferable to marriage in order to promote spirituality, although Paul states this as his judgment and not as a commandment (see verse 25). For our discussion today, I want to lift Paul’s exhortation out of its specific context in this chapter and apply it to every aspect of our consecrated walk.

But before we can discuss distractions, we have to explain what we might be distracted from. The word *distract* means to draw away or divert our attention from an objective. What is our objective? Our Lord tells us what his objective was:

‘But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!’—Lu 12:50

Jesus’ baptism—his entire spiritual life and growth—was his mind’s objective, and he was ‘straitened until it be accomplished’ or completed. That word *straitened* in the Greek is *sunecho*, and it has a variety of meanings including constrain, keep in, hold, press, and stop. Our Lord’s sacrifice and baptism were voluntary. So this ‘straitening’ was something internal—of his own mind, his own will. Jesus had fixed his life’s course in his mind, and he would not allow himself to be distracted.

So it should be with us who are baptized into our Lord’s baptism. We have before our minds our objective which is to grow in grace and knowledge into a Christlike character, fit for a place in the heavenly kingdom. If we suffer with him, we will reign with him. We must not allow ourselves to be distracted from that objective. Here are a few scriptures that speak of the importance of this singleness of mind, a singleness that is unwilling to be distracted from the pursuit of our goal.

‘Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.’—Php 3:13

‘For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.’—1Co 2:2

Some Practical Applications

What are some practical applications of this exhortation to keep from becoming distracted? First, what is distracting to one person may not be distracting to another. For some, watching television, playing chess, or reading magazines might be distracting, while others may have no interest in any of these. It is impossible to compile a list of distractions and then say, 'These are distractions; avoid every item on this list.' If that were all we needed to do to be Christlike, it would just be a simple test of our obedience. There would be no sacrifice. Obedience was God's test of Adam in the garden of Eden: Don't eat of the forbidden tree. But our test is different.

A distraction is not a sin. It is a legitimate desire of the natural man which, if indulged, can hinder spiritual growth. This means almost every normal or natural thing one does could be a distraction. That's right. Almost every earthly thing can be a distraction. It depends on whether one merely satisfies what is needful and sacrifices the rest, or whether one goes beyond what is needful and indulges the flesh. This is a matter for our own individual consciences, but we must be our own severest judge. The line between satisfying and indulging is difficult to draw, but one thing is sure—the pull of the world and the flesh is toward indulgence. Satan actively exploits this tendency to his evil advantage and to our spiritual detriment.

What, then, is our defense against this subtle tool of the adversary? The best defense is, in one word, discipline. We must discipline ourselves to keep our attention focused on our goal and upon the way to get to that goal. Frequent self-examination is also important—taking the measure of our growth in grace and in knowledge. The standard against which we measure ourselves is not the world, nor even the brethren, but to our Lord. He is the example we strive to attain.

Such self-examination will always find us short of that standard of perfection, but one would hope that we find ourselves closer since the last time we did the appraisal.

The need to defend ourselves against distractions is stated in He 12:1,

'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with So great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth So easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'

‘Laying aside every weight’ means we are to eliminate distractions.

Deceptions

The second of the four tools of the adversary is deception. The picture of our walk along the narrow way can be used to illustrate the difference between distraction and deception. Distractions are attempts of the adversary to slow us down or encumber us in our walk. Deceptions are like a division in the road—a detour—which Satan attempts to have us follow to misdirect our efforts along a path which seems to be proper, but which actually leads us further away from, rather than closer to, our goal. Our goal is growth in grace and knowledge of the truth which will result in a true Christlike character. The deceptive detours in our path lead to an increase of unholy character qualities which are the opposite of grace, and to false doctrines which are the opposite of truth. Note Paul’s clear statement: ‘Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.’ *{1Co 15:33}*

Here is what Pastor Russell wrote:

‘It is true, indeed that the tendency of ‘evil communications’ is to ‘corrupt good manners.’ As the ear becomes accustomed to profanity and to unkind and bitter words, and the eye to sights of misery and injustice, the tendency is to blunt the finer sensibilities of the pure and good, So that in time the heart will become more or less calloused and unsympathetic, unless these unholy influences are steadily resisted and the ways of the world shunned.’ *(R2146)*

‘If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.’—
Jas 1:26

We are deceived if we believe we can loosen our new mind’s control over our thoughts, words and deeds, and still attain a Christlike character.

A second type of deception is toward false doctrine.

‘Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.’—Eph 4:13,14

The words of 2 Timothy 3:12-15 seems to touch on both types of deception—unrighteousness and false doctrine. In the first verse of this chapter the time setting is said to be ‘the last days’—our time.

‘Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.’

Defending Against Deceptions

What is our defense against deception? Our best defense is discernment of what is genuine. The words in Timothy suggest this:

‘Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.’—verse 14

We must continue in the things we have learned and been assured of, both as genuine standards of righteous conduct and as genuine doctrines of truth. We must examine moral teachings and doctrinal teachings that are presented to us and discern whether those teachings agree with what we know to be genuine or contradict it.

In the apostle John’s first epistle he encouraged this examination with the exhortation to ‘try the spirits.’

‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.’—1Jo 4:1,2

In John’s day, the genuine standard of truth against which all doctrinal teachings were to be measured was the ransom. This is expressed in the words ‘that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh’ (verse 2). At the time John wrote these words, our Lord had been crucified. His flesh, his perfect humanity, had been sacrificed as a ransom for mankind.

Today our genuine standard is much the same as it was in John’s day. It is still, ‘that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.’ This is our

genuine moral standard since his life's example and teachings are the pattern we follow. This is our doctrinal standard as well—the ransom and all the Harvest Truth taught by Brother Russell.

Earlier I said one could not compile a list of distractions and demand that we all avoid each item on the list. That's because we are all distracted by different things. It is also not possible to compile a list of deceptions because we don't know what the adversary will try to use against us. But we can ask two questions:

1. Do you know what is the genuine standard of moral character and doctrine?
2. Are you aggressively discerning whether the suggestions presented to you from your own thoughts and from others agree with the genuine standard or not?

The battle with deceptions is not merely an intellectual fight within our minds to see if we will allow ourselves to be tricked into believing a lie. The battle is with actions as well.

'But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.'—Jas 1:22

'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'—Ga 6:7,8

Paul is warning us to not sow to the flesh. In addition, we must continually weed out the growth of the flesh that sprouts from Satan's sowing. Brethren, Satan desires to have you that he may 'sift you as wheat'. { *Luke 22:31* } Be not deceived.

Doubts

The third tool of the adversary is doubts. As we walk along the narrow way, Satan uses distractions to slow us down, deceptions to divert us to another path that leads us away from our goal, and doubts to confuse us and make us stop walking entirely.

Have you ever been going somewhere when you suddenly realized you weren't sure where you were going or even if you were going the right way? The natural reaction is to stop and ask, 'Where am I going? Is this the right way?' Doubt makes us stop our progress along the narrow way. If the devil can stop us in the

narrow way, if he can leave us confused and in doubt, wondering if we are going the right way, he has gained a victory. Doubts are less subtle than either distractions or deceptions.

Doubt comes in many forms. We may doubt that what we believe is in fact God's truth. We may doubt that God is dealing with us. We may even doubt whether or not we were ever spirit begotten. Doubt is a very powerful tool of the adversary, and its debilitating effect on our spirituality can be great. What, then, is our defense against doubt? Our best defense is a strong and determined faith.

No essential element of Christian character is given greater prominence in the Bible than faith. Here are some scriptures together with some suggestions from the pen of Brother Russell.

'Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'—He 11:1.

'Mere belief is not sufficient for our trust and progress unless that belief be solidified into a substantial faith.' (R5188)

'True faith is not credulity. It is critical and believes only upon good evidence. It criticizes closely and distinguishes between the teachings of men and the substantiated word of God.' (R2005)

'Faith is not only a groundwork or basis for our hopes, but it is a real substance—a mental substance which stimulates and clarifies the mind. Faith is not a substance we can see with our eyes or hold with our hands, but it becomes a strength to our minds as we progress in the knowledge of God and of the things which God gives to those who love Him above all else and who seek to render to Him loving devoted service.' (R5717)

'And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith.'—Lu 17:5

'How do we receive this increase of faith? By refreshing our memory continually with the divine promises, and remembering that, having made a covenant with the Lord, these promises are ours. Claim them.' (R2642)

Satan tries to create doubt in the Lord's faithful who are seeking to know and do his will. The more conscientious they are, the more subject they will be to Satan's suggestions of unworthiness, rejection, condemnation, or even Second Death. God permits this as a test or trial to faith. To be developed, faith must be tried with opposition. The adversary, on the contrary would destroy our faith,

sometimes by exaggerating our weaknesses and failures, to cause us to cease striving for the goal of Divine approval. He would have us give up in despair.

‘It is your faith that is on trial now. In the calmer days, you were quietly laying the foundation of a knowledge of the truth. Now you are in the furnace to be proved. Summon all your courage, fortify your patience, nerve yourself to endurance, hold fast to your hope.’—(June 4 *Manna*, R1823)

‘The trial of our faith... is not only of our intellectual knowledge of the divine truth but also of our heart-reliance upon God. In both respects, the true child of God will find himself severely tried. (R5114) None will be admitted to membership in the body of Christ who has not been tested and proved by the Lord.’ (R4004)

Doubt that is not quickly suppressed leads to fear, and fear hath torment as we read in 1 John 4:18. ‘Perfect love casteth out fear’ but a determined faith prevents doubt from ever developing into fear.

Disappointments

A fourth tool of the adversary is disappointment. Disappointment and discouragement try to make us give up completely—to quit and go back to where we started.

We are in a war with the adversary. If his weapons of distraction, deception, and doubt fail to stop us, he uses a bigger weapon. All subtlety is gone. The battle is reduced to the basics—his strength against ours. Satan tries to wear us down, to push us backward. We try to press on and put Satan behind us. We are not alone in this fight, because it is not our strength alone that is brought into this battle.

While disappointment and discouragement are powerful weapons in the adversary’s arsenal, we can defend ourselves against them because we know exactly how the attack will be made—through our flesh. What is disappointment? Disappointment arises when things don’t happen according to the wishes of our flesh. It is our flesh that experiences disappointment, not our spirit.

‘We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.’—Ro 8:28

We can all probably quote this from memory. If we truly believe it, then even if we don't know why things are not working out the way we would choose or expect, we should feel no disappointment. We know it is according to God's purpose and for our good.

What is our defense against disappointment? Our defense is delight: 'I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.' *{Ps 40:8}* If this truly is the sentiment of our hearts—'not my will but thine be done'—then *{Lu 22:42}* we cannot be harmed by Satan's attempts to trouble us through disappointment in the way things are happening in our lives.

Delighting in God's will and having faith in Romans 8:28 will not remove us from the battle in which we find ourselves. We will still have trials in our jobs, in our homes, and with family and friends. But the victory will be ours if the new creature directs our actions—if our faith has been expressed and strengthened, and if the 'bridge' between our flesh and our new will has been cut to halt the adversary's advance.

Summary

We have considered four ways Satan tries to kill us spiritually and frustrate God's plan. But as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 2:11, 'we are not ignorant of his devices.' Our advantage over Satan is our knowledge of his devices. He has practiced deception since the garden of Eden. The children of Israel faced countless distractions during their journey to the promised land. Many of the ancient worthies fought hard to resist doubt, disappointment and discouragement. We have all these examples of the adversary's tricks, plus the experiences of our Lord and the early Church in battling him.

Each of Satan's attacks will vary, but his methods are always the same. And we know those methods. This knowledge is our defense and the knowledge that 'since God be for us, who can be against us' *{Ro 8:31}*

May the Lord help us all in the battle.

Hallelujah!

The Ecclesia-Bro. Piotr Mrzyglod, Poland

PEACE UNTO YOU, BRETHREN. May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus and his Father be with you. I bring you the Christian love from my home ecclesia in Chorzow.

The ecclesia is the place where we meet with our spiritual family. For some, Christ's words signify that, for his sake, we must forsake those closest to us, that the ecclesia is really our only family. In the ecclesia as in all families we are also bound by certain rules; there are rules of conduct and laws. It is only when all members strive to conduct themselves according to these principles that the ecclesia will realize the fullness of God's blessing.

What are these laws? The main law by which the Church of God governs itself is the law of love. In John's gospel we read:

'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'—Joh 13:34,35

This is a practical love, an active love, affecting not only our fleshly welfare, but also that of the spirit. In 1 John we read:

'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?'—1 John 3:17

If we are suppose to care for the temporal needs of a brother, then how much more are we suppose to care for his spiritual needs!

If every one would reflect on the influence his actions or words have on the fellowship, if every one would seek the good of his neighbor and not his own, this would suffice and no other law would be necessary. But this is not the case.

Although everyone seated here before me would say that he loves his brother, if we had to transform our words into actions, each one would react somewhat differently. That is why the scriptures give us detailed laws by which the Body of Christ rules itself.

The place where we can best determine how far we have advanced in the development of our character is, after all, the ecclesia. There our characters are in close contact; there we learn what our Lord or the apostles would do if they were in our place. Occasionally someone may feel discouraged when problems arise in the

ecclesia; but there must be such occasions. We must learn to bear with one another.

It would seem that the greatest cause of friction in ecclesias is because there are individuals at various levels of spiritual development. Considering that there may be brethren who are weak and not grounded in the Truth, or some with 'new ideas,' the ecclesia has specific responsibilities. The apostle Paul in Romans writes:

'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 neighbor for his good to edification.'—Ro 15:1,2

Bearing the Infirmities of Others

What does it mean to take on oneself another's infirmities? Who is considered 'weak'? Some are physically weak and some are mentally weak, unable to grasp the deeper things of God's truth. There are also brethren who are spiritually weak. We may at times find ourselves in one of these conditions. Everyone of us can become weak, but not many of us would be able to lift himself up out of such a condition if it were not for the ecclesia. There always seems to be a brother or sister who can comfort us, who are able to 'rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' {Ro 12:15}

If somebody does not possess such a talent, he can help a weak brother or sister through prayer. This is one of the most effective means of providing help to one in need. Of course if our intentions and our prayers are sincere, then, in proportion to our ability, works will follow.

In writing about taking another's infirmities on one's self, the apostle Paul must have had in mind that we should try to understand the other brother, that we should give up our own rights for the benefit of others. We will be able to progress in this respect only when we are pure in heart because only such hearts are far from suspicion and distrust.

Often the weaknesses of others irritate or upset us. Let us remember how we were at the beginning of our walk in the footsteps of Christ. Let us keep in mind just how 'advanced' we truly are, how far we still are from the ideal left us by our Lord. Only when we are humble and feel we are unprofitable servants, will we be able to 'take another's infirmities upon ourselves.'

However, it may happen that we will need help from someone close to us, but will not receive it. Why? Because no one may know we are in trouble. To avoid such a situation, we have testimony meetings in our ecclesias. This is an occasion to confess our sins and ask for forgiveness; it is then that we can ask our brethren for help in our experiences and trials. But this will only happen if we overcome our pride and open our hearts before our fellow brethren. For this to happen, we must be convinced that our utterances, our weaknesses, will not be mentioned or discussed by others. Just by admitting that we have problems or troubles we are strengthened by God; from that moment we feel better. When we add to this the prayers of our fellow brethren, we may rest assured that our problems will shortly disappear.

Seeking the Good of Others

Another principle by which our ecclesias are guided is found in 1 Corinthians 10:24 (NIV): 'Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.' This is an exceptionally difficult rule to follow in our day when the main motivation in most people is gain. Sometimes we hear it said that something 'doesn't pay,' So we don't act. However, for a Christian, bad conduct does not pay.

So before submitting ideas which may be controversial, before we consider anything, let us ask, How will my brother benefit from this? Will my actions edify him?

In belonging to an ecclesia, sharing in the fellowship with the Lord's people, we willingly give up some of our own rights for the sake of unity. The ecclesia imposes certain limitations on us. We read about this in 1 Corinthians 8:13:

'Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.'

Yet on the other hand, couldn't one say as did the apostle Paul, that we are called unto liberty? *{Ga 5:13}* Wouldn't this prove that in the ecclesia one's personal liberty is most important and inviolable? Not so. After all, this same apostle cautions us: 'But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.' *{1Co 8:9}* Moreover, although we have been made free in Christ, we are, in fact, always bond servants.

Every man is a servant to someone: either God or Satan. In coming to Christ, we are released from the control of God's adversary. At

the moment of our consecration we again become, in a certain sense, bond servants of Christ. So in fact we have liberty only to do good: 'Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' { *James 4:17* } Which of us cannot do good?

Let us take note of the immense responsibility laid upon Christians for wasted opportunities! We are held accountable before the Father not only for that which we have done, but also for that which we could have done. Let that thought urge us on to still greater zeal in God's service, to a greater consecration.

Being part of an ecclesia means a continual service; it is a mutual support, an indication of mutual esteem. Our Lord said,

'Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.'—Mt 10:42

This means that even the smallest, seemingly insignificant aid offered to a sister or brother will be rewarded by the Lord. But even if this were not the case, we should reach that condition of heart where helping others brings us pleasure and joy.

Sometimes it is necessary for us to help one of the brethren in a way that might be humiliating for us, but at such a time, let us remember the words of our Master who said,

'If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.'—Joh 13:14

The ecclesia is also a school of humility; therefore,

'Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.'—Ga 5:26

We Are All Debtors to God

Let us remember that for all we possess—our families, our homes, our employment, as well as our knowledge of God's Word—for all these without exception, we are indebted to our Father. All this is temporal. However, we can lose everything in the space of a day. Therefore, let us not envy anyone for that which is temporary or fleeting. That which is considered of value by others are not the hallmarks of a Christian. If people despised our Lord and his disciples, can we expect that they will hold us in high esteem?

In the above verse the apostle Paul writes that we should not provoke one another. There could be various reasons for irritation. Sometimes someone will, with every question, stubbornly repeat his own ideas, which are not shared by the majority of the class. Another might consider himself very important in the ecclesia and give a lengthy answer, almost a discourse, to every question. Another may criticize less important matters that the Bible leaves open to interpretation. There could be thousands of reasons for provocation; let us not be one of them. Therefore,

‘Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.’—Eph 4:32

And ‘let each esteem the other better than themselves.’ Would that we would have the sentiments of the apostle Paul when speaking of the ecclesia in Rome:

‘For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.’—Ro 1:11,12

Do we long for the brethren when we are not able to attend a meeting? Do we miss the fellowship of the brethren, not just once a week on Sundays, but also during the week? I think each of us would say yes to this question because we realize that each meeting we fail to attend is a spiritual loss for the New Creature from which it is difficult to recover. For the ecclesia is not only a place where we find mutual help and strength, it is also a place where we obtain knowledge about the Bible, where we learn to recognize times and seasons, and where we feed our ‘New Man.’

If we severely limit the nourishment of our bodies, in time they become accustomed to less and less food until eventually one can become ill from lack of food. So with the New Creature when it is not nourished regularly by God’s Word; in time it can die.

Today the world offers us so much of its food that the words of the apostle are specially timely: ‘Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.’ In order to be in the condition of being able to differentiate between the thistle and the vine, we must understand the Word of God. That is why the study of God’s Word is so important. This is where we learn to understand the Lord’s will.

It is sometimes difficult for us to understand that not every mind can grasp the details of the God’s Plan. It is important for each of

us to know the fundamental doctrines to the extent given to us by the Father.

‘And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.’—Php 3:15

This is a rule which agrees with the words of the apostle Paul found in Romans 14:1 where we read: ‘Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.’ Therefore, in secondary matters concerning preferences or in something not written in an easily discernible manner in the Bible, we should be tolerant.

Correcting Error

In concluding our consideration of laws and responsibilities which govern our ecclesias, I leave you with one responsibility which is not pleasant, but very necessary. I have in mind the responsibility of admonishing a brother or sister who is in error. Regarding this very important role within the Lord’s ecclesia, we read in 1 Thessalonians 5:11:

‘Wherefore, comfort [Polish Bible: admonish] yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.’

Note that the apostle Paul makes an appeal for a general admonishing of ourselves! Evidently this does not mean that at the first occasion we should seek to find fault in one another in order to admonish ourselves. Certainly the apostle Paul did not have this in mind because the admonition should be edifying. And really it is difficult to admonish anyone in this manner without offending him. Therefore before we undertake such a step we must approach the matter with an earnest prayer for God’s help.

Admonishing can be accomplished in various ways: by psalms and hymns, also by not participating in things which are not in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, or even with a look like our Lord gave Peter when he denied him. The important thing to remember is that in admonishing a brother or sister, it is not done to show how holy we are and how much the other is a sinner, but that he correct himself and understand that his conduct is wrong. The result of proper admonition is not only the correction of the individual who is admonished, but also general edification. Then instead of ill-will between individuals, brotherly love will be strengthened.

The ecclesia of God must, however, defend the interests of pure Bible teachings. Let us be aware of God's warnings telling us that especially in the last days the great Deceiver would be extremely active. The apostles had already warned us that after their death there would arise in the Church wolves in sheep's clothing, seeking to draw the faithful after them. It is written that we should avoid such individuals:

'Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.'—Ti 3:10, NIV

Each one of us knows perfectly the Lord's rule written in Matthew 18. We are also familiar with the words of the apostle Paul:

'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.'—Ga 6:1

Let us note the emphasis here: that we admonish others in the spirit of meekness. This is a great talent granted to only a few.

On the other hand the Lord's direction seems to contradict 1 Timothy 5:20, 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.' But the words refer to two different circumstances. In Matthew's gospel we read, 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault.'

The sin under consideration here is one which is known only by one's self and the one who sinned. If, however, the brother's sin is known to all and despite previous discussions the brother continues in his wrong, then the admonition may be public. In Volume 6, page 301, we read:

'Such a public rebuke necessarily implies a public sin of a grievous nature.'

Nevertheless, admonition is not merely to draw someone's attention to a wrong. One form of admonition is exclusion from the fellowship. We must remember that judgment does not belong to us. We may not make a final judgment regarding a brother. We may rather give our opinion on some particular, definite behavior. Even the act of disfellowshipping must show a love for that person. Exclusion from the fellowship should not be considered a punishment. It is only a strong form of admonition that should arouse repentance. If, however, that does not take place, that person should be considered by us as a 'heathen man and a

publican.’ Let us remember, however, that the exclusion is not permanent. When the debarred individual shows remorse, correction, or when he desires fellowship, the ecclesia is to return its brotherly fellowship to that person.

None of us can build himself up in seclusion because then he would lose the help of the Almighty, His blessing, and even fellowship with Him. Because we have fellowship with God, if we...

‘Walk in the light... we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.’—1 John 1:7

Let us note that we have fellowship with the Father and His Son not only when we conduct ourselves properly and believe in the atoning blood of Christ, but also when we have fellowship with the brethren. So let us strive for it; let us endeavor, at any cost, to attend ecclesia meetings with active participation. If sometimes it becomes necessary to admonish a brother through disfellowship, let him remember that this is not permanent. Instead of being offended by the brethren, let such an individual ask for forgiveness, correct his error, and desire to return to fellowship.

If we will strive to observe the principles governing God’s ecclesias, if we long for the fellowship of the brethren, then we will be able to repeat the psalmist’s words, ‘Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’ {*Ps 133:1*} Then the ecclesia will be the place where we will long to be because in the ecclesia we will have fellowship with Christ and the Father. This is a great privilege which I think all here will greatly appreciate.

Amen.

Beautifying the House of the Lord-Bro. Ioan Neagomir, Romania

I HAVE THE GREAT JOY OF BEING here with you with the sincere desire to praise our Lord by all that we say and do.

Beloved brethren, preparing this subject, which is So useful today, was a special blessing to me and I hope it will also be a blessing for you.

Our proper attitude and behavior in the house of the Lord will adorn and beautify it. To adorn means to make something nice, pleasant, admirable. When we look at one another, we see that a smile and joy adorns our face. We are pleasant, beautiful in the eyes of the brethren and in the eyes of the Father.

We apply the phrase 'house of the Lord' in both an individual and collective sense. In 2 Corinthians 5:1,2 the apostle Paul uses the expression, 'earthly house of this tabernacle,' and 'desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' The apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:13,14 says, 'as long as I am in this tabernacle,' and 'I must put off this my tabernacle.'

In the individual sense, which refers to our natural body as the residence of the New Creature, the child of God has the greatest responsibility. In the other sense of the word Paul says, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple [Greek: *naos*, house in itself] of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?' {1Co 3:16} In this house each Christian is a member.

Individual Beauty

The cultivation of individual beauty is our contribution to the beauty of the Lord's house. But to what can we compare individual and collective beauty? 'Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever,' says the psalmist in chapter 93:5.

'Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house; So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.'—Ps 45:10,11

Therefore a life which is consecrated and holy, where we stand in the Holy enlightened by the golden candlestick, eat of the unleavened bread, and offer sweet incense on the golden altar, will make us pleasing to the Father.

The prophet Isaiah describes our Lord: 'He hath no form nor comeliness... and we hid as it were our faces from him.' {Isa 53:2,3} The surrendering of his will and his earthly life to the Father according to his covenant of sacrifice lacked beauty in the eyes of the Jews. Our sacrificial offering will not be beautiful in the eyes of the world. Instead it will produce a stench for 'the servant is not greater than his lord.' {Joh 13:16}

As it was with our Lord, immediately after we consecrate we are begotten by the holy spirit and we have access to the Holy. Here the process of our sanctification begins; we begin to ‘adorn our robe.’ In other words, we develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

‘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.’—Ps 45:13,14

Since we want the king to desire our beauty, we will work to change our minds and wills. We look to our perfect model, our Lord.

Although we need not neglect our bodies but should give them due care, our attention should first be directed to the inner clothing, to clothing ‘the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness’; { *Ephesians 4:24* } to putting on ‘the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.’ { *Eph 6:11* } In Colossians 3:12,14 we are told to put on ‘bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.’ The apostle Peter emphasizes the need for inner adornment when he says,

‘Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.’—1Pe 3:3,4

And in 1 Peter 5:5, ‘Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder, Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.’ Paul tells us to ‘make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.’ { *Ro 13:14* }

These things more or less influence our inner being. We want to point out two more which affect those on the outside, other people. The Lord says that if we fulfill these responsibilities, we are beautiful.

‘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

It is an honor for us to be able to preach the glad tidings of future peace and joy to all who have a heart prepared to listen. We read in Romans 10:14,

‘How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?’

How shall those of the household of faith whose eyes are not yet open, hear that our Lord has begun to reign?

Also Isaiah 40 draws our attention to the special message which the feet members will give: ‘Comfort ye, comfort ye my people ... cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished.’ Yes, this is the message to the Jews.

We realize that on this side of the veil we can only partially achieve the beauty of our individual and collective house in its different aspects. However, at the first resurrection the realization of our hopes will bring perfect beauty with our glorification to be with him.

The Perfection of Beauty

In Psalms 50:2 the Prophet David says, ‘Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.’ In Psalms 45 this same prophet gives us a characterization of the beauty of our Lord, the beauty that we should copy: speech full of grace, a brave soldier, loving, a defender of gentleness, righteousness and truth, teacher, righteous judge, and king. Of course, some of these are not for us in this present life, but experiences are permitted to prepare us for our future position. The character which we form expresses itself through our attitude and behavior. In other words, who we are as individuals and what we have inside will be manifested on the outside. ‘For as he thinketh in his heart, So is he.’ {Pr 23:7} But we cannot say that we or others have such-and-such a character after just one or two manifestations. These may be merely incidental. Features of character are those that express an established attitude and which constantly manifest themselves in one’s conduct.

We are not allowed to pass judgment upon someone else’s character. We should rather find excuses for them, thinking that perhaps they acted under the influence of unfavorable circumstances. We are not born with a fixed character. It is formed as a function of our orientation and by the influences to which we submit.

Dear brethren, I like the way Bro. Russell expresses this in Volume 1, chapter 10, page 203, which I would like to read:

‘We do not either conform or transform ourselves; but we do either submit ourselves to be conformed to the world by the worldly influences, the spirit of the world around us, or submit ourselves to the will of God, the holy will or Spirit, to be transformed by heavenly influences exercised through the Word of God. You that are consecrated, to which influences are you submitting? The transforming influences lead to present sacrifice and suffering, but the end is glorious. If you are developing under these transforming influences, you are proving daily what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.’

In order to harmonize that which we believe, think, and feel, with our conduct—or in other words to act in conformity with our faith—habit is very important. We all know that everything, however big or small, starts from a thought, from a small idea. It is necessary for a Christian to cultivate thoughts in the Truth, in spiritual things, to form the mind of Christ. True is the proverb, ‘Plant a thought, harvest an act, plant an act and harvest a habit, plant a habit and harvest a character, plant a character and harvest a destiny.’ In Romans 8:6 the apostle Paul says, ‘For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.’

Our whole life is dependent on our way of thinking. In the beginning it may appear to be totally insignificant, to be only a little idea. But what different results it may produce! Satan said in his heart, ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the most High.’ {*Isa 14:13, 14*} But Jesus, on the contrary, said, ‘not my will, but thine be done.’ {*Lu 22:42*} We know what the results were from the Lord’s words in Matthew 23:12, ‘Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.’

Thus the apostle Paul exhorts us to cultivate proper thoughts:

‘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.’—Php 4:8

In the Manna text of February 9 Bro. Russell says:

‘The Christian’s *habit of thought* has much indeed to do with his spiritual progress or retrogression, as it is also an index of his spiritual state; and good habits of thought need to be carefully cultivated.’

The Importance of Good Habits

We often hear of certain brethren having a habit of systematically attending the meetings, of being punctual, of reading So many pages a day, of praying in certain situations, of making So many visits to the brethren a week, of helping those in need, of discussing the truth as many times as they have occasion, of systematically contributing to the Lord’s work according to their financial means, etc. Or, on the contrary, of some who don’t have the habit of always coming to the meetings, don’t have the habit of being punctual, of doing one thing or another systematically, who don’t have the habit of witnessing to their neighbors whenever they have the opportunity, etc. Except when there are good reasons, such habits show two kinds of attitude about these things.

All that pertains to Christian life and activity must become such a habit for us that we do it automatically, as an inborn reflex like walking, eating, and sleeping. In the morning when the alarm rings our first thought should be,

‘What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.’—Ps 116:1214

Those who daily practice the Morning Resolve, the Vow, the Manna, and a systematic study of the Truth, can testify to the help they provide. Thus it is through good habits that the truth can become fixed in our characters, that we can become identified with it.

We know that attitude is a position taken toward someone, something, a situation, a principle, etc., and that this is evident in conduct or behavior. We as Christians have certain attitudes toward God, toward our Lord Jesus, toward the truth and its service, toward ourselves, and all mankind. And we have certain attitudes in different situations, such as in the family, in a meeting, at the work place, in travel, in private, in prayer, and in discussions.

Although an examination of these in this order would be of interest, we cannot do so since they are mutually dependent on each other; they are correlated one with another. We say they are dependent on each other because, for example, we can not love God without loving the brethren. The apostle John says,

‘For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?’—14:20

So our first priority of love is the brethren, then all mankind. ‘As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.’ *{Ga 6:10}* ‘And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.’ *{1Jo 3:16}* It would not be acceptable to love the world if we did not love the brethren. By loving the truth we love God who gave the Lord Jesus who is the image of the truth and who gave witness to the truth. ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’ *{Joh 14:6}* ‘To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.’ *{Joh 18:37}*

Concerning attitudes about one’s self the apostle tells us, ‘Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.’ *{Php 2:3}* ‘In honour preferring one another.’ *{Ro 12:10}* Love for self should come last. So let us look at a Christian’s attitude from another point of view: its content. The attitude of a Christian can be categorized more or less in these three groups:

1. Obedience [submission]
2. Respect [reverence]
3. Thankfulness [gratitude]

Obedience [submission]

Obedience is that attitude which gives serious attention to another’s words, advice, and counsel. It also means to be under the authority or in the service of someone.

‘Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey.’—Ro 6:16

From servants of sin and unrighteousness we have become servants of righteousness, servants of the Lord and his will. As a sign of our condition as servants, the Lord has bored our ears through with the truth. *{Ex 21:6 Psalms 40:6}*

But to reach this state, by his grace we have made a covenant of submission, we have sworn to be faithful unto death. In consecrating ourselves we put ourselves under divine authority. Now we are careful about everything the Lord tells us. Our attitude is, 'Speak Lord for thy servant heareth.'

Now we no longer think whether or not we will do what God says, but more importantly how we can fulfill His will in a way which will be pleasing to Him. The constant attitude of obedience [submission] in a Christian's conduct proves that he has developed the character traits of faith, humility, gentleness, loyalty, purity, honesty, the spirit of sacrifice, and zeal in service.

We have, as the apostle says in Hebrews chapter 12, 'a great cloud of witnesses' which gave evidence of faithfulness through obedience. 'Though he [our Lord] were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.' {He 5:8} How much more should this be true of us! The value of our Lord's submission and obedience is specially valuable for us in every way in the sense that the apostle explains in Romans 5:19. Because of his obedience, we are reckoned justified. On this basis the Father accepts the 'gold' of our submission now, for in the future we will be co-laborers with our Justifier in the work of bringing men into at-one-ment with God.

Submission to the commandments and the divine will includes also submission to the divine arrangement established for the family and for the church. A wife should submit to her husband as the church should submit to Christ. {see Ephesians 5:22} This attitude should be mutually manifested among the consecrated, a fact which is a proof of being filled with the holy spirit. {see Ephesians 5:21}

Respect [reverence]

To be respectful means to have esteem, consideration toward someone; to honor. The word respect is especially used in connection with man, while reverence is used with God. Christian respect comes from the correct appreciation of self and the sincere recognition of the qualities or authority of another. Respect toward God is a holy fear that in some way we might be displeasing to Father as expressed in the words, 'Whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' {He 12:28}

Respect for man implies love, humility, cleanliness, justice, generosity. To respect brethren, members of our family, and

others, means to have consideration for their rights and privileges as much as we are able. Consideration toward others has an impact upon us also because it gives dignity to our character. In the final analysis our image as a Christian depends on how we treat others. We believe this is the idea suggested by the apostle Paul when he instructed Timothy:

‘Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.’—1Ti 4:12

Of course a great responsibility in this is carried by the servants of the ecclesia, but the same principle applies to all the consecrated. Order, discipline, cleanliness, and respect for one another should come from the inside, not the outside.

The Importance of Attitude

Dear brethren, we would like to mention the correct attitude in places like this, in our meetings. This place, for example, and other places, are not in themselves holy. A place is only holy if the Lord’s people meet there to praise, pray, and study His Word. A lesson that is dear to us is how God dealt with Moses at the burning bush.

The presence of Jehovah with His people is a special opportunity for us and we should give it the proper consideration. Our attitude is expressed through the attention given at the moment, through prayer, speech, the way we dress, the position of our body, and discussion with the brethren during intermission. It should always be reverential, respectful. Let us walk circumspectly, ready rather to listen than to ‘bring a foolish sacrifice.’ Let us be more aware of our heart condition, whether we be in a meeting or alone in prayer.

Thankfulness [gratitude]

Thankfulness implies satisfaction, modesty, peace, joy, praise, appreciation, generosity. God is the giver of all good and perfect gifts, and we are continually receiving them. The greatest gift we have received is His grace in Christ, which is manifested by the fact that our eyes have been opened to see the truth and our hearts have been opened to receive it.

The prophet David in Psalms 50 verse 14 says we are to ‘offer unto God thanksgiving.’ Thanksgiving cannot be just the expression of the lips; it goes further, to the sacrifice of our lives consecrated in conformity to our covenant.

In the beginning of our way we were not aware of how many reasons we have for thanksgiving and gratitude to God. This attitude develops with time until the expression of thanksgiving and gratitude predominates in the prayers of a consecrated Christian. This happens not because he feels the need, but because he has learned to leave things in the Lord's hands. He will notice that 'all things work together for good' even in experiences which are displeasing to the natural man. He will be able to be joyful in them because he is thankful for the way divine wisdom has seen best to lead. He will receive joy and peace by putting in practice the apostle's counsel to 'be content with such things as ye have,' and 'godliness with contentment is great gain.' {He 13:5 1 Timothy 6:6}

'God loveth a cheerful giver.' (2Cor. 9:7) The one who gives cheerfully is the one who feels that all he has, he has received. He expresses his gratitude by giving to others. An aspect of similar importance is that of generosity, as the apostle Paul says, 'abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God.' {2Co 9:12}

We as men have different ways of expressing praise and gratitude toward the Lord. We, beloved brethren, don't want to be among those who consider that only our way of giving praise and gratitude is acceptable. To praise and to be grateful to the Lord is even proper for those in the world. We want to be among those who encourage, who easily forgive, don't accuse, who don't speak evil of others.

We all have need of comforting, encouragement, understanding, forgiveness. Let us be living epistles in which brethren and all men can read all our features as summarized in the one word love. Let us be in the attitude to receive with gratitude and praise the sweet ointment of divine love, in the way and through the means which His wisdom sees best. And let us also pour this ointment generously on others.

I desire this blessed state for you, as well as for myself.

Amen.

**'I Shall Be Next Unto Thee' -Bro. Roman Rorata,
Poland**

BELOVED BRETHREN IN JESUS Christ, participants of the Eighth International Bible Student Convention. God has permitted

us to arrive here from various places on this earth So in these turbulent end times of the vanishing world He can give us the privilege of participating in the joy of fellowship and the teachings of the Word of God. This is yet another oasis for us to experience temporary rest and strengthen us for the further journey following the captain of our salvation, Jesus Christ.

I bring warm greetings from the Bilgoraj ecclesia. All the brethren from that ecclesia wish you manifold blessings and many spiritual lessons. Personally, I am grateful to the heavenly father that for the sixth time I am able to participate in such a grand gathering. I am constantly grateful for the privileges our Lord gives me and the spiritual riches of his grace, especially for the privilege to serve with the Word of Truth.

Jonathan, a Splendid Example

For this convention I have selected the title 'I shall be next unto thee.' The words are taken from 1 Samuel 23:16,17, which read:

'And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee.'

The Bible provides us with splendid examples to follow, something that is rare on this earth. We stand in awe of people who do not consider their greatness, pride, social position, etc., in order to help their neighbor. In this case Jonathan, Saul's son, provides this kind of example. He decides to travel to Ziph where David is to fulfill the dictates of his own heart. He has a plan to encourage his friend and help him in his difficult experiences.

Where in the present, egotistical world can one find such wonderful people who would leave their position including the comforts of the royal palace to care for those who find themselves in a difficult position in their lives? Much more prevalent are the examples of human indifference to those who need moral support.

Let us scrutinize our hearts when we happen to hurt someone or cause pain through inappropriate behavior instead of being an encouragement. Do we immediately make an effort to alleviate our brother's pain rather than passively watch as he suffers? Quite often, the Lord permits some hard experiences through which we are able to show sympathy to others. This is good. However,

sometimes we may not be able to accomplish this in a person's life; it might be too late. Someone once said:

A tree is not aware of the weight of a bird, but the bough will move when it flies away.

So it is, the world does not notice the deeds of a noble man until death removes him from the earth.

Jonathan's life becomes tightly tied to David's who was forced to hide in the forbidding mountains when he was pursued by Saul. Notice that Jonathan did not remain passive when faced with David's experiences. Jonathan knew his father was doing harm to his friend and war companion who once in the name of God defeated the Philistines during his battle with Goliath.

Jonathan, A Man of Principle

Notice that for Jonathan his family ties had little value; he was not seduced by the idea of becoming the heir to the throne after his father. He stood for principle, knowing that Saul's vengefulness could not be justified. Jonathan took David's side 'and strengthened his hand in God.' The Bible says: 'Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.' {*Eccl. 11:1*}

It was not long before this that David encouraged all of Israel, when Israel's small army stood facing the Philistine army and Goliath mockingly called on the Israelites:

'And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? Choose a man, and let him come and oppose me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us.... When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.'—1Sa 17:8, 9,11

Israel's warriors were paralyzed by fear thinking that there was no one among them as strong as Goliath. This situation lasted 40 days. Every time Goliath would step out asking to duel, the entire heart of Israel would tremble. When David volunteered to fight Goliath, he was summoned by Saul and it was then that he spoke these words of encouragement:

‘And David said to Saul, Let no man’s heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’—1Sa 17:32

David conquered Goliath in the name of the Lord. This very event cemented the hearts of David and Jonathan So that they remained friends through good and evil.

Now Jonathan encourages David: ‘Fear not: for the hand of my father shall not find thee.’ Jonathan wanted to assure David that he was indeed the Lord’s anointed and that just as God was with him during the fight with Goliath, he would also spare him from the vengeance of Saul.

God would not allow his chosen king to perish against His will. Surely this story was recorded for a wise purpose—so that all the Lord’s anointed, those called to be saints, recipients of the Holy Spirit, be convinced in their minds that without God’s will ‘there shall not an hair of your head perish’ {*Lu 21:18*} and ‘In God have I put my trust; I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.’ {*Ps 56:11*} How often, though, our fears take over and unrest takes away our sleep. We worry about our future, our tomorrows, particularly during those times when people who are close to us turn against us and try to cause us harm. But how we rejoice when someone just like Jonathan crosses our path and provides us with ‘strength in God.’

Indeed, such are God’s angels sent to strengthen us in the conviction that God is our refuge and tower and in Him we are secure. God’s providence is full of unknowns and it is difficult to see what hides behind labyrinths of circumstances. We have, therefore, to permit the faith that is in us to take over and walk straight forward toward adversities believing in the promise, ‘I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.’ {*Jos 1:5*}

Jonathan later says, ‘thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto you.’ Indeed, Jonathan’s position is worthy of emulation. Has our spiritual development reached the point of true humility? Do we prefer others and take a less honorable place for ourselves? Jonathan’s actions might appear strange in our times where daily we witness competition in our society, and inexcusable power struggles. The so-called ‘high level struggles’ to become leader of a nation at times loses all decency and are repulsive to the average citizen. There is a definite shortage of principled people who put first the welfare of their nation and society. All would like to rule, but few are willing to serve. The gaining of privileges or any

position among the brethren by discrediting others has no place among the believers.

We recall the words of Jesus: 'Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.' He further directs his words to the believers:

'But it shall not be so among you [the true Christians]: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.'—Mt 20:25-28.

Oh if only this principle of Christ were applied by those who call themselves Christians and are in the position of power. The exposures of indecent power struggles would no longer appear in the media.

Jonathan prefigures the Ancient Worthies. The name 'Jonathan' means 'gift of God' or 'Jehovah is the giver.' This seems to represent the godly men of the Old Testament. They constitute a lovely reflection of the wonderful disposition and intellect that Jonathan possessed. These worthies lived before Christ though by their actions they can be compared to the Church of the Gospel Age.

Great faith and zeal for God's work characterized their lives as well as the enthusiasm and heroism that we so much admire and imitate as we follow Christ. They lived long before the Gospel Age, but their lives testify that had they lived after the ransom had been paid, they could have belonged to the Church of Christ. The Apostle Paul writes:

'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: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.'—He 11:37-40.

Lives Lived by Faith

These men of God, just like Jonathan, lived by faith the meaning of the lesson: 'I shall be next unto thee.' They could not have been 'the first.' Such an opportunity did not exist because the way to participate in the Kingdom of Heaven was not open because the ransom was not paid at the time. Through their eyes of faith they looked into the wonderful future described in colorful images of the redeemed mankind and believed that Christ, head and body, would establish this blessed state through their royal rule. God promised this rule to the victorious Church as the Apostle Paul states: 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.' {2Ti 2:12}

Jonathan lived during the time when David was anointed king over Israel. We understand that David's rule does not represent Christ's Kingdom during the Millennium. In the future Millennial Kingdom, there will be no bloodshed and no wars such as David had with the neighboring countries. There 'they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks' {Isa 2:4} and 'neither shall they learn war any more' {Micah 4:3} In this kingdom eternal peace will rule since the Prince of Peace will be its ruler. {Isa 9:5,6}

In this kingdom, the Old Testament Worthies will be next after Christ. The book of Revelation describes their position:

'The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'—Re 4:10,11.

The phrase 'cast their crowns before the throne' implies that these prophets gave up their own glory on behalf of Christ and the Church. They prophesied that the crown which signifies royal rule and whatever honors are associated with it belonged not to them but to the Christ and his elected Church. The Apostle Paul wrote,

'If So be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.'—Ro 8:17

Jonathan said to David, 'I shall be next unto thee.' Positions in the future kingdom were handed out. David was to remain the king, the first man in the nation. Similarly Christ, the Lord, with his bride, the Church, will be the firstfruits since they will attain the highest level, namely the divine nature—glory, honor and immortality.

The Ancient Worthies will receive the perfect human nature on earth and they will be viewed as representatives of the invisible king. The psalmist prophetically speaks of this time:

‘Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.’—Ps 45:16

When the earthly phase of the Christ’s Kingdom is established, the Ancient Worthies will be the firstfruits of resurrection. They will receive a ‘better resurrection’ that will bring them everlasting life on earth. We read,

‘And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.’—Isa 1:26

The Covenant of Mercy

‘And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee; The Lord do So and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee. But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.’—1Sa 20:11,13,15

When David became established on his throne, he remembered the promise given to Jonathan regarding his offspring. David asked his servants:

‘Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?’—2Sa 9:1

He wanted to show mercy in remembrance of his wonderful friend. David’s servants informed him that, indeed, there remained after Jonathan one son who was lame in both feet.

‘He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.’—2Sa 4:4

The name 'Mephibosheth' means dispeller of shame (i.e., the oracles of Baal), disgrace of lips. These seem to characterize the Jewish nation. The Jews are children in the direct line of the prophets just as the Apostle Peter proclaims:

'Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.'—Ac 3:25

The Jews were proud of the fact that Abraham was their father even though Abraham's faith as well as the spiritual disposition of other prophets was not a part of their lives.

Mephibosheth was unkind, suspicious, almost unfriendly toward David. For example, when David was trying to escape Absalom, Mephibosheth did not stand by David's side but remained loyal to Absalom. It seems that Mephibosheth did not inherit any of his father's wonderful character. David, however, did not consider this, remembering the covenant of mercy between himself and his friend Jonathan and displaying this mercy towards Mephibosheth despite his ungratefulness.

'As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons... for [Mephibosheth] did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.'—2Sa 9:11,13
David's Outstanding Character

What a wonderful character David possessed. For the sake of the father he accepted his lame son. He was not embarrassed to include him as his own family. This was indeed true friendship—holy, eternal and inseparable.

We find in David a great example to emulate, whom God declared, when he chose him to be the king of Israel, that he was 'a man after his own heart.' {1Sa 13:14}

Lame Mephibosheth represents the Jewish nation. It was to this nation that God's prophet Elijah once said:

'How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.'—118:21

Such were the Jews in the past and such they remain. However, one cannot say that they do not serve God just as one cannot say that they do not serve idols in various forms. Money has always

been the biggest idol in that nation. That ‘golden calf’ has been the focus of their attention. Even today we see them dancing around this idol.

For the sake of Jonathan, David showed mercy to Mephibosheth even though Mephibosheth was not worthy. Similarly, the Apostle Paul speaks about the Jewish nation:

‘And So all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sake. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Even So have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.’—Ro 11:26-29,31

‘I will give you the sure mercies of David.’ {Ac 13:34} The Jewish nation will become a recipient of God’s mercy prepared in Jesus Christ according to the promise given before the ages. The nation of Israel having a king with such wonderful character traits—Christ the Lord whom God himself appointed—will be greatly blessed.

Israel will return to fellowship with God and will be regarded as worthy to participate at the king’s table, to be a channel for the blessing of other nations as they approach fellowship with God through accepting the restitution conditions of the New Covenant. The Prophet Isaiah states:

‘And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.’—Isa 25:6

This mountain mentioned by the Lord’s prophet is the earthly kingdom for which we pray: ‘Thy kingdom come.’ This kingdom will come to earth and with it God’s blessings will be poured upon all nations. The Lord will prepare through our Lord Jesus Christ a ‘feast of fat things.’

The redemptive advantages contained in the sacrifice laid for the sins of the world are these ‘fat things.’ These carry with them health and spiritual and moral welfare as the result of the merit of our Lord’s ransom sacrifice to be applied on behalf of mankind in order to lift men up from the fall and sin and lead them into restitution and perfection possessed by Adam in Eden.

‘Wines on the lees’ symbolize wholesome and pure teachings which will fill human hearts with joy, peace, contentment, and happiness. In God’s kingdom there will be no lying, falsehood, illogical teachings about hell, purgatory and other human theories not based on God’s teachings. Streams of pure redemptive truth will flow. Just as in Cana of Galilee, during a wedding feast, Jesus as a Son of Man created wine out of water, So in a like manner, Christ, the Lord of glory, will supply wine (teachings) for all participants in his Messianic Kingdom. {*Joh 2:1-11*}

Israel’s At-One-Ment with God

We thank God for his mercy and favor that is returning to the nation of Israel. In the not too distant future, Israel will return to complete at-one-ment with God through recognizing His son as their savior. They will be accepted into God’s family on the level of perfect humanity and they will partake of the wonderful royal food just as Mephibosheth did.

There will be wonderful bread from heaven for them—the Redeemer, the Son of God, the Messiah guaranteeing eternal life based on obedience. Jesus introduced this eternal truth during his first advent as it is written in John 6:51.

The following applies not only to the Jews but also to all the nations of earth, all of Adam’s posterity: ‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.’

Amen.

He that Humbleth Himself Shall Be Exalter-Bro. Lutz Ruthmann, Germany

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT the high calling of God, we might ask ourselves: Why did God call you or me to such indescribable glory and honor, and why did He ignore people whom we might consider more suitable? Why do we find among the disciples of the Lord only a few high-ranking characters, none a genius who holds the high admiration of his fellow man? The apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Corinthians:

‘He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, So that no man may boast before him.’—1Co 1:28*

In these inspired words of the apostle we find the approach the heavenly Father uses to call members of the Church. Paul shows us the principle used by the Almighty God in this calling: He judges by His own wisdom, not by any human wisdom.

Human wisdom would conclude that the function of a future king and priest required high qualifications; an uneducated fisherman or tax collector would not qualify. However, the Lord working in harmony with his Father called fishermen and tax collectors to be his disciples and made them the foundation of the spiritual temple. God chose 'the things that are not'; in other words, 'the things that are of no value in the world's eyes.' At the same time the apostle says God chose the lowly things of this world 'to nullify the things that are.'

The Choice of David

To help us better understand God's approach let us review the story and circumstances in the choice of David to be king. Jesse brought his sons to Samuel who was to anoint one of them as king according to God's will. God had said to Samuel,

'Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.'—1Sa 16:3

In the sixth verse we are told how Jesse's sons appeared before Samuel. And what happens? Samuel sees Eliab, Jesse's firstborn, a man who attracts his immediate attention because Eliab is powerfully built and handsome. Upon seeing Eliab he said, 'Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord.' Samuel was no longer interested to see the others; he was sure this one would be anointed. This was Samuel's choice, not God's. God thought of someone quite different, someone whose father considered so insignificant he never asked him to appear.

God did not stop Samuel from making his own personal choice. He intended to give him a lesson, to teach him that God judges according to guidelines that are much different than man's.

'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.'—1Sa 16:7

Jesse didn't consider David, who was grazing the sheep, as a possible choice among his sons. Young David appeared too meaningless and insignificant in his eyes. Jesse judged humanly and who would reproach him for it? Samuel too judged humanly when he thought Eliab would be the one for this high function just because of his outward appearance. Both judged according to human wisdom, but God made chose another according to His wisdom. He chose David.

In this experience we are shown two different ways of judging: as a man judges and as the heavenly Father judges. Man considers the outward appearance, but God the heart. God saw David's heart, that it was humble and teachable, So He chose him and filled him with His holy spirit.

This choice was soon shown to be the correct one. When the Philistines appeared with their frightening warrior Goliath, God again took the approach of choosing the lowly and despised things to shame the powerful. Would it not have been a holy duty for Saul or one of his experienced warriors to fight this Philistine who defied God and Israel's army? But nothing happened. Saul was frightened and all of Israel with him.

But God, who sees the heart, mastered the situation in His own way. He let a shepherd-boy, someone insignificant in man's eyes, become the deliverer and eradicator of this humiliation. And it all happened according to the principle that God chooses the despised from the world to shame the powerful.

And it is Eliab who curses David as wicked and presumptuous because David offered to fight Goliath. *{1Sa 17:28}* Why did Eliab not say he was ready to do away with this source of humiliation of Israel and contempt for his God? Because he was judging humanly. He though he could not fight this giant who was bristling with weapons.

What did David think? Did he believe that as unarmed and inexperienced a warrior as he was, he could defeat Goliath? Let us see exactly what David said about this situation:

'The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.'—1Sa 17:37

It was not suicidal presumption that was driving David to this fight; just knowledge.

‘I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head.’—1Sa 17:45,46

Isn’t this a wonderful attitude, we would almost say true Christian attitude, being shown here by David? He gives himself entirely into God’s hand, faithfully convinced that God will deliver him and Israel. David humbled himself and exalted God at the same time, being also confident that through the most insignificant and apparently less suitable ones, God can achieve wonderful things.

Calling Saul to be an Apostle

We want to consider another example, one that shows how our great God calls according to His own wisdom and knowledge. This calling concerns the choice of Saul to be an apostle. After the ascension of our Lord, Peter stood in the midst of the brethren and said that someone else should receive the apostleship Judas possessed. After that they chose two from their number: Joseph, called Barsabbas, and Matthias. They asked the Lord to show through the drawing of lots who should receive this office. The lot fell on Matthias So he was added to the eleven apostles. It was a human choice, not confirmed by the heavenly Father who had someone else in mind.

Saul from Tarsus was a bitter persecutor of the disciples of Jesus. When Stephen was stoned, Saul agreed with putting him to death and kept the robes of the ones who stoned him. {Ac 7:54-59} The scriptures testify:

‘Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.’—Ac 8:3

But ‘Saul, who was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples’ comes to Damascus. On his journey suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and a voice said to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’—Ac 9:4

Saul becomes blind. The brightness of the glory of the Lord has blinded him and he must be conducted by hand. He comes to Ananias who fears this infuriated persecutor of Christians.

‘Lord, I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here

with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.’—Ac 9:13,14

None of Jesus’ disciples and followers would have thought that of all people this obstinate persecutor of the saints would be called to be an apostle. Anyone else but him! But the Lord called the one whom the Father indicated. {See John 17:9} The Lord said to Ananias,

‘Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name!’—Ac 9:15,16

God didn’t confirm the choice of Matthias, He chose Saul. How unfathomable are God’s ways! He saw the humble heart of Saul and his zeal for Him. Saul believed he was doing a service well-pleasing to God. He was dispersing the churches and persecuting Christians until the Lord showed him that he was going in the wrong direction. Saul was humble and he greatly regretted what he had done out of ignorance. Out of a Saul came Paul. Even after many years Paul always realized,

‘I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am.’—1Co 15:9,10

The Importance of Humility

‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’—Jas 4:6

Paul kept his humility of heart during his entire life following the Lord. The scriptures also give us opposite examples when people who had been exalted by God’s grace lost their humility. The life of king Saul is such an example which teaches us much. Saul had a humble heart when God chose him as Israel’s king. After he sinned and became disobedient, God told him through Samuel,

‘Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel.’—1 Sam.15:17

The Bible doesn’t tell us if Saul possessed special abilities to take on the responsibilities of a king and army commander. If we consider his own words, he said he was from the smallest tribe of Israel and of the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin. Thus his words show us his humility but no special ability, to use

the words of the world. Saul was humble when he was called. What could he have of his own to distinguish himself from all the others? Was it sufficient to be humble? Was he the suitable man, the 'right man in the right place' So to say?

Saul showed despondency when he was called to be king. Considering the impending dangers coming from the Philistines, did he possess the right characteristics of an army commander and liberator of Israel? We can only say that according to man's judgment Saul was unsuitable for ruling as king over Israel. Yet he was God's first choice. What can we say more than the words of Isaiah 55:8, 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways'?

To ask about Saul's qualifications is to judge humanly. It does not take into account that God's spirit strengthens a weak person.

'I can do everything through him who gives me strength.'—Php 4:13

This applied to Saul. As we will see, it is God's spirit that enabled Saul, and in him and through him achieves what Saul could not do by himself. Samuel's prophetic words which he gives to Saul are a definite proof. We read:

'The spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power... and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.'—1Sa 10:6,7

It was the anointing of God's spirit that 'changed Saul into a different person.' From this point forward God was leading Saul, acting in him and through him, and made him into an intrepid, vigorous army commander and king.

Humility and Obedience

The attribution of this divine spirit demanded humility and obedience. We see how soon God's spirit left Saul's side when he became disobedient and proud. When we humbly put everything in God's hand, when we trust that the spirit of the Father operating in us gives us strength and insight—where we cannot do anything from our own strength—then we will walk according to His will and we will accomplish it.

At the time of our 'aptitude test' for the high calling, the heavenly Father doesn't ask, as the world might, 'What can you show that you possess? What references or certificates do you have? Which schools or courses of study did you complete? Where are you from; which languages do you speak?' No. He asks, 'Are you teachable and humble in heart So that you acknowledge you are a sinner in Adam? Do you believe in my son, Christ, that he bought you with his blood and made you free?' It is grace that we receive freely, that we do not deserve, and to which we are not entitled.

'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.'—Rom. 3:23,24

The heavenly Father wants us to develop a steady confidence, not in our own abilities, but in Him and in our Lord as our advocate. We are to develop confidence in His transforming spirit, which operates in the new creature and makes a 'new man' out of us. However, sometimes we are not conscious of this, especially when a thought arises, 'Surely I can not reach this high goal. I'm not intelligent enough to understand this or that, nor do I have the strength to do what the scriptures require of me. I'M NOT... I CANNOT... I HAVE NOT...'

Is it right to become disheartened because we are So weak or insignificant? Would that not imply that our heavenly Father's spirit operating in us would not be able to transform us accordingly to His will? Would it not be better to do everything we can within our power, then leave the results to the Lord? Let us not doubt that God's spirit, which proved to be So powerful in a Saul and in a David, can also operate powerfully in us, that it can prepare us for the work He has for us!

It is normal to feel and recognize even more our own helplessness and shortcomings in the face of God's superior laws. However, this critical insight is not in vain and it is not without reason, as the Lord says, 'Without me you can do nothing!' Doesn't this knowledge—that we from our own strength are not able to do anything—fill our heart with the deepest thankfulness for the Lord's help, causing us to put our only hope in the Lord's redeeming blood?

It seems the apostle Paul had this in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians, 'When I am weak, then I am strong.' {2 Cor. 12:10} t is always when we are fully aware of our weaknesses and

shortcomings that we will put our confidence in the Lord. Then we are strong in the spirit because the Lord wants us that way.

But if we are strong in our own eyes, a spirit of self-assurance and self-satisfaction is revealed; we would have little reason to ask for help from our heavenly Father. Such a worldly, proud spirit cannot bring joy to our Father nor to our Lord. The apostle James tells us,

‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’—Jas 4:6

Our Lord’s parable about the Pharisee and tax collector who prayed may show the accuracy of this observation. *{Lu 18:9-14}* The Pharisee, proud and self-righteous, showed no desire for God’s forgiving grace. It did not seem to him that he needed any personal forgiveness because he was exemplary in every respect. He was not like ‘this tax collector.’ But the tax collector knew he was nothing at all and did not try to justify himself. He put all his confidence in God, saying, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ The Lord insists that afterward the tax collector went home justified.

In the eyes of God and our Lord, two essential points justified the tax collector. First, he objectively revealed his weakness toward God, calling himself ‘a sinner.’ Second, he deeply regretted his shortcomings and besought God’s forgiveness for his sins. His language was that of the heart, not that of words. In contrast the Pharisee praised his own merit toward God with many words, but his heart was empty. Our Lord gives us the moral of this story when he said,

‘Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’—Lu 18:14

This divine principle runs through the whole counsel of salvation. It is shown in pictures in both the Old and New Testaments. Our Lord, being the center of God’s plan, also had to humble himself before the heavenly Father would exalt him. The apostle Paul tells us this:

‘Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven

and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’—Php 2:6-11

‘I will be like the Most High.’

The scriptures also show us the great fall of the cherubim Lucifer, who exalted himself. He wanted, as a mighty robber, to be like the Most High. The prophet Isaiah relates it to us in these words:

‘How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.’—Isa 14:12-15, KJV

Satan persistently continued to follow this thought of self-exaltation and, in so doing, tried to ignore God’s principle of self-humiliation.

In Matthew 4:8-10 we are told how the devil placed our Lord upon a high mountain to show him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And as God’s adversary he tried to turn Jesus from following a way of faithfulness and self-abasement: ‘All this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me.’ Satan again tries to exalt himself and also to keep our Savior from humbling himself before his father. But Jesus resists this cunningly conceived plan by saying, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’

We see once again the activity of the adversary as he applies the same tactics with the elect. And he had some success when he introduced the sin of self-exaltation into the early church which until then was chaste. Thus as the man of sin rises, he progressively reveals himself:

‘That man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; So that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.’—2Thes. 2:35, KJV

Papacy rises. It exalts itself and rules above kings and kingdoms. Its head is the bishop of Rome, who assumes the following presumptuous and God-dishonoring titles: ‘Holy Father,’ ‘most

divine of all heads,' 'High Priest vested with fullness of might,' 'Christ's Representative,' 'Unrestrained Priest,' 'Ruler of the Lord's house,' and 'infallible Pope.' Did Satan succeed in nullifying God's intentions? No, he did not! During all the centuries of oppression and persecution through the papacy there have been followers of the Lord who have not bowed their knees to this Babylonian system. As true followers of Christ they followed the way of self-abasement even to the bitter consequence of an ignominious, violent death. They recalled their Savior's words:

'Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.'—Mt 10:39

The Lord did not immediately destroy this degenerate system—and the one who is responsible for it—because in this way the tares were separated from the wheat. God could have destroyed His adversary immediately, but He kept him alive to demonstrate His fullness of might and the wisdom of His decisions, and thus glorify His name.

The scriptures reveal these motives in the form of a dialog that God has with Pharaoh, a type of Satan, through Moses:

'For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'—Ex 9:15,16

'I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power.' Does not this power of God reside in the calling and election of the church, which the adversary tries to prevent using every means? Are not the members of Christ the ones who with the Lord as their head 'will crush the head of the serpent'? { *Genesis 3:15* }

'The weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.'—1Co 1:25

Here God's inscrutable might and wisdom are revealed. It is an expression of unlimited fullness of might that the heavenly Father does not deploy an army of mighty spiritual beings to destroy Satan and his system. On the contrary He calls weak, low, and meaningless people for this purpose—'have-nots' who are ignored by the world and despised as a whole. Is not the transformation of these weak people by the heavenly Father through His holy spirit and according to His will and for His purpose a show of His unrestrained might? And is it not 'by the foolishness of preaching'

which is also helping in it? {1Co 1:21} Yes, God's spirit is capable of all this, this spirit that is working in those who are weak.

With our limited human mind we can just grasp a bit of the real wisdom and might of the creator, So we should understand that we cannot achieve anything by our own strength. This should make us very humble recognizing that we are at best just 'useless servants.' Once we recognize this we will be ready to put everything in God's hands. From Him we know that He not only possesses the characteristics of might and wisdom, but also of love and justice. As a loving father He will never betray the confidence we have put in Him. Let us not disappoint Him either! Let us be always led through His spirit! Let us abase ourselves under the mighty hand of God, as the apostle Peter tells us:

'Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.' —1Pe 5:6,7

To know that we are in the hands of such a loving and mighty Father gives us peace and safety, which the world cannot give. If we put ourselves confidently under divine protection, nobody will be able to take us out of his hand. Where do we get this assurance? From our beloved Lord who gives us these cheering words:

'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.'—Joh 10:27,28

Nothing can take us out of the hand of God and our Lord if we humbly follow the Lord and listen to his voice. 'For he cares for you.' Let us never forget that. May praise and thanks be given to our heavenly Father and to our beloved Lord. Amen.

Greece and the Seven Churches-Bro. Russell Shallieu

TODAY, PERHAPS MORE THAN ever before, the Christian's walk is by faith. None of us have, like the early church, met the Lord face to face. Nor have we had the opportunity to inquire first hand of any of the twelve who were specially chosen to preach the gospel. But the heavenly Father has given us certain privileges that many down through the Gospel Age have not had. It has been our privilege at the end of this age to travel 'to and fro' as described by the Prophet Daniel, {Da 12:4} to see first-hand both the signs as

well as the sites and wonders {*Jer 32:20*} that the Lord has preserved even to this our generation, to behold the splendor of Jerusalem, ‘The royal city’, {*1 Samuel 27:5*} to walk where the Master once walked, and to stand in places where the prophets once stood!

In this aspiration in early June 1995, 76 brethren departed from the United States—others from Canada, Australia, Germany, and France—to travel to Greece and Turkey. Over the course of 14 days, 88 brethren sojourned where the early church prospered and traveled to places where the apostles ministered and bore witness of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While not a missionary journey in the same sense that the apostles once engaged, it was a mission of individual growth as new creatures. The experiences in convention and on tour provided insights into what happened 1900 years ago and also what may be applied to what is happening today among ourselves as individuals as well as ecclesias. It was, for many, an opportunity of a lifetime which provided inspiration and insight into the scriptures which could not have been otherwise obtained.

We hope to share with you that experience in some small way. Perhaps you too will receive a blessing from The Greece and Seven Churches Convention/Tour.

Greece

For those traveling from the USA, it was 11 hours before the flight arrived in Greece.

Athens was our first stop. Today, contrary to preconceived notions some might have, Athens is a poorly designed ‘modern’ city literally built upon the treasures of the past. A new subway system is under construction in Athens and probably will be until the kingdom comes. It was planned as a seven-year project. Now it is said to be of ‘indefinite duration.’ Why? Because archaeological finds are being encountered as shafts are excavated at each of the station stops.

As things are today, except for a few noteworthy sites, Athens lost its splendor a long time ago. Were it not for scripture it is difficult to imagine it as the seat of what was once the third Universal Empire. Buildings, traffic, pollution, and signs mask what surely must have been a spectacle at one time. The Acropolis, both by virtue of its lofty elevation (some 230 feet above the city) and its

archaeological remains give one a glimpse of the ancient city and its people which Paul addressed many centuries ago in the words ‘Ye men of Athens.’ {Ac 17:22}

To make the trip profitable spiritually it was organized so that the brethren would not only share in a ‘conventional’ convention for two days but also experience a roving convention during the course of their travels. As the brethren visited the various sites they were addressed by an elder with a ‘mini-discourse’ which called attention to the biblical significance of that particular location.

Mars Hill

It was here upon Mars Hill (Areopagus), a small rocky knoll, that the apostle Paul addressed the Athenians. Here 1,900 years later our group was addressed by a contemporary elder. His remarks entitled ‘Mars Hill Revisited’ echoed the sentiments of Paul.

Philo the Alexandrian described the Athenians as the ‘keenest-sighted’ mentally. Even though they were ‘religious’ and eager to discuss religion, it is evident that their spiritual level was not exceptionally high. Paul, in delivering his message of the new doctrine of Christianity, referred to the ‘unknown god’—recognized as such since the Athenians did not want to offend any god they might have omitted. Altars to unknown gods were found on many of the roads leading to Athens. One document gives account of an inscription which read: ‘To the gods of Asia, Europe and Libya, to the unknown and strange gods.’

While Paul’s discourse did not convert many, in Acts 17:34 we read that a notable and influential senator Dionysius did listen to what Paul said and believed and was converted to Christianity. Today he’s known as St. Denis the Areopagite—the first Athenian to adopt Christianity. Regrettably, these many centuries later, the one and only ‘true God’ remains ‘unknown’ to nearly all mankind—even to many professed Christians.

From this vantage point one can see, as Paul did, the Parthenon dedicated to the goddess Athena—a magnificent architectural achievement embodying principles of design that man, in spite of all technological advances, has forgotten. This temple was built in the fifth century BC and like those in Egypt, copies the plan of the Tabernacle. It has a court, entrance room, and inner room.

As we have different religious denominations today, so too back there. Here upon the Acropolis some worshipped Athena, others

the God Poseidon, the god of the sea. From the hill of Pnyx, the Athenians gathered to listen to orators occupying a semi-circular terrace where a rostrum was cut into a rock. As many as 18,000 were able to assemble in this location for debates and discussions. Citizen participation were a foundation of the democratic processes which we have today.

Shortly after watching the changing of the guard at the Presidential Palace we stopped briefly at the Olympian Stadium where the Olympic games of ancient Greece were held. It was a convenient location for a group photo. In fact, our group could easily be lost in such a stadium which is said to accommodate 70,000!

Corinth

The next day's journey brought us to the site of what perhaps is the most familiar of all the ecclesias cited in the Bible: Corinth.

Although destroyed by an earthquake in 521 AD the archaeological remains testify of a city which was prosperous. Corinth as a seaport had more of a Roman influence than Grecian. Sailors embarked and disembarked for travel from this city to various parts of the Roman empire. Its geographical position allowed for control of trade routes. In 46 BC it was made the capital of the province of Achaea by Augustus Caesar.

The archaeological find of two stones—one with three menorahs and the other with the inscription 'Synagogue for the Jews'—identifies without a doubt the existence of a synagogue there. The synagogue was located in the Agora, or marketplace—the equivalent of today's central business district. Paul often preached in this Jewish synagogue. *{Ac 18:13}* It is believed that the Jewish population in Corinth ran as high as 20,000 perhaps because many had come there to escape Roman persecution under Claudius. It was here that the Roman refugees Aquila and Priscilla met Paul, who like themselves was a tent maker (Acts 18:3; 1Cor. 4:12).

The Judgment Seat or 'Bema' (i.e., High Place) was the site where Paul was acquitted by Lucius Gallio, the Roman proconsul *{Ac 18:12-16}* sometime around AD 5153 after the Jews banded together to attack him and take him to court. Paul stayed in Corinth about 18 months preaching the gospel and arguing in the synagogue. *{Ac 18:4,6 1 Thessalonians 2:15,16}*

The Temple of Apollo dating to the sixth century BC was situated above. Some columns and remains still stand. It was here where

political, administrative, and religious activities took place while the lower agora was principally for commercial purposes.

Prostitution was a problem. The Temple of Aphrodite whose female servants gave Corinth its reputation for immorality was located on the topmost peak of the Corinth acropolis. {1Co 6:9-20 2 Corinthians 12:20,21} Perhaps as many as 1,000 women priestesses conducted immoral religious services at the acropolis in Corinth. It is no wonder, then, that morality was an issue in the ecclesia also.

Paul might have preached here because he recognized Corinth as an excellent strategic location for the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman empire.

A 'Conventional' Convention

After two days of touring, the brethren assembled in Athens at the Royal Olympic Hotel for what was undoubtedly the largest gathering of brethren there in at least 75 years, and perhaps more than a thousand years! In addition to the 88 on tour from 39 ecclesias, eight Greek brethren attended the convention: Bro. Gonos, Bro. G. Tsikas (deacon), Bro. Nick Chasiotis, Bro. I. Russos, Sr. Roula Petridi, Bro. N. Vlandis, Bro. T. Chytiris, and one other brother. Bro. Hercules Gonos began his address with a warm and encouraging welcome:

'To the participants of the Greece and Seven Churches Visitation Program of June 619, 1995. Dear brethren in Christ, elder and younger men, elder women and younger sisters; the Greek brethren in Christ, with warmest feelings, welcome you to Athens, the first stop of your holy tour. We welcome you, and we wish, that everything you hear from the speakers and all the monuments you get to visit connected with the work of the Holy Apostles and their fellow workers, will not only contribute to your acquiring historical knowledge, as it So happens with worldly-minded tourists, but will indeed motivate you to do works of faith and labors of love with greater zeal and reverence; works that will be worthy of those of the Early Church founders So that your expenditures will not be in vain but rather serve a double purpose: to glorify God and to make your calling and election sure.'

Thus began two days of convention with eight discourses, two reflection and testimony meetings, and a vesper program—all with a special focus on the early churches, such as Corinth, Athens, Galatia, and Colosse and those who were particularly important in

helping establish the brethren in The Faith: Paul, John, and Apollos.

To give an added dimension to the experience, a former member of the Greek Orthodox Church was invited to give his perspective on Christianity's impact on Paganism and its resulting effect on both as well as a lecture on 'The Issues and Decisions of the Council of Nicea.' A group discussion followed which allowed for additional discussion and commentary by the brethren.

Mediterranean Islands

Enroute to Turkey, the group visited three Greek Islands in the southern Aegean: Thira, Crete, and Rhodes. While not as meaningful from a biblical point of view, this portion of the trip did provide a nice break from the unseasonably high temperatures. The ship had approximately 600 passengers and 400 crew.

In the early morning hours as the sun was rising we passed into a sea-filled caldera—the approach to Thira which is also called Santorini. Thira was born of a volcanic eruption and is classified as active today. Tradition explains that this island rose when Atlantis sunk, a story no doubt that has its origins in the biblical flood of Noah's day. It is thought to have been evacuated by the Minoans sometime around 1628 BC before a major volcanic eruption overwhelmed it somewhat like Pompeii. Pumice had covered buildings, pottery, and other furnishings which were found remarkably preserved in the town of Akrotiri when full-scale excavations were undertaken in 1967. What was one island, is three today when the magma chamber collapsed into the sea. The island was resettled upon the rim in the ninth century BC by the Dorian Greeks, very much like today. Its vista is spectacular but aside from the relatively small archaeological findings its appeal rests largely with the shopper and the photographer.

Crete, the largest of the Greek islands, also dates back to the Minoan civilization. Here we visited the excavations of the Palace of Knossos. Dating to the sixth century BC King Knossos' empire had included Crete, Peloponnesus, and parts of Sicily. Indications of bull and blood sacrifices reminded us again of the corruptions of the ceremonial practices of the Mosaic Law covenant the Lord had instituted. Numerous large pottery vessels for storing food have been found intact. The area seen today was unearthed in 1900 AD and covers approximately 5.5 acres.

Rhodes is historically best remembered for one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The famed Colossus of Rhodes is said to have straddled or have been located at the mouth of its seaport. It is believed to have collapsed during an earthquake in 225 BC. Crusaders stopped here on the way to the holy land; thus much of what is seen today reflects that style of architecture, particularly the fortress.

The Knights of St. John came from seven different Catholic groups. They organized in Rhodes and were opposed by the Catholic Church. Today this group is known by a more familiar name: the Masons.

Paul visited this island {Ac 21:1} on his third missionary journey and is believed to have landed at Lindos bay, sometimes referred to as St. Paul's Harbor. A small chapel commemorates the landing and preaching of the apostle. At the Acropolis is the famous Temple of Athena Lindia which can be seen from the water. Tradition says Paul saw the temple from afar and decided the island needed someone to convert the people from the errors and activities of this heathen temple.

Silas, a man from Rhodes, is held in high esteem as is Dionysius in Athens, Titus in Crete, Barnabas in Cyprus, and Demetrius in Thessalonica. Silas is believed to have done much preaching and conversion of the people on this island.

Many who have traveled to Bible lands, particularly Israel, better appreciate the distances traveled by foot as our Lord, the disciples, and others did during the course of their missionary work. Similarly this trip helped us understand the nautical distance between places that Paul traversed. The vessels, of course, could not be compared, further amplifying the sacrifice one would endure and the zeal one must have to undertake such journeys.

We disembarked at the Turkish port of Kusadasi. But shortly after stepping upon dry land and Turkish soil, we boarded another vessel—a hydrofoil to the Greek island of Patmos. Typically one would travel from Kusadasi to Patmos by ferry boat, a four to five hour journey which requires an overnight stay. But with the advent of modern technology, this trip is reduced to a comfortable 90 minutes. The hydrofoil carries approximately 100 passengers and can travel up to 60 miles-per-hour across ocean waters.

Patmos is highly regarded among Orthodox believers. Those families who can afford it construct their own churches on this

island to use during holy days. If I recall correctly, there are approximately 300 churches on the island—quite a few for an island with an area of only 23 square miles! Patmos consists of three volcanic swells of land connected by two small isthmuses which collectively appear in a horseshoe shape. 850 feet above sea level at the highest point the Greek Orthodox Church has built a monastery.

We would not be surprised to learn that the apostle John organized an ecclesia here. He had been arrested, brought to Rome before Emperor Domitian, and sentenced to exile in a penal colony on this desolate island. He came here between 93 and 95 AD. He was released and subsequently returned to Smyrna under the reign of Nerva about 1 1/2 to three years later.

Few antiquities remain. Most people visit the Grotto of the Apocalypse. This traditional cave was fortified into a monastery by Gregory of Caesarea in the 17th century. The monastery includes jewels of Catherine the Great of Russia, but from our point of view the greater wealth resides in its library. It contains over 900 manuscripts, plus 2,000 codices and books, and 13,000 documents! This is a wealth of information but like the Bible during the Dark Ages, it is 'clothed in sackcloth.' {*Re 11:3*}

Our visit included a service which was observed by both public as well as one of the monks! After lunch we returned to Kusadasi.

Turkey

What was Asia Minor in ancient times is today Turkey. Here in a land that is now 99% Moslem, Christianity had its first political benefactor—Constantine. Turkey is uniquely situated as a land bridge between Europe and Asia. It has been, and continues to be, looked upon with envy by hostile neighbors. Considering the internal strife with the growing Kurdish population, it is a wonder that things are as 'peaceful' as they appear to be.

Bible Students have many interests in this land. Here at the headwaters of the rivers described in Genesis, the Garden of Eden was placed and our oldest ancestor was brought forth from the dust of the Earth. Here eight were spared when the ark in which they travelled came to rest upon Mount Ararat. And here in this land seven churches were chosen to illustrate the experiences of the Lord's people through the Gospel Age. These were not the largest ecclesias nor were they the most prominent, according to biblical or historical records; some were insignificant by such standards.

But each manifested a unique ‘personality.’ Some were commended, others were sharply criticized. Our report of these seven sites follows the order recorded in the Bible: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

A short distance from Kusadasi is the ancient port city of Ephesus. This name conveys the thought of ‘first’ or ‘desirable’ and Ephesus is the first church in the circle of Asiatic churches. It was also the most important and greatest commercial city in the Roman province of Asia. Its population may have numbered a third of a million. It housed the Celsus Library, the third largest library of the ancient world. Its amphitheater could hold an audience of 25,000. Ephesus represented the first period of church history: AD 3470. Today it is called Selcuk.

The first period of the Gospel Age church was favored with general supervision and nurturing by the apostles. Paul had the most prominent role as its ‘messenger.’ In its zenith of glory it was known as the ‘light [lumens] of Asia.’ But that role of letting their light shine gradually waned as the brethren ‘left [their] first love.’ They became distracted; the Lord criticizes them because their latter works were not as pleasing as their former.

The archaeological remains in Ephesus speak of a former grandeur that surpassed the other six cities. Its baths, paved streets with sewers, game inscriptions, and buildings with statuary and ornate decoration give a glimpse of what it must have been like. But its silent ruins do not show the degradation of its inhabitants. Its decadence rested largely in satisfying the lusts and sensual desires of the flesh—an ‘eros’ love rather than a Godly love. Footprint markers guided pilgrims to the famed house of Diana, the ‘House of Love.’ The spiritual counterpart shows the importance of fidelity and fervent love for the Lord: ‘Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.’ {*Re 2:5*}

All that remains of another of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—the Temple of Artemis—is a single column. It is believed to have had 127 columns, 36 façades decorated with reliefs, and was 345 feet long by 163 feet wide. But it was destroyed by the Goths in 263 AD.

In Ephesus our assembly drew the attention of other tourists. Some listened to the service and the singing of hymns and at the conclusion applauded! Later in Thyatira and Philadelphia we had

similar 'witness' experiences as local residents gathered about our group.

Smyrna

is now called Izmir. It is the church of 'bitter experience.' The word 'Smyrna' is related to the thought of 'myrrh.' From 70 to 313 AD the Church suffered under Roman emperors including the infamous Diocletian.

John, is identified as a 'messenger' to this ecclesia as well as to the period of history which marked this part of the Gospel Church's development. Revelation 2:10 gives testimony to that which our brethren endured:

'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: Behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried, and ye shall have tribulation ten days.'

For the ten-years period of 303 to 313 AD, Christians suffered cruelly during the reign of Diocletian. In Izmir upon this hillside called Mount Pagos, Polycarp and thousands of others perished because of their faith. Henry C. Sheldon, speaking of their martyrdom, states: 'Some were thrown to wild beasts, some burned at the stake [yet] not one of them let a sigh or groan escape.' By enduring such hardship they were promised untold riches: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' {*Re 2:10*}

Lighted temples upon the mountainside in ancient times appeared as a crown from the harbor below as described by Appollonias of Tyana in 85 AD.

'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.'—Re 2:11

Significant attention was given by the rulers of the city to keep the special status of Neokoros or Imperial cult worship center, hardly a status we would find praiseworthy. Our service was at the site of the ancient agora. If the city kept the emperor's favor, it would not 'die' economically. If we keep the favor of The Emperor, we will not 'die the second death.'

From earlier beginnings Papacy would now rise to power. From 313 to 1157 AD saw the development of the 'trinity' as a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Arius was the most noted critic of this teaching and of the Nicene Creed which put it

into writing. But the emperor Constantine supported, at least for a time, the trinitarian viewpoint and all of Arius' objections were dismissed. It is believed that Arius was later poisoned on the eve of what was anticipated to be his return to favor by the emperor.

Pergamos

had the second largest library of the ancient world, smaller than Alexandria but larger than Ephesus. Ephesus boasted of its commercial preeminence; Pergamos boasted of its religious primacy.

The word 'Pergamos' conveys the thought of 'earthly elevation.' Thus papacy made its ascent along earthly lines instead of the spiritual which it professed. Pergamos (or Bergama as it is now called) was a fortified stronghold situated on a steep mountain slope. It was the place where a superior sword was manufactured. Our Lord identifies himself with the sword of truth which is mightier than any sword made by man. Apparently the teachings of its cultic center encouraged the emperor to believe he was immune from the law. Likewise papacy did as it pleased in its rise to power. Our Lord however encourage his faithful followers to contend for the faith, not with carnal weaponry, but with spiritual weaponry: 'These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.'

An altar dedicated to Zeus once stood in Pergamos upon a terraced hillside. Early Christians looked upon this with disdain because they regarded it as the seat or throne of Satan: 'I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.'

In a larger sense the seat of Satan was Pagan Rome, later renamed Papal Rome. Christians of that era were praised for holding fast to the Lord's name while those in the nominal church assumed the title of spiritual 'father.' But, they were reprimanded because pagan practices and beliefs were permitted to have a place in the Church: 'Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.' Unless the Lord's people waged a good warfare against those who subverted the faith and oppressed the faithful, they would not have full approval.

Pergamos was acclaimed as a health resort and center of healing. The Asclepium is situated several miles from the upper temple area. The Asclepion symbol used today in medicine had its origins there, but we're reminded of an earlier beginning when Moses lifted up Nehushtan, the brazen serpent wrapped around a staff. The cult priests here routinely used drugs as a part of their medical

treatment. When patients were in a hallucinogenic state, they would be sent through this tunnel. Priests would whisper from the holes above and by the power of suggestion try to cure the patient. But as the Lord's word declares, none can prolong their days according to the flesh. Those who would be faithful unto death are promised the opportunity to eat of the hidden manna of life:

'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written.'

A white stone in the Roman judicial system signified acquittal. Those who would ultimately be of the bride class would be acquitted of all their transgressions.

Thyatira

means 'sweet perfume of sacrifice.' Suggestive of slow-burning incense the faithful ones of this period (1157 to 1367 AD) had a relatively long period of suffering. An additional meaning suggested by the word Thyatira is 'tiara,' a word which, when applied in an unfavorable connotation, suggests the reign of the false church. Because the city of Thyatira was known for the production of purple dye, it would symbolically suggest the regal robes of purple worn by the priesthood of the papacy. Lydia was a 'seller of purple' which today is called 'Turkey Red' and is obtained from the madder root. {Ac 16:14}

'These things saith the Son of God, Who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto fine brass.' Thyatira was also renowned for its smelting and brass-works. The word translated 'fine brass' may be a technical term for a particular type of alloy which came from this area.

Its messenger was Peter Waldo, a rich merchant from southern France who would give all in service to the Lord. Waldo, and the Waldenses and Albigenses as they were known, possessed the Bible in their native tongue of French. They desired to return to the original simplicity of the gospel in marked contrast to the false church with all its titles, traditions, and trappings.

The Lord commended the faithful for their patient endurance while the apostate church during this period introduced more false doctrines including the doctrine of infallibility. As the false church exercised its power during its so-called reign, the Lord promised

the faithful overcomer that he would be given the privilege and power to rule according to Divine authority: 'He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.'

Today the village of Thyatira is known as *ak-Hissar* or 'white castle.' What little ruins remain are situated in the middle of the city.

Sardis

was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. The Romans erected many outstanding buildings here. From the remains we see it had a large and wealthy Jewish community. This synagogue may have been the largest of the ancient world.

The name Sardis can mean 'that which remains' in the sense of a used garment or remnant. 'Worn out' by a long series of bloody persecutions, the Christians of this period from 1367 to 1517 AD needed special assistance from the Lord to do their appointed work. But the word Sardis when applied to the false church, can also mean remnant in the sense of 'refuse' or 'carnality.'

Sardis was notorious for its immorality. Spiritually speaking there was much need for reformation. John Wycliffe was appointed for the early reformation work. Eventually his work was found so abhorrent that his denounciators exhumed his body 40 years after his death and burned it and disposed of the ashes in a neighboring brook. The poet Wordsworth wrote that this brook 'hath conveyed his ashes to Avon, Avon to Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over.'

After Wycliffe's death a more difficult test would come: to remain vigilant and zealous. But lacking competent leadership, the movement suffered and was reduced to silence. Sardis was overtaken by its enemies.

A few miles from ancient Sardis is 'Cemetery Hill' where over 1,000 graves have been excavated. How fitting is our Lord's words: 'I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.'

The literal citadel of Sardis was atop an alluvial hill which hinted of its eventual decay and ruin: 'Hold fast!' While many yielded and suffered persecution and death, some recanted under pressure.

King Croesus brought literal Sardis to its zenith of greatness. But the Lord's warning—'if therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee'—literally had its fulfillment at least three times in history. What was considered to be an impregnable city was overtaken by scaling the cliffs and entering by a weakly defended point under cover of darkness. Thus Croesus' empire ended abruptly in 546 BC. By the same tactics Antiochus the Great captured the city in 214 BC.

The promise to the overcomer was to be 'clothed in white raiment,' a fitting promise in a city noted for its luxury clothing trade. In 1969 bits of cloth with gold thread were found to substantiate this reputation.

'And I will not blot out his name out of the book of life' alludes to a term of 'credit.' Those who did not pay their bills would be 'blotted out' from being able to make further purchases. Those whose names were written upon parchment could not be 'erased.' 'But I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.'

Philadelphia

is the period of the Reformation from 1517 AD to the beginning of the Gospel Age Harvest in 1877. During this period the German monk Martin Luther was the appointed mouthpiece of the Lord. The scripture 'the just shall live by faith' put Luther on a collision course with the papal system he once accepted as the authority in religious affairs. Appalled by the corruption and vice of the papal court and the practice of selling indulgences, Luther posted 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg. In 1520 he was excommunicated. Being further threatened with the penalty of heresy which was punishable by death, Luther publicly burned the papal bull on December 10, 1520. He refused to recant at the Diet at Worms and subsequently went into hiding, but not at the expense of the gospel. While he was in Wartburg Castle under the protection of Elector Frederick, Luther translated the entire New Testament and part of the Old Testament into German.

'I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.'—Re 3:8

With the Word of God in the common language, Protestantism began. The door of the Reformation had been opened and all the power of Satan could not shut it.

Philadelphia is situated in the ancient province of Lydia 27 miles southeast of Sardis and was founded in 133 BC by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamos. It is on an 800-foot plateau adjoining the Tmolus mountain range. In its ruins we see a great entry arch supported by two columns: 'He that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.'

Here is a silent testimony of the pillars in front of Solomon's Temple, named Jachin and Boaz, and picturing the glorified church as queen next to her Lord Jesus—King Boaz.

Philadelphia was known as the 'earthquake city.' It was destroyed by earthquake in AD 17. So from both a natural viewpoint as well as a spiritual, as a result of the Renaissance things would be very unsettled.

The thought of 'brotherly love' is associated with the word Philadelphia. In the most important sense our 'brotherly love' should be manifest by our steadfast loyalty to Christ.

The literal city of Attalus Philadelphus has had frequent changes of name: Neo-Caesarea in deference to Tiberius, Flavia in honor of Vespasian, again Philadelphia Neocorate for wardenship of emperor worship, Alla-Shehir, or 'City of God' under Mohammedan rule, and finally its present Turkish name of Ala-Shehir or 'Red City.'

'And I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.'—Re 3:12

The name that the Lord will give his people will endure forever.

Laodicea

The meaning of the word Laodicea, the last period of church history, is either 'a judged people' or 'justice for the people.' The city was founded in the third century BC by Seleucid Antiochus II and was named for his wife Laodice.

As the chief city of Phrygia Pacatiana, Laodicea was situated a little south of Colossae and Hieropolis, about 56 miles east southeast of Smyrna. Ruins of the city exist today at a place called Eski-Hissar, signifying 'old' or 'decadent castle' near the modern city of Denizli.

This period of church history commenced in 1878 and is influenced by the Laodicean messenger, Charles Taze Russell. Like the six preceding messengers, the ministry of Charles Russell was viewed with disdain by religious orthodoxy. Christendom, like the literal city of Laodicea, did not have an adequate supply of fresh water. But Bro. Russell's example of zeal and service, and his prolific writings, furnished the much needed water of truth and was an inspiration for others. But again there was the principle: when the 'shepherd was smitten, the sheep scattered.' Since his death, the Harvest Message has slowly and steadily lost much of its initial energy and 'heat.'

The criticism 'I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot' also implies that many individuals who have heard the Harvest Message have not been heated to a sufficient level of zeal for the Lord and his cause. We should follow the example of the Prophet Jeremiah:

'But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.'—Jer 20:9

The sentence of the Lord is this:

'Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.'—Re 3:16

The ruins of Laodicea testify of a once vast city that has been reduced to rubble and strewn about as if it were 'spewn out'! The drinking of calcified spring water which was piped to Laodicea was known to cause cramps, diarrhea, and vomiting.

The admonition is that we, as individuals, do all within our power not to be lukewarm, not be lulled into drowsiness and a false sense of security.

Because Laodicea is situated between the hot springs of Hieropolis, which is responsible for these white-robed cliffs, and the cold springs of Colosse, it may also be called lukewarm.

‘Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.’—Re 3:17,18

Because of its strategic location, Laodicea was once a prosperous commercial and banking center. It was ‘in need of nothing.’ If graveyards are any indication of size and prosperity, this one at Heiropolis shows how large and well-populated the area once was.

Part of Laodicea’s commercial prosperity came from its trade in a high-quality black wool which is in marked contrast to the Lord’s admonition that we seek to be robed in the white garments of Christ’s righteousness.

Laodicea was also noted as a medical center for eye and ear maladies and a Phrygian powder used in the treatment of ophthalmia. Those who are of the Laodicean spirit are described as blind and in need of much more than a powder. Thankfully, we are reminded: ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.’

Conclusion

So ends our brief excursion. We haven’t shown you everything to be seen, nor have we told you everything that could be told. But we do hope you have received a blessing.

A trip to Rome, Israel, and possibly Sinai is being planned for 1997. Contact Brother Paul Mali if you have an interest.

That Old Serpent-Bro. Jean Siwek, France

DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST. The subject we’re going to discuss is taken from a well-known verse of Revelation:

‘And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.’—Re 20:2

That old serpent! For the past 6,000 years he has been wreaking havoc. We remember that it was in Eden that he started his destructive work. But why would Satan, a spiritual being, choose the serpent to represent him on earth? Why not a greater, stronger, more beautiful, or more imposing animal? We are going to look for

a moment at the characteristics of this particular animal and we will see that it could not be another.

To most of us a snake seems to be a cold animal, with a clammy skin, which glides surreptitiously towards its victim and springs upon it with the speed of light to inject its deadly poison into it. What other name in the animal kingdom inspires so many legends, such fears, often repulsion and even terror, or, on the other hand, such morbid attraction?

There exist more than 2,700 species of snake on earth of all sizes, from a few inches long up to the biggest which can reach 36 feet and hundreds of pounds.

First of all, let us see where snakes live. For the most part they occupy dry land but also a good portion of the seas and oceans. The whole sum of their habitats comprises a wide range of natural environments in nearly all latitudes, at times including even the extreme climates. One finds this animal everywhere: in both humid and dry forests, in the grass or the bushes, in marshes, rivers, and savannas, in the sands of deserts, in the plains or the mountains, in trees (from the trunk to the uppermost branches), in grottos and caverns, even underground where they hollow out tunnels. Wherever man may settle there are snakes. One can note on their distribution maps that the most human-populated regions are also the most infested. What other animal could better embody the one who presently dominates over the whole human race? Satan is found wherever we find man, and is capable of exercising his evil in every place. No human being escapes his watch.

Social manners are less developed among snakes, which are considered to be the least social of the reptiles. They are generally individualistic and try to isolate themselves from each other except when they find a place rich in food. Can one find a greater individualist or egotist than the Prince of this World? He also isolated himself from the other angels to make himself equal with God.

Characteristics of Snakes

The physical characteristics of a snake are no less interesting to consider. Contrary to accepted thinking, snake skin is not slimy as one might suppose when one sees them at a distance. It is smooth and silky to the touch.

Similarly our arch enemy arouses great disgust in those who know him. Few people are willing to draw too close to him. However, at times those who do come near to him rather enjoy the contact. There are sects which claim to be of the devil; their members do not see him under the disagreeable and repulsive aspect which we recognize in him.

Snakes Change Their Skin

More or less regularly, snakes change their skin by shedding. The skin starts to loosen around the mouth and the snake frees itself head first. Then to get out of the sheath, it executes contortions while rubbing itself on the ground, on rocks, or on branches. So it can ease itself out from its body length, much like the sleeve of a coat that one takes off inside-out. The old skin is abandoned by the snake which now appears more brilliantly colored. This shedding is preceded by a period of two weeks during which the snake eats nothing. How analogous to the Prince of this World!

When he has nothing to eat, when he can no longer fool mankind, when his frauds are revealed, he changes his skin. He changes his methods and tactics to appear more credible. For example, one recalls that long ago sorcery was rare, more particularly forbidden, and even punished by death. Today it is practiced in broad daylight. The great deceiver has 'changed his skin' to better fool others. Sorcery has changed to become a 'divination art' which pleases the world. And it's not the only example.

Let us look at another physical aspect. Snakes have all kinds of coats (or 'clothes') which charms the esthetic sensibility of man. With colors running from white to black, including copper and bright green, they show off a great variety of designs such as orange rays, zigzags, and yellow spots. Satan likewise is able to display his attractive colors. One of the best examples one might give took place in the desert after the baptism of our Lord. It reached its climax in the third temptation. Let us read from the fourth chapter of Matthew, verses 8 to 10:

'The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'

In Luke 4:13 we read, 'When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him.' Satan presented himself to the Lord in his most resplendent aspect, as Prince of this World. And as such, he spoke only the truth. Nonetheless, our Lord well recognized that those were only the beautiful colors of a serpent's exterior. He did not succumb to temptation.

The apostle Paul warns us by saying that 'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.' {2Co 11:14} He also adds, 'Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.' {2Th 2:9}

So let us be on our guard, let us be strong and learn to recognize that beautiful, shimmering colors, that ideas and miracles which fascinate us at times, can be the work of the serpent.

Continuing this inquiry, it is curious to see that certain snakes have the coloring of the environment in which they evolve. The green of certain species can blend with that of leaves and the grayish brown of other species blends with branches. Sea snakes often show a dark back, not easily detectable from above, and a clear-colored belly which, when viewed from below, resembles the sky above the water surface. Tropical snakes appear exactly as vines. Some of these can 'melt' into their environment because of their color, others simply hide in the sand, under leaves or on branches to become completely invisible to the animal they are tracking. Can we not see this same quality in our adversary? Is it always easy to spot him?

We note that at times Satan is found among us without our knowing it. The Lord warns us:

'For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.'—Mt 24:24

Satan, a Master of Disguise

To get into this position Satan certainly does not present himself directly in front of his victims. He 'hides' himself where he can. Are we always able to discern the true from the false? Are there not times when we allow ourselves to be seduced by ideas which seem to us altogether reasonable and normal, and which nevertheless are suggested to us by the adversary? Let us be watchful with each step we take and never forget that tares look the same as wheat until harvest.

But all snakes do not try to disguise themselves. A great many are ready to confront their enemy because they have venom. These have vivid and contrasting colors: black and white, yellow and red, and the like. In this we can see another behavior of Satan. These contrasting colors can represent good and evil, life or death. Hence it may happen that we shall have to choose between two extremes as was the case, for example, with the first Christians. They were required to either renounce their faith and save their life or hold firmly to what the Lord had given them and die. In either case Satan used his deadly venom, but it was the Christian who decided with the help of the holy spirit which of the two choices would preserve his spiritual life.

Let us try to see how a serpent detects its prey. First of all, the eye of this animal does not have an eyelid. The serpent never closes its eyes, and we often say that Satan never sleeps, but that our 'adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' {1Pe 5:8} Not only does a snake not close its eyes but additionally it has great scope of vision. It sees distinctly despite the distance and perceives things with depth. Satan has in his visual field the entire world of mankind and particularly those who have made a covenant with the Lord. He is constantly on the alert to identify his next victim. Notice how quickly he identified Judas among the twelve. He immediately saw his predisposition to love money and so then injected him with his deadly venom.

Eye alone is not enough for a snake; it also possesses a highly developed sense of smell which guarantees the detection of prey by its odor. What 'odors' can Satan detect? The scriptures tell us that 'we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.' (2Cor. 2:15) We know also that in the Tabernacle, the offerings made by fire were a sweet savour unto the Lord. {Le 1:9} That is why the apostle Paul says,

'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.'—Ro 12:1

The incense which burned on the altar and typified prayers was also a sweet savour unto the Lord. And we notice that when we send our prayers to God, when we try to sacrifice or give our life for our brethren, Satan often comes to disturb us. He also detects this odor rising to God, and tries to do everything he can to deter us from our good intentions.

The serpent has yet another sense: it can analyze with its tongue chemical particles acquired from its prey. When prey interests it, it devours the victim. It is among reptiles that this sense is most developed. Once again we see that Satan behaves in like manner towards us, as we read in Luke 8:11,12 in the explanation of the parable:

‘The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.’

If we are not watchful, Satan can enter our heart. He can remove the good words which have been placed there and keep them from germinating in our heart and bringing forth acceptable fruit unto God. Our salvation is thus compromised. The analogy is quite striking, but it is not the last.

The serpent even has the ability to detect infrared rays. The very weak difference of temperature of around three-thousandths of a degree is sufficient to alert it to the presence of prey. It is thus able to locate and capture its prey in the dark. What ‘warmth’ is the adversary able to detect in us? We might think that it might be love which gives warmth, the zeal which we bring to the service of God. There again Satan seeks to detract us as soon as such feelings begin to grow within us.

Continuing our analysis, certain cobras, called spitters, project their venom toward the eyes of their enemy with surprising accuracy and up to a distance of several yards. If the eye is not immediately rinsed with water, it can be destroyed by a severe inflammation; blindness can occur within a few days.

We recall the story of Balaam, how blinded he became by the devil. He did not see the angel of the Lord. Three times he hit his donkey before it finally opened its mouth; but he did not open his eyes. We should, accordingly, take care that we are not allied with those whom the apostle Paul described:

‘If our gospel be hid... the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ... should shine unto them.’—2Co 4:3,4

So let us constantly wash our eyes with the water of truth that we might see clearly, that we might remove from our eyes any poison discharged there by Satan.

Another characteristic of snakes is that all of them have at the end of their tails glands which produce a substance with a strong and disagreeable odor. The fetid content of these glands is ejected on the body of whomever or whatever dares touch it. In the same way, those who come in contact with Satan or who fall under his influence, all those demon-possessed, are cast-off from society because they have been impregnated with a vile odor, figuratively speaking.

Let us look at how these reptiles move. But before that, we might note that some snakes even today still possess vestigial hind feet. This well confirms that snakes were not created by the Lord as they appear now, but that they were in fact forced to crawl following the divine curse. When they crawl, it is quite rare to see them advance in a straight line. While traveling, snakes give the impression of exactly conforming themselves to the ridges of earth. They have the ability to alter instantly their way of crawling depending on the terrain, to consume minimum energy. Likewise Satan does not proceed in a straight line. He studies perfectly all that takes place on the earth to make moves that best suit his interests. He avoids all obstacles which separate him from man. He uses devious means and adapts himself to all situations that serve his objectives, which are to deceive and destroy.

And just like a serpent which leaves its tracks on the ground, we can affirm that the movement of Satan upon the earth also leaves considerable evidence: pride, egotism, hatred, violence, war, etc. A snake is also capable of simulating death by turning on its back with its mouth open. In Genesis 3:1 we read, 'The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.' The apostle Paul in 22:26 tells us of the snares of the devil. Sometimes we think him dead, deprived of his nefarious power; but nevertheless he is there, ready to strike at his prey. Make no mistake. We have to struggle for our spiritual life in a world where Satan is everywhere.

The apostle John writes in Revelation 2:13, 'I know... where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is.' Let us open our eyes. Let us not be too sure of ourselves. If it is necessary, let us go to our Lord 'to buy... eyesalve to anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see.' {*Re 3:18*} And when we see our adversary before us, let us pray and flee far from him to remain worthy.

After going over all these characteristics, could we imagine another animal that would better represent Satan on the earth?

Killer Snakes

But if snakes possess all these characteristics, it is because they are necessary to get food. To satisfy hunger, snakes kill; it is rare for them to eat dead animals. They are all predators. Their prey can be much larger than they are. A leopard has been found in the stomach of an 18-foot long python. The story is told of a young 14-year-old Indonesian who was swallowed by another python. The serpent does not bother with details; he swallows his prey whole. In the same way Satan attacks prey that comes in all sizes. He attacks both unbelievers and believers, the true Christians having faith more or less strong, and seeks to devour them. The scriptures tell us that he tries to deceive even the elect. But the most important prey which he sought to attack was our Lord Jesus, as we have already mentioned.

In most cases once it identifies its prey, using all the means at its disposal that we discussed, a serpent orients and prepares itself for the capture. Generally it approaches slowly and its tongue is quite active. This is exactly like the adversary who approaches us without noise so as not to arouse our suspicions. Mother Eve was the first to suffer the consequence of the evil tongue and Satan's lies. In launching an attack, the snake hits the prey with its head. Certain snakes can do this from a distance of about a yard. They push with their tails on the ground, the body forms an S like a spring, and they lunge forward as the spring-like action is released.

The golden tree snake can even launch itself from a tree, with its body stretched and rigid like an arrow. This phase of attack takes only 45 milliseconds, and can attain a speed of 22 miles per hour. The prey is thus hit with considerable energy. When Satan hits, he uses the same great energy. He hits in such a way that his victim more often becomes unconscious and so cannot react. When we begin to think evil, or to act wickedly, we rarely perceive it because Satan has already hit us. After this first strike, there are four ways a snake actually kills its victim.

First, the serpent holds the prey in its jaws and wraps its body around the victim. In a few seconds the prey is killed by asphyxiation or cardiac arrest. How is it possible to be so deprived of freedom by exterior means as to be totally asphyxiated? Jesus once said to the Pharisees, 'Ye lay aside the commandment of God and hold the tradition of men.' {*Mr 7:8*} We also can be 'asphyxiated' by traditions, by prejudices which confine us little by little in a vise from which it can be quite difficult to extricate ourselves. Let us know how to determine the difference between

divine commandments and traditions established by men. Let us always go back to the spring, the Word of God, which gives us true freedom in Christ.

Second, the serpent injects venom into the body of a victim to immobilize it and keep it from escaping. In Psalms 58:3,4 we read:

‘The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.’

This verse teaches us that the devil can inject us with wickedness, deceitfulness, and hatred. Here is how the apostle Paul enumerates it:

‘Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before... that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’—Ga 5:19-21

In another case still, certain snakes have a toxic saliva, more or less venomous, which they smear on prey to make it easier to swallow. Once again we can draw an analogy with the way Satan works. After having rendered us more or less unconscious with a first blow to the head, he takes advantage of our bewilderment by presenting his false doctrines, his fables, his vain words which lure us and make us lose time. The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5:6, ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words.’ And Paul states that they eat up like a gangrene (2Tim. 2:17, Rotherham) which can lead to death. Let us be prudent and not be coated with Satan’s slimy saliva which impedes our freedom in Christ. The apostle John writes:

‘Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.’—14:1

So let us always choose the pure water of biblical truth lest Satan ensnare us.

Third, some snakes swallow their prey instantly, head first. The same procedure can occur when a Christian voluntarily sins or when he sins against the holy spirit. In this case, Satan swallows him whole and there is no longer any hope for the sinner, as says the apostle Paul:

‘For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.’—He 10:26

Fourth, a snake might also in very rare cases attack other snakes. Actually if two snakes converge on the same prey, they may fight with each other. The battle ends when one of them flees leaving the other to possess the prey. But sometimes the victor eats both the prey and its adversary. The Lord Jesus himself alluded to this when he said:

‘And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?’—Mt 12:26

We all know that this is what is happening now. Satan’s kingdom is being divided and we think it cannot continue much longer.

The Healing Serpent

But this picture of the serpent would not be complete if we did not consider one last aspect: the healing serpent.

The venomous glandular system of snakes is the most nearly perfect in the animal world. The venom contains hundreds, indeed thousands, of different proteins among which are found the toxins. A great number of these toxins have a paralyzing effect on humans. Certain ones cause cardiac arrest, or the degeneration of muscles, or even hemorrhaging. Since ancient times man has sought to convert the dreadful efficiency of snake venom for his own advantage. But it is in the last few decades that the great richness of venom has been discovered and man studies its different constituents to make pharmaceuticals.

About a century ago, Albert Calmette made an antivenom serum and showed that the serum from an immunized animal could save another animal bitten by the same snake. Today there actually are multiple-use serums which are effective against several kinds of venom. More and more therapeutic properties are derived from venom. Certain proteins are utilized to control blood pressure, others to help or hinder the coagulation of human blood. The serpent can be used to heal man.

But if these properties have been discovered only recently, we notice that in the Bible a serpent was also able to heal. The event took place in the wilderness. Let us read this episode in Numbers 21:28.

‘The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.’

The copper serpent healed those Israelites who had been bitten by a fiery serpent. God had thus provided a remedy. We all know the meaning of this wonderful picture. The fiery serpents, as we mentioned at the beginning of this lesson, represent the devil who bites all mankind and injects into them his venom of sin and evil. The wages of sin is death and So all mankind was sentenced to death. But for those who acknowledge their sins, God has provided another ‘serpent,’ a copper serpent that could save from death. Copper in a spiritual sense represents human perfection. A perfect being had to take the form of a serpent.

We know that it was our Lord Jesus who said:

‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even So must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God So loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’—Joh 3:1416

The apostle Paul explains:

‘For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’—2Co 5:21

The perfect Jesus was made sin and he was lifted up on the cross. And the apostle Peter confirms this:

‘Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.’—12:24

And since then it is sufficient to lift our eyes to the cross if we would be healed. It is sufficient to believe on him, to have a strong and deep faith if we would have eternal life. Looking upon the Lord and having faith in him, heals man from the serpent's bite.

In conclusion, dear brethren, let us note that although the serpent kills, as we have already seen, it has enemies able to kill it as well. These include, for example, the hedgehog, the secretary bird, the African monitor-lizard, the list goes on.

Let us repeat once more our Revelation text: 'And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.' Before this happens, while he is still free to move around as he pleases, let us be vigilant, let us learn to recognize him every time he presents himself to us. Let us not permit ourselves to be fascinated by his pleasing colors, but let us flee from him as quickly as possible.

The apostle James exhorts us: 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' {*Jas 4:7*} To resist him, let us follow the counsel of the apostle Paul:

'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.'—Eph 6:10,11

Amen. **Eliezer, Abraham's Servant-Bro. Samuel Stalder, Germany**

BELOVED BRETHREN IN THE Lord and friends of the truth! May the grace and peace of God be with you. It is a great joy for my wife, Annick, and me to be here with you. We would also like to bring you the love and greetings from our home ecclesia in Frankenthal, Germany. The brethren there wish you many blessings.

The holy scriptures tell us about many interesting characters. We enjoy looking back again and again at the splendor of the kings of Israel, at the faith of the judges, and at the hardship in the lives of God's holy prophets. Today we would like to look at a less well-known person So we might learn from his deeds and from his faithfulness. It is the character of Eliezer, the servant of Abraham.

Let us first find some information about him:

‘After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; your reward shall be very great. And Abram said, O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’—Ge 15:1,2*

As we can see from these words, Eliezer was a man from Damascus and was obviously the heir of Abraham, who at that time was childless. Thus, Abraham says of him, ‘One born in my house is also my heir.’ {*Ge 15:3*} Archeological discoveries, especially the tablets of Nuzi, give us further information So we can better understand this behavior by the patriarch Abraham.

At the time of Abraham it was often the custom that childless couples adopted a son whom they viewed as the heir of their possessions. The main tasks of such an adoptive son involved caring for them in their old age and burying them after their death. Then, as a reward, this adoptive son inherited their possessions. A further condition was that any natural-born son, who was born after the adoption, would be considered as the principal heir. As we well know, this happened in Abraham’s case.

Eliezer, a Humble Servant

Eliezer was probably the servant or ‘oldest of his household’ mentioned in the scriptures that Abraham sent to find a bride for his son and new heir, Isaac. It surely required much trust to send the ‘disinherited one’ [so to speak] off to a distant land to seek a wife for the new heir. What trust is truly revealed in this, and how much loyalty this servant must have had for his master! Eliezer was a very humble, devoted, and loyal servant of Abraham. He deeply believed that God would help him in his task.

We recognize that the entire story of this courtship contains a wonderful antitypical fulfillment: Abraham represents our Heavenly Father, Isaac is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Eliezer represents the Holy Spirit which was sent out from God. But let us take a closer look at what happened at that time. At the proper time, the Father sent the Holy Spirit to gather out the elect class of the Bride of Christ. In the type, she was not to be chosen from among the Canaanites, but rather from the ‘relatives.’ There were those who believed in God. Laban, Rebekah and other relatives believed in the one God who was also the God of Abraham. So in antitype, the Holy Spirit was sent to all who had faith, to select from them a Bride. Abraham’s relatives thus aptly represent the Household of Faith.

Eliezer at the Well

Eliezer undertook his journey immediately.

‘Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master’s in his hand; and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.’—Ge 24:10,11.

We notice that the servant took ten camels with him. It is probable that many of these camels carried gifts for the bride. He took with him as gifts at least a heavy gold ring and two bracelets, silver and gold jewelry, and costly clothing, which are particularly mentioned. Perhaps still other gifts went with him on this arduous journey. But specifying ten camels points to something that might surely be of no small significance to the bride. We will deal with this a bit later.

So Eliezer arrived at that well with his ten camels. Although he brought with him the instructions of his master Abraham about who might be considered the best wife for Isaac, the selection remained in his hands. He resolved to choose the first girl who would offer water to him and his ten camels. At the same time Eliezer knew that a Canaanite woman was not appropriate for Isaac. In the antitype this points to the fact that God does not call sinners, only those who are justified through faith in Him.

Eliezer spoke only for and in the name of his master Abraham. It must also be clear to us that he acted entirely as Isaac wished because of his obedience to him. Were we in Isaac’s place at that time, we likewise would surely have placed our trust in Eliezer. The gratitude of Eliezer for God’s overruling in the selection of the bride impresses us. We undoubtedly wish every master had such a servant. Even more, we see a lesson for ourselves from his thankfulness, devotion, and humility. How important these qualities are!

‘And I bowed low and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master’s kinsman for his son.’—Ge 24:48.

Just as Eliezer as a humble servant spoke in the name of Abraham, So the Holy Spirit speaks in antitype to those called in the name of the Heavenly Father. We should, however, say here that we understand the Holy Spirit to be the working power of God, not a person. Hence, the bowing of Eliezer before God indicates that this power is completely devoted to the Heavenly Father. These thoughts are well known by many of us and confirm our evaluation of God's work. But now we want to turn from the wonderful picture of selecting the bride at the well to another beautiful picture.

Eliezer: A Companion on the Way

We read the words of Jesus about the Holy Spirit in John 16:13-15:

'But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for he shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that he takes of mine, and will disclose it to you.'

Some interesting parallels to the story of Eliezer's journey occur to us when reading these verses. These concern more the journey itself, and less the selection of the bride. We would like to suggest that we examine in more detail a few points about this. First we will discuss the deeper meaning of the Greek word *parakletos*, which is often translated 'counselor' or 'comforter.' How did Eliezer fulfill this function? We also want to examine what the gifts of Eliezer, the ten camels, and the journey to Canaan might picture.

The Holy Spirit is a Helper

Let us turn now to the first point. We know from the Gospel of John one term for the Holy Spirit, the Greek word *parakletos*. But the usual translation of this word is somewhat unclear. In many cases it is rendered 'comforter' or 'counselor.' The right meaning, which is also found in the footnotes of more accurate translations of the Bible, is 'helper' or 'the one called to help.' When we apply this meaning to the Holy Spirit, then we better understand the words from John 16 already quoted: 'But when he, the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.' This 'helper' also leads us into all the Truth. Of course one of Eliezer's tasks he received from Abraham was to bring back Isaac's bride. His work was not just to select the bride, but also to lead her home through

the wilderness of Canaan. Genesis 24:7 says, 'He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.'

So, as John describes this 'Helper,' it is the holy power through which God's people should be led. This helper is also the power that helps us 'walk by faith, not by sight.' Can we really say that Eliezer was a help to Rebekah in this way?

We believe the answer is 'yes.' We would like to read from Genesis 24, beginning with verse 33, the account of Eliezer's testimony to Rebekah's family:

'But when food was set before him, he said, I will not eat until I have told my business. And he said, Speak on. So he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys. Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age; and he has given him all that he has.'

We gather from these words, and from the further account of Eliezer's sojourn, that he gave an extensive report on his master Abraham and on the purpose of his journey. Before beginning their return journey, however, further events occurred.

'Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The matter comes from the Lord; So we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken. And it came about when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord. And the servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, Send me away to my master. But her brother and her mother said, Let the girl stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go. And he said to them, Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master. And they said, We will call the girl and consult her wishes. Then they called Rebekah and said to her, Will you go with this man? And she said, I will go. Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham's servant and his men.'—Ge 24:50-59

Doubtless the decision of Rebekah wasn't without deliberation. The gifts that Eliezer brought were a preview of her future life, like

the great and precious promises of the holy scriptures are for us. Eliezer was a help and an aid in directing the girl's thoughts to the near future and by giving her an insight about her future life. Encouraged by the report of Eliezer and of his faithful dealings, and also through the precious gifts, she could see that a happy and pleasant life was her prospect. Moreover the house of Abraham wasn't strange to her. We are sure she asked all about Abraham and considered it well. So we can understand that having Eliezer's testimony in mind she agreed without hesitation to make that long and difficult journey. Even in today's conditions it would be a very exhausting trip.

In the antitype the acceptance of the call by the bride of Christ is not possible accompanied by doubts or hesitation. The acceptance of this invitation will be made by the bride spontaneously and will be seen as the right decision, as wonderful, because she has the right heart condition. Before entering the narrow way the bride will, of course, consider if she really wants to walk in it. Some need more time to make this decision than others. But once the right way is recognized, it should be entered without doubts and without hesitation. The role of Eliezer to lead us to the truth is interesting. Of even greater importance is his role as assistant and companion during the journey through the wilderness.

Eliezer went on his way. Genesis 24:60 and 61 describe the departure:

'And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them. Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.'

Before this the servant gave Rebekah golden and silver raiment (or jewels as some versions translate it) and other clothes. This will be antitypically available when we are joined to the Lord Jesus Christ at our consecration. The golden raiment shows the newness of life as a new creature which will possess the divine nature. Gold in scripture is a symbol of divine things or the divine nature. New clothes often represent justification or newness of life. A bride, for example, in ancient Bible times was given a beautiful garment for her wedding before she actually married. {Compare Revelation 21:2} Rebekah's brother and mother received other precious things. Those in the household of faith who are not so deeply consecrated, will receive gifts from Eliezer as did Laban and his mother. This

principle is also shown by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians in the affairs of the family.

The Journey to Canaan

The journey finally began. Rebekah and Eliezer were surely joyful on this trip because they wanted to go into the promised land of Canaan. Rebekah took her girls or maids with her on the journey. This is an accurate picture of the Great Company which is also going along the way to antitypical Canaan. Before them was a long journey.

What could this journey through deserts and desolate regions signify? We think it is a picture of the wilderness experience of the true church before they reach the promised land. Nothing further is reported about this journey except for the meeting with Isaac at the well of Beer-lahai-roi. But we know that Eliezer was the leader of the trip and that ten camels transported the travelers.

We believe these ten camels picture ten basic teachings of the Word of God, which, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit [Eliezer], 'transport' us to Canaan. As desert travelers used camels for transportation to reach their goal quickly, safely and fully, So the Holy Spirit uses these basic truths to reach its goal quickly, safely and fully. The Holy Spirit [Eliezer] leads us to the promised land by these basic truths or teachings [camels]. Without these basic truths we would make no great progress along the way; rather, we would become stranded somewhere in the wilderness.

We recognize ten main teachings in the scriptures. These are of great significance for the new creation. They show us clearly the true character and plan of God and allow us to make progress along the narrow way. We would suggest that the ten basic truths taught in the holy scriptures are:

Basic Truths, Biblical Basis

1. The Creation, Psalms 33:6,7,9
2. The Fall into Sin, Ezekiel 18:4
3. The Abrahamic Promise, Genesis 22:16-18
4. The Law, Galatians 3:24
5. The Ransom, He 10:10
6. Justification, Galatians 2:16
7. Sanctification, He 12:14
8. The Parousia, Matthew 24:3
9. Resurrection, Romans 4:17
10. Restitution, Acts 3:21

These ten basic truths are necessary to understand God's plan for mankind, Israel, and oneself. Yes, we are led by the Spirit

[Eliezer], with the help of the Word of God, into the entire truth.
We remember John 16:13-15:

‘But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come.’

The Well of Beer-lahai-roi

Toward the end of their long journey they arrived in the region between Kadesh and Bered. There lay the spring and well where the angel of the Lord found Hagar and Ishmael in their flight from Sarah’s presence. {*Ge 16:7,8*} Once again an important meeting took place near this well.

‘Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.’—*Ge 24:62,63*

The well, near where Isaac saw the camels, was called Lahai-roi. At the time of Hagar she called it Beer-lahai-roi. {*Ge 16:14*} This Hebrew name means ‘the well of the living one who has seen me.’

‘And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. And she said to the servant, Who is that man walking in the field to meet us? And the servant said, He is my master.’—*Ge 24:64, 65*

If there is a picture here, it is surely that we, like Rebekah, at the *parousia* or second presence of our Lord, will recognize him only with the help of the Holy Spirit. Only through the answer from Eliezer did Rebekah know it was Isaac. What did she do? ‘Then she took her veil and covered herself.’ She prepared herself immediately for her role as bride.

Verse 66 states, ‘And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.’ We assume Isaac was very pleased with the servant Eliezer because he loved Rebekah. His mother, Sarah, had died. Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother’s tent. So also will the Church, when she enters into the heavenly tent, take the place of the antitypical Sarah covenant (the covenant by sacrifice).

Eliezer and Us

What lessons can we draw from this story? As a picture of the bride, Rebekah received a golden earring at the well outside Nahor. This earring was the first gift of the Holy Spirit. It antitypically opens up the ears of understanding for all who have a heart to receive the message. Then Eliezer gave Rebekah two golden bracelets for her wrists. This symbolizes the blessing of our works in the faith after we have heard the message.

How did the mission of the Holy Spirit proceed? Eliezer had been instructed to bring Rebekah into the promised land of Canaan. After he had helped her with her decision through the wonderful promises about her future life and through the pledge of gifts, he accompanied her during the long journey in the wilderness. For this he used ten camels. We believe that these ten camels symbolize the ten basic teachings of the Word of God which brings us, through the leading of the Holy Spirit [Eliezer], to Canaan. Only when we use these symbolic 'camels' on our way to Canaan, and completely entrust ourselves to the guidance of the antitypical Eliezer, will the exceedingly precious promises become a reality at journey's end.

And So again we recall the well-known words,

'But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come.'—Joh 16:1315

Our new creature needs this Helper and Leader to grow in the knowledge of the plan of God and to make progress in character building. Let us truly use these ten camels provided by the Holy Spirit to come securely to our future home. Let us climb aboard these 'camels' willingly, and explore these truths more and more deeply. Let us seize hold of the enormous grace that lies before us. But as we climb aboard the camels, we, as Rebekah, should not neglect to have the bridal veil ready. It is an external sign which pictures our readiness to go in unto the bridegroom.

May the Lord give his blessing upon this journey through this wilderness into the wonderful heavenly Canaan promised to us. Wonderful times of blessing lie before us! Let us watch and pray and be ready at all times, for one day the antitypical Eliezer will deliver us to Isaac, and we will together with our bridegroom enter into his everlasting tent.

Amen.

The Spirit and Power of Elijah-Bro. David Stein, USA

TWO PROPHETS OF THE OLD Testament stand out as special: Moses and Elijah. Their ministries were unique in view of the manifestations of God's supernatural powers which occurred. In the case of Elijah, events in his life were providentially overruled to become prophetic testimonies of experiences of the Christian church during the dark ages. The ministry of John the Baptist, of whom we shall hear from Bro. Burns shortly, was foretold to be advanced 'in the spirit and power of Elijah.' {*Lu 1:17*} So both Elijah and John the Baptist led lives which depicted in advance notable portions of the Gospel Age history. Our object in this presentation is to understand the work of God's spirit and power in the prophet Elijah, especially as it relates to the experiences of the body of Christ.

Let's start with the obvious question: Why do we believe that Elijah is a type of the church? That God intended his ministry to be prophetic is suggested by Malachi 4:5,6:

'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'

Elijah himself was long dead by the time Malachi was inspired to write these words. But whoever is meant prophetically would have a ministry that would be, in certain respects, like Elijah's. These types of parallels appear frequently in scripture. Specifically, this antitypical Elijah would: (1) precede the day of Jehovah, and (2) effect a reconciliation of some kind in the matter of true worship between the faithful of the past, 'the fathers,' and the chosen of the present, 'the children.'

The activities and experiences of the church are central to the Gospel Age. So the church is a logical place to look for prophetic fulfillment of Elijah's experience. Paul tells us in Colossians 1:26,27 :

'Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.'

The mystery now manifest to the saints is a simple truth: Christ in the church. Who but the church would God choose to preach a gospel of reconciliation before the day of Jehovah? This is stated clearly:

‘And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.’—2Co 5:18,19

Note how clearly Paul teaches that the church would be intimately involved in preaching the reconciliation which God proposes. These scriptures and others establish a sufficient foundation to begin looking for prophetic fulfillments in the Gospel Age to the ministry of Elijah. Finding them would be a powerful confirmation of our understanding.

Elijah’s Life and Ministry

We begin with a overview of the pivotal points in Elijah’s life and ministry. Elijah the Tishbite is first introduced to us as he is sent to deal with wicked King Ahab. How bad was this king?

‘And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.’ —1Ki 16:33

Very bad indeed! In 1 Kings 17:1 Elijah enters the scene:

‘And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.’

Elijah announces Jehovah’s judgment: a drought. This is very bad news in any agrarian society. Clearly this penalty would enrage Ahab, and this rage would naturally be directed against the messenger. So God instructed Elijah to hide. In Luke 4:25 Jesus tells us that the total time Elijah is in hiding from Ahab is 3 1/2 years.

‘But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land.’

This is a very interesting length of time because it comes up again in the scriptures. For example in Daniel 12:7 there is a period of 'time, times and an half' during which 'the power of the holy people' is scattered. If we correctly understand a 'time' to be a year, then 'time, times and a half' is 3 1/2 years. And this scattering experience which Daniel describes sounds curiously like Elijah's experience.

Again in the book of Revelation we read of similar time periods. In Revelation 11:2, the court without the temple is given to the Gentiles to tread for 42 months which is 3 1/2 years! And the thought of Gentiles treading the holy court of God again reflects a similarity to our previous two references. Finally in Revelation 12:6, the women flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days, again a period of 3 1/2 years! The reference to fleeing into the wilderness and the length of time is identical with the experiences of Elijah.

In this last reference, the wilderness is symbolic. But when did the church flee into such a symbolic place for 3 1/2 years? 3 1/2 years is a small period of time in a Gospel Age of nearly 2,000 years. Could the 3 1/2 years (or 1,260 days) likewise be symbolic of a longer period of time? If we apply the formula given us in Ezekiel 4:6, a day representing a year, we calculate 1,260 years. This is a significant part of the Gospel Age. Was there such a period during which the church was ill-treated? Yes there was! While it is true that the church has been ill-treated for most of the Gospel Age, nevertheless, there was a defined period of such experience with clearly marked beginning and ending points. This is the historical period of 539 AD to 1799 AD. In 539 AD the union of ecclesiastical and political power in the Papacy began the unparalleled banishment of truth and true worship. The removal of the Bible from the hands of the people, coupled with the rise of ritualism, resulted in a spiritual famine. The prophet Amos seems to have seen this development for he writes:

'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.'—Am 8:11

Elijah's first hiding place was at the brook Cherith. Elijah was here sustained miraculously for about a year. While in the hiding place, God appointed ravens to bring him bread and meat twice a day. We believe that this feeding experience had its counterpart in the way the church was fed during the early reign of the Papal Antichrist, a period we call the dark ages. They did not receive spiritual food through the apostate system, but rather through

avenues not connected with Papacy. These were probably isolated individuals or ecclesias which retained portions of truth, strengthening those who opposed that adulterous system. Papacy would have considered these little enclaves as unclean as the Israelites considered ravens. But the true church remained hidden, protected, and fed.

After a time, the drought affected the brook and it dried up. Elijah is then instructed to relocate to the city of Zarephath. This name means refinement, probably a reference to the smelting that was said to have been done there. God's miraculous preservation of Elijah continues. This time Elijah receives food from a Gentile widow whose barrel of flour and cruse of oil did not give out. To emphasize the power at Elijah's disposal during this time he even raises the widow's son from the dead!

The prophetic application of this phase of Elijah's experience suggests the time of Reformation. Individuals such as Waldo, Wycliffe, Luther and many, many others during a period of several centuries raised their voices against the errors of the Papal system by preaching the true gospel. The true church was sustained by this food. The power of these reformation experiences is also suggested in the miracle of raising the widow's son from the dead! New life was returning to the church by this wonderful infusion of truth.

The next and most dramatic phase of Elijah's life occurs when God tells him to show himself to Ahab and tell him that God will send rain again. This occurs near the end of the 3 1/2 years. As he is traveling to carry out God's instruction, he encounters a man named Obadiah. This encounter is most certainly not accidental. Elijah tells Obadiah, who is an overseer of Ahab's house, to tell Ahab that Elijah is here.

Obadiah is somewhat alarmed to see Elijah. Ahab had conducted an intensive search for Elijah. Obadiah worries that if he simply announces that Elijah is here, Ahab will think that Obadiah had known all along where he was and kill him for hiding that knowledge, especially if Elijah fails to appear. But Elijah tells him that he will stand before Ahab 'today.'

And Elijah keeps his word. When he sees Elijah, Ahab asks: 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' How often have the faithful servants of God been blamed for the consequences of the real troublemakers! However, Elijah is not intimidated. He tells Ahab that it is his own idol worship which is the cause of the trouble on Israel. Then he issues a command:

‘Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel’s table.’—1Ki 18:19

Evidently, Ahab saw this as a challenge, which it was, and figured that he would have overwhelming odds to destroy the prophet. He was still thinking with such an unfaithful heart that he never even considered that the challenge was with Jehovah God! So a great crowd gathers at Mount Carmel for what would be the battle of the gods!

You are familiar with what happens next. Two bullocks were slain and divided in pieces to be placed on separate altars, one for Baal and one for Jehovah. Each of the worshipers, Elijah for Jehovah and 450 prophets for Baal, were to call upon their God and the God which answered by consuming the sacrifice with fire would be properly recognized as God. The people of Israel who were watching approved of this arrangement.

The great contest began. After hours of calling upon their god with no effect, Elijah prepared the altar of Jehovah. After the sacrifice was prepared, Elijah had twelve jars of water poured on it. There was to be no trickery here! Once that was done, Elijah uttered a simple prayer of two sentences:

‘Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.’

No sooner had Elijah finished his prayer than the fire of Jehovah flashed out of heaven and consumed not only the sacrifice, but also the wood, the altar stones, the dust and the water. The people fell on their faces and said ‘Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God.’ Elijah seized the moment and had every one of the prophets of Baal killed, the appropriate penalty for apostates under the Law.

Elijah then told Ahab to get up and eat and drink and said, ‘there is a sound of abundance of rain.’ When the rain was finally seen coming, Elijah instructed Ahab to depart. Shortly the rain came but not before Ahab had driven his chariot to Jezreel. Elijah also went to Jezreel, in a miraculous run, and arrived before the King.

Once again we look for the parallels with the experiences of the church. As mentioned earlier, the 1,260 year period ended in 1799 AD. At that time Napoleon captured the pope and put him in prison. This showed the whole world that the pope was as vulnerable as anyone. This humiliation broke the power of the papacy. It ended the drought. It had a freeing effect upon the thinking of men throughout the western world. This freedom has had both good and bad consequences. On the bad side, the release from papal religious superstition caused the start of anti-religious thinking. The pendulum of extremes began its swing to the other direction. It is in the 19th century that agnosticism, atheism, secular humanism and the like not only got their start but began to grow. Much of the trouble in Western society today can be traced directly to the anti-religious sentiments which began nearly 200 years ago.

On the good side, a torrent of Bible publications began to flow. The great Bible societies of the last 200 years were established within a few years of this event. Bible study began on anscale. This is suggested by the next experiences of Elijah.

Back in Jezreel, Ahab told Jezebel what happened on Mount Carmel. So bad was her heart that she did not stop for a moment to consider the implications of that stupendous demonstration of Jehovah's power. Instead she sent a message to Elijah:

'Then Jezebel sent a message unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.'—1Ki 19:2

Elijah quickly fled for his life into a wilderness beyond Beersheba. He must have been very discouraged for he asked God to end his life. There he rested until an angel awakened him and told to him to eat and drink. This was repeated a second time after which he went to Horeb and evidently did not have to eat again for forty days and nights.

The two meals in the days right after the events on Mount Carmel suggest the great biblical feeding that occurred in the beginning of the 1800s. Many organizations, 'Bible Societies,' were formed and distributed Bibles on a scale never before seen. This in turn led to increased Bible study. Elijah's going for 40 days and nights brings us to the 1840s, another significant time for the church.

As he was lodging in a cave at Horeb, he was instructed to stand upon the mount while Jehovah passed by. He saw a great and

strong wind rend the mountains. Then he felt a powerful earthquake. After that he saw a fire. In each case we are told that Jehovah was not in the manifestation, the wind, earthquake, or fire. After these things Elijah heard a 'still, small voice.'

These experiences must have been very fortifying to Elijah. He continued to carry out further instructions from the Lord, including the calling of Elisha, the son of Shaphat, to follow him.

The revelation of the wind, earthquake, and fire suggests that vision that was given the church in and following the 1840s. The Millerite movement brought together a diverse group of Bible-believing Christians with intense interest in the return of Christ. The doctrine of the return of Christ had been full of apocalyptic visions of Jesus overturning the kingdoms of man. The focus on this doctrine included a study of these apocalyptic prophecies.

The disappointment in 1844 when Christ did not return caused great sifting within the church. The Evangelical Alliance, the forerunner of today's World Council of Churches, was quite dismayed with the public interest and support of William Miller. The disappointment of 1844 furnished them with a reason to make sure this type of movement, disruptive to mainstream Christendom, would not happen again. In 1846 they established a doctrinal charter which disallowed any religious voice which did not have their approval. This had the positive effect of removing from the true church those who had any heart harmony with the nominal systems. Those sincere brethren, who were as disappointed as the masses in not seeing a return of Christ, nevertheless still believed the Bible prophecies of such a return. Instead of losing faith or joining empty organizations, they went back to the scriptures to try to understand what was taught there. It was these brethren who were the early roots of today's Bible Student movement.

Elijah's Last Day

Let us focus now on the last day of Elijah's ministry, a dramatic account of the power and spirit of Elijah. Elisha, his companion, had been traveling with Elijah for sometime. In 2 Kings 2:1, he and Elisha are shown leaving Gilgal. They travel together from there to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to the Jordan River. All of this occurred under the watchful eyes of the sons of the prophets, all of whom seem to have unusual knowledge of what was to transpire later that day. At the Jordan river Elijah uses his mantle to smite the river and it opens for them to pass over. Elisha must have been astonished at this display of power and at Elijah's

answer to his request for a double portion of his spirit. The double portion was the usual legacy of the firstborn of a father. Elisha asks for that consideration. In 2 Kings 2:10 Elijah responds:

‘Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be So unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.’

As they walked together on the other side, they are parted by a chariot and horses of fire and Elijah is carried heavenward by a whirlwind. His mantle drops to the ground and is taken up by Elisha. Elisha returns across the Jordan by using the same smiting method. Thus ends the public ministry of Elijah.

The application to the church brings us to the present time. The cities of Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho seem to indicate various conditions of the church at the end of the Gospel Age. The name *Gilgal* means ‘a rolling away.’ It was at the end of the 1800s that the brethren came to recognize the complete casting away of Babylon by Jehovah. The separated true church was blessed with biblical truth in abundance. No more would Babylon in any way be a source of enlightenment. The term ‘Babylon has fallen’ from Revelation 18 applies to this cast-off condition. We can characterize this development as a ‘rolling away’ of the last vestige of doctrinal errors.

Charles Taze Russell

The church then entered a period of great activity in the preaching work. This was done for more than three decades under the direction of Brother Charles T. Russell. Many thousands of brethren associated themselves with Brother Russell in this work which became international in character. The name ‘Bethel’ means ‘house of God.’ This organizational house proved to be a great blessing to the brethren and accomplished a wonderful witnessing work.

When Brother Russell died in 1916, the organization took on a different character, one dedicated to growth in numbers rather than spiritual growth. It soon deviated from the pure doctrines which had energized So many. This ended the ‘Bethel’ phase of the church’s activity. The name ‘Jericho’ means ‘place of fragrances.’ A fragrance is not seen with the eyes. The church moved out of Bethel to be guided by faith rather than an organization that could be seen. This describes the experiences of the brethren for the last seven decades. We are now approaching the time of the smiting of

Jordan. What this fully represents is yet to be seen. However, it will be a judgment occasion, probably of the church as well as the world. The effect of that judgment will be felt by both the Church and the Great Company classes.

The separation of Elijah and Elisha by a chariot and horses of fire suggests trouble. Evidently the church, wearing the mantle of authority, will have a final judgment message to give to the world, one of fiery character. It causes a whirlwind of activity in the midst of which the church finishes her earthly course.

The Elijah type ends here... or does it? Years after he was taken by the whirlwind, wicked king Jehoram receives a letter from Elijah!

‘And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet saying ...’—2Ch 21:12

The letter is a stinging judgment message, much in the character of Elijah. Is this connected to the previous type? We are not sure, but it is certainly worthy of further study.

The final experiences of the church as recorded in 2 Kings 2 give us only a part of the picture. But God’s word does not leave us with only this. Further details of this time are provided in another type, that of John the Baptist. Brother Eugene will now bring us insights into that.

The Kingdom of Heaven-Bro. Eugeniusz Szarkowicz, Poland

DEAR FAMILY OF GOD IN OUR Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I greet you with the words of our Lord: Peace be with you. Those members of our class in Przychojec, located in eastern Poland, who are not able to be here, send you their brotherly love and special greetings on the occasion of this spiritual feast, and also for your entire consecrated life.

The Importance of the Kingdom

The subject of our discussion is the kingdom of heaven. The most important teaching of our Lord, Master, and Teacher, Jesus Christ, at the time of his first advent on earth, was the message of the heavenly kingdom. To get his message across in the most convincing and detailed way, our Lord Jesus used many parables and illustrations. These indicate the election and development of a class that would play a major role in the kingdom. Referring to this

class the Lord said 'it pleased God to give them the kingdom.' He personally issued the invitation to several true Israelites to become the first members of this class, and diligently prepared them to share in the spiritual phase of the kingdom, about which they yet knew so little. He prayed to his Father for them and for all those who eventually believe in him through their words.

This subject was so difficult to understand by an imperfect mind that our Lord used illustrations and parables from everyday life and material things to make it clear. We will analyze some of these to draw out for ourselves the intended lesson. These illustrations make it possible for us to observe the development of this class of the true heavenly kingdom, from its very beginning, to the time when it is glorified.

In our Lord's comments, we find a description not only of the class comprising the true Kingdom of Heaven, but also of a false class, which tries to imitate the true class. However, the differences between the two classes are clearly noticeable.

No individual parable of our Lord contains all the lessons he taught just as looking at a building from one angle only will not give us all the details of the entire building: its rooms, furniture, and other equipment, etc.

The Sower

The first parable, recorded in Matthew 13:38, describes a sower of seed. It is the spreading of God's truth and how it is received by different listeners. Some seeds fell close to the wayside and never germinated to develop roots because they were eaten by birds. Other seeds fell in stony places where the soil had no depth. Those seeds sprang up for a short period of time but because of the poor soil, they were scorched by the sun and withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns and were choked. Still other seeds fell on good soil and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.

This sowing of the seed of truth has taken place during the entire period of the Gospel Age until the time of harvest.

Our Lord Jesus explained some of his parables to his disciples. This parable of the Sower was for them also.

The Wheat and Tares

The next parable also refers to sowing of seed, but of two types of seed. In this parable our Lord illustrated the development of both types of seed: from the time of sowing, its germination and increase, to the time of harvest. This parable is found in Matthew 13:24-30 and is called the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. In this parable the 'good seed' does not refer to the seed of Truth, as in the parable of the Sower but, as our Lord declared, 'the good seed are the children of the kingdom' (vs. 38)—that is, the class of the true Kingdom of Heaven.

After speaking these parables, our Lord sent the multitude away. Later, when they were in the house, the disciples asked our Lord to explain the meaning of the parable of the Wheat and the Tares (vs. 36). A part of the explanation of the parable reads, 'As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; So shall it be in the end of this world.' (vs. 40)

In the land of Israel there are many kinds of tares, but the worst among them is a so-called 'bearded tare.' This 'bearded tare,' when it is growing, is very similar to wheat until it ripens, as our Lord mentioned in the parable.

In the fifth chapter of Galatians, the apostle Paul shows a sharp contrast between the 'fruits of the spirit' and the works of the flesh. In verse 22 he tells us what character traits we should have. In verses 19-21 he outlines certain sins and states that those who 'do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.' Botanically speaking, wheat and tares are different because they belong to different family groups. The similarity exists only for a time. Later the wheat class develops the 'fruits of the spirit' and the tare class brings forth the works of 'the evil one.'

In this parable our Lord Jesus illustrated the fact that together with the class of the true Kingdom of Heaven—or wheat—the tare class is also developed, and falsely acts in the name of our Lord. Outwardly they appear to be defenders of the Truth and of the Heavenly Kingdom class. In any event, our Lord says they are tares.

'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.'—Mt 7:21-23

The Mustard Seed

Our Lord gave still another parable, explaining how from a small beginning a false system would grow, develop, and become the place of refuge for 'birds.' In the first parable mentioned, we learn that the birds devoured the seeds that fell near the wayside. Satan and his agents are ready to perform this same act, as shown in the parable of the Mustard Seed, which, when it had grown into a plant, became a refuge for birds. *{Mt 13:31,32}* This fully grown plant represents a false system, which claims to be the true Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord said that the birds which devoured the seed which fell near the wayside represent 'the evil one.' *{Mt 13:19}* That 'evil one' devours the seed of Truth which was sown in the heart. In Revelation 18:2, we find a description of the false system which is called Babylon. The apostle John states that it became the habitation of every unclean bird.

Consequently, we see clearly that our Lord Jesus used the expression 'Kingdom of Heaven' in a wide sense, not only referring just to his true followers, but also to those who call themselves the Kingdom class, but really are not.

Hidden Leaven

After the parable of the Mustard Seed, which describes the growth and development of the false system of Babylon, we are given another parable, showing how widely the impure influence of the false doctrines of this system were spread. In Matthew 13:33 we read about a woman who 'hid leaven in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.' This parable is often wrongly understood by many believers. It is generally explained that this shows the spread of the influence of the gospel of our Lord among the nations of the world. But a detailed study of this parable does not support such an idea.

Leaven is never used in the scriptures to represent good things, or things to be desired, but in every biblical example it represents something undesirable, imperfect, evil, or marred by sin. Before eating the paschal supper, the Israelites were commanded to remove all leaven from their homes. *{Ex 12:15}* In 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, the apostle Paul said, 'a leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' In Matthew 16:6 our Lord also used the illustration of leaven in the same sense, warning against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

In the Old Testament leaven denotes defilement. In the New Testament it symbolizes anger, hatred, wickedness, in contrast to sincerity and truth. It also represents false doctrines. Therefore we do not believe that our Lord Jesus used the symbol of leaven to represent the spreading of the true gospel. Two other elements of this parable lead us to believe that our interpretation is the right one. These are 'woman' and 'three measures of meal.'

In the scriptures a woman often symbolizes either of two groups of believers: the true Church—the Bride of Christ, a pure virgin—or the false church, Babylon, which claims to be the true church, just as tares would like to pass as wheat. In Revelation 17:3 we read about a woman, and the succeeding verses inform us that this woman represents a false system.

The parable mentions three measures of meal. It might seem strange as to why our Lord used such an illustration. In symbolic language meal represents spiritual food, or God's Word. 'Measure' is a utensil for measuring; it is a Hebrew measure of liquids and dry food. An *ephah* is equivalent to 40 liters, that is, 'three measures' or 40 omers. The *ephah* was a unit of measure in our Lord's day just as a liter is in our day. Our Lord wanted to make it clear that the woman took the whole truth and spoiled all of it.

We understand what the word 'leaven' means in this parable. The woman represents the false church which mixed error into the pure teachings of our Lord, which resulted in making all of it impure.

The parable refers to the development of those who call themselves the class of the true Kingdom of Heaven. It shows that during the time the true Kingdom class was developing, the great Adversary of the Truth, through his woman [his agents], introduced errors and false doctrines into God's Word. The Adversary did this to twist, to spoil, to pollute. As a result the Truth was hidden from all, with the exception of the class of the true Kingdom of Heaven.

We have discussed four parables in the order given to us by our Lord. It would seem that we can now see the reason for them to be in this order. The lessons we receive were intended for a special purpose. The first parable shows how the Word of Truth was supposed to be presented to and received by those who heard it.

The second parable tells us that Truth will yield a crop of true wheat in the time of harvest, true children of the Kingdom; that an enemy was to come to sow tares among the wheat, and that the

tares and the wheat, in the beginning, were to be similar, just as the false church tried to pass as the true Church.

The third parable explains how the system—the tare class—developed from a small embryo. This system was to grow large and give shelter to birds, which represents the Adversary and his agents. These same birds, in the first parable flew in and devoured the seed of Truth.

The fourth parable continues the same thought, and shows how the false system, shown in the parable as tares, would preach error, which is represented by leaven. In the end real truths would become twisted and made impure through false doctrines to the degree that they would be unsuitable as spiritual food.

Wise and Foolish Virgins

Let us turn our attention to another parable in Matthew 25:1-13. This parable refers to two classes of the true Heavenly Kingdom. In this parable our Lord showed that there are those who are truly consecrated and also those who do not completely fulfill their consecration vows. This parable speaks about five wise and five foolish virgins. All ten had the hope of meeting their Bridegroom. Only five were ready when the Bridegroom drew near. Those five had oil in their lamps and vessels. The other five had to go away and buy some oil. In the meantime the wise ones went into the marriage.

The two groups of virgins represent two classes of those who were begotten of the spirit as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. The wise virgins in another place are called the 'Little Flock.' {*Lu 12:32*} The foolish virgins are shown as those who did not keep their garments clean. These, as we read in Revelation 7:9, stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, which they had made clean, with palms of victory in their hands. The foolish virgins, instead of being of the Bride class, will merely be present at Marriage Supper. {*Ps 45:14*} They will be before the throne but not on the throne.

The Wedding Garment

There is still another parable, which refers to another group, a third group, who had made a covenant to followers of our Lord. They received robes of Christ's righteousness, and were received of the Father, but 'insulted' the spirit of grace. {*He 10:29, NIV*} This parable deals with an aspect of the marriage supper, which has an

application on this side of the veil in our present life. We must not confuse it with the marriage feast described in Revelation 19:7-9.

The parable in Matthew 22:2-14 states in verse 12 that the king saw at the wedding feast a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. The thought contained in this verse is not that he entered without a garment, only that he took it off after he came in to the feast. Everyone had to have one when he came in to the wedding. When the king asked him, how he came in without a garment, the man was speechless. The king gave orders to bind him and take him out into outer darkness. The apostle Jude in verses 12 and 13 speaks of such a class represented by the man without a garment.

We see how beautifully our Lord Jesus used parables to illustrate the development of both classes of the Heavenly Kingdom, the true and the false. Revelation 19:6-9 contains a description of the true wheat gathered into his barn, from the parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

The time is coming for the climax of the Gospel Age. It is right to suppose that all the holy angels, archangels, and all intelligent spirit beings of the Heavenly Kingdom will be witnesses at that marriage. Perhaps also they will be members of the choir singing 'the song of Moses and the Lamb.' {*Re 15:3*} When the Bride, in robes embroidered in gold, will be ushered into the 'king's palace,' she will meet her Heavenly Bridegroom. The Father himself will be there to join in the happiness of the Bride and her Bridegroom, to give his fatherly blessing on that heavenly union. The virgins, her companions, will be with her. The majesty and grandeur of this heavenly ceremony is beyond human comprehension and description.

That will certainly be a time of great joy, the time of the Heavenly Kingdom, a share in which, from the bottom of my heart, I wish for you, brethren.

Amen.

The Third Day-Bro. Greig Tosh, Australia

BIBLE STUDENTS ARE FAMILIAR with the term 'third day' — the third 1000-year day. The scriptures use several different terms in referring to this day such as the 'Seventh Day,' 'Sabbath Day,' 'Last Day,' 'Day of the Lord Jesus Christ,' 'Great Day,' 'Judgment Day,' 'That Day,' and 'the Times of Restitution.' Bible students

also refer to it as the 'Millennium' or 'Millennial Age or Kingdom Age.'

When we look at conditions in the world today, we see a gloomy picture, deteriorating moral standards, a shift away from the basic fundamental laws of our great Creator, a dramatic increase in crime, violence, assaults, murders, small wars, guerrilla attacks, insurrection. and a monetary system that teeters from the brink of one crisis to another. Governments seem powerless to act and there appears to be no way out. We look back over 6000 years of human history and see one long dark night of weeping, from the fall in Eden until today.

Those who do not know God's plan are asking, 'Why doesn't God do something?' Only one thing makes sense of it all, that gives hope, that makes it all logical and reasonable, and that is the mighty work to be accomplished on 'the third day.' The scripture says, 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning'—the *{Ps 30:5}* morning of the new day, the day when Jesus Christ is king and his authority is supreme and must be obeyed. That is when the world will learn righteousness.

There are many illustrations of this day in the scriptures with special reference to the term 'third day.' Before the blessings of this day can flow to all mankind, one important event must take place first. That event is a marriage, the most important marriage in the history of the world. We find it described in Revelation:

'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.'—Re 19:7,8

Here we have an illustration of the uniting of Christ and his Church in the first resurrection. We as the first-fruits of God's creation have the hope of sharing in this first resurrection and will be the first to receive the blessings of the New Day. Then we, together with our Lord, will dispense the blessings to the after-fruits. Scholars tell us that there were two harvests in Israel. The first was a small harvest called the harvest of the first fruits. The latter harvest was large and abundant. How well this illustrates the two coming harvests.

The 3 1/2 years of our Lord's ministry at his first advent pictured good things to come. We see him preaching the gospel, making

known the good news, feeding the multitudes, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead. These are small samples of the marvelous work to be accomplished in the coming third day.

The scribes and Pharisees were angry because many of these miracles were performed on the Sabbath Day. Jesus did not do this to annoy them, but to show us what was to take place on the antitypical Sabbath Day. Jesus will be Lord of this coming Great Day. {Mt 12:8}

At the beginning of our Lord's ministry a most important event occurred before he did any of his miracles. The account is in John 2:1-11.

'And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.'

This is a picture of the marriage of the Lamb. We are told it took place on the third day. There would be no point in telling us this unless it was an illustration of the greater third day. Verse 2 says both Jesus and his disciples were called to the marriage, the same ones who will attend the coming marriage. Note that Jesus' mother is not included in those called to the marriage (verse 1 just says that she was there). In verse 5 the servants were taking instructions from her So she could have been in charge of the catering operation. She might have been a close friend of the family and hence the invitation to Jesus and the disciples to attend.

We notice the strange reply Jesus gave to his mother when she told him that they had no wine: 'Mine hour is not yet come.' He obviously did not mean that the time to start his ministry or perform miracles had not yet come nor the time to turn water into wine because that is what he did. His meaning could have been that 'my time has not yet come in the full sense of the word.' Jesus' hour or time does not come until the marriage of the Lamb when he changes antitypical water into wine.

Six waterpots were filled with water. Water represents God's word, the truth. {*Eph 5:26*} The number seven represents perfection and completeness. Thus six waterpots could picture the imperfect and incomplete understanding of the Plan of God that most have had during the Gospel Age. There are a multitude of different denominations and sects possessing some measure of truth mixed with much error. Even the true followers of the Master have not known it all. At this end of the age we have been greatly privileged with a clearer view of the Divine Plan. Even So we still have much to learn:

'For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.'—1Cor. 13:12

Our full and complete understanding must wait until the wedding day when the Bridegroom turns the water into wine. Wine also symbolizes doctrine. In Matthew 9:17 Jesus said that men do not put new wine into old bottles, meaning the new doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven was not to be put into the old Jewish system but was to be completely separate.

Wine and Water

In our illustration wine is contrasted with water. At the day when the full truth in all its beauty is made known to all the world, how different it will be from the many false doctrines of Christendom with their teaching of eternal torment and destruction of the earth in a fiery furnace. It will be as different as water is from wine.

How meaningful are the words of the governor of the feast when he said that the good wine had been kept to the last. When the world tastes the new wine in the morning of the third day, they will say, 'Indeed, the best was kept until the last!'

The little episode closes with the words, 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested forth his

glory, and his disciples believed on him.’ The marriage of the lamb will be the first event of the new age. Then the world will see a manifestation of our Lord’s glory and they will all believe on him, not just the few. Matthew 24:30 tells us that ‘all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.’

The footstep-followers of the Master will be the first to drink of this good wine as we read in Matthew 26:29. At the last supper Jesus said, ‘I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.’ The Greek contains the thought of ‘new wine’ instead of ‘drinking new.’ *Today’s English Version* reads:

‘I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in my Father’s Kingdom.’

Jesus said:

‘I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’ —Lu 22:29,30

The word ‘appoint’ means to make a covenant. One translation says, ‘I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me for a Kingdom.’

Men consider it a great honor to be invited to share a table with some important person such as royalty, perhaps a prince or a king. How much greater privilege and honor it is to be invited to sit at the table of our great King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and drink the new wine with him.

We all appreciate adventure. The greatest and most thrilling adventure any of us could possibly imagine will take place the other side of the veil when we are invited to sit with our Master at his table, to sup with him and drink of the very best wine. What a joy it is when we discover some new bright gem of truth that we had not previously found. How carefully we examine it and polish it to get its full luster. It may even be some old gem of truth that we had been looking at in the wrong light so that we never saw its true sparkle. We change the angle, look at it in a different light, and it appears in full brilliance and glory for the first time. We are using the symbolism of gems for the precious truths of God’s Word. Our Master uses the symbolism of food and drink. This is what is meant to sit at his table and to eat and drink with him. He

will then drink the new wine with us. In other words he will share with us all that the Heavenly Father has shared with him—the full mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.

‘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.’—Lu 12:37

We are among those who are watching. For some time now our Master has been serving us with present truth, but the meal is not yet complete. Most of us have a ‘sweet tooth’ So we are looking forward to the last course. This must await the time when we sit at his table in the kingdom. Only then will dessert be served, when we will say ‘truly the best was kept until last.’

God’s Sumptuous Feast

Our gracious Heavenly Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ, has also prepared a sumptuous feast for all mankind. When we have partaken of our feast, we will then gird ourselves and, together with our Lord, we will come forth and serve them.

‘And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.’ —Isa 25:6

This feast is made unto all people in this mountain [kingdom]. Once again it is in the Kingdom Age on the third day. Let us turn to Hosea 6:1,2.

‘Come and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten; and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.’

The speaker here is the nation of Israel. In the broader sense the sentiments of these lovely verses are applicable to all people, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. How very true these words are with regard to Israel and also to all mankind:

‘This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.’—Ec 1:13

God has indeed ‘torn’ for man’s eventual good. But he has promised to heal and bind up on the third day. We need to

understand that the expression 'after two days' means on the second day (after two days had arrived) not after two days were over as one could mean by this expression. We see this point clearly in connection with the resurrection of our Lord. Many texts state that he was to rise on the third day. {Mt 16:21 17:23 20:19 and other texts} Yet in Mark 8:31 Jesus said,

'The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.'

Mt 27:62-64 reads,

'The chief priests and Pharisees came unto Pilate saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away.'

It is very clear in this text that 'after three days' means on the third day. They asked for a guard to be placed on the grave only until the third day. Hosea 6:2 refers to two different works and two different time periods. The revival of Israel takes place on the second day, in this case near the end of the second day. This is a prophecy that has already been fulfilled probably as far back as 1878 and in a fuller sense since 1948 when Israel became a nation. But their raising up must await the third day, after the Church is complete and Israel's blindness is removed. {Ro 11:25} They cannot be raised up until they accept Jesus as their Messiah.

After two days they are to be revived. The Hebrew word translated 'revive' means 'to make or keep alive.' Surely God has been keeping the nation of Israel alive in spite of their enemies. 'Rise up' means what it says: to cause to rise up. We are also shown two different stages in the growth and development of the nation of Israel. In the illustration of the fig tree (Matthew 21:19 and Mark 11:13) Jesus puts a curse on the fig tree. He said, 'Let no fruit grow on thee henceforth for ever' [literally: 'for the age']. Jesus was looking for fruit, but found only leaves, just as he looked for fruit from the nation of Israel. We have the parable of the fig tree:

'He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto

him, Lord let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.’—Lu 13:69

The three years here would picture the 3 1/2 years of our Lord’s ministry. Israel was given a further 3 1/2 years of exclusive favor before being cut down. In Matthew 21:43 Jesus said to Israel, ‘Therefore I say unto you, The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.’

Mt 24:32 tells of the fig tree putting forth leaves but no fruit. This represents stage one which we see today. When this occurs, verse 33 says it is near, even at the doors. By the parallel passage in Luke 21:31 we learn that ‘it’ refers to the Kingdom of God that is at hand. The second stage in the development of Israel is pictured in The Song of Solomon 2:1113,

‘For, lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs.’

In this beautiful illustration the wintertime of trouble and tribulation is over. The Millennial summertime has come. It is the early morning of the third day. Stage two of Israel’s development has now commenced: their raising up. For the first time she is producing more than leaves; she is starting to bring forth fruit. ‘The fig tree putteth forth her green figs.’ It is only the early morning of the New Day. The fruit is still immature, but a start has been made, the grand work of this day has commenced. Soon all the trees will start producing fruit. The hatred we see in the world today between nations and races will turn to love under the guiding influence of God’s Holy Spirit.

The Fourth Day

Many lessons have been given about the raising of Lazarus by our Lord. It symbolizes the hope for all mankind. The account is found in John 11:1-44. This miracle occurred on the ‘fourth day’ in contrast to the others which occurred on either the Sabbath or the third day. (Of course in many cases we are not told on what day they happened.) The sister of Lazarus sent a message to Jesus that Lazarus was ill. Jesus stayed where he was for two days although he could have left immediately. Lazarus would still have been dead before he got there and he could still have raised him.

It seems a picture is being made of exactly what Jesus did. He remained where he was, in heaven, for part of two 'days.' As the apostle Peter said speaking of Jesus:

'Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'—Acs 3:21

It is after two days that Jesus takes action to assist the suffering and dying world just as he took action to assist Lazarus after two days by commencing his journey. When he arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days and was bound hand and foot. When Jesus raised him, he gave instructions to loose him. This seems to illustrate more than just the resurrections that will take place on the third day. It could picture the raising up to full perfection and the total unbinding which will not be fully accomplished until the work of the third day is over and the fourth day commences.

'For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.'—1Co 15:25,26

Man can never be completely raised up and unbound if death is still a possibility. Under Israel's law male children had to be circumcised on the eighth day. *{Le 12:3}* This pictures circumcision of the heart as Paul shows in Romans 2:29. The time when all mankind will possess circumcision of the heart is on the eighth '1000-year day' counting from creation (same as the fourth day from our Lord's ministry). In the Old Testament the eighth day is mentioned many times. In Leviticus 23:34-36 we have the feast of Tabernacles. Verse 34 calls it a seven day feast. Verse 36 says, 'on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation... a solemn assembly' [Margin: 'a final and closing']. This pictures the final and closing of God's program on the eighth 1000-year day. The feast of Tabernacles would seem to picture the transient nature of this life, a brief threescore years and ten. *{Ps 90:10}*

In Luke 13:32,33 the Pharisees told Jesus that Herod would kill him. He replied,

'Go ye and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils and I do cures today and tomorrow and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.'

Here we have a picture of the two days of the Gospel Age followed by the third day, the Millennium. This thought was seen at the end

of the last century. Although there could have been some literal fulfillment of this passage in our Lord's day, we are interested in its prophetic fulfillment. Jesus has been doing spiritual cures for the two days of the Gospel Age for those the Heavenly Father has called to be the Bride. On the third day he will be perfected when he is united with them. The Greek word translated 'perfected' also has the meaning of finished or complete. The Gospel Age work with the Church will be complete at the opening of the third day. Jesus says that even though one work is complete, he still must work the day following, showing the Millennial Age work during the third day. This is similar to Exodus 19:10,11,

'And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.'

Moses, a Type of Christ

Moses as a type of Christ passed this message to the people in verses 14 and 15. In the Luke text Jesus emphasizes the work he is to do. He has been sanctifying, setting apart, those the Father has drawn to him during the two days of the Gospel Age. The Exodus account shows us that the Bride must also make herself ready, that we as individuals, must clean ourselves and wash our clothes. In other words, we must keep our garments unspotted, white, and pure. Mount Sinai pictures the Kingdom and the time when Jesus will come down in the sight of all the people, the time of his revelation when every eye is to see or discern his presence. These instructions were given to the whole nation of Israel, typifying the world. So there is another illustration we can draw from the Exodus passage: from the time of our Lord's first advent, God has been calling on all people to repent, clean themselves up, and be ready against the third day. Those who have heeded this message, even if not called to be part of the Bride, will have a great advantage when the third day comes. Paul said to the Athenians on Mars Hill,

'And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; 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.'—Ac 17:30,31

Paul is saying to repent because the Judgment Day is coming. We know the third day and the judgment day are the same. The Mars Hill message is portrayed in the Exodus passage. Paul is saying the same thing as Moses: clean yourselves and be ready against the third day. The thought that Mount Sinai typifies the Kingdom is brought out in He 12:18-21, which describes the events that took place at Mount Sinai on that literal third day. Verse 18 says, 'For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched,' meaning that we have not come to any literal mountain. Verse 22: 'But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.'

How well these dovetail together. Mount Zion typifies the Kingdom, which is the antitype of Mount Sinai. Some take the word 'come'—'ye have come unto Mount Zion'—to mean 'approaching.' Perhaps one could say we have come to it now in the sense that the Church is the Kingdom in its developmental stage. Our Heavenly Father has already, 'Delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.' {*Col 1:13*}

We will come to it in the full sense in the early morning of the third day when we stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb as shown in Revelation 14:1, and Obadiah 21. 'And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.'

From when should we start to count the first of these three days? A widely accepted view in Bible Student circles is that we commence from the start of the fifth day, (i.e., the fifth 1000-year day from creation). It has been suggested this day commenced about 128 years before the birth of our Lord. Therefore the third day would have started more than 120 years ago. This seemed quite reasonable when the thought was first presented at the end of the last century. But looking at it from our vantage point today, we must ask, 'Does this still seem correct?'

It seems clear that the Bride is only granted [the first] two days to make herself ready. She must be prepared and waiting when the third day dawns. Perhaps we should start counting these two days from our Lord's first advent although some think this places the time too far into the future because they believe the Kingdom is very close.

Brother Frank Shallieu has suggested that the Gospel Age harvest is 120 years long. He sees Noah as a prototype of Christ and notes

that he was given a 120 year warning before the flood. He observes that Moses as a type of The Christ, head and body, died at age 120 just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land. He cites John 4:35 to suggest that the harvest is four months which at 30 days each is 120 days (literally 120 years). Here are his words for another illustration of this time period:

‘The Ark of the Covenant, symbolic of Christ, preceded the host of Israel, symbolic of the world of mankind by the space of two thousand cubits, i.e., two thousand years. Since the true date of Jesus’ birth as an infant was 2 BC, the year AD 1998 would therefore mark the termination of the two thousand years.’*

Since there was no year zero between BC and AD, one year must be added. 2000 years from 2 BC terminates in AD 1999. A 120-year harvest would also end at that time if one dated the start of the harvest from AD 1879 when the harvest message began to be preached on a regular basis.

Some events in God’s end-time program should be counted from our Lord’s birth, while perhaps for others we should start from the our Lord’s ministry, and for others from his resurrection. We have been expecting the kingdom since 1914, So these considerations are most important. They show us that a full 2000 years must elapse before this wonderful time can come. So if anyone asks the question, ‘Why doesn’t God do something?’ perhaps we should answer, ‘Because it is not yet the third day.’

It is still appropriate for us to pray, ‘Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.’