

## **Fellowship of Brethren-Brother Zdzislaw Kolacz, Poland**

Dear brothers and sisters! I am bringing to you greetings and Christian love from the ecclesia of the Lord's people in Chorzow to all participants of this spiritual feast in Miskolc. Dearly beloved in our Savior, Jesus Christ, brethren, thanks be to our heavenly father for keeping us in the holy truth thus far, and for the opportunity to see the faces of other brethren, and to rejoice in the precious promises contained in this book.

I have entitled the reflections I want to share with you 'Fellowship of Brethren.' The theme of this talk is the words of the Apostle Paul from Philippians 2:1-2: 'If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.'

Having gathered at this 9th International Convention in Miskolc for seven days, we will enjoy the opportunity of spiritual fellowship with brethren in accord with the words of the Apostle Paul recorded in Hebrews 10:24: 'and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.'

It is the longing for that spiritual fellowship that has brought us here to strengthen the bonds of brotherly love and enliven them. This is a spiritual oasis in which we will be encouraged to fight the difficulties of the dreary, everyday life.

We all differ, with respect to age, gender, standard of living and fleshly attributes. However, with respect to the spirit and emotions, we constitute one large family as described by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:14-15: 'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.'

This spiritual family is bound by one common goal: service for Christ manifested through service to the brethren who desire to follow our Lord and Master. He has declared that he is not ashamed of this family and he calls its members his brothers and sisters.

The fellowship I am talking about is all the more precious because we are united with those whom the Apostle Paul declares saints. 'Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession,

Christ Jesus'. { *Hebrews 3:1* } The fellowship of brethren is the proof of our fellowship with God. If we do not desire the fellowship of our brethren whom we see daily, how can we desire fellowship with God whom we do not see?. { *1 John 4:20* } May this fellowship of brethren strengthen the bonds uniting the Lord's people on the way to their heavenly country.

We believe also in the Lord's promise that he will be present among us, as noted in Matthew 18:20: 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' We are gathered here in much greater numbers than two or three. We rejoice in the opportunity to see the faces of brethren from many countries and from almost all continents. We may say as St. Paul expressed, that it is a grand gathering (a 'general assembly,' Hebrews 12:22-23).

Carrying out the Lord's New Commandment to love one another will manifest itself in our service one towards another with our possessions. One finds such an example of fellowship in the early Church, as recorded by Luke in Acts 2:42: 'And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' Based on these words we can conclude the following:

- (1) Fellowship should be permanent.
- (2) Breaking of bread is a sign of close fellowship.
- (3) Prayer fortifies fellowship.

Prayer constitutes a very important link that indicates fellowship, no matter where it takes place.

To partake of the spiritual bread of life we must be in fellowship with the Lord as well as in fellowship with his people. Him hearing our prayers is predicated on us remaining in unity and fellowship with brethren. Psalms 133:1 reads: 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'

Sacrificing for others in this spirit leads to even warmer fellowship. The more presence of the noble spirit in our fellowship, the truer the fellowship. The less the presence of Christ's spirit, the more room in the fellowship for foreign elements.

The mystery of unity in the true Church lies not in the external organization. The apostles in the first church were not guided by

the wisdom and the ways of this world. The unifying factors that unite those that profess the beautiful teachings of Christ are mutual service, simplicity, and love.

Selfishness may be an obstacle to unity and fellowship. The Apostle Paul warns brethren not to maintain fellowship with those who are in darkness: 'Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?' { *2 Corinthians 6:14* }

We cannot stay in fellowship with the godless, those who sin against the light of the truth, or those who have taken the grace of God in vain. The basis of our fellowship is:

- (1) Acceptance of Christ as the Savior.
- (2) Complete consecration to the Lord.

The harmony that exists in a human body constitutes a beautiful example of fellowship in the Body of Christ. 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, So it is with Christ'. { *1 Corinthians 12:12* } May this wonderful unity and cooperation in a human body inspire us to be built up into 'a perfect man' in Christ.

The author of *Studies in the Scriptures*, pastor Russell, writes about this in the following manner. '... as the well-being of a human body depends largely upon the unity and harmony and cooperation of all its members, So also it is with the Church, the body of Christ. If one member suffer either pain or degradation or disgrace, all the members are affected, willingly or unwillingly, and if one member is specially blessed or comforted or refreshed, proportionally all others share the blessings' (Volume Six, page 236).

What is the goal of our fellowship? The Apostle Paul answers this question in *1 Corinthians 14:26*: 'What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.' All of us gathered in this fellowship have brought our best towards building up: a smile, a warm handshake, a song, or words of life. And our master is serving us at his abundantly-prepared table.

'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'. { *Luke 12:37* } We know that the Lord will be giving out

various spiritual gifts So as to make this fellowship blessed and fruitful. 'And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ'.  
{ *Ephesians 4:11-12*}

The fellowship with the master and the brethren in Christ is the greatest joy and happiness for the new creation. Dear brethren, from various countries, what a great joy and happiness it is that the Lord has allowed us to meet here to praise and glorify his holy and noble name through our hymns and prayers, as well as through dividing the word of life found in his book!

The fellowship of brethren was portrayed in the Holy Word by means of various types and pictures. The following are just some of these.

Our fellowship is pictured in the stones, where we are living stones, being built in Christ: 'and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. { *1 Peter 2:5*} Stones cannot preserve their individuality if they are to be part of the spiritual house.

Another picture of fellowship is found in the shepherd and the sheep. Our Lord is a good shepherd and we are his sheep. 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep'. { *John 10:11*} A sheep separated from the flock longs for fellowship and takes such separation very hard.

Another example comes from the world of plants. 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser'. { *John 15:1*} The connection between the vine and the vinedresser is very strong as is the connection of the vine with the roots which ensures life.

Again, the fellowship is also represented in marriage. The creator himself has decided that marriage should be unbroken and man and wife are to help each other in all affairs and situations in life. The Apostle Paul writes that marriage is a picture of a bond, binding Christ and the Church. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church'. { *Ephesians 5:31-32*}

Jesus elevated the fellowship of a spiritual family above any human and earthly fellowship. We read his words: 'While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers

stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother' '*{ Matthew 12:47-50}*

Christ values our fellowship based on our commitment to seek and to do his holy will, which is good, pleasing, and perfect.

We find many more examples in the Holy Word, pointing to fellowship. Brothers and sisters who manifest living faith, zeal toward God and a sincere desire to follow the Lord are our best friends for whom we are willing to give our lives, should it become necessary. Their joys become our joys, their sorrows become our sorrows.

'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep'. *{ Romans 12:15}* We should make a strong effort not to hurt our brethren whether through words, or actions, or improper examples. We will treat their weaknesses with care and sympathy, always ready to forgive even the greatest wrong as soon as the person who wronged us lets us know that he or she regrets the action and does not harbor any ill will.

If we follow such a course of action, growing more and more in grace and knowledge and in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, fighting the good fight of faith, according to our ability helping others, we will become more and more like our Lord with regard to character and thus obtain a closer unity with our Heavenly Father and with our master, Jesus Christ. Such wonderful unity was possessed by our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, who in his prayer asked for the same unity to be among the church on earth.

We are living in very active times. Almost everyone is involved, sometimes at the expense of the truth, in various political and religious movements. By this means people seek fellowship but this fellowship has nothing in common with the clarity of understanding of the teachings of God's Word. The Word is indeed the basis of this beautiful fellowship. It is also one of the important signs of the times. Jesus talked about this very thing in his parable about the harvest, explaining that it is the time of binding the chaff to be burned.

The Prophet Isaiah proclaimed similarly: 'And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, 'We will eat our own bread, and wear our own clothes: only let us be called by your

name, to take away our reproach'. { *Isaiah 4:1* } The Lord Jesus does not approve of such a fellowship; it will not bring the desired blessing and building up of God's children. It is a warning for us not to participate in a fellowship devoid of the spirit and teachings of Christ. It does not lead to the true freedom in Christ.

Humility should be the ornament of the fellowship of brethren. Such is the Apostle Peter's advice: 'Likewise you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble' '. { *1 Peter 5:5* }

Anyone who thinks of himself or herself highly will not be able to appreciate fellowship with other brothers and sisters because the spirit of conceit will not allow them to appreciate the noble example of others or the wholesome doctrine or any other wise advice. In order to take advantage of fellowship we must possess a teachable spirit and the desire to learn in humility regarding others above ourselves.

The fellowship with God's people is a place of spiritual rest. I believe that our fellowship at this convention is such an oasis. It will, however, be up to us to make our fellowship fruitful and blessed.

Dearly beloved in the Lord! Dear Brothers and Sisters! Let us open our hearts widely one towards another and pour out the fragrant oil whose pleasant aroma will stay with us throughout the convention and for the rest of our earthly pilgrimage.

This longing was expressed by the Psalmist: 'My soul longs, yea, faints for the courts of the

LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at thy altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God'. { *Psalms 84:2-4* }

Blessed are those who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise! [Selah] Similarly as birds feel the warmth, protection and rest in their nests So did the Psalmist feel in the house of the Lord. Let us feel the same way as we sing in a hymn: 'the fellowship with the saints will comfort us.' Amen.

**An Introduction to the Exodus: A Picture of the Plan of the Ages-Brother James Parkinson, USA**

A people oppressed by cruel taskmasters are freed from oppression by the mighty acts of God. Israel's Exodus from Egypt. Who has not been moved by the recounting of it?

But many scriptures in both Old and New Testaments point out a greater significance. By the Exodus our God has shown how He will eventually deliver His church and the world of mankind from the bondage of Satan, sickness, and death.

Let us look at the principal features of the Exodus and their significances. Detail can generally be minimized or omitted to give somewhat more attention to things which affect us today. This introduction will suggest lines of further Bible study in connection with several of the topics.

There need be no altercation over the suggestions below. If the Christian agrees, the responses to Pharaoh's compromises suggest healthy outlets for spiritual zeal. If he does not agree, time itself will show what is right.

## Exodus

One of the three longest types in the Bible is the Exodus picture, chapters 7-15. (Only Joseph, Ezekiel's Temple, and the tabernacle are comparably long, but most of them are not one continuous type.)

That the Exodus is a type is shown by many scriptures, such as the seven last plagues in Revelation 16. Again, 'Is it not thou [arm of Jehovah] that driedst up the sea... that madest the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over'. { *Isaiah 51:9-11* } 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, 11 says the Israelites 'were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea... Now these things happened unto them by way of type; and they were written for our admonition.' { *Also Psalms 106:7-12, 105:25-45, 78:42-53 , etc.* }

Now let us review the Exodus: Moses comes to Egypt and demands of Pharaoh that the Israelites go 3 days journey into the wilderness. Pharaoh refuses. There are several plagues, and then the firstborn of Egypt are slain, while the firstborn of the LORD's people are passed over. Then for a few days the Israelites journey towards the wilderness (desert), free of Egyptian influence. Next, Pharaoh pursues, the Lord delivers all His people across the sea, and the Egyptian army (including Pharaoh) is destroyed in the sea. Thereupon the Israelites sing a beautiful song of thanksgiving for

their deliverance. Finally, they do what they were called to do—they go three days journey into the wilder ness, to serve the LORD their God.

In addition, there is a picture within a picture: Exodus 12 gives the Passover in detail. Its strange placement is also interesting. But here we are interested in the larger picture.

### The Symbols

First, let us consider, Who does Pharaoh represent? the oppressor whose heart was hard? Yes, Satan. { *Ezekiel 31:18* } Who does Moses represent? the leader of the LORD's people? Yes, Jesus Christ. { *Hebrews 11:24-27* } Parallel to what the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh', { *Exodus 7:1, KJV = King James Version = Authorized Version, 1611, in English* } John 1:1 from the Greek says, 'The Word also was a god' (or, 'And Mighty was the Word!').

Now for a harder question: Who does Aaron represent? the spokesman for Moses? Aaron would represent the true church, who speak for Christ ( Matthew 5:14, reflecting John 8:12). Then the Israelites are the LORD's people, and the Egyptians are the people of the Adversary.

The period of the plagues (which are evils) would picture this present evil world, particularly this Gospel Age feature of it (beginning when Moses arrives, or at Christ's First Advent). The deliverance of the firstborn of Israel and the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt would picture the completion of the church of the firstborn (the heirs of the LORD's Kingdom) and the destruction of the heirs of Satan's Kingdom (by virtue of destroying the kingdom of this world, which leaves nothing to be inherited).

[The significance of the church of Christ being represented by Israel's firstborn { *Hebrews 12:23* } extends beyond the concept of heirship and birthright. The firstborn were dedicated to God in Exodus 13:2. They were exchanged for the Levites in Numbers 8:5-26, showing that the Levites also represent the church. The Levites were given no inheritance in the land, showing that the church all have the heavenly hope, and no earthly hope. Numbers 18:20, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Joshua 18:7. Two groups are shown in Revelation 7, the 144,000 and a great multitude (great company). The 144,000 are with their Lord (the Lamb) in heaven in Revelation 14:1-4. In Revelation 19:1 one hears 'a great voice of



a great multitude in heaven,' showing that theirs is also a heavenly hope. Together, these two groups are 'the church.' (Note the contrasting of these two groups in Ezekiel 44:10-16, though both will serve in the sanctuary, both will go to heaven.)]

When the LORD's people leave Egypt they are out from the influence of Pharaoh. That is, during the Millennial Age—the Restitution Kingdom—the LORD's people (the resurrected world) will be out from under the influence of Satan, because he will be bound. But some time later Pharaoh pursues them. Revelation 20 tells us that Satan will be loosed for a little season at the end of the Millennium. But the LORD will deliver His people—the regenerated world—while Pharaoh/Satan will be destroyed once and for all.

Then the Israelites sing a beautiful song of thanksgiving for their deliverance. Imagine what rejoicing there will be when Satan, sin, sickness, and death are destroyed once and for all! And then they go three days journey into the wilderness to serve the LORD their God to picture for us the perfect ages of eternity. (End of type in Exodus 15:22)

There is thus far a good summary of these things in Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 6, the first two or three pages of the Passover chapter (pages 457-459 in most English editions).

#### First Lessons

Two lessons may now be drawn from the Exodus picture:

(1) The firstborn of Israel are not delivered until the time when the firstborn of Egypt are slain. That is, we may be assured the church of the firstborn will not be complete until we see the heirs of Satan's kingdom being destroyed—until we see in progress the final overthrow of this present evil world—Armageddon.

(2) Pharaoh oppresses the LORD's people until the death of the Egyptian firstborn and the Exodus commences. { *Exodus 9:34-35, 10:3-4, 7* } That is, Satan will not be bound before Armageddon, even though his kingdom may be in disorder.

#### More Details of the Gospel Age

The first three plagues of blood, frogs, and lice fall upon both the Egyptians and the Israelites. Then in Exodus 8:20-23 the LORD puts a division between the peoples; So that no more plagues fall

upon the Israelites in Goshen. Also, Moses does not administer any of the first three plagues, but in each case he is told, 'Say unto Aaron' do this or do that. { *Exodus 7:19,8:5,8:16*} But in the administering of the seven last plagues Moses takes the dominant role.

Viewing the reality, Jesus' active role is connected with the beginning of the separation work. That is, Christ's return begins the harvest work of separation, as shown in Revelation 18:1-5.

This division of the 10 plagues into 3 + 7 is also shown by the 'seven last plagues' in Revelation 16.

[The background for the seven events in the Last Day is found in Joshua 6. The seven priests with the seven trumpets march around Jericho on seven successive days. On the last day they march seven times. The former, which divides the entire Gospel Age into 7 periods, gives the setting for the seven trumpets of Revelation 8:2-11:19, the seven seals of Revelation 6:1-8:1, and the seven letters to the seven churches (periods of the church) of Revelation 2:1-3:22. (Some would add the seven parables of Matthew 13. Note also in Leviticus 8 the consecration of the priesthood in seven days, as a type of the consecration of the royal priesthood spanning the entire Gospel Age.) The seven circuits on the last day give the setting for the seven last plagues of Exodus and Revelation.]

## Second Lesson

A significant implication of the plagues is:

(3) The LORD has several (7) different and successive works to do between His return and the establishment of His Kingdom in the earth.

## Pharaoh's Four Compromises

The LORD had said, 'Let my people go that they may serve me.' During the first three plagues Pharaoh flatly refuses. But after the LORD makes a distinction between the peoples, from time to time Pharaoh's offers compromises: Go sacrifice to your God in the land, or I will let you go... only you shall not go very far away, or Leave your children behind, or Leave your sacrifices behind. To the Christian during the harvest time the danger of these compromises has special significance:

(a) Go sacrifice to your God in the land. { *Exodus 8:25* } That is, Go sacrifice to your God in the denominations (who say, You must join us to be saved—not ‘join Christ,’ but ‘join us’). But the word of our Lord in Revelation 18:1-4 is ‘Babylon is fallen... Come out of her, my people.’ (The concept is also shown in Lot being called out of Sodom, and Elijah being called out of the cities before being taken up.)

(b) I will let you go... only you shall not go very far away. { *Exodus 8:28* } That is, if you leave the denominations, take some of the denominational spirit (or worldly spirit) with you. But the word of our Lord in Revelation 18:1-4 continues, ‘Come out of her my people that ye be not partakers of her sins.’ Do not return to any form of sectarianism. ‘Remember Lot’s wife.’

(c) I will let you go but not your children. ‘Let the Lord be So with you as I will let... your little ones go’. { *Exodus 10:8-11* } That is, no public witness, no new converts, not even your children. You may believe the truth all you want, but you may not teach it. When you die let Bible truth die with you. But the word of the LORD in Exodus 10:1-2 is ‘... that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son...’

(d) Go ye... only let your flocks and your herds be stayed. { *Exodus 10:24* } You may believe the truth and even talk about it, but sacrificing is forbidden. Advanced technology, communications media, material possessions, etc., are not to be used. But the word of the LORD in Exodus 10:25- 26 is, ‘Thou must also give into our hand sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.’

In resisting these four compromises of the Adversary, the completeness of our consecration during the harvest period is illustrated: We are to come out of denominationalism, we are to leave its spirit altogether behind, we are to teach the gospel truth as far and wide as we are able, and we are to use everything at our disposal to do it!

### The Plagues

Now let us consider the plagues. What are the major events represented in the plagues?

The first three plagues, which occur before the harvest/separation, are given only in Exodus. The following suggestions appear reasonable:

(1) Waters turned to blood. Christianity overthrew Heathendom. Christianity, born in a small conquered nation and rejected by most of the people of its origin, peacefully spread the word of the gospel and thereby destroyed Satan's 2000-year old religion, backed by all the might of the most powerful empire of the world. Having tasted Christian doctrine, heathen doctrine could not satisfy—could not be drunk.

(2) Frogs. The Reformation damaged the Papal Roman Empire. Reformers, true and false (shown by frogs), entered into every facet of life.

(3) Lice. The French Revolution shook Christendom. The absolute monarchies gave way to limited monarchies to stem the flood of peoples (as in Revelation 12:15-16). The damage to Papal government made possible the Bible societies and their work in mass distribution of the Word of God throughout the earth. This the magicians (e.g., priests of the mass) could not counterfeit.

The seven last plagues are given in both Exodus and Revelation. { *Exodus 7:14-12:33, Revelation 16:1-21* } The Exodus plagues show us the major world events after Christ's return, while the Revelation plagues reveal the effects each is to have on a Christendom whose professions and practices do not match.

The invisible nature of Christ's return is the subject of another discussion. Suffice it here to cite Acts 1:9-11, where Christ ascended, 'and a cloud received him out of their sight.' In like manner at His Second Advent He returns in a cloud. { *Luke 21:27* } The faithful see Him in the sense of Romans 1:20, 'the invisible things ... are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made'. { *Hebrews 12:14, Revelation 1:7, Zechariah 12:10* }

The return of Christ does not immediately put the world on trial for life—not until the judges, the priesthood, are all in heaven. { *Isaiah 1:24-26, Revelation 20:6* } The period of Christ's Second Presence, until the church is complete, restores the Jews to the land of Israel and progressively destroys the ecclesiastical and political systems of this present evil world. { *Matthew 24:3,21-22, Daniel 12:1* }

Following Christ's return about 1874 the following identifications are suggested for the plagues:

(1) Flies. The call to come out of Babylon sapped the spiritual strength of rigid Protestantism, reducing it towards the level of

Catholicism. ( Revelation 18:1-5. Similarly in Genesis 19:1-26,2Ki 2:1-11) The harvest message proclaimed that this present evil world is doomed, and that Christ's Kingdom will entirely displace it. The end of Gentile Times was declared due in 1914.

(2) Murrain killed the cattle—the first destructive plague. World War I spelled the end for most of the kings of Christendom. The war also permanently eliminated the monetary standards of Europe in August 1914 (Ashby Bladen, Forbes, December 22, 1980, page 72).

(3) Boils. The next major world event was the Depression. Its influence on fundamentalist Protestantism was disastrous. Louis Cassels writes, 'By the early 1930s, the modernists seemed to have won the fight. Fundamentalism was relegated to the fringes of Protestant life. Major denominations and theological schools came under virtually complete sway of liberals' ('Fundamentalism Rising Under Another Banner,' United Press, ca. 1958). Those fundamentalists, who had called truth 'heresy,' were now heretics in their own denominations; hence Revelation 16:4-6.

[Fundamentalists were those who avowed belief in (1) the infallibility of the Bible, (2) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, (3) Jesus achieved a 'substitutionary atonement' for sin, (4) the bodily resurrection of Christ, and (5) the expectation of Christ's return to establish his kingdom on earth—all good choices, though the wording of a few could be improved. But among them, Calvinists absolutely denied that Christ died for all, evangelicals made non-scriptural words a test of faith (e.g., trinity, or triune), and the majority condemned most of mankind to an eternity of torture, while arguing over whether God or Satan was to blame.]

(4) Hail—the second destructive plague, which destroyed two of Egypt's four crops. The next major world event was World War II. (Hail seems particularly appropriate to the extensive aerial bombing of this war.) The war was inconsistent with liberal theology of a world evolving into a great society; So Cassels continues, 'There are few modernist theologians left to uphold the 'winning' side of the 30-year old debate.' These preachers had been scorched by the sunlight of Bible prophecy, Revelation 16:8. (Liberalism of the Harry Emerson Fosdick type was displaced by 'neo-orthodoxy.' Hence Revelation 16:9 allows that they may have changed their ways, but it was not in a way that glorifies God.)

(5) Locusts—the third destructive plague, brought in by an east wind, and afterwards driven out by a mighty west wind. The

locusts ate up the other two crops of Egypt. { *Exodus 10:1-20* } Since World War II the world had been locked in an East vs. West struggle. (Locusts, So destructive in Egypt, were food for John the Baptist in Matthew 3:4. Tribulations, as well as the Bible, are food for the Christian. Romans 5:3-5, Revelation 10:9-10) Locusts suggest the tribulations of communist (Marxist-Leninist) origin, with the resultant military arms race and foreign 'aid,' which drained the civilian economies. The mighty west wind drove the Soviet economic/political collapse, which terminates the plague. { *Exodus 10:19* }

The Revelation plague is upon the seat of the beast—upon Rome, upon the Vatican. { *Revelation 16:10-11* } Roman Catholicism claims to be built equally upon scripture and tradition. A little Bible study shows it is not built upon scripture. And, under pressure from communism worldwide we watched the tradition being swept out from underneath the Roman Church. A Pole was elected pope to try to stem the tide. Their priests were running in many different directions. Their kingdom was filled with darkness. Shedding meatless Fridays and some fictional saints (such as Christopher), and modernizing church services are among the ways they ate their words for pain, but they did not repent of playing politics and serving mammon.

The proper Christian response is not 'Aha, it served them right,' but compassion on the system's many victims: 'Here is the Bible light, this is the hope.' Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

(6) Darkness, So thick that no Egyptian left home during the three days it lasted. { *Exodus 10:21-29* } The Revelation plague dried up the river Euphrates, around which the Babylonian economy was built. Revelation 16:12-16. These two descriptions may suggest a great depression will take away the wealth of Roman Catholicism (and other denominations that serve mammon). All this prepares the way for the kings from the sunrising—for the Kingdom of Christ and His church.

(7) Death of the Egyptian firstborn—the ultimate destructive plague. The collapse of the Kingdom of this world leaves nothing for its political and economic heirs to inherit; thus as heirs they die. { *Exodus 11:1-10, 12:29-36* }

The Revelation plague (Armageddon) is poured out into the air—upon the spiritual powers of this world. { *Revelation 16:17-21* } 'It is done' (like our Lord's words on the cross, 'It is finished'), implies the church of the firstborn is complete around the beginning of the

final overthrow of this present evil world. Then Jezebel's eunuchs—her own celibate priesthood—take the lead in throwing her down. { *Revelation 2:20-23, 2Ki 9:30-37* }

#### Timing of Pharaoh's Compromises

The times at which Pharaoh proposes his compromises is interesting. They would appear to correlate with the times of special activity by the Lord's people. The first two are in conjunction with the first plague after the harvest separation begins, which by interpretation would be between 1874 and 1914:

(a) Go sacrifice to your God in the land/ denominations—suggests the resistance the Lord's people met to the call Come out of Babylon, up to World War I.

(b) Go, but go not far away—suggests that not a few unregenerate also came out. Pastor Russell's public meetings drew thousands only since 1902, after which the numbers began snowballing. When Satan could not keep them in the denominations, his second attack was to pour tares into the new fellowship. Thus, when C.T. Russell died, J.F. Rutherford brought the Lord's people into a new bondage, and Pharaoh 'did not let the people go'. { *Exodus 8:32, 9:7* }

In connection with the 5th of the 7 last plagues,

(c) The families, especially young ones, are forbidden, though not the sacrifices. This proposed compromise suggests a peak in Bible Student activity between World War II and the Soviet collapse. Since World War I some non-Watchtower groups actually opposed public witness (as being out of date); understandably most have faded. Parents today should be wary of their children being diverted by this world's allures, or even destroyed by mindless cults or drugs. But we should use modern technology in fulfilling Matthew 24:14 —radio, satellite TV, tape recorders, modern printing, rapid travel, etc. Yet afterwards Pharaoh still will not let the LORD's people go. { *Exodus 10:20* }

Finally, just before the last plague,

(d) Leave your sacrifices behind. It suggests one more period of Bible Student activity. At some time yet future personal sacrifice may become difficult, especially with use of high-technology media. (Perhaps governments' ownership or control will follow emergency from depression.) Again the plague ends with Pharaoh not letting the LORD's people go. { *Exodus 10:27* }

If the three occasions of these four proposed compromises result from three calls to come out of Babylonish conditions, it suggests further study of the three times Elijah was called to leave a city for another place before being taken up (a picture of receiving the reward of the heavenly hope), 2 Kings 2:1-11.

#### Effects of Plagues on Christendom and Israel

Above has been suggested the systematically detrimental effects on Christendom of every major world event since about 1874. Side by side, one may show how each event has been systematically beneficial to the heavily-prophesied restoration of the Jews to Israel. (Detailed discussion is beyond scope here.)

Event	Effect on Christendom	Effect on Fleshly Israel
(1) Early Harvest 1874-1914	called the faithful to come out; proclaimed impending destruction of Christendom.	Congress of Nations in Berlin (1878) legalized immigration to Palestine.
(2) World War I 1914-1918	Removed long-standing royal support. (Also damaged Western Economies.)	balfour Declaration (1917) proclaimed Palestine a homeland for the Jews.
(3) Depression 1929-1939	Devastated Protestant Fundamentalism.	Economics and rise of Hitler increased Palestine immigration.
(4) World War II 1939-1945	Devastated Protestant Liberalism.	Vastly increased Palestine immigration from Central Europe.
(5) Communism 1945-1990	Devastates Catholic Traditionalism.	Increases Israel immigration from the East.
(6) Depression	To destroy denominational wealth.	To increase Israel immigration from the West.
(7) Armageddon	To destroy denominations.	Final assault, and the LORD's victory, to fulfill Ezekiel 38-39.

One can easily see above how fully coming out of denominationalism makes one immune to its plagues. { *Revelation 18:4* }

#### The Passover

The Passover lamb is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. { *1 Corinthians 5:7* } The Passover has been the subject of many good studies and summaries (e.g., *Studies in the Scriptures, Volume 6, Study XI, 'The Passover of the New Creation'*), which will not be repeated here. But we should address the question, Why is the Passover given in conjunction with the last plague?

Christ's First Advent could hardly have waited until Armageddon! It would appear, then, that the Passover is shown just before the



Exodus begins in order to remind us that it is Christ's ransom sacrifice at His First Advent that leads to the deliverance of all the peoples from the world of sin, sickness, and death.

In like manner, 'Behold, I come as a thief' in Revelation 16:15, given just before the Armageddon plague, is a reminder that Christ's Second Advent is also necessary to the deliverance of all peoples. (Neither the First nor Second Advent was delayed until Armageddon.) It is to be inferred from Revelation 15:8 that when the last plague is ended, humanity will come to the temple (Christ and His church, 2 Corinthians 6:16) to receive the blessings of the Millennial-Age covenant. { *Revelation 21:24* }

### The Feast of Unleavened Bread

It seems good to close with a brief sketch of the world's great hope. Unleavened bread symbolizes pure and uncorrupted spiritual food, as in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. The Passover itself was to be eaten with unleavened bread, Exodus 12:8, as we with the heavenly hope must now partake of Christ's sacrifice. On the morrow began a seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. { *Exodus 12:15-20, Leviticus 23:4-8* } The first day and the last day were each to be a holy convocation. The first day of the Exodus (from Avaris/Raamses to Succoth, Exodus 12:37) represents the beginning of the deliverance of the LORD's people from the kingdom of bondage, or the deliverance of ransomed mankind at the beginning of Christ's Thousand-Year Kingdom on earth. Imagine what rejoicing there will be as people begin to come back from the dead!

A second day brings Israel from Succoth to Etham (near modern Ismailia), just at the edge of the desert, { *Exodus 13:20* } and on the third day they turn 90° and go along the edge of the desert to near Pihahiroth, to a narrow part of what once connected to the Red Sea. A fourth day is spent crossing the sea and watching Pharaoh (sic!) and his hosts drown. Thereupon they sing a beautiful song of thanksgiving for their deliverance, { *Exodus 15:1-18* } showing the world's thanksgiving for final deliverance from all enemies at the end of the Thousand-Year Kingdom of Christ. { *1 Corinthians 15:25-26* }

Days five, six, and seven fulfill their original call to go three days' journey into the desert to serve the LORD their God. { *Exodus 3:18, 5:3, 8:27, 15:22* } Thus the holy convocation on the seventh and final day of the feast depicts the rejoicing of all mankind throughout the perfect ages of eternity. { *Revelation 5:13* }

Lastly, let us put in mind the practical lessons, to apply them to ourselves and for the benefit of others.

### Archaeological and Historical Background

A lad of seventeen, Joseph was sold successively to Midianite traveling merchants (called Ishmaelites), and the Egyptians about BC 1852, during the reign of Sesostris III. Towards the end of this reign Joseph was falsely imprisoned. [Sesostris III (1878-1843) warred in Canaan and apparently conquered as far north as Shechem; this may explain why Jacob's family could travel freely to Egypt and why Joseph was allowed to bury Jacob in southern Canaan.]

In the second year of the new king, Ammenemes III felt insecure and imprisoned his butler and baker (likely on charges of food poisoning), where Joseph interpreted their dreams. In the fourth year of Ammenemes (BC 1839) Joseph was exalted to the highest office in the king's government. After that year, and seven more, the famine began; in the ninth year Jacob and all his family moved to Egypt, BC 1830.

[Archaeology records that Ammenemes III began as a warring pharaoh, like most of his Dynasty 12 predecessors, but later became a peaceful pharaoh. From his 4th through 18th year the stone quarries at Hammamat were idled (covering the year Joseph came to power, the seven years of plenty, and the seven years of famine). During his reign 90 square kilometers of new farmland were opened up in the Fayum district southwest of Memphis. The nomarchs, or regional rulers, were unusually wealthy early in Ammenemes' reign, but they appear impoverished later on (due undoubtedly to the seven years of famine). Ammenemes brought the Middle Kingdom of Egypt to the apex of its glory. The hand of the LORD and of Joseph may easily be seen in these things.] Just as Joseph saved the world of that time, So a greater than Joseph is Saviour of the entire world of mankind.

Jacob died in BC 1813, the 30th year of Ammenemes III, and Joseph was given leave to go to Canaan to bury him. Sixteen years later Ammenemes died, after a 45-year reign, and his son and daughter took the throne. The dynasty ended eleven years later, BC 1786. Twenty-seven years later Joseph also died. Then a new king arose over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. [The Hyksos overthrew Ammenemes' dynasty.] These Hyksos kings were the original builders of the capital city of Avaris (Hatwaret, later renamed Raamses), about BC 1720. (The Hyksos were merchants and

craftsmen, who apparently stepped into a power vacuum. They were immigrants of mixed Semitic and Hamitic stock. They introduced horse-and-chariot warfare into Egypt.) Moses was born BC 1696 and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter.

The so-called Great Hyksos dynasty reigned in the 17th century BC. The greatest of these was Khian, or Iannas (the Jannes of 2 Timothy 3:8), who reigned 30-40 years and reunited upper and lower Egypt. Early in his reign Moses left the royal court (perhaps dissenting from Khian's methods and practices) and fled Egypt.

After Khian's long and successful reign, any successor would have to be ambitious to leave his mark in history. Israelite slave labor was an integral part of fulfilling this ambition. But in the next to last year of Jambres (in the Egyptian language something akin to Yambre, quite possibly Mayebre Sheshi, who reigned probably for 3 years, though possibly for 13), Moses returned to Egypt. { *Exodus 4:19* } Pharaoh's ambition ran counter to the LORD's determination, which brought on the destruction of Egypt, { *compare Exodus 10:7* } and the following year the death of Pharaoh himself.

About forty years later the last of the Hyksos dynasty had been driven from Egypt, and then from Sharuhen in southwestern Canaan. It is unlikely Israel encountered even these later Hyksos as they were subduing the hill country of Canaan. { *cf. Exodus 14:13* } [Hazor { *Joshua 11:1-3* } appears to have been a Hyksos site but not likely of the Egyptian branch of Hyksos.]

Later, an Egyptian queen left the following monument to the Exodus:

'I have restored that which was ruins, I have raised up that which was unfinished since the Asiatics [Hyksos] were in the midst of Avaris [Raamses] of the Northland, and the barbarians [Israelites] were in the midst of them, overthrowing that which was made...'

## **Bezaleel and Aholiab, Brother Jean Wozniak, France**

Ex 31:1-6

Dear brethren, it would be easy for each of us to discuss the important people of the Bible. It would be easy also for us to take a type and to talk about its antitype. For example: Joseph is an undeniable picture of our Lord, Elijah of the Church class, David of the militant Church, Cyrus of our Lord.

We can easily locate many other characters because we know them. We can immediately give them a signification. On the other hand, the Bible indicates other characters who did outstanding work, but we rarely consider them, if ever. However, they have their place in the Word of God and have done grand works.

Dear brothers and sisters, let me speak to you about two extraordinary characters from the Old Testament. Their short story is registered in only a few verses, but their works, based on extremely important wisdom from heaven, were phenomenal. I am talking about Bezaleel and Aholiab.

We find the necessary information about our study in Exodus chapter 31, verses 1 to 6. 'Then the Lord said to Moses, See, I have chosen Bezaleel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts, 'to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. Moreover, I have appointed Aholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan to help him.'

Dear Brethren: this account shows us Bezaleel as an artisan and Aholiab as his assistant. This story, So short, may seem ordinary and unimportant. It is our Job now to put it into context and analyze the mission given to these two men. Only then we will understand that the story holds a wonderful aspect of God's Plan.

It happened after leaving Egypt, when the Eternal gave instructions to Moses how to build the tabernacle. We can see that the choice the Eternal made did not happen by chance. The simple significance of their names and the duty entrusted to them will enable us to understand the precise lessons given in these two characters.

The narrative shows that God looked with favor upon Bezaleel and his assistant Aholiab. These two characters, particularly talented and gifted by divine wisdom, were the craftsmen of the literal tabernacle which assisted the nation of Israel while progressing in their travel to the Promised Land.

Dear brethren, the goal of this study is to see and understand how by these two characters Christ and his Church are wonderfully pictured as craftsmen of the antitype, that is the spiritual tabernacle. Let us read again what was said about Bezaleel. 'Then

the Lord said to Moses, See, I have chosen Bezaleel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts, to make artistic designs.'

The name of Bezaleel, who was captain of the project, was chosen by God. What a wonderful picture of our Lord Jesus Christ. What did the prophet Isaiah say about this subject in chapter 7 verse 14? 'Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.'

This same prophet gives us complementary information in chapter 11:1, 2. 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.'

The image of Bezaleel has even more significance because of the meaning of his name, 'God's shadow.' Dear brethren, is this description connected with the one of our Lord? Let's read Hebrews 1:1-3. 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the express image of his being.'

I think there is no doubt that Bezaleel (the shadow of God) is a picture of Jesus Christ (the reflection of glory and image of God the Father). Our story tells us that Bezaleel 'was the Son of Uri.' Does this detail have any meaning in comprehending this passage? I think nothing is superfluous, because Uri means 'light.'

Isn't it again a wonderful reference to our Lord? Let us not forget the witness of John the Baptist. We read in John 1:9: 'That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' These words are confirmed by the Apostle in John 8:12: 'When Jesus spoke again to people, he said 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' '

Another detail: The story tells us that Uri was a son of Hur. The dictionary gives us two meanings for Hur: 'noble' and 'cavern.' Dear brethren, do these two definitions correspond to the identity of our Lord? The Apostle John starts his Gospel with these words

(chapter 1, verse 1): ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.’

What a title of nobility—of high rank—the first of the divine creation! It is about this noble creature that Solomon spoke in Proverbs 8:22: ‘The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old.’ The Apostle John tells us about the same creature when he sent the message to the Church of Laodicea. Revelation 3:14 says: ‘To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.’

Dear Brethren, the message given to the Church of Laodicea by the angel was given by the first divine creature. By the one who was rich, and made himself poor as it is described in Philippians 2:5-11 (we will read just a few sections): ‘Who being in the form of God (spiritual nature—noble—in an elevated situation)... humbled himself and became obedient to death—even the death of the cross!’

Our Lord in His first existence (in glory and majesty, with a noble disposition) left his kingdom of light and humbled himself under the mighty hand of God in order to taste death (the grave) for Adam, and in Adam for all of his descendants. In this stage He entered the cavern of death; he, who as a perfect human being had the right to live forever. For the gift of his life God supremely elevated him.

The next detail tells us that Hur was a descendant of the tribe of Judah. Instinctively, hearing Judah, we remember Revelation 5:5: ‘Then one of the elders said to me: Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’ Judah means praised. To praise means to ‘celebrate someone’s merit.’ A praised person is a person of merit.

What a wonderful application to our Lord, who while being with his Father as the Logos received tribute and praise from a host of angels, because ‘through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made’. { *John 1:3* } All the myriads of angels owe their existence to the Word. For all times this Word arouses admiration and praise.

The Apostle, in John 1:14, explains: ‘The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only

begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ Additionally, let us remember that the birth of Jesus mobilized the entire heaven with joy and praise to God.

Dear brethren, during the whole Gospel Age, an age that is now reaching its end, our Lord receives the praise of all the consecrated, of all those who follow in his footsteps. He is our Lord and Savior, So he receives all our gratitude and our praise. To day through him we have access to the Father and we can have communion with Him. We take the opportunity of prayer with great respect and reverence, but always through the merit of our Lord.

Dear brethren, in the future, all creation in heaven and on earth will give reverence and praise to Christ forever. Now we understand why God gave Him the responsibility to prepare all the necessary materials and the construction of the great antitypical (spiritual) tabernacle.

Bezaleel was given help in the person of Aholiab, ‘son of Ahisamach of the tribe of Dan.’ If without hesitation we recognize our Lord in Bezaleel, I think we all agree that Aholiab can represent only the help God has chosen for his son—namely the Church—the body of Christ. Aholiab means ‘father’s tent.’

The Apostle Paul tells us about this group in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17. ‘Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.’ In this way the Church both collectively and individually forms a father’s tent—God’s sanctuary, or God’s temple.

Aholiab was the son of Ahisamach, which means ‘my brother endured.’ What a beautiful representation of Jesus’ words from the parable of the true vine. John 15:5: ‘I am the vine; you are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing.’ It is the vine that holds the branches, and not the contrary. Our Lord, represented by the vine, holds the branches (the Church members). Consequently they draw from the sap (nutritious elements) in the vine (our Lord).

Ahisamach came from the tribe of Dan, which means ‘Judge.’ The Apostle Paul defines the future function of the Church in 1 Corinthians 6:2 as one of judging. ‘Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?’ Dear brethren, this function still belongs in the future. It means the restoration of the human race from sin and death.

Before this begins it is necessary for the saints of the Gospel Age to become capable of such a function, by introspection of self, by a fair and critical judgment of themselves. The Apostle Paul encourages us to do this. As we read in 2 Corinthians 7:1, ‘Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.’

This work requires constant and sustained attention. It must enable us to dominate our lives. The words from Romans 8:13 are very important: ‘For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.’ Therefore, from the passage in Exodus, chapter 31, which is the object of our study, we may understand that the two craftsmen Bezaleel and Aholiab were instruments chosen by God for the construction of an outstanding and very significant project—the tabernacle of God to be among the people of Israel.

Today, we have no doubt concerning the significance of the antitype in these events. Christ and his Church have this extraordinary mission to build the spiritual tabernacle of God. The Apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 8:1-2: ‘The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high Priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.’

We remember Bezaleel was an instrument chosen by God. He was given the pre-eminence and the responsibility through special talents and special abilities. Likewise, our Lord was given the pre-eminence in the execution of all things. Let’s read Colossians 1:18-19. ‘And he is the head of the body, the Church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, So that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things.’ He was given a special knowledge to construct a grand spiritual tabernacle!

These materials are not of minor importance. Exodus chapter 31 speaks about gold, silver, bronze, stones and wood. Does all this have a meaning? What can we tell about these materials? Dear brethren, with the knowledge God gives us through his Scriptures and his Spirit, can we see in these materials their symbols of delicate precision and their perfectly coherent significance?



Gold. It is a precious metal of great reputation. Today it is much desired by the inhabitants of Earth. This metal represents, as we know, the divine nature which does not deteriorate—the highest nature in all the universe, superior to angels.

Silver. For us it has two meanings: it represents the spirit nature, angelic. It is also a symbol of truth, especially truth that concerns the redemption accomplished in Jesus Christ.

In the tabernacle, and precisely in the sanctuary or Most Holy, the posts were covered with gold which represents the divine nature. The bases that held the posts were made of silver and represented the absolute perfection of the real, true new creatures.

In the type, the Israelites paid an atonement tax in silver. We find the description of this in Exodus 30:11-16: ‘Then the Lord said to Moses, when you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the Lord a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them.

‘Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weights twenty gerahs.’ This half shekel is an offering to the Lord. All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the Lord. The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the Lord to atone for your lives. Receive the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the tent of meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before the Lord, making atonement for your souls.

Bronze or copper represents human perfection, the perfection that Adam received at his creation. This same material was used in the desert when the Israelites spoke against God. The Eternal sent snakes against the people, and many Israelites died. After recognizing their mistake, Moses prayed for the people. Numbers 21:8-9 says: ‘The Lord said to Moses: Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live. So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.’

Snakes represent sin—the serpent made of bronze (or copper) represented perfect Jesus Christ, and the pole represented the cross. ‘Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, So the Son of Man

must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life'. { *John 3:14*} Isn't this a wonderful picture?

Bezaleel was gifted with the knowledge of working with stones, and mounting them on the breast plate of the High Priest: 12 precious stones were set in gold with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel engraved on them. The breast plate was attached to the chest of the high priest, on his heart, which shows us how important it was. It was a breast plate of justice.

The man Christ Jesus was perfect and is the only one who always perfectly kept God's law without violating it, whereas those that constitute the little flock, his body, have his merit imputed to them. Isn't it a glorious illustration of Jesus Christ who oversees this work? He who endured all the trials... and what trials... works these stones wonderfully, as it says in 1 Peter 2:4-5:

'As you come to him, the living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him, you also like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.'

The twelve precious stones on the breast plate of the high priest represent the little flock of 144,000 members.

Jesus Christ, the antitype of Bezaleel, has the responsibility of the woodworking and of its sculpture. The wood used was widespread throughout Sinai and described in the Bible as of Shittim or acacia wood, known in those regions. This was the only wood used in the construction of the tabernacle. The wood, in contrast with the precious metals, is a corruptible substance, and implies that the church members on this side of the veil are not actually perfect, as human beings.

We have to remember that the different furniture we find in the tabernacle—the table of shew bread, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant, and additionally the boards or frames made of acacia wood—were specially covered with gold. The posts of the sanctuary or holy place were covered with gold, symbol of the divine nature, but had at each base a socket of bronze, showing that we have this treasure (the divine nature) in earthen vessels. This implies that the new creature is based, or standing, on our justified humanity.

2Co 4:7: 'But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.' So this picture

has an important significance and suggests that things that are originally mortal will become, in the time designated by God, immortal.

The Apostle Paul illuminates us on this subject in 1 Corinthians 15:42-43 .‘ So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.’ 1 Corinthians 15:50: ‘I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.’

Dear brethren, let’s summarize today’s meditation. The tabernacle was built by Bezaleel who was called from among the Israelites (who represents all humanity, which in the very near future will be blessed by Christ and brought into reconciliation with the Creator). The work will be finished with the help of Aholiab, the Church class, the assistant of Bezaleel, who represents our Lord.

This is the purpose of calling the Church. The Church is called to cooperate with her Savior, her Master, for the establishment of God’s Kingdom on Earth. Romans 8:20-23: ‘For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ‘We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.’

This picture, dear brethren, which presents just one of many aspects which we can discover in the figures of the tabernacle, shows us that the work of Bezaleel and Aholiab, in the time designated by God, will bear fruit. The spiritual tabernacle will rise, Christ, head and body. And with him people will find their original identity, the one that was lost by Adam in paradise.

We will finish with the words written in Revelation 21:1-4. ‘Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

‘I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: Now

the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'

Let us realize the importance of the significance of this passage in the scriptures and become a part of the spiritual tabernacle of God beyond the veil with our Lord. This is what I wish for all of you with all my heart as well as for myself. Amen.

## **Our Heavenly Father's Love Vesper Service-Brother Kenneth Rawson, USA**

Introduction.

Many aspects of nominal church theology concerning God's character have been Hellenized by Grecian philosophy. They accepted the Greek idea of Divine impassibility, the notion that God cannot suffer since God stands outside the realm of human pain and sorrow.

The Catholic theology early declared as 'vain babblings' the idea that the Divine nature could suffer. Calvin broke with Martin Luther on this subject and fostered this Hellenistic concept on his wing of the Protestant Reformation. Calvin and the Reform theology he founded taught that God is *without passions*.

We strongly take exception to 'without passions.' No wonder Calvinists have neither a reasonable nor compassionate concept of God. No wonder such a concept of God teaches that the vast majority of mankind are predestinated—before they were even born—to eternal torment.

A concept that embraces the idea that God cannot suffer has to answer the question—Can God love? The prophet Jeremiah's reference to the 'tears' of God { *Jeremiah 14:17* } confirms the beautiful insight to God's love penned by Pastor Russell—

Reprint 1833. 'The principle taught in the divine Word, that true love weeps with those that weep and rejoices with those that rejoice, is one which is also exemplified in the Divine character.'

But God is not man. He is not bound by man's limitations. God's ability to suffer does not disturb His peace of mind. His Fatherly love that shares the sorrows of His human family contains no

anxiety over their eternal welfare. With Divine serenity His wisdom has planned for the eternal welfare of all, and in His serenity He knows His Divine love and power will attain that end.

Jer 14:17 speaks of God shedding ‘tears day and night’ for the ‘daughter of my people’ (KJV). Calvinists insist that it is Jeremiah not God who is crying. However, it was God who told Jeremiah to tell Judah that He, God, was crying for their plight. In verses 17 and 18 God, as a loving father, deeply feels the chastisement inflicted on His wayward people.

In verse 19, Jeremiah is speaking. He asks God, ‘Hast thou utterly rejected Judah?... Why has thou smitten *us*?’ Notice the *us*. Jeremiah includes him self as a part of Judah, God’s people, or the ‘My people’ of verse 17. Yes, God says He was crying over the plight of His people. Jeremiah includes himself in the ‘My people’ for whom God was crying.

The tears of God are also mentioned in Jeremiah 9:17,18: ‘Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; ... And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for *us*, that *our* eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.’

Notice the Lord is speaking and He calls for the ‘mourning women,’ professional mourners, to wail ‘for *us* that *our* eyes may run down with tears.’ Notice the *us* and *our*— God is sharing Israel’s suffering and crying together with them.

First, we will consider the Scriptures that reveal the tenderness of God’s fatherly love as He shares the sufferings of His children. Second, do we at times, like Job, doubt the tenderness of God’s love in our lives. Third, if we, like Job, honestly take our doubts to God, He will sustain our faith.

#### Our Heavenly Father’s Love

One of the most touching descriptions of God’s capacity to emotionally suffer for us, relates to the gift of His son as penned in Reprint 1833 by Bro. Russell:

‘Ah, did the Father let him go on that errand of mercy without the slightest sensation of *sorrowful emotion*? Had he no appreciation of the *pangs of a father’s love* when the arrows of death pierced the heart of his beloved Son? ‘When our dear Lord said, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,’ did it touch no

sympathetic chord in the heart of the Eternal? Yea, verily: the unfeigned love of the Father sympathetically shared the Lord's sorrow. 'The principle taught in the divine Word, that *true love weeps with those that weep* and rejoices with those that rejoice, is one which is also exemplified in the divine character. The immortal Jehovah could not himself die for us, his divine nature being proof against death....

'But God could and did sacrifice at great cost to his loving, fatherly nature, the dearest treasure of his heart and thus he manifested { *1 John 4:9*} the great love wherewith he loved his deceived and fallen creatures. 'If this sacrifice cost him nothing; if it were impossible for his mind to realize any *painful emotion*, even under such a circumstance; then the gift of his Son would be no manifestation of love; for that which costs nothing manifests nothing.'

As inspiring as this is, we want to probe God's actual emotions while we suffer. Have you thought about God's feelings—His emotions while we are suffering. We want to probe God's ability to suffer when we suffer. There are three reasons Spirit-begotten sons of God suffer.

One, we suffer for righteousness sake. Two, we endure trials for the development of Christ likeness. Three, we suffer for foolishness sake—in cluding our partially willful sins. First, we will probe God's emotions when we disobey.

'Let my eyes run with tears, day and night let them not cease, for my hapless people have suffered a grievous injury, a very painful wound'. { *Jeremiah 14:17, Jewish Publication Society*}

Jeremiah 14:17 assures us that God even cries over the tragic loss that befalls those (like Israel) who have rebelled against Him. Yes, God does care when we suffer. He is concerned when tragedy strikes. God knows our frame that we are but dust. { *Psalms 103:14*} The infinite Creator and God of the universe wants to convey to mere earthlings—frail humanity—His compassion and love for us. How can one So omnipotent communicate His capacity to suffer with finite man? He uses an imagery we can understand—'tears.'

Far from being an indication of weakness, God's imagery of shedding 'tears' assures us of a profound fatherly care and concern. It is not that God literally cries. But God uses this symbolism to convey His capacity to share our suffering.

## Just How Deep is God's Fatherly Love?

Obviously, we don't have a written scenario of God's dealings with a member of the Little Flock from beginning to end. That was impossible. But we do have a record of God's dealings with the nation of Israel. God had to punish Israel at times—some times quite severely. And the Scriptures go into detail concerning God's emotions for Israel.

At times God has to punish us, especially when we commit partially willful, that is, mixed sins. Bro. Russell wrote in Reprint 5690 that most of our sins are mixed sins. God has to chasten us for degrees of willfulness.

What is God's attitude or feelings while He is punishing us? Is He angry at us? Perhaps, but I don't believe we fully understand God's anger. Bro. Russell defined God's anger as a holy anger of love. It is because God loves us so much that He punishes us when we disobey. Remember Hebrews 12:6 & 7:

'For whom the Lord *loveth* he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?'

It is true of God that when He punishes us it hurts Him. A parent might discipline a child by remanding the child to his room for the evening. A loving parent feels the pain of the child's punishment and often recalls the many wonderful times they shared together. Likewise it hurts God when he chastens His people.

## God's Love For Disobedient Israel

While we consider God's love for Israel even while He is punishing her, cherish God's love for you even during periods of chastening. Listen to the parental sorrow of God for Israel in Jeremiah 6:26. 'Thus says the Lord... Oh my *poor people*, put on sackcloth, ... for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us' (NRSV).

This is incredible. The 'us' class is God and Israel. God puts Himself in the picture of sharing Israel's suffering. This assures us that God chastens in love. He chastens to heal. { *Isaiah 19:22* } Listen to a loving father's thoughts of nostalgia while He is chastening Israel, a disobedient son.

‘Like [as pleasing as] grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel, Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your ancestors... When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son’. { *Hosea 9:10 11:1, NRSV*}

What tenderness—while God is punishing Israel, He recalls how He first loved Israel as a son way back in Egypt. Then in the wilderness Israel was as refreshing as a cluster of luscious grapes. Yet the more God dealt with Israel the more they disobeyed.

‘The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them’. { *Hosea 11:2-4, NRSV*}

God continues His expressions of nostalgia. Do you enjoy remembering when you taught your child to walk? Do you remember that warm wonderful feeling when you would lift your infant child in your arms and touch their cheek to yours? God is saying—this is how I felt about Israel while I was punishing her.

But Israel continued to pervert the laws of God and neglected the ‘fatherless and widows.’ Severer punishment must be inflicted, but not without its toll on God. God’s heart sinks to the depths of sorrow, as he withdraws his loving protection. God exclaims, ‘I have given the *dearly beloved of my heart* into the hand of her enemies’. { *Jeremiah 12:7*}

They were scattered to the ends of the earth. God’s punishment is most severe upon Ephraim, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. But the Creator and God of the Universe is suffering with Ephraim in this severe chastening of dispersion as noted in His further expressions of nostalgia.

‘Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me, A child that is dandled! Whenever I have turned against him, My thoughts would dwell on him still. That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love. Declares the LORD’. { *Jeremiah 31:20- 21, JPS*}

Have you ever dandled your child on your knee? Even while Ephraim (Israel), is cast off from favor, God’s thoughts in tender nostalgia continue to dwell on Israel. With a yearning heart God speaks of Israel prophetically as a son who will be received back in love.



How do we know that God's expressions of fatherly love—a love that felt Israel's sufferings during her chastening—were true? How do we know God's nostalgic longings to restore Israel back to His favor were true? The rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948 is the proof. It is a miracle of history. Never before has the polity of a nation been destroyed, its people scattered to the ends of the earth and then regathered nearly 2,000 years later to their ancient homeland to be reborn as a nation. God's fatherly chastening of love will continue to restore the Jewish people to full favor and belief. Yes, God chastens to heal.

Oh, what a marvelous God we have! His dealings with Israel are our assurance that God's chastenings are rehabilitative. So that we, His *beloved* children, might be restored to the bosom of His favor. Yes, God chastens to heal. { *Isaiah 19:22* }

Yada

God's symbolic tears convey the imagery of the profound fatherly love and concern He has for us. His thoughts of nostalgia for Israel illustrate His tender feelings for us even while He is chastening us for disobedience. But if God has tender fatherly feelings for us while He is chastening us, how much greater are His emotions of love when we suffer for righteousness or when His providence permits tragedies to enlarge our hearts with sympathy for mankind.

God's capacity to experience the sufferings of another not due to disobedience is conveyed in the Hebrew verb *yada* which is sometimes translated 'to know' or 'knew.' *Yada* denotes both an intellectual and emotional act. It is frequently used to note a deep emotional experience between two persons. Therefore, it also means the ability to have a deep sympathetic love—the ability to feel the emotions of another.

In Exodus 3:7, 'The Lord said, I have seen the afflictions of my people, who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know (*yada*) their sufferings.' Here God expresses His ability to feel Israel's sufferings when they were slaves in Egypt.

Ps 31:7 contains a precious promise all Christians should cherish: 'I will rejoice and be glad in Thy lovingkindness, because Thou hast seen my affliction; Thou hast known (*yada*) the troubles of my soul.'

Yes, God's sympathy runs so deep that He actually knows, in the sense of feeling, our troubles, sorrows and tragedies. Yes, 'in our afflictions He (God) is afflicted'. { *Isaiah 63:9* } Especially does God appreciate our suffering for obedience and to enlarge our hearts in Christ-likeness. Tragedies will be permitted for our spiritual growth. And some of the Lord's people are undergoing severe tragedies. Also, one of the most difficult types of trials is the trial of comparison. For example: Why is Brother A wealthy and my family lives in poverty?

Why is Brother B an Elder and I'm not? Why does Brother C have so many opportunities of service and I don't? Why was Sister A born with such a gracious personality that makes her popular in the Church and I am not? At times we might feel that God is a little unfair or He really doesn't care.

Does God Really Care?

Perhaps you feel like a modern day Job—God is unjust, the tragedies of life are just too harsh. Although the prophet Job lived nearly 3000 years ago, he echoed the cry of every generation since. Job was blessed with a loving family of seven sons and three daughters, possessed immense wealth and enjoyed a high rank. Job was considered 'the greatest of all men in the East'. { *Job 1:2,3* }

Then a series of disasters struck. All his children were killed in a storm. His wealth was lost, his possessions destroyed, his devoted employees and servants killed. Physically he was afflicted with painful sores from head to toe. There is an indication that he was suffering from a form of leprosy.

When his close friends saw him, they cried aloud at his pitiful condition and excruciating pain. With the heart piercing words, 'curse God and die,' his wife deserted him. What else could happen? Job cursed the day he was born. { *Job 3:1-3* } Yet he maintained his faith and trust in God. Even under the onslaught of his supposed comforters, Job asserted: 'Though He slay me, Yet will I trust Him'. { *Job 13:15* }

But time and continued opposition took its toll. Job's distress mounted with intensity as his comforters continued to distress him with wild incriminations. Now prostrated physically by total pain, mentally by opposition of friends and emotionally by total bereavement over his children, Job turned to God in passionate protest against God's unjust dealing with him.

"I cry to you and you do not answer me;"

" I stand, and you merely look at me."

" You have turned *cruel* to me;"

" with the might of your hand you *persecute* me."

" You lift me up on the wind,"

" you make me ride on it,"

" and you toss me about in the roar of the storm."

" I know that you will bring me to death."

"" { *Job 30:20-24, NRSV*}

He pleaded with God not to ignore his cry for help. 'Surely one does not turn against the needy, when in disaster they cry for help' (Verse 24). Then he reminds God that he (Job) did not ignore the needs of the poor and those in distress. He spent much of his life caring for the poor and distraught. Would God do less for him? 'Did I not weep for those whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?' (Verse 25)

Although Job didn't ignore the needs of others, he implied that God forsook him to evil and darkness and then ignored his cries for help.

"But when I looked for good, *evil* came;"

" and when I waited for light, *darkness* came."

" My inward parts are in turmoil,"

" and are never still;"

" days of affliction come to meet me."

" I go about in sunless gloom;"

" I stand up in the *assembly* and cry for help."

"( Verses 26-28)"

Yes, Job stood up as an innocent man pleading for justice in an assembly court, but his cries fell on deaf ears.

"My skin turns black and falls from me,"

" and my bones burn with heat."

" My lyre is turned to mourning,"

" and my pipe to the voice of those who weep."

"( Verses 30, 31)"

Some feel the same anguish when tragedies devastate them. Seemingly, God does not heed their prayers for help. Like Job they cry—Oh God, where are you? God didn't answer Job directly. Rather, God raised questions about the mysteries of His creation (Job 38-40). These questions were designed to remind Job that he really knew very little about God. Job had limited knowledge in all the diversified areas of God's works.

He should not be surprised at failing to comprehend fully why he was being permitted to suffer. Actually God's questions revealed the wisdom, power and concern of God demonstrated in all of His creative works.

God asked Job if he was present when He laid the foundation of the earth, if he understood the laws by which the tides of the sea were controlled. He asked him about the instincts and habits of the various birds and animals, and even of the great monsters of the sea. Then Job was asked if he could explain the wisdom and power that are represented in these marvels of creation. As the questioning proceeds, Job interrupted to say:

"Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?"

" I will lay mine hand upon my mouth."

" Once have I spoken; but I will not answer:"

" yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

"" { Job 40:4,5, KJV }

In Job's expression, 'Behold, I am vile,' the meaning of the Hebrew word translated 'vile' is, according to Professor Strong,

literally, 'swift, small, sharp.' Apparently Job acknowledged to the Lord that he had spoken too quickly; that his viewpoint was too limited, and that it was voiced too sharply. The Lord replied to Job:

"Gird your loins like a man;"

" I will ask, and you will inform Me."

" Would you impugn My justice?"

" Would you condemn Me that you may be right?"

" Have you an arm like God's?' (Verses 7-9, JPS)"

Then the Lord continued to raise questions concerning the wonders of His creation. Three of these questions, found in Job 38:31,32, illustrate the dynamic logic conveyed in God's questions.

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades,"

" or loose the bands of Orion?"

" Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?"

Orion

'Canst thou... loose the bands of Orion?' Garrett P. Serviss, the noted astronomer, in his book *Curiosities of the Sky*, wrote about the bands of Orion.

At the present time this band consists of an almost perfect straight line, a row of second-

magnitude stars about equally spaced and of the most striking beauty. In the course of time, however, the two right-hand stars, Mintaka and Alnilam, will approach each other and form a naked-

eye double; but the third, Alnitak, will drift away eastward So that the band will no longer exist.

In other words, one star is traveling in a certain direction at a certain speed, a second one is traveling in a different direction at a second speed, and the third one is going in a third direction and at a still different speed. Actually every star in Orion is traveling its own course, independent of all the others.

Thus these stars that we see forming one of the bands of Orion are like three ships out on the high seas that happen to be in line at the present moment, but in the future will be separated by thousands of miles of ocean. In fact all these stars that at the present time constitute the constellation of Orion are bound for different ports, and all are journeying to different corners of the universe, So that the bands are being dissolved.

### The Pleiades

‘Canst thou bind the sweet influence of the Pleiades...?’ Notice the amazing astronomical contrast with the Pleiades. The seven stars of the Pleiades are in reality a grouping of 250 stars. Photographs now reveal that 250 blazing stars in this group are all traveling together in one common direction. Concerning this cluster, Dr. Robert J. Trumpler of Lick Observatory stated:

‘Over 25,000 individual measures of the Pleiades stars are now available, and their study led to the important discovery that the whole cluster is moving in a southeasterly direction. The Pleiades stars may thus be compared to a swarm of birds, flying together to a distant goal. This leaves no doubt that the Pleiades are not a temporary or accidental agglomeration of stars, but a system in which the stars are bound together by a close kinship.’

Dr. Trumpler said that all this led to an important discovery. Without any reference whatsoever to the Book of Job, he announced to the world that these discoveries prove that the stars in the Pleiades are all bound together and are flying together like a flock of birds as they journey to their distant goal. That is exactly what God said. ‘Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?’ In other words, Can you keep them bound together So that they remain as a family of stars?

Incredible! God’s laws of cosmology are loosing or dissolving the constellation Orion. Sometime in the far distant future, Orion will be no more. Conversely, wonder of wonders—every last one of the 250 blazing stars in the Pleiades are ordained of God to orbit together in their symmetrical beauty throughout eternity.

### Arcturus

‘Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?’ Garrett P. Serviss wrote:

‘Arcturus, one of the greatest suns in the universe, is a runaway whose speed of flight is 257 miles per second. Arcturus, we have every reason to believe, possesses thousands of times the mass of our sun. Think of it! Our sun is traveling only 12 1/2 miles a second, but Arcturus is traveling 257 miles a second. Think then of the prodigious momentum this motion implies.’

A further observation of Arcturus by Serviss:

‘It could be turned into a new course by a close approach to a great sun, but it could only be stopped by collision head on with a body of enormous mass. Barring such accidents, it must, as far as we can see, keep on until it has traversed our stellar system, whence it may escape and pass out into space beyond to join perhaps one of those other island universes of which we have spoken.’

Charles Burckhalter, of the Chabot Observatory, added an interesting note regarding this great sun:

‘This high velocity places Arcturus in that very small class of stars that apparently are a law unto themselves. He is an outsider, a visitor, a stranger within the gates; to speak plainly, Arcturus is a runaway. Newton gives the velocity of a star under control as not more than 25 miles a second, and Arcturus is going 257 miles a second. Therefore, the combined attraction of all the stars we know cannot stop him or even turn him in his path.’

When Mr. Burckhalter had his attention called to this text in the book of Job, he studied it in the light of modern discovery and made a statement that has attracted worldwide attention:

‘The study of the Book of Job and its comparison with the latest scientific discoveries has brought me to the matured conviction that the Bible is an inspired book and was written by the One who made the stars.’

The wonders of God’s universe never cease to amaze us. Arcturus and his sons *s-o-n-s* are individual runaway suns *s-u-n-s* that seem to be out of orbit in our galaxy. Traveling at such incredible speeds, why don’t they crash with other suns or planets? Where are they headed? Only God knows. Indeed they are not runaways. They will not crash. Why? God is guiding them.

The Lesson of the

Pleiades, Orion, Arcturus

Few have suffered the multiple tragedies of Job. How could God reach through the enormity of Job's self-pity? (Job thought God just didn't care.) In these three questions { Job 38:31,32} God is in reality saying:

*Job, you think I am not concerned about your suffering. Well, let Me ask you these questions. Can you loose the bands of Orion? No, you cannot. But My Divine power will —some day Orion will no longer exist. Job, can you bind the 250 stars of the Pleiades together in their symmetry of beauty and not have a single one drift off? Only I have this power and wisdom. Can you prevent the runaways —Arcturus and his sons —from colliding as they go dashing out of the Milky Way? No, only My Divine power and wisdom can.*

*Job, if I am caring for the details of the universe, do you doubt that I not only care for the details of your life but I have the ability to solve your problems? Trust that there is a good reason I am permitting these tragedies. Remember Job, I work from the perspective of your eternal welfare.*

What an awesome way God chose to tell Job that He was in full control of human affairs, including Job's life! When God finished His series of questions, Job exclaimed:

"I know that thou canst do everything,"

" and that no thought can be withholden from thee."

" Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?"

"‘ Therefore have I uttered that I understood not;"

" things too wonderful for me, which I knew not..."

" I have *heard* of thee by the hearing of the ear:"

" but now mine eye *seeth* thee'." { Job 42:2-5}

Job finally learned the meaning of his severe trial. He learned that its loving purpose was to give him a clearer understanding of God, that he might serve him more faithfully and with greater appreciation. Job speaks of this clearer understanding as '*seeing*' the Lord, instead of merely having *heard* about him. Since he had



gained such deep insights of God, Job's brief period of suffering was a most valuable experience.

Besides restoring Job's health, 'the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning'. { *Job 42:12-15* }

#### One Lesson of Job For Us

These scientific facts recorded in the book of Job concerning the Pleiades, Orion and Arcturus anticipated scientific discovery by nearly 3000 years. Scientists only discovered these startling facts in our Twentieth Century, yet they were recorded in the book of Job nearly 3000 years ago. What an awesome confirmation of the Bible!

Who can doubt the Bible is the inspired word of God? Yes, the book of Job has a powerful, exclusive lesson for Twentieth Century man. Twentieth Century science proves God's Word, the Bible, is true.

#### Honest Doubt

Job 2:10 states: 'In all of this Job sinned not with his lips.' How does this harmonize with chapter 42 where Job accused God of being unjust? Where there are facts, there can be no doubts. But our relationship with God is by faith, not facts—'according to your faith be it unto you'. { *Matthew 9:29* }

Where there is faith, there is room for doubt. Through trials and adversities { *1 Peter 1:7* } the man of God must develop a mature faith, 'a full assurance of faith'. { *Hebrews 10:22* } We watched the drama of Job's struggles to a mature faith. An immature faith has doubts.

Job had doubts, but they were not sins because he didn't try to inflict his doubts upon others. While doubting he lacked trust but still had belief in God. So he took his doubts where a man of God must take his doubts—to his God. And God dramatically answered Job's doubts and developed in him a full assurance of faith.

We will have doubts in our journey to maturity. At such times we must copy the example of Job, Jeremiah, David, and John the Baptist and take our doubts to the Lord in prayer. If our heart is sincere, God will answer our doubts. He will speak to us through His Word and His providences. Sometimes His answer will be—'Now that you have seen my glorious character, *trust* me.'

## **A Bird of Prey-Brother Vasile Intea, Romania**

Dear brethren in the Lord and friends of the truth, peace be unto you! It is a great joy for me and my wife, Maria, to be for the second time amongst you in Miskolc, which is an honor for us. We thank the Heavenly Father and the brethren who made it possible for us to be here, and it is with tears that I am saying this. We bring you greetings from our class in Cluj-Napoca, of those that are not now here with us.

God spoke in many ways through the mouth of his holy prophets of old, through his Son Jesus Christ and through his apostles, about his plan of salvation for mankind. *{See Job 33:14-16}* But they expressed themselves in dark sayings and figures (in parables, metaphors, allegories), difficult to understand, as it is written: 'I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old'. *{Psalms 78:2}*

Jesus spoke to the multitudes only in parables about everything. *{See Matthew 13:34,35}* To give the parables a literal meaning would be a great mistake, as it happened with those that did not take this into account, and made up teachings, theories and dogmas not only false, but also defamatory of God, for they ascribe to God acts and works inconsistent with his character.

Therefore, God hid in dark sayings his plan relating to mankind's salvation in order to keep it from being falsified or destroyed by the great enemy. But when the due time for it to be revealed arrived, God disclosed it in order to be understood.

We have a telling example of this in the Book of the Prophet Daniel, where we read: 'Although I heard [says Daniel] I did not understand. Then I said [to the messenger of heaven], My Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. [Then] many shall be purified, made white and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand'. *{Daniel 12:8-10}*

Human, earthly wisdom cannot grasp the mystery of God's things, *{1 Corinthians 2:7-14}* but 'The entrance of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple'. *{Psalms 119:130}*

Chapter 46 of Isaiah is also a prophecy which hides in its mysterious words the plan of salvation for Israel and the whole

world. First he kindly reproves his people Israel for the sin of idolatry into which it had fallen, then He tells them with goodness to remember the ancient times when He proved to them by great and wonderful works that He was the only true God and that He still loved them and was willing to save them, and also the whole world. This salvation would not tarry, but it would be accomplished in due time. { *Habakkuk 2:1-3* }

In Isaiah 46:10,11, God, through the prophet, says of himself: 'Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure: calling a bird of prey from the east, the man that executes my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it, I will also do it.'

This prophecy has four key phrases:

"(1) 'a bird of prey'"

"( 2) 'called from the east'"

"( 3) 'from a far country'"

"( 4) 'the man' who executes God plans."

First of all a question needs to be answered: what kind of a bird is spoken of here, knowing that there are many kinds of birds of prey, as for instance the owl, the hawk, the vulture, the eagle, etc.

In order to give a correct interpretation from the standpoint of the Bible, we must remember the inspired words of the Apostle Peter: 'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy came not by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Spirit'. { *2 Peter 1:20,21* } Consequently, we are to look into the Word of God for other texts which can shed light upon the one under consideration. These will serve as true keys which will help to unlock the mystery of the prophecy.

Those familiar with the Bible will not err thinking that it is here speaking of the vulture, because in the Bible the vulture is highly appreciated, often being used as a symbol because of its wonderful qualities: it flies at the highest altitude; it has a keen sight and a large field of vision; it has a specific way of building its nest,

making it rough and thorny; it has a specific method of teaching its young to fly, as the Scripture says:

‘As an eagle [vulture, according to the Romanian translation] stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them on her wings, So the LORD alone did lead them’. { *Deuteronomy 32:11,12*}

‘But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.’ { *Isaiah 40:31*}

‘And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth!’ { *Revelation 8:13*}

‘Wherever the body is there the eagles will be gathered together’. { *Luke 17:37*}

(Here we have a metaphorical phrase, which means that where the truth of God is found uncorrupted, there Jesus’ truly consecrated ones will gather together.) These texts confirm the thought that the bird of prey in the prophecy is a vulture, which represents ‘a man’ who will fulfill the will of the Almighty, and all of his plans.

His will about which this prophecy speaks is the salvation of Israel and of all mankind { *1 Timothy 2:4*} from the sentence of everlasting death imposed because of sin. { *Romans 5:12*} The deliverance from this sentence could be brought only through the satisfaction (first of all) of the requirements of divine justice.

The principle of absolute, perfect divine justice is shown in the law given to Israel and it reads as follows: ‘A life for a life, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’ { *Exodus 21:23-29, Deuteronomy 19:21*} . In other words, divine justice required a ransom price, a perfect man, as Adam was before he sinned, who willingly would take upon himself the Adamic guilt and condemnation, offering himself and giving himself up voluntarily in death, with all the rights and privileges to which he was entitled.

Divine justice required no more and no less than an exact measure, or equivalent. The price was great indeed. Who would be able to pay it? Could one of Adam’s offspring pay it? God himself answers this question through his prophet: ‘people boast in the multitude of their riches, but none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.

‘For the redemption of their souls is So costly that [even with all the gold and silver of which they boast] it will never be accomplished’. { *Psalms 49:6-8, Romanian translation*} There is no hope. Nevertheless, God said: ‘My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure’. { *Isaiah 46:10*}

A blessed hope was given to righteous Job, who in the torment of his suffering said: ‘I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth’. { *Job 19:25*} Who would be the One? The plans of God are in the right hand of his power and wisdom, ‘written in a sealed scroll’... And an angel in heaven was ‘proclaiming with a loud voice: Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loosen its seals?’ ‘And no one in heaven [among the angels] or on the earth [among men] or under the earth [among the dead] was able to open the scroll or to look at it’. { *Revelation 5:1-3*}

This means that an angel, a living or a dead man, was not acceptable for the perfect man Adam who sinned. It was necessary to be an equivalent for Adam, the perfect man: ‘a little lower than the angels,’ but higher than imperfect, fallen man. Such a man was not to be found on the earth.

As a result, God ‘called him from the east’... to accomplish his plans. It cannot mean here the geographical east, but it means the symbolical ‘east.’ We believe this represents the place where the light from the Father’s habitation arises, even from the Father who dwells ‘in the light which no man can approach unto’. { *1 Timothy 6:16*} It is the east from where the ‘kings’ who will reign with Christ will come, after the way for their coming has been prepared. { *Revelation 16:12, Daniel 7:12*}

He comes from a ‘far country’, { *Luke 19:11-15*} first to redeem what was lost, then to restore what he had redeemed. ‘After a long time ... he came,’ says Matthew 25:19. The ‘far country’ from which he is called and from which he comes is heaven, where he was with the Father. { *John 14:2-5,28*}

First he came like ‘a man.’ Yes, he ‘emptied himself [of heavenly glory], taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness’. { *Philippians 2:6-8 NRSV*} He was ‘made flesh’, { *John 1:14*} human flesh, in order to be sacrificed in death as a ransom price for the life of the world. { *John 6:51, Hebrews 10:5-10*} As long as he was a man, even though ‘undefiled and separate from sinners,’ he was ‘lower than the angels’. { *Hebrews 7:26,2:9*}

The phrase ‘a man,’ represented as a bird of prey, { *Isaiah 46:11*} called to accomplish the plans and the will of God, is not referring

to a common man called from among the sinners. He is 'the man Jesus Christ' who will accomplish 'all the intention' of God. He said: 'I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me'. { *John 6:38* } And the apostle Paul said: 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all'. { *1 Timothy 2:5-6* }

Jesus was the Son of God, as was testified at Jordan when a voice was heard saying 'this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. { *Matthew 3:17,2 Pet. 1:17-18* } Nevertheless, Jesus usually called himself the 'son of man.' This has a special significance, since through this name, 'son of man' our Lord Jesus discloses to us what he really was during his earthly life, that is 'a man,' but a perfect man, 'blameless, undefiled, separate from sinners.' God prepared for him a perfect body, acceptable as a sacrifice for the sin of Adam and all mankind. { *Hebrews 10:5-10, 1Jo 2:1-2* }

Before He was born as a man on earth, he existed as a glorious heavenly being of the highest rank, called in the Bible 'Michael the archangel'. { *Daniel 10:13,21,12:1, Jude 9* } In fact, he is the 'beginning of his work' { *Revelation 1:8, Proverbs 8:22* } and in order to redeem mankind from the sentence of sin, he 'emptied himself [of heavenly glory], taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men [of sinful men]'. { *Philippians 2:7-8 RSV* }

It seems fitting for us to stop a little here and think of the words of Pilate, addressed to the mob of Jews who were clamoring for Jesus' crucifixion. Pilate came out of the hall of judgment followed by Jesus, who had a crown of thorns on his head and was dressed, mockingly, in a purple robe (like a king). Then Pilate said demonstratively, 'Here is the man!' meaning 'Here is a true man, separate from others. This true, perfect man has no guilt. I searched him thoroughly and I find in Him no guilt.'

So Jesus as the Lamb of God paid to justice the price for the deliverance of mankind, and now he has the 'keys of death and hades [the grave]'. { *Revelation 1:18* } Nevertheless, mankind is still in bondage of sin and in the 'captivity' of death. He has fallen as a prey to 'the strong man,' the enemy, who has governed and oppressed him for thousands of years. Will he be delivered from the powerful hand of the oppressor? The Prophet Isaiah asks: 'Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?' And the Lord answers:

'Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee and I will save the children... and all flesh

shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob'. { *Isaiah 49:24-26*} This work, being the second great step in the divine program, will be accomplished by 'The man Christ Jesus,' who is represented here by 'a bird of prey from the east.'

It seems quite obvious that the strong man of this prophecy is Satan, the great enemy, who in the Gospels also is called 'the strong man.' Also it seems obvious that the prey is mankind fallen prey to the strong man, 'the old serpent,' who through cunning, deception and lies entrapped him in sin and made himself a lord over mankind and over his heritage, the earth. { *Job 9:24, Genesis 3:1-6*} He is the oppressor that subjected all mankind and led them in the ways of sin, suffering and death. { *Ephesians 2:2, Romans 6:16*}

We read in the Gospel of Luke 11:21,22: 'When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted and divideth his spoils.'

The Prophet Isaiah also says: 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors'. { *Isaiah 53:12*}

We saw that the prey is mankind taken by 'the strong man,' and that the prey will be taken by 'the stronger than him.' Now remains the question, With whom will he divide the prey? Who are 'the strong ones' with whom he will share it?

We find an answer in Psalms 82:6,7, which says: 'I have said, You are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.' In Biblical usage the word 'gods' means 'strong ones,' as the following texts show: 1 Corinthians 8:5,6, Exodus 7:1.

'Sons of God' are only those that have the Spirit of Christ, those that are begotten to the new nature, to become heirs with Christ of his glory, honor and immortality. { *2 Thessalonians 2:14, Romans 8:9*} As the Apostle Paul says: 'You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus'. { *Galatians 3:26*} Therefore they are 'strong ones' ('gods') and overcomers through Jesus. They are the members of his elect 'body,' which is his church.

With these will he divide the prey in the sense that they will participate in the judgment of the world by tests, and in the blessing and gradual raising up of the obedient, first of those alive, then of those 'in the land of the enemy,' in the tombs, who will be resurrected gradually during the thousand year reign of Christ. { *John 5:28,29, Acts 24:15* }

The disobedient, those proved to be incorrigible, wicked to the utmost, at the end of a judgment by tests for one hundred years, will be destroyed completely in the second death. { *Acts 3:23, Revelation 21:8* } . This destruction is represented by the 'lake of fire.'

It seems that in the parable of Luke 19:12-19, the Lord Jesus gave us a hint of the way in which the overcomers will participate in the judging and restoration of mankind in the Kingdom. He will divide the authority and responsibility (or 'the throne') to every man according to his faithfulness, activity and zeal.

Jesus Christ the overcomer will take away from the dominion of Satan not only mankind, but also the rulership of mankind, which Satan took by usurpation. When the seventh angel sounded the trumpet, loud voices were heard 'in heaven' announcing to the people that 'the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever'. { *Revelation 11:15* }

This is a fulfillment of the prophetic vision of Daniel 7:13,14. Jesus Christ, who overcame the world and its unrighteous ruler, has promised his followers: 'He that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron'. { *Revelation 2:26,27* } In this manner our Lord and Saviour (and the world's also), will divide 'the prey' with 'the strong'. { *Isaiah 53:12* }

But what will be the portion of the people in this 'prey'? It is written in the Law at Mount Sinai, which was a shadow of things to come, that the prey of war was divided not only among the warriors, but also among 'all the congregation'. { *Numbers 31:27,42-47* }

The key of understanding is found in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. The Lord wanted the people of Israel to be taken into captivity in Babylon for 70 years in order for them to expiate their sins. Jeremiah was sent to tell the people the words of the Lord. 'He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall



live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. { *Jeremiah 38:1,2*} ‘Thy life shall be for a prey to thee, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD’. { *Jeremiah 39:18*}

From these words of the Lord we are to remember that life itself is ‘a prey of war,’ for it is gained through battle, through obedience to the Word of God. This prey will be So large that even the ‘lame will partake of it. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity’. { *Isaiah 33:23,24*} ‘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’. { *Hosea 6:1,2*}

When the world is delivered out of the long night of sin, suffering and death, the people will sing with joy the song in the prophecy of Isaiah 14:3-10. These texts, and many others, will be fulfilled on the earth when the earthly part of the

kingdom is established and the individual judgment begins, after Satan is bound and the prophets are resurrected and made ‘princes’ in all the land of Christ, that is, in all the earth.

May the Lord help us to be worthy of participation with him in this great work. This is what I wish for me and also for you all. Amen.

### **The Crown of Victory-Brother Erich Weiglhofer, Austria**

Dear brethren in the Lord! Let me start my lesson with the promise which was given to the church of Smyrna. It reads: ‘Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life’. { *Revelation 2:10*}

This statement was a warning that the faithful would be put in prison and persecuted in every way, as the message shows. For this reason the promise of a future glory and a conqueror’s crown of life would be a tremendous stimulus to remain faithful.

This conqueror’s crown is not human perfection on earth, but incorruptibility, immortality. It is the divine nature. Thereby our eyes are led to a goal which did not exist before in God’s creation. It is the new creation, which will be completed in our time. It was

not revealed to anyone of us by a personal revelation or gospel, but it can be read clearly and sensibly in the holy Scriptures.

We read in Colossians 1:26: 'The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.' It was hidden for So long until God sent word to us through Jesus Christ firsthand, and then through his apostles. All that could be passed on before was a mystery, until it was revealed, and to those to whom it is not passed on it remains a mystery. But now the way which leads to this wonderful goal of the conqueror's crown of life is clear and sensible: namely the way of following our Lord Jesus. For this reason is the exhortation of our Lord: 'Be faithful even to the point of death.' We do not want to waste time, strength, thoughts or money to achieve perishable enjoyments and rewards which the world So richly offers to us.

The new creation is a reality. The Father has said so, and So we will complete our consecration and not fall victim to other interpretations of scripture.

Brother Russell writes in the Sixth Volume of Studies in the Scriptures: 'Our Lord, the leader of our salvation, had not only to fulfill his consecration as a living sacrifice, but he had to complete this consecration in death. And the same applies to the church which is his body. The church has to fulfill it also. Paul speaks to the brethren in Colossians 1:24: '[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.'

The way which leads to joint rulership with Jesus in his kingdom is not an easy one. It is a way of suffering which eventually ends in death. As we read in Psalms 82:7: 'Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.' Until now, were there not two human rulers of earth? The first was Adam, to whom it was said rule over the earth. He became disobedient and lost his authority before God. Centuries later another sovereign came to earth, the man Christ Jesus.

He had the same human authority as Adam had before he fell in sin. Adam died and also Jesus died. And like one of these princes died, So we also will die. Either we die like Adam as an arbitrary breaker of the covenant or as a willing offering like our Lord Jesus. 'Whoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it'. { *Matthew 16:25*}

This daily dying and this courage of faith is necessary if we want to make our calling and election sure. Only if we walk faithfully in

the footsteps of our Lord will the promise of glory, honor and immortality be ours. Jesus knows that those who walk in this way need encouragement. Therefore he said: 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom'. { *Luke 12:32*} Is this not a wonderful promise for the prospective rulers in the kingdom of Christ? But it is not for those who later will be servants in that kingdom. It is important to hold this difference in mind, for the kingdom of Christ will have both rulers and also servants.

The life of a Christian in many regards can be compared with a warrior. 'Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer'. { *2 Timothy 2:3,4*} The Bible uses this parable to teach us very important lessons regarding obedience to God's will. So the Apostle Paul obviously thought about the good fight of faith of a Christian when he wrote this text.

The basic teaching of this illustration of a soldier, applied to a follower of Christ, is respecting faithfulness and devotion towards God. He has to have obedience, faithfulness, courage, faith, sacrifice, suffering and death, and he must have these willingly.

We will now take a closer look at these qualities. An essential quality of a good soldier is obedience, and So each follower of Christ has to learn to be obedient. The success of an army in battle depends primarily on the obedience of a soldier to the instructions of the commanding officer.

So the Christian army is composed of soldiers who are ready to strictly obey the leader of their salvation. Who is our leader? We all know that it is our Lord Jesus, who received an order from the heavenly Father to be the leader of this host of warriors who press through affliction and trouble to victory and glory.

The victory of this army will be absolutely sure, but our personal victory within the army of the Lord depends on our obedience to his orders. Much more depends on obedience than one might first imagine. The obedience of a follower of Christ should reach to the inner most part of the heart.

Only the spirit of complete subjection to the will of the Lord protects us from the danger of disobedience. A follower of Christ has to fulfill both pleasant obligations and unpleasant ones. The doing of things which by nature we do not like to do is testing our

obedience to the will of God. The human heart is very deceitful, and if our faithfulness to our Lord is not complete we can persuade ourselves that we are obedient to all the instructions of our service, though we obey only part of them, only the instructions that are most pleasing to us.

If the spirit of complete consecration does not exist, then the orders which will either be ignored or obeyed depend mostly on the sympathy or aversion of the follower of Christ. The ideal warrior will not be led by his personal preference, but only by the orders of his leader. Faithfulness is very much related to obedience.

Warriors of Jesus Christ can not fraternize with God's enemies and then be friendly with the leader of their salvation. They have to stand completely for the Lord and the principles of righteousness which are connected with the warfare of a follower of Christ. Our Lord said: 'My kingdom is not of this world'. { *John 18:36* }

That means that we as warriors of Christ cannot unite ourselves with this present evil world. { *Galatians 1:4* } And we must always be alert to the malicious efforts of the prince of this world, to entice us to join his ranks, if not openly then through the worldly spirit.

The forces which fight the army of the Lord most times appear as angels of light, to deceive. 'And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve'. { *2 Corinthians 11:14-15* }

So in this present time many voices are calling out to those engaged for the Lord: for instance wealth, pleasure, art, power, science, technology and wrong doctrines exert a strong influence for worldliness. Our great adversary acts very shrewdly. He uses these influences to distract us from the straight way. 'Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices'. { *2 Corinthians 2:11* } The world entices us to occupy ourselves with its attractions and hopes.

But the bridegroom tells us: 'Hear and look, the things of this present life are perishable, but the ways I show you are eternal, and you have the opportunity to sacrifice the perishable things, for this you will earn the most precious blessings, the conqueror's crown of life, the divine nature, and become the bride of Christ.'  
(Augmented from Psalms 45:10)

In Revelation 17:14 it is said that those who are suitable to be united with the lamb are those called, chosen and faithful. To be called into this high position in the kingdom as united rulers with Christ is not enough. This calling has to be in accord with a complete consecration, to do the will of God. On the basis of this consecration the called become elected ones. After this it is necessary to make the calling and election sure through a life of faithfulness.

What does it mean, faithfulness to the Lord? Faithfulness means devotion to his word of truth. The Apostle Peter speaks about other aspects of faithfulness also, and reminds us that we are called to become participants of the divine nature. He says:

‘Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, So that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control perseverance; and to perseverance godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love.

‘For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’. { *2 Peter 1:4-11* }

The Apostle Paul also encouraged the brethren in Rome to persevere in hope on our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote: ‘For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?’. { *Romans 8:24* }

As disciples of Christ we hope for what the Lord has promised, and what we do not yet see. We are happy, recognizing that the second presence of Christ is now a reality, but we still wait for the fulfillment of the hope to live and to reign with Christ. So we wait just as the disciples in the ancient church, patiently, for the realization of our hope. This waiting requires patience and perseverance because we have to endure examinations while waiting.

The Apostle Paul shows us this in Romans 5:3-5. 'Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; character hope; and hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the holy Spirit, which he has given us.' The return of Christ is also connected to the necessity of perseverance in Hebrews 10:36-38.

We read: 'You need to persevere So that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a little while he who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.'

Although we are at the end of this age, much closer in relation to the fulfillment of the plan of God than those in the early church, nevertheless we have the test of patient perseverance. Naturally we would very much like the quick realization of our hopes for the kingdom. But we have no certainty how soon it will be. We are urged to lay down our lives further in the service of the Lord, without knowing how long we have to serve, sacrifice and suffer.

For this reason we need to persevere in hope. That means exercising the patience which enables us to hold up our hope, no matter how long the waiting time may last, nor how burdensome our experience in this service may be, while we are waiting in doing. This really is a test. May we not lose the enthusiasm of our first love for the truth and its service, because there seems to be a delay in the fulfillment of our hopes. God is a perfect time keeper, and each detail of his plan will happen exactly at the time he appointed for it.

In the parable of the sower our Lord said: 'But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop'. { *Luke 8:11-15* } The parable also speaks of a kind of seed which fell among thorns. 'The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature' (verse 14).

So all the disciples of the Lord have to be alert that life's worries do not disturb their work of faith, and their efforts of love. Continuing in doing good is the best protection against this danger. Of course this should be with prayer for never failing strength in the service of the Lord.

We, beloved brethren, have the possibility of claiming for ourselves the promise of glory, honor and immortality. We have to devote our senses to the influence of the holy Spirit and to accept the will of God as it is revealed through the word of God.

There is no spiritual creation without becoming subject to the will of God. The conditions of our life are overruled by God for the purpose that we will be made receptive to the teachings of his Word. For those who willingly submit themselves to the will of God, as it is expressed in God's word, the spiritual creation is a certainty. They can be sure of receiving the conqueror's crown if they continue faithful to the Lord.

This being faithful has to be proved by tests. So we all have tests of faith. Without these tests our faithfulness could never be proved. Even our Lord Jesus had to pass such tests of faith. In Hebrews 12:2 we read: 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

By this we can see that the temptations in the beginning of his race were relatively easy. He could easily recognize them and he refused them resolutely and unambiguously, such as the temptations in the wilderness. But at the end of his course the heaviest tests of faith came upon him. So he prayed in Gethsemane: 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will'. { *Matthew 26:39* }

It was always Jesus' delight to do the Father's will, and finishing the prayer with the words 'but as you will,' this test of faith was completed. But on the cross yet the most difficult one overcame him, whereby he cried out: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' { *Matthew 27:46* } Our faith and our faithfulness must be as it was with Jesus. Be full of faith until the completion of the sacrifice, and he will give to you the highest form of life.

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

this side the veil must and will be vanquished, but the apparent defeat only hastens the kingdom glories' (Manna, August 11).

We see that God does not protect his people from tests of faith. He was able to protect Adam, but he did not do it. He also could have driven out all idolaters from his promised land and with that could have protected Israel from this temptation. He did not do that either. God wishes the worship of those who willingly and joyfully acknowledge him as the only true God, regardless of their circumstances.

So it is also with spiritual Israel in the present age, and So it will be with all mankind during the Millennial Age. 'No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out So that you can stand up under it'. { *1 Corinthians 10:13* }

Isn't this a beautiful promise? The Lord knows that his people have to go through tests and temptations. He knows that they are good for his people. Our experiences are in no way different from those of the world. However, in our tests the Lord is with us and gives us strength to bear them. He shows by his providence the importance they have for us, to prepare us to live and reign with Christ.

Does not the Lord assure us in this promise that he will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear? Yes, the Lord helps us in every time of difficulty, and when there is a need, his help will deliver them. We have to prove to our Lord our faithfulness and devotion by difficulties and sacrifices. For this the Lord encourages us by his promises. This great opportunity we possess is much greater than all the world has to offer.

Let us read Romans 6:4. 'We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.' This precious truth should be of great encouragement for every one of the people of God, especially for those who are isolated.

Brethren who in an ecclesia can work together in the spirit of the truth are especially privileged, more than those who are alone. But we also know that many brethren are alone, in God's providence, and no one is there to encourage them. But is there really no one? There is one, who says: 'I know your deeds'. { *Revelation 2:2* }



It is our Lord Jesus, who also could speak to us in this way: ‘I know that you spent as much of your time, your strength and your resources in my service as you were able. Yes, I know your deeds, and if you remain faithful, I will give you the crown of life.’

What still needs to be done, or what are we still lacking? In Luke 9:23 the Lord said to his disciples: ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’ To take up the cross daily means to renew our consecration daily, to grasp the opportunities daily, which are presented to us. For example: to serve the Lord and to proclaim the good news as we have the opportunity. And to bear with patience the tests which come upon us, to grow into the image of our Lord each day.

It is demanded from each follower of the Lord that he deny himself, using all that the Lord has put in his hands as a steward in the service of the Lord: time, talents and strength. We should be in possession of the same love, the same eagerness, the same devotedness, the same unshakable consecration, which was in the hearts of the first faithful servants of the Lord, and that to such an extent that should it be demanded of us, we also would be ready to lay down our lives, as they did.

Like the bullock, So also the sacrifice of the goat class has to be consumed completely. Should not each consecrated child of God ask himself: ‘What am I still lacking? Do I lack love for my Lord and his precious truth, or do I lack a greater measure of truth, self-denial and patient perseverance, or do I lack humility and repentance, or do I need to show greater growth as a new creature, more growth in brotherly love or other fruits of the spirit?’

Nobody is So perfect that he has no lack. And when the Lord tests and tries us in reply to our prayers, let us then be faithful followers of our Lord and master them with courage and resolve.

The Psalmist writes in Psalms 92:1,2: ‘It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night.’ The hearts of the people of God should be overflowing with thanksgiving and praise each day for all the blessings he So freely and permanently bestows upon us.

Don’t we have much to be thankful for? We also share the common blessings with the world, like food and clothing. For this

we should also give thanks to the Lord daily, to him who gives rain and sunshine to both the righteous and unrighteous.

Yet as new creatures we have much more than the world to be thankful for. How wonderful it is that in these dark days of world distress the Lord has given us the truth. All around us the hearts of men are filled with fear and anxiety. Jesus said of this time of his second presence that the hearts of men will be filled with fear.

The conditions of the world are for us a confirmation that the complete revelation of the messianic kingdom is very close. Instead of being fearful, 'look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption is drawing near'. { *Luke 21:28*} 'God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble'. { *Psalms 46:2*}

Now that we have reached the end of the age with its great increase of knowledge, the people of God are especially blessed. They have many resources such as Bibles, concordances, Studies in the Scriptures, and much more, to hear the voice of the Lord by his word very clearly and with great certainty.

'Prove yourself faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life'. { *Revelation 2:10*} 'To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne'. { *Revelation 3:21*}

Isn't it marvelous, dear Brethren, that the plan of God shall be executed so completely? May the knowledge of this precious truth stimulate us to faithfulness and may we always listen to the voice of God. May he lead us and let us always be ready to follow faithfully his guidance.

May God give his blessings to all of us. Amen.

## **The Restoration of the Nations-Brother Casimir Tomiak, France**

### ***Symposium, Part One***

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may the peace of the Lord be with you.

The restoration of the nations is extensively described in the Word. We read in Isaiah 25:6: 'And in this [royal] mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of fat things' —not only for one nation, like formerly of Israel, but for all people.

Before developing this topic, 'The Restoration of the Nations,' we are going to see in what way the nations will be gathered, and then re-established and replaced by the Kingdom of Christ. To this effect, God has chosen a people and given them a country on the earth, as demonstrated in the people of Israel.

It is very important to emphasize the events and circumstances by which God instituted this government. Pastor Russell tells us in Volume 1, on the topic 'Divine Revelation,' that Israel, before they received a king, was a republic. This republic form of civil government lasted more than 400 years. Also in Volume 1, on the topic 'The Kingdoms of this World,' we read: 'During the Jewish age God organized the people of Israel as his kingdom, under Moses and the Judges—a sort of Republic—but it was typical only.'

Because of the wish of the elders and the people, this government was changed into a kingdom that didn't have the approval of the Eternal. 1 Samuel 8:5-7 says 'Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you [Samuel], but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.' In this transition the people were warned that they would be under the tyranny and the requirements of a king. This kingdom was ended by the dethronement of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah (Jeremiah 30 and 32).

The Gentile times began in 606 B.C. and lasted until Jesus Christ appeared in 1914. From that time the royal monarchies were shaken and no longer had any success, and their fall was imminent. These kings were forced by God to demonstrate their legitimacy. Then came the time when the republics were deeply rooted and reinforced themselves with considerable success, and this brought about a separation of church and state. Even Pope Leo XIII urged the Catholics to accept the republics and had them stop fighting. Thus the clergy lost the battle against the republics, though we cannot ignore its great power in the Middle Ages.

At the end of World War I, the most prominent event was the fall of the dynasties which collapsed like a house of cards under the blow of the revolutions that followed, which led these royal families to their irreparable loss. It was a cataclysm without precedence. It exploded and dislocated all of Europe's monarchies. The most remarkable fact for us is that the majority of these dynasties were replaced by republics.

These monarchical governments were constantly pursued, groups of objectors were organized and many of these kings were dethroned. One after the other were assassinated which made room for the forming of another kind of government. It is these events which prove to us that the date 1914 is valid and important. It marked a just end of the nations. Of a certainty, it was announced by the Word of God. { *Daniel 12:1-4*} What is important for us is that these monarchical governments were replaced by the same form of government that Israel had before they asked for a king, that is to say, democratic republics placed in the hands of the people. These new governors no longer pretend to be established by God and therefore irremovable.

Secondly, the leaders no longer have absolute power, and all decisions are based on a constitution created by elected men, chosen by the sovereign people. It is at this precise moment that the veil of ignorance and of superstition began to tear by the increase of knowledge, education for all, and the freedom of expression. { *Daniel 12:4*}

The riches, in these forms of governments, are not in the hands of the powerful monarchs anymore. Also, it is in these democratic countries, with freedom from the yoke of royalty, that stupendous social advantages have developed in many areas, and the quality of life has increased considerably, more than in the countries which still have not moved to this form of government. Every upheaval or deviation from the democratic system costs the people dearly. (An example being in Germany in 1939.)

We should not think that because these forms of government were instituted after the fall of the nations in 1914, and because the rulers do not have absolute power like the monarchs of the past, that this system is the kingdom of God. Because we know that the kingdom of God will not be established by a universal suffrage of the nations.

We have seen that the former kingdoms were destroyed and annihilated. To these last democratic governments permitted by God, { *Romans 13:1*} an extension of life is granted to them for a certain time. The Prophet Daniel tells us this in Daniel 7, where the governments are compared to beasts. We read in verse 12: 'As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.' Then they will be discarded and replaced by the Kingdom of Christ. We read in Matthew 25:31, 'the son of the man shall come in his glory [Christ

head and body complete] ... and before him shall be gathered all nations.'

A magnificent lesson is shown to us in Saul, king of Israel, and David. King Saul was rejected ( 1 Samuel 16, starting at verse 1). The legitimate king, David, was in exile, deprived of liberty. Saul, though rejected, found himself still on the throne for a few more years. He represents to us the present governments. Rejected Saul remained on the throne a few more years because he was granted an extension of his life until he died, and then David took his place.

King David represents our legitimate King and Lord during his second presence, in which time we have the privilege of living, because we are at the dawn of the institution of the Kingdom which he will inaugurate with the complete church. This will be before the fall of the kingdoms of this world, because it is the strength of this kingdom of Christ which will annihilate all the other kingdoms of this world. 'He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet' according to 1 Corinthians 15:25.

There is evidence that during the reign of Christ, the enemies will be present and gradually eliminated. { *Isaiah 65:20* } At this time, the Lord and King will take control of the Kingdom 'and he shall rule [the nations] with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers' according to Revelation 2:27.

#### The Goal of Gathering the Nations

Zep 3:8 reads 'My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger.' This will be accomplished during the last phase of the great tribulation described in Matthew 24:21, 'For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.'

The Word of God indicates to us that this great and final distress will be in three phases ( 1 Kings 19:11-12 and Revelation 9:12). Phase One: represented by a violent wind, wars and tribulations. Phase Two: represented by earthquakes, the revolutions which followed. Phase Three: represented by fire, which pictures the anarchy which will end this evil world.

It is quite clear that this distress began in 1914 at the time of World War I. This is clearly predicted by the prophet in Daniel 12:1-4, who said 'there shall be a time of trouble,' that is to say a period

long enough to accomplish all three phases referred to in 1 Kings 19:11,12. Verse 4 of Daniel 12 tells us ‘knowledge will be increased.’ And that is the key, the outcome of the prophecy. Is this not the period of time in which we live?

This first phase led to all types of revolutions (Russian and others in 1917), when a lot of nations were freed from bondage by the fall of the monarchies and the oppressors. Then, by the increase of knowledge and the freedom of expression, in the last phase of the great distress (anarchy), God will put an end to the existence of the kingdoms of this evil world, the present world. { *1 Kings 19:12*}

This period—the end of the nations since 1914—is strongly confirmed in Luke 21:24, where we read ‘and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.’

We see clearly that this lapse of time, between 1914 and our day, is a time when the phases of the great distress are interspersed by calmer periods. The period of the end of the nations is the time of reversing the former order of things of this world. No Christian could be unaware of it. But we see that these improvements, caused by the increase of knowledge, have not brought satisfaction to the nations, but the opposite. This is what the holy scriptures confirm to us.

In Revelation 11:17-18, we read ‘We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. [And as a result] the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come’ —that is to say, the last phase of this great tribulation, anarchy. Thus we see clearly that from 1914 to the present the Lord reverses the former regime of the existing powers in order to prepare the nations to accept a new order supervised by the messiah and his church, and we live in a part of this great day of vengeance of the Eternal which will end with the inauguration of the Kingdom of God, and will be the fulfillment of the Lord’s prayer, ‘Thy kingdom come.’

#### Judgment of the Nations—His Goal

Joe 3:2 says ‘I will gather all nations... and I will enter into judgment with them.’ The Lord is going to demonstrate the inability of fallen man to govern himself without divine intervention. The nations of earth will perceive that they have failed in their attempts to establish peace. Currently men speak of

peace and reconciliation, but unfortunately they are continually torn between the two. When the Prince of Peace establishes it, it will be a lasting, eternal peace. We cite as an example the development of Marxism, and its subsequent fall when all the attempts to institute a good life and social progress had failed.

We read in Psalms 2:1-5, 'Why are the nations in an uproar, and the peoples devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying 'Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us.' He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. Then he will speak to them in his anger and terrify them in his fury.' (Verse 10) 'Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth.' We read further, in Isaiah 26:9, 'When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.'

#### Restoration of the Nations

Re 11:18: 'The nations were angry, and thy wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and should destroy them which destroy the earth.'

Ps 99:1: 'The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble!' Then will follow the glory. While the new king proceeds with his work of restoration of the nations, he will be finally acknowledged by all the people of the earth as the true king, and all will obey him, because 'every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people'. { *Acts 3:22,23*}

Revelation 1:7 says 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.' This will begin with Israel, because the return of Israel to their homeland is fundamental to the restoration of the nations, and the blessings will follow as mentioned in Psalms 97:1,6: 'The Lord reigneth... and all the people see his glory.'

It will be the establishment of the fifth universal empire, the kingdom of God which will never be destroyed, and which will be placed into the hands of the glorified Christ. 'The desire of all nations shall come' according to Haggai 2:7. At that time the opportunity of returning to perfection will be given to all. Christ head and body will receive the nations as an inheritance, according

to Psalms 2:8 Revelation 14:6 says: 'having the everlasting gospel [good news] to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.' And Isaiah 52:7 adds: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, thy God reigneth!'

Isa 2:2: 'The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains... and all nations shall flow unto it... neither shall they learn war any more.' According to Isaiah 13:12, men will become more precious than the gold of Ophir.

The moment So desired will come when all the universe will kneel before the Eternal in a humble and obedient reverence in giving back glory and honor to the all powerful for all of eternity. May the good celestial Father grant us his grace.

## **Man's Individual Restitution-Brother Henryk Plewniok, Poland**

### ***Symposium, Part Two***

Dear Brethren in Christ! This part of our study we must begin by explaining the meaning of the word *restitution*, which comes from the Latin word *restitutio*.

If we ask a lawyer for a definition of this word, we would find from him that it means a 'restoration of the original state.' A medical doctor will define it as a 'complete recovery.' Although this word is not found directly in the Polish translations of the Bible, yet both of the above definitions are really the central part of the Scriptures' gospel teaching. This good news assures us about the Creator's love toward his creation.

#### **Why Restitution is Necessary**

As a result of his disobedience to the divine will that was expressed in the law given, man was convicted for his disobedient act, removed from the divine presence, removed from access to the tree of life, and considered worthy of death. From that point on a process of dying has continued, a process of a deepening degradation.

Despite the increase of knowledge and the efforts made, mankind is unable to free themselves from this condition and to change their



fate because they are not able to change God's judgment. They are powerless, as was the nation of Israel in the Egyptian captivity, unable to free themselves from Pharaoh's oppression until God intervened in the matters of his people.

Similarly, in a larger sense, the hope of the human race rests upon God, who is moved by love. Our omniscient heavenly Father knew that man would choose evil rather than good. But because of his love for his creation, he decided that he would not leave man in the state of continuous dying which is the consequence of sin. The Lord God in his wisdom foresaw a way in which mankind would be able to regain what was lost in the Garden of Eden. It is the process of restitution that will bring back those grand conditions.

### The Conditions of Restitution

A ray of hope was given to Adam and Eve about their path back to life. Although it might not have been understood then, it foretold a seed which was to bruise, or destroy, the seed of the serpent, the cause of all evil. The realization of that hope took place 4000 years later when on the hills of Bethlehem the angels declared 'good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord'. { *Luke 2:10-11* }

Some time after that the Apostle Paul, while explaining the work of our Lord, wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:22: 'For as in Adam all die, even So in Christ shall all be made alive.' In this and the preceding verses, the apostle shows that the perfect man Christ Jesus was an equivalent to the first perfect man, who sinned. Thus, becoming Adam's substitute in death, Jesus gives hope for a new future to the entire human race born in sin. Our Lord's ransom sacrifice, (the corresponding price), presented to divine justice, is a guarantee of the first stage of man's individual restitution, i.e. the awakening from the dead. { *Romans 5:18* }

Every member of the human race awakened from the grave will receive a second chance, and by their conduct they will decide and prove their being or not being worthy of eternal life. No one who does not prove their unconditional obedience to God's law will receive eternal life.

A person who is raised from the grave without any physical deficiencies, { *Isaiah 35:5-6* } but with the same habits, convictions and mental tendencies as in their former life (for there is no work or thought in the grave, as we read in Ecclesiastes 9:10), would

find themselves in danger of another fall, and death as a consequence, from which there would be no rising, as the scriptures tell us. There would be no one to help man lift himself up from the fallen state.

Divine wisdom foresaw a solution to this problem as well. Sufferings that are undeserved are not without a reward with our heavenly Father. Therefore, our Lord Jesus, having endured sufferings for 3 1/2 years of his ministry, and dying the death of a martyr, proved his faithfulness to the Father. The perfect human life offered up by our Lord constitutes the ransom for Adam, and in him for all mankind. But his reward was the glory, honor and immortality of a resurrected spiritual being. According to the Apostle Peter, our Lord was 'put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit' with the authority to rule over all other principalities. { *Matthew 28:18* } The Apostle Paul reaffirmed that in Romans 14:9, 'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.'

Thus, through the death of our Lord, mankind can have the hope of being raised from the grave, and through his resurrection they receive the grand opportunity of returning to unity and harmony with God which Adam and Eve once enjoyed in the garden of Eden. The Apostle Paul assures us of that when he says: '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'. { *Acts 17:31* }

Now, why has this appointed day not come for So long, despite the daily prayers of millions of Christians, 'thy Kingdom Come'? Again, the Apostle Paul has the answer in Galatians 3:16,29: '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. ... If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

In chapter 4, verse 28, he adds: 'Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.' The promise, given to mankind by the Lord God himself, was not forgotten or retracted. 'For God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? { *Numbers 23:19* }

It was with the purpose of completing the seed of promise that the time for mankind's blessing has been delayed. The little number of

those who have understood and accepted the ransom during this time and who have subjected themselves under the power and direction of Jesus Christ as their head are now undergoing a trial for a special purpose, i.e. that they might be God's helpers in the judging and blessing of mankind in the age to come.

This was also shown in the sacrifices of the typical Day of Atonement in the earthly Tabernacle, which has a deeper and greater antitypical meaning. Before the offering for the people was complete the high priest could not bless this people. Similarly, only after the sacrifice of the Church is complete, which by the grace of God is recognized as part of the sin-offering, will the great restitution work begin, the work of blessing singularly all the individuals among the people.

The determination of the year, the day, and the hour is not the most crucial matter. But based on the teaching of the Scriptures, we can tell that the time of that blessing will be the part of the second presence of our Lord known as the apokalupsis.

Ac 3:21. 'Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.'

Ac 17:31. 'Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.'

#### The Flow of the Restitution Process

Both the Scriptures, and also reason, are against the claim that the foretold 'day of judgment' could be a literal day of 24 hours. Even if that time were not for a trial, but simply for a pronouncement of the sentence, i.e. 'life' or 'death,' and if it were to take only one second per person, we can easily calculate that this method would allow for only 86,400 beings to be judged within 24 hours.

Would it be reasonable to raise a person from the dead only to inform them that they do not deserve to live but to die? And this sentence would have to be executed right after that. But because this day is appointed by God, it is God's day and its formula is given to us by the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:8: 'But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.'

The work of that day will not be an instantaneous, miraculous phenomenon, but a gradual process whose purpose will be to bring every man to the real, complete perfection displayed by Adam, who was created in God's image and likeness.

If mankind raised from the grave were made perfect immediately, then, for example, those children who had died in their infancy or early youth would not benefit from an experience of evil, which is the method which God chose as the most effective for learning what is good and what is evil. For such inexperienced beings, the trial to come at the end of the Millennium would most likely end as it did for Adam and Eve in Eden—except there would be no possibility of redemption.

This process will then take 1000 years and will be conducted under the supervision of the great mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ—the head and the completed body. It will be carried out in friendly circumstances when Satan's influence on the human mind will be made impossible. { *Revelation 2:1-3* } The future of every person will be in their own hands, and of their own choice, as we find in the following:

Jer 31:29. 'In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'

Eze 18:20-24. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son.'

Ps 64:9. 'And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing'

Isa 42:16. 'And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not'

Isa 35:8-10. 'And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness... the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.'

The ancient worthies will play a great part in shaping the consciousness of the people. They, for their faithfulness in this life, will attain a better resurrection and will not need to be subjected to another trial.

Wilful and incorrigible sinners who will not make any progress toward perfection will be destroyed all throughout the millennial day. { *Psalms 101:8* } Others will live till its end when Satan will be

loosed for a little season. { *Revelation 20:3* } This short time will be enough to reveal those who, because conditions required it, are obedient only outwardly.

Those whose hearts and minds will not have been truly corrected will then demonstrate that they do not deserve an eternal life of happiness. They will be destroyed once and for all together with their deceiver in the second death. { *Revelation 20:7-10* } Moses speaks prophetically about this time, and the Apostle Peter refers back to Moses' words in Acts 3:22,23. We also have a picture of this final reckoning in our Lord's parable of the sheep and the goats. { *Matthew 25:31-46* }

Concurrently with the restitution of the individuals' characters, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will take charge of the restitution of earthly conditions which deteriorated together with the degradation of man, who has been the ruler of the earth by God's appointment. We find this in various Scriptures: Psalms 67:6 'Then shall the earth yield her increase,' Isaiah 33:24 'And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick'

The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 35:1-7 describes the glorious result of this process: 'the desert shall... blossom as the rose... then 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: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.'

Surely this is a joyful picture of mankind's future, although it will commence by an unpleasant period of overturning the old order, as was mentioned by the brother in part one of this symposium.

We must emphasize that this is not a new doctrine and that we do not 'follow cunningly devised fables' by teaching it. { *2 Peter 2:16* } The hope of restitution is the result of God's love, one of the attributes of God's character. Just as God himself has no beginning and no end, So love is forever.

Apart from the direct scriptures quoted here, the course of the process of restitution has been shown in the laws and precepts that regulated the life of the nation of Israel and instructed them to abide by the jubilee years. Every 50th year was to be one of claiming one's own rights, and returning to things lost, and to freedom. It will be no different with mankind's great Jubilee. The greatest victory will be the freedom from sin and death.

Let us look again at the meaning of the word restitution, defined as 'a restoration of the original state,' in order to see how greatly it contradicts the theory of evolution. If man arrived at the current level of development by evolving repeatedly from a lower species to a higher one, and if the original state were to be restored, we doubt that anyone living now would desire such a restoration. This supports the logical nature of the teaching of God's Word and its superiority to other teachings.

Knowing all this, let us go boldly to others with this good news. And let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling, that we might have a part with our Lord in the more glorious part of restitution, i.e. part of the mediatorial work between God and men.

This is my heart's desire for you, brethren, as I strive to attain the same, which please grant us, Father, Amen.

### **Our Day Burns as an Oven and Who Shall Stand? - Brother Hercules Gonos, Greece**

The Prophet Malachi prophesied the coming of John, the forerunner, and the coming and presence of the Messiah, over 400 years before Christ. Malachi foretold the blessings and judgments of Messiah, and in few but emphatic words he described the work of Messiah's presence—both the first parousia or presence in Israel, and the second presence worldwide.

John is proclaimed by the name Elijah. This is the name with which the Hebrews expected him to arrive, So as to prepare the people to receive the Messiah, as it is written: 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord'. { *Malachi 4:5* }

Upon considering this prophecy, the scribes of Israel thought of Elijah the Tishbite. Consequently Peter, James and John, after the vision on the mount of transfiguration, where they saw Elijah and Moses, asked the Lord this question: 'Why, then, say the scribes that Elijah must first come?' { *Matthew 17:10* }

To this question the Lord gave the following double answer regarding Elijah's identity and coming. One meaning refers to the first advent, and the other refers to the second advent. Regarding Elijah of the first advent, the Lord explicitly indicates John the Baptist was 'Elijah,' saying 'if ye will receive it, this is Elijah who was to come'. { *Matthew 11:14* }

Regarding Elijah of the second advent, let us look closely at our Lord's expression. 'Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed'. { *Matthew 17:11, 12*}

Elijah, in the phrase 'is come already,' means John the Baptist. However, Elijah about whom Jesus said he 'shall first come, and restore all things' is another Elijah—another instrument, one future from the time our Lord spoke these words. For the first Elijah he used the recent past 'is come already,' but for the second Elijah he used the future tense 'shall first come, and restore all things.'

This other Elijah was to carry out a work of restoration higher, and to a greater extent, than that of John's, during a time which the prophet Joel, just as Malachi, places 'before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come'. { *Joel 2:31*}

The English translations use the words 'terrible' and 'dreadful' day, whereas the Greek translation uses the word 'epiphaneia day'—day of epiphania—which signifies 'shining forth' or 'bright shining' (Reprints 2974). In other words, 'epiphania' is synonymous to 'eminent' or 'prominent.'

The English translation, by using the words 'terrible' and 'dreadful,' connect this to Armageddon {*which Revelation 19:17 associates with an angel standing in the sun*} and the Greek translation, by using the word 'epiphania,' points out the glorious outlook of the same day. The Epiphania and the Revelation (Apokalupsis) of the Kingdom of Christ to the world will occur when the last members of Christ are caught up in the clouds. 'Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds', { *1 Thessalonians 4:17*} and their enemies will recognize this and give glory to the God of heaven. { *Revelation 11:13*}

This great day is the day when 'then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall 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'. { *Matthew 24:30, Revelation 1:7, see also Pastor Russell's Sermons, page 420*} It is also the day about which the Lord said: 'and knew not until the flood came'. { *Matthew 24:39*}

This eagerly for our adoption as sons,

the redemption of our bodies.'

This picture, dear brethren, which presents just one of many aspects which we can discover in the figures of the tabernacle, shows us that the work of Bezaleel and Aholiab, in the time designated by God, will bear fruit. The spiritual tabernacle will rise, Christ, head and body. And with him people will find their original identity, the one that was lost by Adam in paradise.

We will finish with the words written in Revelation 21:1-4. 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

'I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'

Let us realize the importance of the significance of this passage in the scriptures and become a part of the spiritual tabernacle of God beyond the veil with our Lord. This is what I wish for all of you with all my heart as well as for myself. Amen.

### **There Standeth One Among You Whom Ye Know Not- Brother Jaroslaw Symczuk, Ukraine**

John 1:26

Dear brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ. I am truly thankful to our heavenly father for the privilege of attending this International Convention, and for the joy which comes from the fellowship with the brethren coming from different countries. Just as David said in Psalms 16:3, 'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.'

My desire is to share with you a topic that comes from the word of God—'There standeth one among you, whom ye know not.' These prophetic words were spoken by John who was called the prophet of the Most High. Christ also called him Elijah. His life represents the last experiences of the church.

The holy prophet said this to the Pharisees who, because of their high social standing, pride, and arrogance, did not recognize Jesus,



about whom the prophets of God had prophesied. The Pharisees knew these prophecies, but because of their blindness they did not recognize the one standing among them.

They not only rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they also tried to prevent the nation from accepting him as their Messiah as well. During his first advent, Jesus said, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes... because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation'. { *Luke 19:42-44* }

We understand that the Jewish age is a type of the Gospel age. The first advent is a picture of the second presence of Jesus Christ, and fleshly Israel is a type of spiritual Israel. The prophet Isaiah prophesied: 'And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem'. { *Isaiah 8:14* } For this offence and stumbling to take place, Jesus Christ had to be present in person.

During his first advent, our Lord showed himself as a bridegroom, a reaper, and a king. First, let us examine Jesus' work as a bridegroom. The prophet John says, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled'. { *John 3:29* }

We notice that John, the prophet, rejoiced greatly that the time had come when he could witness and listen to the voice of his bridegroom. From that point on our Lord as a bridegroom began to select his bride. First he called his twelve disciples who later became apostles. There were also seventy other disciples who accompanied him, however, not all selected became the bride. One of the twelve who was the closest to the Lord, plus a few others, stumbled and fell away. This is the proof that not all who are called will become the bride of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus took care of his disciples. He taught them, and cared that they were fully clothed and fed. Before his death he asked 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you anything? And they said, Nothing'. { *Luke 22:35* }

In this scripture is a beautiful hidden picture of our Lord's second advent as a bridegroom. The Apostle Paul speaks of this: 'For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ'. { *1 Corinthians 11:2* }

The year 1874 was the time when this great promise was fulfilled—the promise that our Lord gave to his disciples, saying: ‘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’. { *John 14:3* }

If during his first advent Jesus Christ was recognized by John the prophet and his disciples, similarly his second presence will be seen only by those who are waiting—his bride. Our Lord said: ‘Let your loins be girded about, and your light burning... Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching’. { *Luke 12:35,37* }

‘Girding your loins’ means for God’s people to watch, and be active in the Lord’s service. The light of God’s word through the oil of the holy Spirit shows them the prophecies regarding Christ’s second presence.

Our Lord did not give an exact date for his return, but the Prophet Daniel spoke regarding this blessed time, even though he himself did not understand the message, and asked: ‘O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end... Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days’. { *Daniel 12:8,9,12* }

1335 days actually means 1335 years, and refers to the period from 539 to 1874. Until that time of Christ’s second presence the abomination of desolation rose, flourished and fell. Dear brethren, we are living in a blessed time. A time which the Prophet Daniel wanted to know so much about. It is a blessed time because of the presence of the great Prince Michael.

The words of the prophet John, ‘There Standeth One Among You, Whom Ye Know Not,’ can be applied most of all to nominal Christianity which stumbles as did nominal Israel. As nominal Israel did not recognize Jesus as their Messiah during his first advent, nominal Christianity does not see the second presence of Jesus Christ. But the true house, the true sons, the true bride of Christ, constantly waited for her bridegroom. This was illustrated by the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. In the gospel of Matthew, chapter 25:6-8 we read:

‘And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom: go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil;

for our lamps are gone out.’ In this parable we see that when the cry went forth proclaiming the Lord’s presence for the second time, all of the virgins arose and took their lamps.

Lamps represent the word of God. Psalms 119:105 says: ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.’ And oil represents the spirit of truth. After receiving the great light of prophecies which pointed to the second coming of Jesus Christ, the wise virgins recognized that the Lord was present.

The true bride, represented by the five wise virgins, in addition to burning lamps took with them some containers filled with oil. This means that the bride had the spirit of truth in her heart. Right now she continues this cry that the Bridegroom is present for the second time, that he is present among us, and that we can see him with our eyes of faith and through the understanding of the prophecies which point to the second presence of Jesus Christ.

As we read the words of John, we notice that there is supposed to be another class of people who do not see the one standing among them. The Apostle Peter wrote about this class. ‘Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation’. { *2 Peter 3:3-4*}

When the Apostle Peter says that these scoffers ‘walk after their own lusts,’ he means they create for themselves mistaken theories and teachings. They do not recognize the signs and great changes taking place at that time, which point to the second presence of Jesus Christ. They throw them away as something unworthy of study. Constantly they try to spread their false teachings and mislead others.

In order to prevent these false teachings from entering our mind we must guard our lamps So they will be shining at all times, and So that we would not run out of the oil in our containers. The Apostle Peter admonishes us: ‘We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts’. { *2 Peter 1:19*}

We are living in a truly blessed time because we have that lamp which illuminates the prophecies and points to the second presence of Jesus Christ. We are also living during the dawning of the Day of the Lord. Jesus Christ gave us a beautiful sign of his second

presence: 'For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; So shall also the coming of the Son of man be'.  
{ *Matthew 24:27*}

We understand the correct translation in this passage. The word lightning we understand as the light of the sun which illustrates the gradual illumination of the truth and blessings during the day of his presence. Just as the light of the sun shines gradually more brightly, the light of the truth and its blessings are spreading further and further. In the light of that day we can repeat after the Apostle Peter: 'For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.'

Let us go back to the type of the first presence of Jesus Christ. When Christ asked his disciples if they lacked anything, they replied they did not lack anything. If our Lord asked us such a question, how would we answer? Probably the same as his disciples. We lack nothing. Our answer can be the same as those disciples whom the Lord was so concerned about. Similarly with us we don't lack anything because our Lord, who is present for the second time, is taking care of us.

As proof of this let us quote the words of a parable: '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'. { *Luke 12:37*} This parable teaches us that our Lord by himself took care of the table so that it would be full of the grace and blessing connected with the second presence. He also led things in such a way that good food would be provided through his faithful servant Bro. Russell.

We are living in such a blessed time, when God's truth has been explained so clearly that we can see the entire beauty and wisdom of the plan of God. We have a wonderful privilege of reading the works of the faithful servant in our own language. We have freedom, a freedom that we could not even have considered earlier. We can meet together at International Conventions. We can host brethren from different parts of the world. We believe this is a blessing from the Lord who takes care of us so that we will lack nothing.

We can ask ourselves a question now. If the Lord is not yet present for the second time, but we understand that we are living in the last days when the last members of the body of Christ will soon end

their course and will be taken beyond the second veil, who then will the Lord seat, and whom will he serve?

A period of time is required in order to bless and serve. When the church will be taken a time of trouble will take place such as never has been before and never will be again. From that we can see that there will be no time any more for blessings and graces, because the night will come of which Christ says: 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work'. { *John 9:4* }

Let us go back to the first presence of Jesus Christ, the time of harvest of the Jewish age, when Christ showed himself as a great reaper. Jesus said to his disciples: 'Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.... I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours'. { *John 4:36,38* }

The above words suggest that the Lord was present during the harvest and he was leading the work. Jesus Christ sent his disciples so that they would harvest the grain. He did not send them to sow, because that work others had done already: patriarchs, judges, prophets, and other great men of God.

A sickle is needed in order to reap. The sickle represents present truth. This sharp sickle the apostles received after the death of Jesus when they were baptized with the holy Spirit. Jesus told them: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth'. { *John 16:12,13* }

During that time the whole nation of Israel was given a great test. That test was Jesus Christ, his coming as the Messiah and also his cross. Let us read the words of the Apostle Paul: 'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God'. { *1 Corinthians 1:23,24* }

A great work had begun of separating the wheat from the chaff, which meant the separating of the true Israelites from the nominal. Jesus Christ talked about this in such words: 'Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire'. { *Matthew 3:12* }

During the Jewish Harvest there was a lot of chaff, but not much wheat. After a certain period of time the nation of Israel with its spiritual leaders was cast away. Jesus said: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate!' { *Matthew 23:37-38*}

Let us go back now to the Gospel age. We understand that we are living during the harvest time and maybe more precisely during its last phase. If there is a harvest then there must be a reaper of the harvest present in order to reap. We read about this in Revelation 14:14: 'And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.'

These words describe a reaper, and the white cloud represents the glory of God which belongs to Christ. The golden crown points to his power which he received from God to reap and to rule the earth. The sharp sickle represents present truth, and the fact that the sickle was in his hand represents his personal involvement during the harvest.

The above mentioned harvest refers to the entire house of Christianity. When Christ began to reap with his sharp sickle, present truth, he did this through his faithful servant, and said to his workers: 'Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them into bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn'. { *Matthew 13:30*}

The conclusion can be drawn from the words of Christ that the tares were to be gathered and bound for burning. We are living in the time when the tares are being gathered and bound into bundles. They are supposed to be burned because the field is for the wheat. When the faulty system of nominal Christianity is destroyed, the people of that system will become the field upon which a new sowing can be done.

The wheat is to be gathered separately as it is mentioned in Psalms 50:5, 'Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.' The reaper in charge showed us a beautiful truth which teaches clearly that the true godly people need to come out of Babylon, 'that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues'. { *Revelation 18:4*} Nominal Christianity was rejected by our Lord. In the trial of wheat only the

true wheat prevailed. This was shown even during the first advent of Christ. 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat'. { *Luke 22:31* }

One of the trials which the church is now experiencing is faith in the presence of our Lord. This was shown by the picture of John the Baptist. 'Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he, or do we look for another?' { *Matthew 11:2-3* } This questioning rose in the heart of John very quickly, but after Christ gave his answer to his disciples, John did not doubt any more.

This picture is a warning to us that we should not get discouraged and lack faith in Jesus' second presence. The symbolic answer that '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,' is designed to strengthen our confidence in his second presence.

Jesus enlightened us with the word of truth, So we would not worry. He showed us a straight road So that whoever is lame could not get lost but would become healed. We were cleansed by him from our sins. He opened our ears So that we would hear his voice of truth. 'Even when we were dead in sins, [God] quickened us together with Christ'. { *Ephesians 2:5* } Just as during the first advent the Gospel was preached to the poor in spirit, today the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached in all the world as a witness to the nations. { *Matthew 24:14* }

Let us look now at a picture of Jesus as a king. During his first advent he introduced himself already as a king when he entered Jerusalem on a donkey. The prophet Zechariah prophesied about this, 'Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass'. { *Matthew 21:5* }

The prophet says that the king was to be meek, gentle and coming with full salvation. This is why the goal of the first presence of Christ was not to reign but to redeem humanity from sin and death. He had to die, the just for the unjust. Our Lord humbled himself, displaying meekness and providing complete salvation.

The nation of Israel accepted Christ as king only for a short time. Four days after his entrance to Jerusalem the same nation was calling on Pilate to crucify him. Pilate answered them: 'Behold your king! ... Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, we have no king but Caesar'. { *John 19:14-15* } Only a

small number of true Israelites could see a great king in Jesus riding on a donkey and crying for Jerusalem.

When he came for the first time, Jesus humbled himself and took on the body of an ordinary man to redeem the entire human race. During his second coming God has exalted him and given him a name above all names. Christ came with full power. He told his disciples about this. 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth'. { *Matthew 28:18* } He received such power to destroy all the kingdoms of the earth and establish his own kingdom which will last forever.

In 1914 when the Times of the Gentiles ended, the anger upon the nations began. Christ began to destroy all the kingdoms and governments of this world like someone destroying clay pots. Those kingdoms received the great smiting during the first and second world wars, and also during the fall of socialism—the great Soviet Union.

The collapse of the governments of this world is a preparation for the establishment of the powerful kingdom that was described as unmovable. We read about this in Revelation 17:14: 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he Lord of lords, and King of kings.'

Even though we are living when Christ is reigning, Satan still has quite a bit of power. Our Lord said: 'No man can enter into a strong man's house and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house'. { *Mark 3:27* } The process of binding Satan is not the work of one day. It is a process, the battle between good and evil, light versus darkness, and it takes up a certain amount of time. Satan is being bound as the light of truth is spreading throughout the earth. The development of knowledge and of freedom restricts the power of Satan.

Nominal Christianity does not recognize Christ who is present for the second time as a king. As before, the nominal house of Israel says: 'We have no king.' Their eyes are directed completely in a different direction. Instead of showing that Christ is present and that he is establishing his kingdom, they are making plans for the distant future thinking that this world, which is crumbling, will last another thousand years.

However, God, through David, warns them: 'Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion... be wise now



therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are they that put their trust in him'. { *Psalms 2:5,6,10-12* }

Dear Brethren, we are thankful to the Lord for opening our eyes So we can see our Lord as king. Our goal is to show people that Christ is present and tell them 'Behold Christ your king.' The prophet Jeremiah said such words, 'Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?' { *Jeremiah 8:19* }

Yes we can boldly say that Christ is in his Zion, that we see him with eyes of understanding. However, to those who do not see him we can say: 'There standeth one among you, whom ye know not.'

In closing, I would like to remind us of the words of the Apostle John. 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is'. { *1 John 3:2* }  
Amen.

## **The Vision of Present Truth-Brother Michael Nekora, USA**

Habakkuk 2:2.'Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.'

I grew up in the truth. When I attended the meetings as a small boy, I was always reminded of this scripture because I could see it on the Chart of the Ages which was displayed at our Sunday meetings. As a child I thought the chart was the 'vision' mentioned in Habakkuk and that Brother Russell was the one who wrote it down.

Bro. Russell first printed the chart in the September 1881 Zion's Watch Tower, five years before the first volume appeared. He felt the chart was a good way to visually understand the great plan of God from the creation of man through the ages to come. He wrote, 'We know of nothing which would give you So clear a conception of the plan of God.'<sup>1</sup> Later in life I came to realize the vision is much, much more than the Chart of the Ages.

Bro. Russell died more than 80 years ago. There are few people alive who have seen him with their own eyes. Although we read

about the great enthusiasm for witnessing and Bible study that energized the brethren during his ministry, it seems like a long time ago. To some the ‘vision’ Bro. Russell saw and communicated does not seem as energizing as it once was. Important doctrines he emphasized are not always as appreciated today as they were then.

Heb 2:1. ‘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.’

We are Bible Students. Why should it matter what Bro. Russell taught, or what was taught by

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the many great teachers we’ve had in all our lands? It matters because studying the Bible is not enough. Without a basic understanding of the plan of God—without an understanding of ‘the vision’ —we can’t understand what’s in the Bible. You’re here because you (or someone who taught you) first learned the basics of God’s plan from Bro. Russell’s writings.

Bro. Russell was not just another writer; he was not just another commentator whose opinion on scripture was as good as but no better than any other. He was uniquely used by the Lord at the end of this Gospel Age to cleanse the church of the corrupting errors accumulated through the centuries, and to proclaim to the footstep followers of the Master that it was time to come out of ‘Babylon.’ Today the Chart of the Ages is recognized throughout the world as a symbol for those who believe as most of us do. It is our common understanding of the ‘vision’ that allows us to unite our hearts and minds in fellowship with others of like precious faith throughout the world.

What was the ‘vision’ of truth that Bro. Russell saw and communicated to us?

Hab 2:1. ‘I will stand upon my watch, and fix my foot upon the Tower, and I will watch to see what will be said to me.’

Bro. Russell was born in 1852. In July 1879, at the age of 27, he published the first issue of Zion’s Watch Tower. Perhaps it was Habakkuk 2:1 that provided the inspiration for the title of that periodical.

## Christ's Second Presence

But Zion's Watch Tower was not its only title. The cover also contained the words Herald of Christ's Presence. The first article in the first issue was on the subject of Christ's second advent. An article in the second issue emphasized that this is an invisible presence which precedes the Millennium. In the October issue an article by J. H. Paton argued that this invisible presence occurred in 1874.

This was a revolutionary concept. Christendom then as now expected the second advent. William Miller thought the scriptures clearly indicated that Christ would return in 1844. It didn't happen. But Miller's preaching triggered an interest in the subject of Christ's second presence. Paton, Russell, and others came to the conclusion that the world would never see Christ again with their literal eyes. The second presence had to be invisible.

Believing that Christ is invisibly present now makes us unique among Christians. I doubt that there are any Christian groups whose roots are not in the writings of Bro. Russell who believe the Lord is present now. These words are from the Reprints, bottom of page 735:

'In October, 1883, the question was asked through the Tower: 'Are there any other papers than the Tower which teach as it does, that Jesus is now present?' And the answer was given: 'We know of none other which teaches the personal presence of Christ Jesus,' etc. 'If any reader knows of any journal which up to and at that date taught the presence of our Lord, they will confer a favor by sending us a copy of such paper with the article containing such teaching marked. We feel sure, that the above answer was correct.'

A belief in the invisible presence of our Lord is part of this 'vision.'

## Ransom for All

Bro. Russell was absolutely convinced that the Bible taught that Jesus Christ died for all, whether anyone believed it or not, and whether they agreed with his understanding of the Bible or not. Believing in a ransom for all also made him unique in the Christian world. Today most Christians still believe that salvation is limited to those who agree with their understanding of the scriptures.

Bro. Russell was surprised that those with whom he initially cooperated, like Brothers Barbour and Paton, eventually rejected this doctrine. When they did, Bro. Russell immediately stopped cooperating with them. To him there could be no compromising this doctrine. He continually emphasized the primacy of the scriptures as our only creed.

‘Beware of and reject every theory which rejects the ransom, even though it adheres to the name Christian and quotes from the Bible’ (R895, October 1886).

If all that are within their graves are to come forth, then it follows that the dead are not being tormented eternally in hell. This was said in the very first issue of the Watch Tower. The Bible hell is simply oblivion—death. It was an unconventional message in its time; today it seems less so. His was truly a ‘Gospel message’ [meaning ‘good news’]. It stood in contrast to the ‘bad news’ being preached by everyone else. Because all died in Adam; all will come back in the kingdom through Christ.

Think about the Christian community around you. Who teaches that mankind will be resurrected back to perfect human life right here on earth where they will be instructed in righteousness? Who teaches that the atheists, the Buddhists, the Mohammedans, the Confucians, the worshippers of Baal, or a 1000-and-one other false gods will all come back to life because there will be a resurrection of the dead? Not one that I know of. That first issue of Zion’s Watch Tower referred to what would become a favorite text of Bible Students:

Ac 3:19-21. ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.’

A ransom for all and a restitution of all things forms a part of the vision communicated to us by Bro. Russell. It is a precious part of our heritage.

### Why God Permits Evil

Few within the Christian community can answer the question, ‘If God is all powerful, why does he permit evil to flourish in the world?’ The lead article in the second issue of the *Watch Tower*

answered that question and it involves restitution. If this were to be the only life mankind will ever live, then there is no answer to the question.

Mt 11:23. 'And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.'

So why weren't such mighty works done in Sodom? Was it right to destroy Sodom without giving them a chance to repent? Yes it was because their chance is yet future in the kingdom. Mankind is receiving its education in unrighteousness now; its education in righteous will take place in the kingdom when they come back to life on earth.

Knowing why God permits evil to flourish is a part of this 'vision.' You know it; most of your Christian friends do not.

#### The Tabernacle

There were many articles on the various offerings of Leviticus and on the Tabernacle in the Watch Tower during the early years.<sup>2</sup> Bro. W. I. Mann authored many of them. Bro. Paton, in Oct. 1880 wrote about the scapegoat (R150). Because Bro. Paton rejected the idea that the Great Company was a spiritual class, Bro. Russell followed Paton's article with a note reaffirming his belief that it was.

The meaning of the typical sacrifices of Israel and their entire Tabernacle arrangement thrilled Bro. Russell. He writes about his experience in study and meditation on this subject (R3824). The first book he authored and published was Tabernacle Shadows. It was published in 1881 when Bro. Russell was 29 years old. A diagram of the Tabernacle was also placed to the right of the Chart of the Ages when it was first published in 1881.

An appreciation of the types and shadows in ancient Israel and the lessons they teach spiritual Israel was communicated to us by Bro. Russell. Few among our Christian friends have any interest in nor do they draw any spiritual lessons from a study of this subject.

An understanding of the types and shadows of the Old Testament is an important part of the 'vision' we have received through the ministry of Bro. Russell.

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\_ 2Feb. '80, *The Law Shadows*, talks about the typical sacrifices and what they mean. Mar. '80, *The Great Day of Atonement*. May '80, *The Sin Offering*. July '80, *The Tabernacle*.

Israel

In March 1880 in an article entitled 'Jewish Restoration,' Bro. Russell wrote: 'We believe that fleshly Israel will, in the near future, be recognized as the chief nation of earth.'

Bro. Russell believed and taught that Israel's period of disfavor was drawing to a close and that favor would return to them. In the chart of the ages which he published the following year, part of the pyramid showing the completed work of the kingdom is labelled ISRAEL RESTORED. It is placed higher than the part representing the world of mankind.

Most of Christendom has little interest in Israel or if they regard Israel at all, it is simply as another mission field to be conquered for Christ. That's because they have taken all the promises God made to Israel and given them a spiritual interpretation. The fact that Israel has been regathered from the four corners of the earth into their own land is ignored. The fact that Israel has been providentially protected since their establishment as a nation in 1948 has also been ignored.

But Israel is God's chosen people. He is specially guiding their affairs and protecting them.

Jer 46:28. 'Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.'

Bro. Russell never wavered in his support for Israel. The high point came on October 9, 1910, when he spoke to 4,000 Jews gathered in New York's Hippodrome. In his discourse he advocated the establishment of a Jewish nation. He never lived to see it. We have. He spoke 'comfortably to Jerusalem, that her warfare is accomplished'. { *Isaiah 40:2* } Few of our Christian friends do So today.

Recognizing Israel's place in the plan of God is a part of this 'vision.'

### The Volumes

Virtually all the important elements of the 'vision' were communicated by Bro. Russell in the first few years of the Watch Tower. As time went by, much of what he wrote became available in six volumes entitled 'Studies in the Scriptures.'

Volume 1—1886. It described the primacy and importance of the Bible; our Lord's return; the permission of evil; ransom and restitution; the chart of the ages; the kingdom of God contrasted with the kingdoms of this world; and the coming great time of trouble.

Volume 2—1889. Bible chronology; Daniel's 70 weeks; Times of the Gentiles; the manner of our Lord's return; The Man of Sin. From the foreword: 'The Times of the Gentiles ended in the fall of AD 1914.' Bro. Russell says he has been preaching this for over 40 years. Historians are united in their judgment that 1914 was an unprecedented year in earth's history. Historian Barbara Tuchman said, 'A world came to an end in 1914.' In an editorial, The Seattle Times, January 1, 1959, wrote: 'The modern era... began in 1914 and no one knows when or how it will end.... It could end in mass annihilation.'

Volume 3—1890. This book describes God's kingdom including the preparation work required for it. One chapter describes the restoration of Israel. From the foreword: 'The Great Pyramid has not lost any of its interest to the author.' Even as early as May 1881, he said he had 'great respect' for the Great Pyramid, and called it a 'Miracle in Stone.'

Volume 4—1897. The Battle of Armageddon, the downfall of Babylon, and the establishment of the kingdom.

Volume 5—1899. From the foreword: 'The keynote of this volume is the Ransom-price.'

Volume 6—1904. The New Creation along with notes on baptism, the Memorial, marriage, parenting, and other obligations.

Bro. Russell Himself

If we had more time, we could continue to describe various elements of the 'vision' Bro. Russell saw So clearly and communicated to those with ears to hear. How did he himself come to understand it? The same way our elders come to understand the truths they give us from this platform. They did not talk with some divine messenger who told them what to say. They did study the scriptures and considered the thoughts of others to see whether these things are true or not.

Bro. Russell said at the age of 16 he had been a consecrated child of God for some years. He said he 'stumbled' upon Adventism and 'confessed indebtedness to Adventists.' He was influenced by Jonas Wendell, George Stetson, George Storrs, Nelson Barbour, J. H. Paton, and others. What mattered most to Bro. Russell was doctrines that could be proved from the Bible. He claimed 'as a faithful student of the Word of God, to be an index finger... to help [us] trace for ourselves, on the sacred page, the wonderful plan of God' (R3821).

Let us never forget this. Millions have studied the Bible yet they do not understand what it teaches. Errors from the past cloud their minds; they see no 'vision' of God's plan to bless the world of mankind. Others feel the books written by their leaders are far more important than the Bible So they only study those books. Even among our own fellowship some classes study only the Bible; other classes study only the writings of Bro. Russell. While studying a volume is one method of Bible study—a topical study of the scriptures—to say that it replaces direct Bible study is an error. The Bible itself is the word of God. If we call ourselves Bible Students, we should not be afraid to study it.

When asked what name those who were associated with Bro. Russell called themselves, he replied that we were strictly nonsectarian. He went on:

'We have no creed (fence) to bind us together or to keep others out of our company. The Bible is our only standard, and its teachings our only creed.... We are in fellowship with all Christians in whom we can recognize the Spirit of Christ, and especially with those who recognize the Bible as the only standard. We do not require, therefore, that all shall see just as we do in order to be called Christians' (R344, April 1882).

Let us never feel we must force conformity of thought among brethren. When one differs with Bro. Russell's interpretation of scripture, he should be free to give the reasons for the difference.



However, there is a serious problem when one does not know what Bro. Russell's interpretation is. We are deceived if we think we can study the Bible by ourselves and come to an accurate knowledge of what it teaches without the help of others. This does not mean we are 'following a man.' Everything we learn comes from others through the spoken and written word. Of course the Lord leads us, but he does it through human agencies. It has always been that way. The Ethiopian eunuch knew that. When asked by Philip if he understood what he read, he replied: 'How can I, except some man should guide me?' { *Acts 8:31* }

If you want to understand the truth, study Bro. Russell's writings. Learn about his 'vision' of God's great plan of salvation. If Bro. Russell says something you think is wrong, be prepared with the scriptures that lead you to that conclusion. Check your scriptures against his, then reconcile the differences. This is Bible study within the framework of the truth the Lord has given us through Bro. Russell's ministry.

If you don't have the right framework, you won't be able to appreciate the teachings of the Bible. And what is that framework?

-Our God is a God of love. He does have a plan to bless the human race.

-The foundation of His plan is the death of the perfect man Jesus Christ which provides a ransom for all whether they know it or not.

-The dead are really dead. But there will be a future kingdom of righteousness when all who have died will be brought back to life.

-Those who devote their lives to God during this age will receive a heavenly resurrection permitting them to bring blessings to everyone else in the kingdom upon the earth.

-Evil will not exist forever. It will be destroyed along with those who practice evil at the end of the kingdom.

This is So clear, So reasonable, So like a wise and loving God. Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. We should be enthusiastic when we share our 'vision' with the world around us.

Near the end of his life, in the year 1914, Bro. Russell began his greatest witness effort ever: 'The Photodrama of Creation.' It took two years to prepare. Slides plus motion pictures in tinted color

with sound from phonograph records were shown to thousands to bring them the message of God's plan. It was the most advanced communication technology of its time. I would now like you to see Bro. Russell as he appeared on film introducing the second part of the Photo Drama. His voice was recorded on phonograph records:

—BEGIN video projection—

'We have seen and heard part first of the Photo Drama of Creation. We hope that as a result, our reverence for our great Creator is increased. The Bible story of the fall of Father Adam, under the curse or sentence of death, may we never forget. The reign of sin and death, and its power and influence, even upon angels, leading up to the deluge, we have fixed in our memory. God's oath-bound covenant with Abraham we have seen to be the basis of all the resurrection hope. Our interest in God, and in the Bible, and in our fellows, increases as we gain a broader view of creation. It is for this reason that our patrons declare each part of the Drama the best.

'Let us keep in memory the great fact that creation is not yet complete. The completed creation will find our earth a paradise and filled with a perfect and happy human family in harmony with the Creator. Thereafter, there shall be no more sin, sorrow, sighing or dying. The curse of death will have been rolled away by the redeemer and the blessing of God will be upon all—everlasting life; for all willful sinners will have been destroyed in the second death.

'Part second begins with Melchisedec, priest and king, the supposed builder of the Great Pyramid. It will show us Moses, God's typical dealings with typical Israel, the exodus, crossing the Red Sea, giving of the Mount Sinai law, the manna, the tabernacle and its sacrifices, and other wilderness experiences, the death and burial of Moses, Israel's crossing Jordan, Joshua's battles, Israel's kings—Saul, David, Solomon; Solomon's temple, Elisha, Elijah, Israel's last king Zedekiah—concluding with the beautiful and touching film, 'The Shunamite's Son.' It illustrates the Divine power back of Messiah's coming kingdom, when all that are in their graves shall be called forth, and when sin and death will end.'

—END video projection—

Let us also be committed to witnessing to others using all the available technologies we have today. If the Lord blesses our efforts, we rejoice. If there is no fruitage, it doesn't matter. Let us

do with our might what our hands find to do in the vineyard of the Lord.

May the Lord help us remain faithful to the 'vision' of truth he has given to each one of us. May it never be said of us that we let slip the things we have heard. Amen.

## **The Battle for Jerusalem and What it Means to the World-Brother Paul Mali, USA**

### ***Public Discourse***

#### Seven World Trends

The year 2000 AD is very near. It will start the third millennium. Some say 2000 AD will be just another year. It will be no different than those years of the past. Still others say it will be a turning point for an exciting new civilization to emerge.

But still others as they view 2000 AD say it will be a turning point for a series of deadly negative events. This last group are quick to point out seven negative trends that have worldwide implications:

-First trend is the rise of the radical discontents. The discontents are restless for the things they do not have. They are part of a huge population group called the 'have nots.' From a total population of six billion, the 'have nots' are estimated at four and one-half billion.

The discontented 'have nots' will become extreme, active, rebellious and violent. They are discontent over government policies, declining personal finances, climbing taxes, constricting jobs, insufficient food, low morality and failed political promises. These radical discontents will become lawless and anarchistic.

-Second trend is the rise of economic wars. Competition in world markets has always been between products and companies. As the world moves closer and closer to a one civilization culture, corporations are moving closer and closer to a single globalized world market.

Competition among products and companies includes governments. With this inclusion competition becomes critical and deterministic. As a result, governments are now collaborating and supporting their host companies for their competitive success. This collaboration and support includes lowered taxes, exempt

tariffs, favored policies, intelligence information, shared resources and trained people for their operation. Since many governments are doing this, economic wars are inevitable.

-Third trend is the downsizing of organizations. These organizations include businesses, governments, corporations, institutions and small enterprises. Organizations are attempting to be efficient and effective with smaller employment. The downsizing will remove jobs. People need jobs for food, livelihoods and commitments. When jobs are removed and no longer available, individual survivability will reach critical concerns.

-Fourth trend is Russia's return to superpower status. Right after the Cold War ended, Russia wanted to be a member of the Western community. They even applied as a member of the NATO Alliance. The doors have been closed to them. As a result, Russia has focused in the Middle East and the developing Third World countries.

As a result a new axis is formalizing among Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, China and possibly Turkey. What is powerful about this alliance is the control of oil which the world desperately needs. If and when Russia achieves this control of oil, they will resume super power status with a unique control of the world.

-Fifth trend is China's rise to superpower status. There are 1.2 billion people in China which is one quarter of the world's population. China has developed technologies comparable to any advanced country in the world. These advanced technologies, along with a huge population, has made China the world's largest economy. Nothing will prevent China from becoming a dominant power in the world.

-Sixth trend is the rise of Islam throughout the world. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. Within this ideology are the radical fundamentalists who believe in holy wars or wars that serve 'Allah.' These radical fundamentalists have had violent confrontation with their governments in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. If they succeed as a collective group they could control the world's oil supply. Islam is reaching out for new conversions especially in the United States.

-Seventh and last trend is the struggle and battle for Jerusalem. Two direct countries involved in this struggle are Israel and the PLO. But indirectly, the struggle will impact the world. What

keeps Israel dominant in the Middle East is its military. But neighboring countries are catching up. The commitment to liberate Jerusalem by the Arabs is intense. It is met by an equal intensity from Israel to keep Jerusalem for the Jews. As of this writing, no solutions have been offered to satisfy both sides.

### Conflict Over Jerusalem!

As 2000 AD approaches, the battle for Jerusalem will intensify. Imposing a peace between Israel and the PLO does not seem workable. Israel's survival hangs by the slenderest of threads. Israel is surrounded by hostile neighbors who have sworn her destruction and annihilation. Israel lives from day to day not knowing whether a nuclear rocket will fall on them or a terrorist bomb explosion in a mall or invaders crossing her borders for a full scale war.

The problem for Israel is not only external, but internal as well. Israel's infrastructure is shaking. Recently, there is the battle for identity. 1000 US Rabbis have declared the two largest branches of Judaism are not Jewish. These are the liberals and the conservatives. This is because they do not observe complete Jewish laws. The point these rabbis are making is that 65-85 percent of world Jews are not Jews. If we add the secularist Jews with the liberals and conservatists, the Jews are having a crisis of identity!

Can Israel survive in a hostile world from both an external and internal point of view? Central to Israel's survival is the battle for Jerusalem. Why Jerusalem and the Jews have become front page news to the world surely needs an explanation.

Biblical scriptures offer this explanation. The Jews feel, and scriptures tend to support it, they are a chosen people. Deuteronomy 7:6, 'God said, thou art an holy people. I have chosen thee to be a special people above all people who are upon the face of the earth.' Also the time to favor Israel has come. Jeremiah 16:14-15, 'I will cause them to return to the land which I have given unto their fathers.' It appears that God in his choice of Israel is also Israel's protector.

The hostile nations against Israel do not realize they are going against Israel's God. Genesis 12:3, 'I will bless them that bless thee and curse them that curse thee and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' Also in Zechariah 14:3, 'Then shall the

Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle.'

But, what is making Jerusalem the spark or ignition for the start of a great conflagration? The answer is two countries want Jerusalem as their capital. Both countries are expecting it. Both countries will fight to the bitter end for it. Both countries are willing to die to every man to have Jerusalem. There has been some exchange of land. Israel has given up land in Gaza, Shechem, Hebron and Bethlehem as much as 10 percent.

But the Palestinians continue to press for the prize they seek— Jerusalem. Yasser Arafat has had a dream of a Palestinian State with Jerusalem as the capital. At one time Israel's Prime Minister Peres gave Arafat the assurance the Palestinians would have a foothold in Jerusalem. In fact, Peres gave Arafat control and responsibility for all Christian and Islamic holy places. Arafat has a letter to that effect. On the other hand, Netanyahu is firm, even at the cost of losing all the friendly nations including the U.S., that Jerusalem belongs to the Jews.

The Bible gives clear statements as to who owns Palestine. In Deuteronomy 1:6-8, God said, 'Behold I set the land before you, go in and possess the land which the Lord gives to you and to your seed.' And in Genesis 15:18-21, 'The Lord made a covenant with Abram. I will give you the land from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates.'

And in Zechariah 2:11-12, 'Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day and the Lord shall inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and shall choose Jerusalem.' And finally, Isaiah 2:3-4, 'For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.'

Jerusalem is now the capital of Israel challenged by the PLO to be the capital of Palestine, but the scriptural texts imply it will be the capital of the world when the Biblical Civilization will be operating on planet earth. This is cited in Jeremiah 3:17, 'And at that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord and all the nations.' It's no wonder the battle for Jerusalem is escalating! Right after World War I, the League of Nations considered locating themselves in Jerusalem.

Right after 1948, when Israel became a state, the United Nations wanted to make Jerusalem an international city. During this time the Catholic Pope asked, and continues to press, that Jerusalem be

made an international city. But why is there So much pressure to be aligned with Jerusalem? It appears the nations want to be in league and aligned with God. The nations want a connection with God. This implies the battle for Jerusalem might very well be a religious battle.

Zec 12:2-3 implies this, 'I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all people. I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all nations.' Jerusalem will weigh heavy as a stone on the lifestyles of the nations of the world.

#### Stone of Burden for all Nations

Many have raised the question, what is this stone that Zechariah speaks of? May I suggest two possibilities:

-First, that the stone is literal in meaning. It is the Stone in the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in the heart of the old city of Jerusalem. It's a stone, a rock. That's all it is. I've seen it. I've touched it. I've walked around it. I've even walked under it. (There's a cave under it.)

Then why all this fuss over a stone? It's because the Muslims venerate this stone as a holy relic. The Muslims say Mohammed ascended to heaven on this stone. But the Jews also venerate this stone because Abraham, the father of Jews, was to sacrifice his son Isaac on this rock.

Additionally, Jewish Orthodoxy locates the holy of holies of Solomon's temple right over this stone. Also the Jews are looking forward to building the 3rd temple on the same site in preparation of the coming Messiah. The stone is also venerated by Christians along with Muslims and Jews. The Christians' interest is that the second coming of Christ will not happen until the temple is built in Jerusalem.

There you have it. Three major religions of the world are tied to the stone which involves over 3 billion people. The Muslims involve all Arab nations, India, Southeast Asia, some Russian Republics and Africa. The Jews involve Israel, Russia, the U.S. and the Diaspora. The Christians involve Europe, U.S., South America and a world scattering. Discussions over the stone in Jerusalem generate interests and headlines throughout the world. Disputes over the stone create religious sensitivities throughout the world.

Digging and excavating around or near the stone produces vibrations throughout the world So that stress is laid upon Prime Ministers, Presidents and Diplomats. The struggle over the ownership of the stone will signal the movement of armies, navies and war machines in a holy war. It truly is a burdensome stone.

There's a second possible meaning to Zechariah's stone. The burdensome stone could be symbolic of the religious spirit that prevails in Jerusalem. Most religious groups are represented and headquartered in Jerusalem.

What we are saying is that a religious spirit has invaded Jerusalem that has produced chaos, confusion and a Babylonian atmosphere. Consequently, in many ways Jerusalem has become a microcosm of the religions of the world, since most religions are represented in the city. Here are the groups that want Jerusalem:

- (a) The Jews want Jerusalem to build their 3rd temple.
- (b) The Muslims want Jerusalem to maintain the dome of the rock.
- (c) The Catholics want Jerusalem as an international city.
- (d) The Evangelical Protestants want Jerusalem as a prelude to the Second Coming.
- (e) The Russian Orthodox want Jerusalem along with the Greek and Armenian Orthodox.

This is a new development to have a role in the control of Jerusalem. Here we see all sides jockeying for a coming battle. Broadly speaking, three- fourths of the world wants Jerusalem. The United Nations is involved in coordinating the predators going after the prey.

But the battle for Jerusalem is only symbolic of the battle with anti-Semitism. Hate for the Jews has been historic and still continues. It's worldwide. Nobody is stopping it. It's even escalating. Jesus predicted this anti-Semitism when he said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children'. { Luke 23:28} But now with a homeland and a territorial state, anti-Semitism is changing to a national anti-Semitism. In the past, anti-Semitism was on an individual basis. The trend is up that it will be nations against the Semitic Israel. It is interesting to note the causes that started the hate for Jews.



For one, Jewish refusal to worship multiple Gods. Jews insist on the one God!. { *Deuteronomy 6:4*} Outside this view, there is the worship of multiple Gods or multiple persons. This disparity causes a hate reaction.

Another reason: Jewish refusal to be assimilated into a host country where they live. This is why Jewish communities and ghettos sprang up. They kept themselves separated from the culture they lived in.

Still another reason is the Jewish conflict with Christendom. Christendom sees the Jews rejecting the Messiah of Jesus, even the divinity of Jesus as a man. Christendom sees the words of Jesus condemning the Jews. They see the Jews as God killers since most religious groups in Christendom see Jesus as God.

Still another cause of anti-Semitism is the open cultured conflicts in diet, marriage and living practices. These conflicts often result in separation, such as ghettos and special communities.

Finally, the greatest cause of anti-Semitism is the conflict with Islam. Islam's anti-Semitism is deeply rooted. The Jews refuse to accept Mohammed as the Messiah sent by God. This refusal infuriates the hate for Jews.

Islam is violently opposed to Israel's occupation of Jerusalem. Islam continues to call for a holy war against Israel's control of the Temple Mount. Islam continues to call for the extermination of the Jews and their right to exist. They want genocide! Islam's hatred of Israel is not for its policies nor its borders, but for its national existence. The anti-Semitism of people has always been religious, but now it has become political, and infecting and affecting many countries of the world.

The battle of Jerusalem is also a battle for world leadership. Everyone knows and senses that in Jerusalem there is a gathering storm. Intelligence sources have noted Egypt and Syria are planning one final war against Israel by 2003 at the latest.

Iran will back the Arab attack on Israel. Certain Islamic terror groups have threatened the U.S. with nuclear terrorism if the U.S. attempts to help Israel. Intelligence sources have gathered information that nuclear terrorist groups are already in the U.S. with their threat to use nuclear bombs to keep the U.S. away from helping the Israelis. This is a fulfillment of the scripture text that 'all Israel's lovers will leave her'. { *Jeremiah 30:14*}

As this is going on, a new game is developing in Muslim central Asia over oil. It's Russia versus the United States all over again with oil nations between them. The vast oil wealth of the Arabian peninsula could fall into the hands of radicals. With the world's supply controlled by the radicals, a new terror of world conflict will emerge. The near future conflicts in this area are sensed by world leaders who are anxious to help stabilize and bring solutions to the Middle East situation.

This is a leadership challenge. There are world leaders who think their strategies to bring about a solution to the Middle East scenario is worthy. After all, these leaders want to go down in history as problem solvers. They don't want to be just heads of their states, but leaders in world issues. Their leadership test is seen in the activities of the United Nations.

The one group that will spark the gathering storm over Jerusalem will be the Islamic Radicals. These Radicals are changing the power balance in the world with their terrorist activities. They are causing serious problems for France and other West European states. They are attempting to gain control of the oil wealth in Arabian lands. If they do they will have the world by the tail. They are struggling internally with Arab secularists and may win the battle.

They are planning nuclear terror and even nuclear attacks throughout the world. The Radical Islamics believe to free Jerusalem and exterminate Jews is a heavenly mission. The Islamic clerics are assuring men that anyone dying in the execution of their mission against Israel will immediately go to heaven and be given a harem.

Because of the Radical groups, Russia and China are paying protection money to Iran in the form of modern weapons. Russia right now is building a 1.5 billion dollar nuclear power plant in Iran. Whoever said that Russia has lost its superpower status?

Don't be surprised to see an emerging China in world affairs. China may even join the Syrian / Iranian / Iraqi axis. The only thing that could make matters worse in terms of Biblical prophecy is to see secular Turkey joining the confederation.

These countries, in alignment, confirm the confederation of Ezekiel 38 and 39 which has often been connected with Jacob's Trouble. This is Gog's invasion of Israel from the north led by

Russia in coordination and collaboration with its allies of Islamic Iran, Libya, Ethiopia, Gomer (the Balkans) and Turkey. According to the book of Ezekiel, Chapters 38 and 39, this invasion will precipitate a major conflagration in the Middle East, but will involve most of the nations of the world. It will be an invasion in which Jerusalem will be the spoil.

Zec 14:2,3 states all the nations will go against Jerusalem, suggesting a United Nations voted resolution will go against Israel. The city will fall, houses rifled and women ravished. The city would be temporarily taken.

### Jerusalem—The Center of World Destiny

How will the battle for Jerusalem affect the world?

-First, the battle for Jerusalem will mean other nations will be drawn into the conflict. There will be United Nations involvement as well as other distant nations. The radical discontents will spark this involvement. Religion will be the coordinator. The battle will take place in symbolic Armageddon. Zechariah 13:8 suggests only one-third of the people in the Middle East will survive the struggle. Two-thirds will not.

-Second, the battle for Jerusalem will mean a religious war and few, if any, world religions will survive. Radical discontents will be active throughout the world. They will be a serious threat to government, religions and culture. The main thrust of radical discontents is anti-westernism. Already in the United States, a group has been formed called the 'Army of God.' They are radical and violent. They are targeting gay bars, abortion clinics, federal buildings and government policies.

-Third, the battle for Jerusalem will mean the emergence of new world leaders. These new leaders will still have the old ideas. Russia's emerging leaders are communists with twenty-first century clothing. General Lebed of Russia has said 'no one will push Russia in the corner.' Vladimir Zhirinovsky has said a war will be raging for ten to fifteen years in the Middle East with nothing to stop it. Zhirinovsky has been compared to Adolph Hitler.

Clinton's leadership style continues to be disarm and dismantle the defense strategy. Russia is gearing up for the big battle. Russia will play a key role in the final chapter of the history of an old civilization. Russia will light the fuse in the final World War.

Russia eventually will fail. Ezekiel 39:6, 'I will rain fire on Magog.'

-Fourth, the battle for Jerusalem will mean national anti-Semitism will escalate into world anti-Semitism. The growing tension between Jew and Arab will continue, but a tension between Jews and the world will develop. Anti-Semitism will involve and permeate civilization.

-Fifth and lastly, the battle for Jerusalem will mean the world economy and trade processes will shake and collapse. A discernible trend is the rise of foreign investments by many financial centers in the world. Foreign investors in other countries have already been hampered by terrorist threats. Investors prefer not to deal with the secretive and unexpected activities of terrorists. These terrorists frighten world banks, investors, tourists and trade negotiations.

There are many governments, including the United States, who give lip service to balancing the budget and controlling the rocketing growth of government spending. As these expenditures escalate, balance and control will be formidable.

The battle for Jerusalem has begun in its early stages. Many groups want it for their purposes:

- (a) The Jews want Jerusalem as their historic and contemporary capital.
- (b) The Muslims want Jerusalem as their holy site.
- (c) The Catholics want Jerusalem as an international city for no restricted visits.
- (d) The Protestants want Jerusalem for bringing about the second coming of Christ.
- (e) The Russian Orthodox want Jerusalem as a center to control the Middle East.

Israel will be the victor since Jerusalem was promised by God to be the inheritance of the Jewish people. { *Jeremiah 3:17* } The Jews have begun to return to the promised land according to God's progressive plan. This is the reason for the regathering of Jews to Israel. It will signal the start of God's kingdom on earth often referred to as the Millennial Kingdom.

The battle for Jerusalem is only a milestone toward this ultimate vision. Here are the events that define an exciting vision of what will happen:

(1) The invisible return of Jesus to earth to make more changes beyond Israel. This has started. His return is to complete the members of the Royal House often referred to as his Church. The mission of this Church is to unite the world under Christ { *Revelation 11:15* } .

(2) The regathering of the Jews will bring about the restoration of Israel as a pivotal nation in world affairs. Jerusalem will become not only the political center of Christ's reign on earth but His religious headquarters as well. This will signal the resurrected return of the ancient worthies (fathers of Israel) who were the faithful servants of the past. { *Ezekiel 11:16-19* }

(3) the resurrection of all humans who have died will commence. The return to life on earth by all humans will be the greatest miracle in the history of miracles. Reunions by families and loved ones will be awesome. There shall be no more deaths. Death will be swallowed up in victory. { *1 Corinthians 15:54* }

(4) The blessings promised to all the families of the earth will flourish throughout the world. It will be a kingdom of total economic security, living without fear of loss. Peace and harmony will prevail between men and animals with no prospect of war. The deserts will blossom as a rose as God shall wipe away tears from all faces. { *Isaiah 11:6-9* }

If God's kingdom is So exciting and wonderful, why does it seem So long delayed? It was 2000 years ago that Jesus announced this kingdom and it has not happened. The Bible outlines five reasons for the 'seeming' delay.

First, Israel must be fully regathered for all those who wish to immigrate. Second, the earth must be fully populated to meet God's intended design. Third, the human family must have a thorough experience with sin and its consequences. Fourth, the Church class must complete their spiritual development. Fifth, the old civilizations and outworn values must be removed from earth.

The nostalgia for a vision of paradise on earth seems to occupy and haunt the human mind. It is the most powerful of all nostalgias.

The Kingdom of God will satisfy this longing to live in a better world. Amen.

## **To God be the Glory-Brother Larry McClellan, USA**

### *Vesper Service*

We all have a vision of a ‘Golden Age of Prophecy’ —the Divine Plan of the Ages—that thrills and inspires our hearts in a bond of Christian hope and fellowship. The wondrous doctrine of the Ransom and its earth-encompassing benefits for the salvation of all mankind speaks of the majestic wisdom of a truly loving and just God.

The opportunity for the new creation to be gathered, developed, and graduate into part of the Abrahamic Seed that will ultimately ‘bless all the families of the earth’ magnifies the marvelous grace and mercy of such a just and most gracious Creator. Think of the privilege and opportunities secured for us by our beloved Master, Christ Jesus, So that we could become the ‘second Eve’ that would share his kingdom privileges in the ‘ministry of reconciliation.’ The privilege of giving sight to the physically and mentally blind eyes, of giving hearing to the physically and mentally deaf ears.

To assist our King in releasing a captive world from the bondage of sin, and the prison house of death. And then to make a man’s life more precious than the ‘golden wedge of Ophir’ —to bring every willing man and woman to full standing of resurrection and actual perfection—suggests privileges and joys far beyond our present human imagination.

Truly the author of such a marvelous and merciful ‘theology of love,’ as we all know, deserves our earnest praise and adoration. Let us all join our hearts together, in singing praise to such a wonderful and glorious God and Father of the New Creation.

Hymn 367, ‘To God be the Glory’ —We’re going to try to sing this hymn with the Polish Choir singing all the verses except the chorus. When we get to the chorus, all the brethren join in singing it together. But the Polish Choir will sing all the other verses by themselves. And let’s sing this brethren with all of our hearts (hymn 367).

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What a prospect lies just before us brethren. All in their graves coming forth, Satan bound, one pure language of truth covering the earth 'as the waters covering the sea.' Mankind lifted out of the horrible pit of sin and infused with life and inspiring hope—like they've never imagined.

Earth's restoration producing clean fresh waters and invigorating, unpolluted air. Vegetation and flourishing gardens of flowers—and peace on earth—harmony in the hearts of all the obedient sons of man. No more funeral homes, no more hospitals, no more jails and police stations. No more wars and battles of bloodshed, no more unjust despots or dictators ruling with selfish and inhumane acts of violence to the innocent. Yes, our's dear brethren, is a 'theology of love.'

The world and the nominal systems don't know of this glorious kingdom of God, or the few that do speak of a kingdom on earth place false limits of their own on just 'who' is going to be in that wondrous golden age of prophecy. Usually their justice turns out to be 'just-us,' and not the 'ransomed all' that we believe God will include—the ransomed all that Christ gave his life for.

But if they read the scriptures—search the scriptures—with the 'keys' to the scriptures that we have been blessed to have for our edification, they too would learn not to make God's love too narrow, they too would learn that they've magnified his vengeance with a zeal he will not own.

Let's now reflect on the privilege of understanding God and his glorious plan of salvation, as truly revealed in the scriptures, by listening to our next group of brethren. We've asked the Moldovan and Romanian brethren to sing the beautiful hymn 'Search and See,' hymn 296.

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Yes, how wonderful it is to know God's true character and the best plan for man anyone could ever imagine. But now let's take a little time to reflect on the one who gave his life for us—who redeemed us and gave this hope to the whole world—by his agonizing sacrifice at Calvary.

Jesus, the high priest of our profession, the bishop of our souls—our elder brother and advocate with the Father. Precious Jesus, who left his father's house of light, for wanderings sad and lone, and drank the cup his Father poured—oh how his obedience shone.

A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. By his stripes we were all healed. We'd like everyone to join in singing 'All to Thee,' hymn 28.

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And now we'd like Br. \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to read the poem 'To Jesus Always,' on page 30 of the Poems of Dawn.

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Indeed, dear brethren, how very blessed we are to have such a wonderful savior. A Savior who understands our weaknesses and struggles against sin. A savior who understands the 'wiles of the great adversary.' And a savior who was touched with a feeling of our infirmities in the goal of a consecration to sacrifice. Our dearly beloved friend is also our glorious advocate with the Father who pleads our case, and covers our sins, and makes it possible for us to come boldly to the throne of heavenly grace.

What a friend we have in Jesus, a friend who brings peace to a troubled heart. He said 'My peace I give unto you.' Now we'd like the brethren from France to sing the precious hymn 'What a Friend we Have in Jesus,' followed by a poem from Sr. \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_, entitled the same: 'What a Friend we Have in Jesus,' Poems of Dawn, page 106. This will be hymn 321.

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What a blessed assurance that we all have—that Jesus is ours. What a foretaste of glory divine. How we become more and more 'lost in his love' as we seek to more and more walk in his footsteps. Now we've asked Br. \_\_\_\_\_ and Sr. \_\_\_\_\_ to sing a hymn familiar to all of us: 'Blessed Assurance,' hymn Appendix N.

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Undoubtedly all of us can praise our God as well as praise our beloved Savior all the day long. This IS our story... this IS our song. But this song of Moses and the Lamb is a great 'mystery' to the world, a mystery 'hid from the ages, and now made manifest to the saints—which is what? Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in us—dear friends—what an unmerited favor and privilege we have been given.



With all the pain and suffering going on in the world people cannot understand why God doesn't do something. Why is he waiting? In Romans 8:19-22 the Apostle Paul gives the reason for the wait. Let's read together. This will be read from the Weymouth Edition:

'All creation is yearning, longing to see the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to futility, not of its own choice, but by the will of him who So subjected it; yet with the hope that at last the creation itself would be set free from the thralldom of decay to enjoy the liberty that comes with the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation is moaning in the pangs of childbirth until this hour.'

Yes, the whole world waits for the manifestation of the sons of God—the Church—Christ's heavenly bride. Christ Jesus has sought her out from mankind ever since his first advent. During the whole Gospel Age, the church class has wondered 'how long?' How long before she is complete and glorified as the bride of the 'second Adam,' Christ Jesus. Amidst toil and tribulation she has waited for her full deliverance, and the time appears to be close at hand. We asked some of the brethren from America to sing hymn 281, 'The Church.'

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Now let me ask you a question. What is the basis of the things that we all hope for as the prospective bride or church class? What is the evidence of the things that are—as yet—unseen? What is it, without which we cannot please God? Yes, it is 'faith,' isn't it.

Faith—that quiet confidence in God—that 'trust' in God—for all the exceeding great and precious promises that he has given us in his word. Do you fully believe and trust God when he tells you that he will never leave you nor forsake you? Do you believe God when he asks that you simply trust that 'all things will work together for good' because you are called according to his promise?

Do you also trust Jesus, and the promises that he has given us? 'I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also.' But do you trust Jesus today, now, even through the 'stormy day?' Now we would like to sing in faith together hymn 263, everybody, 'Simply Trusting.' (The whole congregation of brethren, sing together!) This will be followed by a solo from our

dear Sr. \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_, the selection being 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus.'

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Free from the blight of sorrow, free from all doubts and fears, only a few more trials, only a few more tears. Here let me wait with patience, wait till the night is o'er. Wait till the glorious sunlight, rises to set no more.

Just think ahead, of the time when the Church's deliverance has come, when the world of mankind's full deliverance has come, and all the willingly obedient have passed over the test of the Little Season. Think of the scripture in Ephesians 1:10, when all things have been brought into harmony, both in heaven and on earth. Think of when the Adversary and all the incorrigible will no longer exist, when mankind is fully perfected in mind, in heart, and in body. (A poem about the kingdom by \_\_\_\_\_, followed by a kingdom hymn by a small group of brethren.)

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Think of the praise mankind will express, as well as all the holy angels, when the fruition of God's wisdom and effort has developed a glorious sin-free kingdom of peace, happiness, and willing, reverential obedience to the great God who made it all possible—God's kingdom fully come—on Earth as it is in heaven.

Our final hymn selection will express the sentiments of all of God's creation eventually, when all his works will praise his name, in earth, and sky, and sea—in the Ages to Come and forevermore. Let's lift up our voices together in a combination of languages, sequenced verse by verse, praising our God and Father, singing one of my very favorite hymns: 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' Appendix B. We're going to have the different choirs sing from the different countries according to the following order:

(1) Verse one: Polish Choir

(2) Verse two: Romanian Choir

(3) Verse three: American Choir

(4) Verse four: Ukrainian, French, Moldovan, and all other brethren from all over the world, join together in 'one' singing the final verse.

To God be the glory! Thank you brethren. We love you all.

## **Arise, O Lord, Into Thy Rest-Brother Donald J. Holliday, England**

'Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions'. { *Psalms 132:1* } It is with deepest feeling that this remarkable song begins. 'A man after My own heart...' This was the portrait of David given by the Lord. What is also remarkable is that this description seems to have been given years before David was born.

Saul had been foolish and had run before the Lord. In 1 Samuel 13:14, the Lord reproves Saul through Samuel. At the beginning of the same chapter we read that this took place during Saul's second year of reign.

Paul tells us that Saul reigned forty years. { *Acts 13:21* } In 2 Samuel 5:4 we read, 'David [was] thirty years old when he began to reign.' So it seems that David was not born when Saul showed his unworthiness, and drew this reproof through Samuel. 'But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him [to be] captain over his people, because thou hast not kept [that] which the LORD commanded thee'. { *1 Samuel 13:14* }

The wonder of divine foreknowledge brought melody into the life of David. In Psalms 139:16, the thought inspired the words—'Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all [my members] were written, [which] in continuance were fashioned, when [as yet there was] none of them.'

These are wonderful words, and they relate to the David class of this age, the members of the Lord's Anointed, His Christ. The whole psalm tells of David's deep experience with his God. Verse one—how intimately the Lord had known his every thought.

In verse two, the Lord anticipated David's response, even before the circumstances that would bring it forth. In verse five, comes David's moment of truth. He realises that every step of the way is beset by the Lord. 'Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.' Here the word 'beset' means to surround and to secure. The Lord's hand was there always upon David. It was there in the heights of his experiences.

It held him tight in the very depths. It led through green pastures, by still waters. Nor did it forsake him in the valley of death's shadow. The Lord's dealing with His own, those wonderful overrulings, revealing His many thoughts; how great was the sum of them!

Thus did the Holy Spirit speak of David in the flesh. Thus, at the same moment, does it speak of the greater David class, The Christ, Head and Body members, that David was to foreshadow. As with David, even before the Body members were born, the Lord's 'book' contained it all. 'When as yet there were none of them,' their character and fashioning was prescribed. 'After My Own Heart.'

Our own existence as human beings illustrates this mystery. Once I was nothing more than one tiny cell. Yet within that microscopic speck was a book. This book contained all the directions for my formation and my development as embryo, to the ultimate moment of birth. Forty weeks the messages went forth, directing each next stage of growth. 'Sentences, paragraphs, chapters,' So have the latest scientific findings described this wonderful programme in our genes. There were even commas, and full stops! Every hour the responses were monitored. Were it not So we would have extra long noses! How wonderful this miracle of the birth of a babe.

This greatest human experience was used to illustrate for us the way that the Lord brings forth His New Creation. The messages, directions from the book, our responses. Every day of that forty weeks some further development takes place in the embryo. There are no lulls, no wasted periods. Every day of our consecrated lives is a day of our change. The Lord looks for our responses, just as He did with David.

Furthermore, another book has been written called a book of remembrance of those who fear His Name. So the request at the outset of Psalms 132 for the Lord to 'remember David' is a very touching one. Could the Lord forget? The Lord who had foreknown this 'one after His own heart,' could David now have slipped His mind? Who ordered every step, beset before, behind, and on him laid His hand, was memory now a problem with the Ancient of days?

What man remembers, how can God forget? Though a mother for a second forgets her babe, 'yet will I not forget thee.' The Lord is 'not unrighteous to forget.' So how do we understand this plea? Certainly not as a jogging of the memory of the Lord. Rather was it

to exhibit that deep and close relationship between the desires of David's heart and the Desires of the Heart of God.

This psalm is a song about two vows, each a pledge of deepest love. From verse two we have the vow of David, from verse eleven, the vow of the Lord God. Psalms 132:1 'LORD, remember David, [and] all his afflictions: (verse 2) How he swore unto the LORD, [and] vowed unto the mighty [God] of Jacob.'

We do not know exactly when this psalm was written, nor for what occasion. There can be no doubt, however, what the Holy Spirit is saying to us through these words. When the Temple was dedicated, Solomon uttered words closely resembling this psalm. This may not mean that the psalm was written at that time, but Solomon found these words most appropriate for the occasion.

2Ch 6:41 'Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. (verse 42) O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.'

The dedication of the Temple was a type, fore shadowing this very special time in which we live today. The saints, the David class of this age, have nearly finished their course. Even this moment, the Lord is in the process of making up His jewels.

This is a precious moment to the Lord. 'They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels'. { *Malachi 3:17*} We feel we may here detect great yearning, and in that prospect, a deep satisfaction in the heart of God. What is it about these people of God that make them, to Him, such a peculiar treasure?

Ps 132:1 'LORD, remember David, [and] all his afflictions.' Remember the David class of this age, and all their afflictions. The afflictions of the saints throughout the age have been many. Of some of these we get glimpses in the records of history. What the historian missed, the Lord remembers.

The death of His saints has been precious in His sight. Each one was faithful unto death, and for each was a crown of life reserved. But the death that mattered most was the one that took place long before the last breath. Consecration was in the Jordan of death. There each devoted soul became dead, dead to all else, but one

single desire represented in this Psalms 132, in the longing heart of David—to ‘find a place’ for the Lord.

David himself suffered many things resulting from the Lord’s call. He was taken from the sheepfold to endure many hard trials in preparation for the throne. However, this psalm identifies for us the true nature of the ‘afflictions’ here to be specially borne in mind by the Lord God.

These were David’s self afflictions, the self afflicting of his own soul. The following verses reveal the earnestness of the intense longing to build for the Lord a home, a place of rest for the holy ark of God. David yearned to provide a place worthy of the Lord. It must be holy, and exquisitely beautiful.

David vowed a vow. He made a solemn promise to His God. He sealed it with an oath. The language he used in verses 3, 4 and 5 revealed a state of total dedication, and singleness of purpose. To express it simply, David said—‘Surely—I will not go home, or go to bed; I will not fall asleep, or even close my eyes, until I find a place for the Lord, a home worthy of the God of Jacob’ { *Psalms 132:5* } —‘an habitation for the mighty [God] of Jacob.’ Here, the word ‘habitation’ is plural, and in the Hebrew this adds a sense of quality and majesty. This place must be different from all others, not merely a place, but a palace truly worthy of So great a God.

Until that Temple is completed, the Holy Presence of God is represented by the shining light of presence, or ‘shekinah,’ from between the cherubim on the sacred mercy seat. But the ark was housed in a tent, a temporary abode of frail fabric. For years the ark had remained at Shiloh, in the area of Ephraim. Some scriptures equate Ephraim with Ephratah, and this may be the reference in verse six. *Psalms 132:6* —‘Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.’ The fields of Jearim, or Kireath-Jearim, also means ‘the city of the wood.’

Here the ark was found in the early days of David. The designed place for the ark was in the holy of holies. However, during the whole period of David’s life, the ark never resided in the Tabernacle. Way back in the days of Eli’s sons, the ark had been carried into the battle field to boost the faltering morale of the Israelites. The Israelites suffered defeat, and the ark was taken by the enemy. Seven months later, the Philistines were glad to get rid of the ark. It had brought a twofold plague, the details of which we shall not go into, save to say that the Lord smote them where it hurt!

Then, what a wonderful moment that was, when the reapers of the fields of Bethshemesh looked up from their labours to see the ark approaching. It was drawn on a cart by milking cows, who, contrary to nature, had unheeded the cries of their calves to bear their precious load as directed by the power of the Lord. The ark had returned from the land of the enemy, and the Philistines, who had followed to observe afar off, watched with great awe. There was little that happened to that sacred ark that lacks significance.

The scene was of wonder and delight on the one hand, and of great awe and dread on the other. Surely this was paralleled by the raising of Jesus from the domain of the enemy, death. Truly does He triumph over principalities and powers, to make of them an open show of the greater power of God. After a brief respite at that place, the ark was taken to Kireath-Jearim. There it remained for at least seventy years, until David had taken Jerusalem. There at Jerusalem was to be the permanent abode for which David longed.

The road from Kireath-Jearim towards Jerusalem is a steep and rugged ascent as one travels eastward towards the sunrise and Mount Zion. The first attempt to bring it up met with failure. It was not the Lord's way. It was the way of the Philistines, for the ark was placed upon a cart of human construction to draw it along by oxen.

This represented a movement not of the Lord but of man and Satan. It was doomed to disaster. The cart jolted over the roughness of the way, and threatened to off-load its sacred burden. Human hands reached out to support and steady the ark of God. Oh, how wary we must be of human ways and human hands in the things of the Lord!

The Papacy was a movement based upon the way of the Philistines. It was a human endeavour to bring in the kingdom. Human hands attempted to achieve what the Lord had not designed. But Papacy was not alone in this. Many other examples were to follow.

Why were such things allowed? How it brings home to all the Lord's people the unspeakable privilege of that holy walk with God. A holy walk—we picture the Levites as, in harmony with divine instruction, they bore the precious weight of divine glory high upon their shoulders.

Thus, with deepest reverence and respect, did they treat this wonderful symbol of the divine presence. 'Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.' Many of us, dear brethren, are of the second or third generation of Truth people. It is not enough that our parents walked with God.

The father of Uzzah had for years tended that ark, and had known the blessing of the divine presence and favour. This did not save his son. The unspeakable privileges passed to our generation call for the greatest awe and respect for the things of God. Everything, we must do His way. It is a holy walk.

Brethren, remember David, and the way he afflicted his soul. Is it our earnest vow, our chief concern above all else, to find out a place worthy of the Lord? Does this yearning desire consume us with the zeal of His house? More than any natural comfort, more than rest of body, does this longing claim our first attention, and direct our thoughts each day? The dedication of David; does it describe my own part in that David class of this age?

'He swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty [God] of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation [worthy of] the mighty God of Jacob.'

What priceless privilege it is, to know the Lord! What a blessed company, who walk and dwell with that One Who inhabits eternity, and Whose Name is Holy! Is my heart a place worthy for such a Being? Can it ever be? Humanly, it is impossible. Yet the Lord has Himself a desire that it should be, and He has provided those means of grace. The man of God is 'thoroughly furnished,' furnished right through, in ways that are totally pleasing to the Lord of Glory.

The Lord brings His own furniture, but it is the fear of the Lord that opens the door. There are states and conditions of the humblest heart in which He is exalted, in which He is given the highest and most welcomed place. The honour and the glory due to His name is reflected in the wonder and awe of those who love Him. In such a heart does He find that home of love to which He is pleased to give His Name. 'They shall be mine.'

David was that man after God's own heart. Day after day, year after year, in his walk with God, he had been laying up the materials of the permanent abode. In 1 Chronicles 22:5 we read



‘the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.’

1Ch 29:2 — ‘Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for things to be made of gold, and the silver for [things] of silver, and the brass for things of brass, the iron for things of iron, and wood for things of wood; onyx stones, and stones to be set, glistening stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.’

Chapter 28: verses 11 & 12, tell us that David’s mind was filled with the Spirit, giving him a concept of the Lord’s requirements. He saw in his mind a pattern of that glorious house of God, and in accordance therewith did he prepare the materials required.

With great zeal did he do this because *{as 1 Chronicles 29:3 states}* ‘I have set my affection to the house of my God.’ When Jesus encourages us to set our affection on things above, to seek first the kingdom, to lay up treasures in heaven, He speaks to the David class of this age.

Our stones, He has laid, of ‘fair colours,’ and our foundations of ‘sapphires’. *{ Isaiah 54:11 }* This is the ‘building of God,’ of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 5:1: ‘an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ The Spirit of the Lord gave David a pattern of what was to be after his death, after the earthly house of David’s tabernacle was dissolved. In that ancient Temple of God lies also a pattern of the greater House yet to be.

Search with us the accounts of that Temple of the days of Solomon. View there the answer to all David’s desires, the results, and the placements of the materials he had So painstakingly gathered together for that day.

Picture in your minds the huge quarries in the twin hills of Jerusalem, out of which the stones were cut and ‘curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.’ Picture the way in which the high peaks were reduced, and the low surrounding places raised up, to produce that high and holy place.

A wall of solid masonry stood across the south of this mound as high as the tallest English church spires. Look up that wall from its base towards the Temple buildings that crown its top; what a glimpse of the wonderful high spiritual Temple this affords.

Water supply was stored in vast cisterns hewn out of the solid rock, one alone holding three million gallons. From what immeasurable supply shall those waters of life flow from beneath the doors of that Temple of God to turn the sea of death to sea of life.

There at the great porch one entered between the two pillars of brass. This is the Way for all man kind, into relationship and fellowship with God. One great pillar was named 'Boaz,' meaning 'in which is strength,' the 'power of God unto salvation.'

Undoubtedly Jesus is thus represented here. At His side, the other 'pillar in the house of his God' stands His companion, 'Jachin,' meaning 'that which He establishes or sets' at His side. Here do we not see the Bride of the Lamb?

Within the Temple the cedar walls reveal the inner beauty of those lofty upright trees of Lebanon. They are adorned throughout with cherubim, palms, carvings of lilies overlaid with gold, and enriched with precious stones. 'The King's daughter is all glorious within.'

Such was the house prepared by David, the Christ in the flesh, and brought into realisation by Solomon, representing the Christ in glory. It was a pattern of that which is greater and more perfect, with divine dimensions, and eternal permanence. Such was the place that, amid shouts of rejoicing, sounds of music and singing, and amid the festive dancing bands of maidens, the ark of God was borne into its rest. And the glory of the Lord filled the place. Such was the setting of our psalm.

Brethren, the sounds of that rejoicing have long since died away. Like a flickering shadow it has come and gone, for that is what it was, a shadow. Even the glory of the Temple of Solomon was just a shadow, a pattern for that which was to come.

Many years after those joyous scenes of dedication, the Lord said, through Isaiah 66:1 'Thus saith the LORD, The heaven [is] my throne, and the earth [is] my footstool: where [is] the house that ye build unto me? and where [is] the place of my rest? (2) For all those [things] hath mine hand made, and all those [things] have been, saith the LORD: but to this [man] will I look, [even] to [him] that is] poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.'

What precious adornments, in His sight, are humility, contrition, and holy awe of the things of God—a heart that counts Him dear, and precious, ‘more dear, more intimately nigh than even the sweetest earthly tie.’

1Pe 3:15 —‘sanctify the Lord God in your hearts’ —find Him a place worthy of all that He is. A God of love deserves the very centre of our love, the uppermost seat, the place of honour and esteem, Who is the source of our delight. ‘My son, give Me thine heart.’

There is nothing cheap or tarnishable in the dwelling place of God, nothing paltry or unworthy. It is a place of delight, our delight, and His, in Whose presence is fulness of joy. All His delight is in His saints, and all their delight is in Him. Oh, to find in our hearts today a place worthy of Our God—before we close our eyes tonight in sleep.

David was enacting a beautiful type when he danced before the Lord. It was a wonderful display of the sheer joy and exuberance of spirit of one whose chief desire centred in the ark, the sacred presence of his God. It was a steep ascent, but each step drew nearer to that goal, the full realisation of the earnest longings of his heart. David’s joy in the Lord overflowed. He lost sight of self, lost sight of everything, but this one absorbing prospect.

He danced with joy before the Lord. Each step upward was a step of sacrifice, a continual sacrifice of praise. 2 Samuel 6:13 —‘And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. (14) And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.’ Not from constraint, but with delight, did David offer before the Lord. Could the Lord be other than moved by this sight?

If that was but type, then is the reality even more precious in the sight of our God. Was that, indeed, but a foreshadowing of my own walk with God? The joy of the Lord, is it mine? Most precious evidence of the Spirit’s anointing, it cannot be fabricated. It rises as incense from a heart enlarged, a heart touched with that deep sense of the fulness of God. The delight of the Lord is with such. He loves dearly those Who have come to know and to love Him dearly. The fragrance stems from Jesus their Head, and identifies with Him. ‘I do only those things that please My Father.’ Such is holiness. It is the continual ascent of the sweet savour of Christ. It is a consuming, the smoke of burnt offering, our whole being ascending in thankful gratitude to our God.

The age behind us was sweetened by such offerings of devotion and love. The age before us will bring forth further such offerings, whole bullocks, from a grateful world of mankind. This moment in time is graced by the last of the offerings of His saints. This is a precious moment to the Lord.

Ps 132:7, 'We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.' That verse sums up David's song of praise recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:8,9, 'Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.'

This was on the occasion of the bearing of the ark to Mt. Zion in the days of David. It is as though we have two viewpoints of this sacred event. David represents the Christ still here in the flesh. This is how we are privileged to realise what today is taking place beyond the veil. When the Temple is dedicated under Solomon, a further viewpoint is illustrated, that of the saints beyond the veil. Theirs is the sight of the true glory of that final abode. These two occasions, separated in time, nevertheless may be seen to synchronise in their reality.

When the Ark was brought to Mount Zion by David, the offerings of praise ascended high from many lips. It was a time of feasting for the Lord's people. 1 Chronicles 16:3 — 'And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine.' And the harps, and the cymbals, and the trumpets filled the air with sounds of great jubilation.

And that, Brethren, that was just the shadow. To this very special moment in the whole of history, the time in which we now live, belongs the reality. Psalms 132:8,9 — 'Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.' It is happening now, as we speak. The ark of God, the vehicle of the Divine presence with His people throughout the ages, is entering into its eternal abode, His finished Sanctuary.

The Temple of the Lord is all but complete. The last consignments of gold, silver, precious stones are all but laid up in heaven. The sound of the mason's tools in the quarry grows less, soon to completely die away.

Amid sounds of greatest rejoicing the Lord surveys His finished work, and enters into His eternal abode, His rest forever, with His saints. 'Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.'

At this wonderful moment, our thoughts turn towards the Lord. He has waited So long. What are His thoughts at this hour? What deep divine emotions fill His heart? 'Arise, O LORD, into thy rest;' Could we but fathom the depths of feeling confided in such language, words that poured forth by the prompting of His Own Spirit!

Revelations lie here of the holy mind of God. These words are now put into our lips, who have been touched with a sense of that deep yearning of a Father's love. It is the cry of our hearts unto our God, at this sacred moment of His eternal existence.

'Thou, and the ark of Thy strength.' This expression is to be found only in this psalm and in Solomon's use of the substance of this psalm at the dedication of the Temple. Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Herein, in the ark of God, the Christ, lies the basis of His covenant. Herein lies the means of its accomplishment. Here embodied, the principles of its permanent establishment within the heart of each creature brought into oneness with His God.

The power of God unto salvation, lies within the completed Christ. These are the Lord's executors, who, now fully prepared, will carry forward the great majestic purpose of God to its full blessed fruition.

Ps 132:8 'Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength. (9) Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy. (10) For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.'

With what poignant language is the blessed truth conveyed in such words. Between these precious sons and the Father So much love has passed. Every experience of the way was designed to bring them closer. Every step was to prepare them for the glorious goal and object of the course. They know, and the Father knows, that there is no possibility, not even the remotest chance, having brought His Christ through suffering to glory, to now withdraw from this most blessed climax of the whole redemptive purpose.

The plea, to turn not away the face of His Christ, is the most touching poetic language to express the certainty of fulfilment of His whole blessed design. 'For this cause' Jesus came into this world. 'For this cause' were called the followers of the Lamb.

And now the hour has come! The drama of the ages reaches fruition. The great wheels of divine purpose have come full turn, and with sense of blessed certainty we enter the final phase. The Christ in glory stands poised for the blessed work ahead, the joy set before them in wondrous array. The ark of His strength is now entering, with the great God it enthrones, into that last permanent stage of perfect union, and glorious oneness.

What is the Father's response to the cry of His saints? In verse 11, the earnest vow of the David class is met by the solemn oath of the Lord. Psalms 132:11 — "The LORD hath sworn [in] truth unto David; he will not turn from it."

So long has He waited for this hour. We now approach that moment when there is 'time no more.'

### **The 23rd Psalm-Brother D. S. P. Varma, India**

My dear precious brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. I bring greetings to you from your brethren in India. My discourse is based on Psalms 23, a very familiar chapter to all of us. The first verse is: 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' As it is in the King James Version, many have a problem in understanding this 17th century English rendering.

My father was one of these. The first time he read it, he wondered—Why is it written, 'the Lord is my shepherd [and] I shall not want.' Does not David want the Lord to be his shepherd? My four year old nephew had the same problem when his mother taught him this Psalm. 'Mama,' he said, 'why is it written, "The Lord is my shepherd [and] I shall not want"?' It should rather be 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not Don't want.'

Note, it says 'the Lord is my shepherd.' The remaining words 'I shall not be in want' applies to me, only if the Lord is my shepherd. All the promises of this psalm belong to us only if the Lord is our shepherd, not otherwise. If the Lord is my shepherd indeed, if I am his sheep, and if I am daily following his leading. And not otherwise.

All of us say this psalm. But is it truly our psalm? Because there is another psalm also. I'll read it to you. But first I'll read the psalm of David.

#### The 23rd Psalm

- (1) 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- (2) 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- (3) 'He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- (4) 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
- (5) 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- (6) 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'

Now I'll read the other psalm.

#### The 23rd Channel

- (1) 'The television is my shepherd; my spiritual life doth want.
- (2) 'It maketh me to sit down and do nothing. It leadeth me beside men of no faith, it restoreth my desire for worldly pleasure.
- (3) 'It requireth all my spare time and takes me away from walking in the narrow way. It increaseth my knowledge of nonsense and keepeth me from the study of the word of God.
- (4) 'Yea, though I live to be a hundred, yet the viewing of my television shall have the first place in my life. I fear not God, for I have made the TV my closest companion. Its sound and its picture, they comfort me.
- (5) 'It maketh me to sit with the scornful and teacheth me the counsel of the ungodly. It anoints my mind with seeds of corruption and fills my head with vanity, which profiteth me nothing, my cup remains empty.

(6) 'Surely, no good thing will come of my life, because I am devoted to my television which leaveth me no time to serve God acceptably. Thus I will dwell in the house of confusion forever.'

Oh dear, what a difference. What is your psalm?

Our savior once said 'Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?'. { *Luke 6:6* } So, there is no use saying 'the Lord is my shepherd' if we do not follow him daily. Then is he not our shepherd at all. But if he is our shepherd indeed, then our shepherd gives us freedom from four things. That is our subject today.

(1) Freedom from Hunger.

(2) Freedom from Fear.

(3) Freedom from Friction.

(4) Freedom from Pests.

(1) Freedom from Hunger

The most important thing for sheep is food. And the shepherd makes them 'to lie down in green pastures,' and leads them 'beside the still waters' (verse 2). He also prepares a 'table' for them in the presence of their enemies (verse 5).

Oh! what a rest of faith the shepherd has given us: ever since we came to the green pastures of present truth, we have had no desire of leaving it for anything else. Long back, one pastor asked another pastor, 'what can be done to keep the sheep from leaving?' The reply was: 'You tie them by their teeth—give them the best food and they will never leave you.'

Really, that's what our pastor, the returned Lord, has done. He has given us the meat in due season, and how can we leave? I've seen people who have wandered from place to place, and from denomination to denomination, not satisfied, restless, angry and ready to perish. And then the Lord has graciously led them to the green pastures. And how delighted they are.

They had been thirsty for years, and now they come to the still waters of the deep love and wisdom of their God. They had been feeding at a table full of filthiness. { *Isaiah 28:8* } But now they



come to the clean prepared table where the Lord himself serves them. Their hunger is gone. They are completely satisfied.

Years back, my grandmother came across the words in Amos 8:11. It tells of a coming famine of the words of God. You know what she did? She immediately purchased a new Bible, wrapped it in a silk cloth and kept it safely in the bottom of a trunk and locked it. She thought that a time was coming when there would be no Bibles at all in the world.

But we know that such a thing never happened, nor will it happen. Everybody has Bibles today, several of them. The sale of the Bible is still the

highest in the world. Even in muslim countries Bibles are there. The Bible Society in Jordan ships over 20 tons of Bibles into Iraq every year. The preaching of the Bible is also on the rise. Everywhere there are public meetings, church services, TV and radio broadcasts, etc. like as never since the beginning of the Gospel Age.

Yet the fact is, we are right now living in the very days of Amos' prophecy. There is a grievous famine of the words of God in the world. Though there are plenty of Bibles and Bible teachers, yet they are blinded to the truth of the Bible. Most of the fundamental doctrines they believe and teach are not in the Bible at all.

They say the soul is immortal, but the Bible clearly says the soul dies. They believe God is three persons in one; the Bible denies it. They teach the wages of sin is eternal torment, but the Bible teaches the very opposite. Alas, the famine in the land is very great indeed. Oh, but thanks be to our shepherd, for amidst this great famine, he gives us freedom from hunger.

We know there is coming a time when the whole world will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But at the present, people wander from sea to sea and from north even to the east, and faint for thirst—because of the difficulty of the famine. Let us ever be thankful for this great blessedness of truth which our shepherd has given us.

## (2) Freedom from Fear

Fear is a most unpleasant feeling. The dread and anxiety is most terrible. It is said that once Satan sent his angel to kill half of the population of a city with a plague. But the whole city was killed.

When Satan asked the angel of this, he replied 'I killed half of them, fear killed the rest.'

Oh! we need freedom from fear.

Now, there is a fear that is proper, from which we do not need to be freed. For instance, 'the fear of God'! We know 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' In 1 Peter 2:17 we read 'Honour all men, love the brotherhood, fear God.'

In Hebrews 12:28,29 we read 'Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.' In Matthew 10:28,29 Jesus said 'Fear not them which kill the body, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.'

Yet one may be freed from this fear provided he has perfect love. For in 1 John 4:18 we read 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.' If you have perfect love, you need not fear destruction of soul and body. But how many can say that they have perfect love? Br. Russell once commenting on perfect love said: 'This is a very scarce commodity, even among the saints of God.'

Next comes the fear of doing wrong. That is a good fear. We must fear to do a wrong thing. In 1 Peter 1:17 we read: 'and if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.'

Then comes the fear of losing. That is also good. It makes us more careful. We read in Hebrews 4:1: 'Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us... any of you should seem to come short of it.' In Philippians 2:12 we read: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.'

But we need freedom from So many other fears that torment us every day. Truly we live in a fear filled world. We face danger on every side. Now, there is...

The fear of Man

The fear of Satan

The fear of Night

The fear of Accidents

The fear of Thieves

The fear of Deception

The fear of Sickness

The fear of War

The fear of Death

The list is endless.

Actually, our Heavenly Shepherd gives us complete freedom from every fear. When Jehovah is the shepherd, the sheep have nothing to fear. The shepherd will not let the wolf or the lion hurt or destroy a single sheep that trusts in him. He keeps us as the apple of his eye. So much, that we can say with David { *Psalms 27:1* } 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?'

Again { *in Psalms 27:3* } 'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.' Even if nuclear war should break out tomorrow, we need not fear. There are more than a hundred scriptures that tell us not to fear.

The past, you need not fear, it is forgiven.

The present you need not fear, it is provided for.

The future you need not fear, it is safe in the hands of your Eternal Father.

'You may tremble on the rock, but the rock never trembles under you.'

Once somebody pointed out Psalms 56:3 to C. H. Spurgeon. It says 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' He replied, 'That's going to Heaven in second class. The first class is, if you could say as in Isaiah 12:2, 'Behold, God is my Salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid'... at all!' Even in times of trial we need not fear, for the Lord knows our 'load limit.' He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able.

Once a woman was travelling in a ship and was very much disturbed by a storm while her husband was calm and restful. She asked him how it was that he was not afraid. He didn't answer her, but he took out his sword and held it to her breast. She smiled. He said, 'Why are you not afraid of this sharp sword. I could slay you in a minute with it.' 'Ah,' she supplied, 'but I am not afraid of a sword when it is my husband who wields it.' 'Even so' said he, 'neither am I afraid of a storm when it is my father who sends it and manages it.' That is going to heaven first class.

The worst thing that could happen to a man is death. It is the last enemy. But we need not fear death at all. Because the prison house of death is without a door! What? No door at all? Yes. Some woman discovered it on the first easter day. They came to the sepulchre early in the morning. And as they came they asked one another this question: 'who shall roll us away the stone'?

That has been the question of millions of every generation. Who shall roll away the stone of the sepulchre, and release the prisoners out? Who shall roll away the stone that blocks the path of life? Those women, on that day, had three difficulties:

- (1) The stone was heavy
- (2) There was the red seal of the government.
- (3) The Roman guards kept watch.

For four thousand years no one could roll away the stone for the same reason.

- (1) The stone was So heavy that no one of the human race could move it. No one had power over the grave; even a lion at death became worse than a dog.
- (2) There was the red seal of the Law—the just punishment of God rested on it. Man had sinned, and justice demanded that he be dead.
- (3) Satan and his angels kept mankind in fear of bondage of death; in deceiving and misleading them on the broad way of destruction. So who could roll away the stone?

It is recorded in Judges 16:1 that Samson once was in the city of Gaza. The Gazaites discovered it and locked up the gate of the city to prevent him from escaping. They thought they could capture

him in the morning. The gate of a city is a symbol of its strength. But at midnight Samson arose. He lifted the doors along with the two posts, bar and all, and put it on his shoulders and carried it to the top of the hill and hung it there like a flag. So when the Gazaites got up in the morning, they found that this strong city was left without a gate.

Even So Jesus slept in the prison-house of death for three days, and then he arose and he rolled away the stone. Therefore, since then, there is no door to the sepulchre. True, men still pass in, but they cannot be shut in. In due time all who are imprisoned there shall come forth.

And since we are living in the blessed times, we need not wait any longer. We will be changed in a moment. Therefore why fear death? Even if we should die today, no fear, 'so much less of earth, and So much more of heaven.'

Our shepherd gives us freedom from fear.

### (3) Freedom from Friction

Well, is there friction among the sheep? I do not know if sheep quarrel. But we all know that we do. In every group there is friction among brethren; even in the Apostles' church there was friction. As someone rightly put it:

'To dwell above with saints we love,

Ah yes! that will be glory.

To live below with saints we know, Well, that's another story.'

Why is there friction among brethren? Well, some of the reasons are:

(1) All of us are imperfect.

(2) All of us are selfish.

(3) All of us are proud.

There are many other causes, but to put it all together, the reason for friction is 'lack of love.' 'Where love is thin, strife is thick.' Love is the oil that takes away friction. Love covers a multitude of sin: love binds us together, even as we sing:

'Bind us together Lord,  
Bind us together, with  
chords that cannot be broken...

Bind us together Lord,  
Bind us together Lord,  
Bind us together with Love.'

Once while I was singing this song, in difficult times in the ecclesia, I realized, only the Lord our shepherd can bind us together. Yes, if there is unity and love among us, it is because of our shepherd. But for his presence, we would all be divided, scattered and destroyed.

There is another hymn that is very popular:

'Blest be the tie that binds,  
Our hearts in Christian love...'

The story behind it is worth noting. It was written by Dr. John Fawcett, Pastor of a small but poor Baptist congregation at Yorkshire. His salary of 25 pounds was totally inadequate. So he accepted a call to a large influential church in London. He preached his farewell sermon, and was loading his belongings into the wagon, when sorrowing members of his congregation, showing deep affection, pleaded with him not to leave.

The pastor and his wife were so overcome that they sat and wept. 'Oh John, John, I cannot bear this,' said his wife. 'We shall not go' said the good man. His decision to remain was a costly one. Loving fellowship of saints was more desired than more money and physical comforts. To commemorate this event, Fawcett wrote the hymn.

The standard that the Lord sets before us is love. Now shall we measure ourselves with that standard? Will you please turn with me to chapter 13 of 1st Corinthians. We'll read from verse 4 through verse 8.

(4) 'Love is patient;

Love is kind, and is not jealous;

Love does not brag and is not arrogant.

(5) 'Does not act unbecomingly;

It does not seek its own,

Is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered.

(6) 'Does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

(7) 'Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,

(8) 'Love never fails.'

Let us put our dear redeemer's name in place of 'Love' and read it. How perfectly our master fits in! Now, I invite you to check and measure yourself by this standard. Put yourself in place of Love and read it again. After all, that's what we are supposed to be, if we are his followers. Oh dear, how much there is to improve. If we all aim at that standard, even as our shepherd teaches us, there will be freedom from friction.

(4) Freedom from Pests

I've heard of a strange disease among sheep caused by the nose fly, which lays eggs on the mucus membrane of the sheep. Later the eggs hatch, and the larvae get into the head, causing severe irritation to the sheep, so that it rubs itself and hits its head at other sheep and almost everything in the way, until eventually it kills itself! So pathetic. That is what sin does to us. It destroys us.

But the shepherd gives his sheep freedom from pests. He knows the solution to this problem. He gives the right medicine and gives us freedom from the pest of sin. How does he do that?

He gives us freedom from:

(1) The penalty of sin,

(2) The power of sin,

(3) The presence of sin.

(1) Freedom from the penalty of sin. This was done for us on Calvary. The moment we come to God trusting in the ransom sacrifice of our Lord, we are freed from the penalty of sin, i.e. Adamic death. None of us are just. We have to be justified. To be justified means 'just as if I had never sinned.' The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. That is done immediately.

(2) Freedom from the power of sin. Even after we are justified, we see sin continue to rule in us. We need freedom from this power of sin. We do not want to be slaves to sin any longer. But that sin is very powerful. Only God can give us freedom from it.

There are some sins that grip us like a vice. But God gives us victory. What is your sin? What is your greatest weakness? It is said that 'we usually tell our little sins; that men may think that we do not have any great sins.' But that will not help. Our Lord Jesus said, 'you strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel'. { *Matthew 23:24* }

We have to deal with our camels. Our shepherd is able to give us freedom from every sin, however great and powerful. But we must fight and overcome, by his grace. Like Joshua took the promised land, fighting all the enemies, and defeating 32 kings, So we must fight against the enemies of our soul—the sins in our heart.

It is not enough that righteousness is imputed to us. It must be imparted. That is a gradual work.

(3) Freedom from the presence of sin. This freedom the shepherd gives when we are raised in the first resurrection. Then we will be completely free from every sin. We will no longer be weak and no longer be tempted. Thus righteousness is completed eventually.

Freedom from the penalty of sin.

Freedom from the power of sin.

Freedom from the presence of sin.

Righteousness is imputed immediately.

Righteousness is imparted gradually.

Righteousness is completed eventually.



So my dear my brothers and sisters, to summarize this lesson: the shepherd gives us freedom from 4 things:

"(1) Freedom from hunger—what we must have is meekness."

"( 2) Freedom from fear—what we must have is faith."

"( 3) Freedom from friction—what we need is love."

"( 4) Freedom from pests—what we must do is fight."

May the Lord help us all truly to be sheep which follow the shepherd. Amen.

### **Behold the Lamb of God, Which Taketh Away the Sin of the World-Brother Pszemyslaw Merski, Australia**

Joh 1:19

Dearly beloved brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ, gathered at this blessed International Convention! I feel very privileged to be able to speak from the Word of God to So many of you brethren of the same precious faith, gathered from various countries.

I am thankful to our Heavenly Father that my wife and I are able to participate in this convention for the second time. We are accompanied by quite a large group of brethren from Australia. I also bring greetings and Christian love from the remaining members of the Melbourne Polish ecclesia.

I'd like to share with you the topic 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' It is a well known and frequently mentioned topic, but it is my wish, with the help and grace of God, to consider this subject about the sin of the world. John the Baptist officially proclaimed and publicly announced that our Lord Jesus is the true Lamb, which takes away the sin of the world.

He made this proclamation approximately 42 days after the baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River, when our Lord Jesus had returned after spending 40 days in the wilderness. We read of this in John 1:29: 'The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' '

After a short time our Lord Jesus left this region. The paths of these two great men separated—each of them was active in a different part of the country. Our Lord Jesus went to Judea, and John the Baptist dwelt in Aenon near Salim. We read about this in John 3:22-26.

We consider this subject with the premise that the Scripture is the Word of God and was written under the influence of the holy Spirit. { *2 Peter 1:21* } The Word of God is the basis of existence, both of mankind and of the entire universe. { *Deuteronomy 8:3* } God said to Israel through Moses: ‘man doth not live by bread alone.’ When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness he referred to these very words: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’. { *Matthew 4:4* }

The power of God’s Word is described in Hebrews 11:3: ‘Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, So that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.’ Contemporary science confirms this, in the well-known theory of the origin of the universe referred to as the Big Bang Theory.

#### The Definition of Sin Based on the Scriptures

1Jo 3:4 says: ‘Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.’ 1 John 5:17: ‘All unrighteousness is sin.’ What is a law? It is a covenant, agreement or statute. { *Psalms 19:8* } What is Justice? First, it is the principal attribute of God: ‘Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne’. { *Psalms 89:14* } Second, it is an absolute law, which cannot be trespassed without punishment.

God created our first father Adam ‘in our image, after our likeness’, { *Genesis 1:26* } which means he was created with the law of God in his heart. Whoever trespasses God’s law commits a sin. We read about the law in respect 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’. { *Genesis 2:15* }

#### The Law of Moses

After four thousand years, the Apostle Paul, being an expert on the Law of Moses, wrote: ‘By one man sin entered into the world, and

death by sin; and So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. { *Romans 5:12* } Saint Paul confirmed this further in the same letter. 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'. { *Romans 6:23* } The Apostle says that: (1) by one man, Adam, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; (2) but the gift of God is eternal life, in Christ Jesus.

Let us go back to our theme text. John the Baptist pointed to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world. Why a Lamb? A lamb is associated with a sacrificial offering, with the shedding of blood, and blood represents life, as when God said to Cain: 'the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground'. { *Genesis 4:10* }

God told Noah: 'you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood'. { *Genesis 9:3,4* } God commanded Israel: 'you shall not eat any blood'. { *Leviticus 3:17* } The Apostles counseled the Gentile brethren to 'abstain... from blood'. { *Acts 15:20* } Sacrifice, which requires the shedding of blood, represents life.

In Genesis 3:21 we read: 'Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.' In order to make a coat of skin, an animal has to be killed and blood shed. It is possible that the animal was a lamb. Already here God showed the necessity for a redeemer who would yield a life for a life.

The Scriptures speak about the offerings of Cain and Abel. 'And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering [probably a lamb]'. { *Genesis 4:3-4* } Here also God implied that the offerings to be sacrificed by his creatures should reflect the necessity of a redemptive sacrifice for sin, that is, laying down life as a redemptive price.

From the beginning the Lord God was teaching that there is no remission of sin without the shedding of blood. 'And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without the shedding of blood is no remission'. { *Hebrews 9:22* } This had its source in Leviticus 17:11.

The question arises: why did Cain and Abel want to make an offering to the Lord God in the first place? Perhaps God in some way told them to do it. But more than this, man has an instinctive motivation to honor his Creator.

Noah offered a burnt offering after leaving the ark, 'and the Lord smelled a sweet savour'. { *Genesis 8:20,21*} Abraham followed God's command and offered up his son Isaac, when at the last moment God, through his angel, stopped Abraham and pointed to a ram in the bushes as a substitute offering.

The Passover Lamb was described in Exodus 12:5-7. 'And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses.' The Lamb was foreordained from before the foundation of the world, as we read in 1 Peter 1:18:

'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.'

#### The Sin of the World

John the Baptist spoke about the sin of the world as singular, 'the sin of the world,' and we notice here the accuracy of the word of God. The sin of the world is the original sin committed by Adam, and then passed on to his children.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this also. 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. { *Romans 5:12*} First the original sin was passed to us through Adam, and all other sins were caused by the fleshly imperfections and infirmities inherited from the original sin. Second, our weaknesses are the result of the original sin to the degree they are part of the original sin.

#### The Ransom

The Lamb was foreordained before the foundation of the world, and according to the Apostle John Jesus was 'slain from the foundation of the world'. { *Revelation 13:8*}

The ransom was provided on the cross when Jesus said: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,' that is my life. Jesus thus deposited the ransom with his Father, without its final application. Jesus put the ransom in the hands of justice as a deposit, and retained the privilege of designating the use of those life rights.

The next step was to mortgage it by assigning it to his church—the church which is not yet fully completed. When our Lord laid down his life he provided the price of ransom, by which at the proper time he will free the whole of mankind.

He ‘gave himself a ransom’ —antilutron—a corresponding price { *1 Timothy 2:5,6*} when he died. But the ransom will be fully paid, fully applied, when the church is complete. The high priest, head and body, will then seal the New Covenant and begin its work on behalf of Adam and all mankind. Then the ransom will be completed, but the work of atonement will not be finished. It will continue till the end of the Millennium.

### Jesus’ Merit

Jesus’ merit was secured by his becoming a man, in order to prove his obedience to God’s arrangements. This merit was in the fact that as a perfect man he willingly sacrificed his right to human life. It is this right to human life, as a merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, which will be applied to take away the sin of the world.

In 1 John 2:2 we read: ‘And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.’ Imputing merits to the church as a separate class mortgages this merit for a time. This imputation means a loan, as it were, to the church—and a loan, a mortgage, has to be returned.

All who sacrifice themselves give up their earthly lives. (1) The church class will die as more than overcomers and receive divine, spiritual life. (2) The great company class will die in the fire, the great tribulation, and will receive a spiritual life. (3) The second death class will die. They all will die without maintaining their earthly life. Thus the mortgage will be lifted.

Then God’s justice will turn mankind over to Christ, who will distribute blessings, the New Covenant will come into force, and the great amnesty will come. The work of the church, great company and the ancient worthies will then begin. The condemnation will be taken away from the world, and only its effects will remain, which will be removed gradually, during the Millennium.

The Church The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, writes that in his plan of salvation God foresaw also the church, apart from Jesus. The church, whose head is the Lord Jesus, is called the body of Christ. In Romans 8:28-30 we read:

‘And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified.’

Eph 1:4: ‘He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.’ This does not mean that the Lord God foresaw us individually, but that he foresaw the church, that is, in the beginning elected that there would be such a class. The church was to be called to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, and was to suffer and die with him. That was part of God’s plan, just as that Jesus was to go through all trials that God planned for him.

The difference between Jesus and the church is that Jesus was perfect, holy, innocent, undefiled and separate from sinners. That is why his death could be the required ransom. In this present Gospel Age, Jesus’ merit is applied, or imputed, for those who come to God through Christ. The original sin may be removed only by faith in the blood of Christ.

Christ’s merit is imputed to those who not only come to God with faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but who have also come to the point of willingly sacrificing themselves. According to the advice of Paul in Romans 12:1, they say ‘I present my body a living sacrifice. Here, O Lord, I consecrate myself to you.’ Then our Lord, as an advocate and also a future mediator for the world, imputes to such a person from his merit that which is necessary So that his sacrifice may be acceptable. This grace and privilege is given by God in the Gospel Age because we need it—because ‘there is none righteous, no, not one’. { *Romans 3:10*}

Then God in righteousness can accept such a sacrifice. Its acceptance is manifested by the giving of the holy Spirit in spirit begettal. Everyone whose offering is So accepted becomes a new creature, and a prospective member of the body of Christ. How do we know about this? According to God’s plan of salvation, God’s purpose is to satisfy all the claims of justice by the end of the gospel age.

The death of Jesus satisfied God’s justice in respect to the original sin, and the sins of the world which are the result of the original

sin. Man fell: (1) Physically—sicknesses shortened life, (2) Mentally—he has a lessened ability to distinguish good from evil, (3) Morally—the result of the above. However there are other sins of the world not resulting immediately from the original sin. These are sins against the holy Spirit, against light; sins which are wilful, intentional, voluntary. These are transgressions which have to be punished.

The sacrifices of the Day of Atonement were offerings for sins. God described the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. The sin offerings on this day were the bullock of sacrifice, the Lord's goat, and the scapegoat which was let free.

According to the Jewish Law, the Day of Atonement lasted twenty four hours. In the antitype the Day of Atonement began with our Lord Jesus and his sacrifice—the sacrifice of the bullock. Next during this antitypical Day of Atonement the Lord's goat is being offered. When the last member of the church goes beyond the second veil, the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement will cease. But the Day of Atonement itself will not end. It will last till the end of the Millennium.

This explains to us why the blessings promised to Abraham have not yet been applied to mankind, although the ransom, the corresponding price for Adam and humanity in him, has been provided.

The blood of the bullock and the blood of the Lord's goat represent the merit of the sacrifice. This blood was brought into the most holy by the high priest for the purpose of atonement. The bullock's blood—our Lord's merit—was to atone for the sins of the tribe of Levi, including the priests who were called the body or household of the high priest (the household of faith).

Next the blood of the Lord's goat was brought in and offered for the whole nation. The fact that the blood of the bullock as well as the blood of the Lord's goat was brought in by the high priest proves that we ourselves (as members of the church) have no part in this matter—we have part in it only as members of Christ's body.

The blood of the bullock took away the sins of the household of faith. The blood of the Lord's goat took away the sins of those who were outside of the tabernacle. The sins for which the atonement was made in the most holy were inherited through Adam's

transgression. The merits of Christ's sacrifice in the offering of his body are applied for all those sins.

The scapegoat, freed in the wilderness, represents the great company. There are sins, which we mentioned before, that are not a result of the original sin. Every sin committed intentionally has to be punished. Wilful sins that we commit will be properly punished. When people do not act according to their abilities, do not do what they are capable of, these are sins which are not the effect of inheriting Adam's sin.

Although this principle is not known by many, it applies to all people. Everyone is responsible in proportion to his knowledge, and to what one can do, as our Lord illustrates the following parable. Luke 12:47-48:

'And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.'

These conscious sins of the nation of Israel were put on the head of the scapegoat by the priest. The world will account for these sins during the great time of trouble, just as the Jews did at the end of the Jewish Age. Jesus said to them: 'Upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias'. { *Matthew 23:35* }

These sins were not directly inherited as a result of Adam's sin, and part of the Jewish leaders had adequate knowledge. The Lord God in his wisdom and goodness resolved to remit even these sins by putting them on the head of the scapegoat—the great company.

Though today the world has great knowledge and awareness, it has not turned away from the mistakes being constantly made for almost two thousand years, as innocent blood was being shed and sins against understanding were committed. The whole world will account for those intentional sins in the great trouble, and the great company will make their robes white and expiate the sins confessed over the scapegoat. When the church is completed and the great company make their robes white and expiate the sins put on the scapegoat, the great company will pass away in the great trouble. God's justice will have no claims against the world.



God's justice will then hand over mankind to the Messiah, Christ head and body, the blessings will begin to be poured on all humanity, and the New Covenant will be implemented. God's People should pray that those precious jewels, the church, are completed and taken from the earth so that those blessings can come. When the church is completed, the New Covenant will be sealed. However some time will pass before the entire great company is raised and Abraham's blessings will start to flow to mankind.

The opposite of the body of Christ is the body of sin. Romans 6:6: 'Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' Saint Paul uses here a figure of speech, just as when it is said 'the man of sin.' It does not mean an individual but an institution which is in opposition to God.

So also in this expression. The Apostle Paul is speaking about the body of sin, which is in opposition to the body of righteousness. The body of sin is composed collectively of all the sins existing in the world. The body of sin is all evil that dominates mankind, all that comes from Satan and those under the curse. The process of destroying the body of sin will last the whole thousand years, and this body will be completely destroyed.

However our most important task now is self improvement. But how? We have to fight to overcome our weaknesses and eliminate the works of sin and unrighteousness which exist in our mortal bodies. The true church of Christ is the only body of righteousness. The saints battle the world, the flesh and the adversary, and this battle is within themselves. However successful a person is in this fight, to this degree he will be able to strengthen others who need his help. However someone is trying to cultivate the fruits of the spirit—goodness, patience, long-suffering and brotherly love—in oneself, to that extent he will be able to help others in leaving their evil state.

The manna from December 6 speaks about this preparation for our future work. " He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls'. { *Proverbs 25:28*}

'The fight with self is the greatest battle, and we have the Lord's word for it that he that 'ruleth his spirit [his own mind, will] is better than he that taketh a city,' because he has to that extent learned to exercise the combativeness of a true character in the right direction, in self-control.

‘It is after we have had considerable experience in battling with sin and selfishness in ourselves, in casting the beam out of our own eyes, in subduing anger, malice, hatred and strife in our own hearts and flesh—it is then, and by means of this severe battle and experience, that we shall be prepared to assist the brethren, and to assist our neighbors in their difficulties—to help them to overcome their besetments and weaknesses.’

This is the preparation for the future work: ‘Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?’ { *1 Corinthians 6:2*} Therefore, in the present time the saints are only members of the body of righteousness, but by and by they will sit with Jesus in the kingdom to completely destroy the whole body of sin.

I wish you all brethren this participation in the kingdom with Jesus, as I wish it for myself. Amen.

### **The Seventh Trumpet-Brother Nicolae Zoicas, Romania**

Dear Brethren, I have the blessing of transmitting greetings of peace from the class of Baia Mare, Romania, a class composed of about 60 persons, a part of which are consecrated.

My discourse will be about a subject which is part of what Bible Students term ‘Present Truth.’ It is titled ‘The Seventh Trumpet.’ I will try to develop and decipher the coded message, noting proofs that this trumpet is sounding now, at this convention. It began to sound more than 100 years ago and will continue to sound a long time. The Psalmist says: ‘Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound’. { *Psalms 89:15*}

Let us open to the book of Revelation, to 8:2. We read: ‘And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.’ Dear friends, when reading the book of Revelation many Christians, myself included, have

felt afraid and have trembled at the terrible descriptions which the book contains. We find all kinds of frightening plagues and scourges such as fire, hail, blood, the dead, thunder, beasts, dragons, etc.

Many teachers of Christianity teach that the end of the world will be manifested by so called ‘apocalyptic calamities.’ But will it be that way? ‘Apocalupsis’ in Greek means discovery, revelation, and

it is with this word that this book begins: 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ'. { *Revelation 1:1* }

Thanks to our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus, today, little by little, we may delve into

the mysteries of this book. Slowly the fear which at first overcomes us disappears in proportion as we understand that the Lord used metaphors, parables, and allegories; figures of speech, that through these certain events may be described, not with normal words but with words that have double meanings.

For example, when it says 'fire' it is not speaking about the kind of fire by which you can warm yourself. This fire does something which resembles the effect of natural fire, that is, it destroys the same way as the fire with which we warm ourselves.

When it says 'lightning' it is not speaking about a natural light which enlightens the eyes but a light of knowledge which enlightens the mind So that we can understand or see with the eyes of the mind.

When it says 'thunder' it is not speaking about a deafening noise. When it says 'beast' or 'dragon' these represent empires, the characters of which are crude, resembling that of beasts. When it says 'water became blood' it means that the truth of God, 'water,' for some is as nauseating as blood.

The 'locusts' from Revelation 9 are not real locusts, nor do the horses, horsemen, sun nor moon represent what is normally understood but instead are symbols.

For example: the sun represents the gospel of Christ, and the moon the law of Moses. So also the 7 trumpets. They are not musical instruments but, as the trumpet in Leviticus 25 announced the freeing of the slaves and the annulment of debts, So also one of the seven trumpets tells of the deliverance of the slaves, the resurrection of the dead, and the repossession of the rights of man.

These 7 trumpets are 7 historical periods which have as a beginning the appearance of Christian teachings, spread by the Lord and his disciples. These 7 periods are characterized by: the fall of paganism, the triumph of Christianity over civilization at that time, the moral decline of medieval Christianity, the Reformation, the return of the Lord Jesus, the great fall of the

empires, the resurrection of the Church, the binding of Satan, and the resurrection of the rest of the dead.

These 7 historical periods cover the whole period of the Middle Ages, pass through the time of 'Rebirth,' traverse the modern epoch, weave into contemporary history, the history of our day, and passing close to our generation they describe events which at the present have not yet happened but which we wait to see happen in the future. Therefore, these 7 trumpets constitute the prophetic description of the Lord Jesus of 7 periods which last approximately 3000 years, the last period being the most important.

This is the seventh and last period, called the 'Trump of God,' or period of God, because in this last period God, through Christ, will establish his Kingdom on earth. Let us hear the words of the Lord in connection with this seventh period of time. The description of these 7 periods starts in 8:2 and end in 11:15-18.

Chapter 11 especially deals with the 2 witnesses, the Old and New Testaments, in the time of the 42 month reign of Papacy, a time which makes up a total of 1260 prophetic days or years, a period of symbolic death or discredit of the Bible until the Reformation when these 2 witnesses 'were resurrected.'

The narration briefly touches on the events of the French Revolution of the eighteenth century, calling it 'an earthquake' (verse 13), and stops at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth with the words of verse 15, which we read:

'The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.'

Verse 18 describes World War One by the words 'the nations were angry.' The 'anger' of the nations erupted exactly at the end of their mandate of power, named by the Lord in Luke 21:24 'the Times of the Gentiles.' This time is also shown in the Old Testament by Moses in Leviticus 26, by Daniel in the interpretation of the 4 beasts, and in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue of a man destroyed by a stone, and the prophet Ezekiel shows that this time of 2520 years starts with the deposing of the last king of Israel in 606 B.C. and ends in 1914. { *Ezekiel 21:26*}

In our time we no longer have to fear the scourges described in the first 6 trumpets since these have already passed into history. Bible chronology indicates the fact that from 1874 we have entered into the sounding of the seventh trumpet. We are in the seventh period of time since our Lord's second advent. This period synchronizes perfectly with the seventh thousand years from the creation of Adam, therefore, the seventh trumpet or period will be 1,000 years as shown in 2 Peter 3:8.

This seventh period begins with the return of the rightful King, the Lord Jesus, and with his government which began destroying the kingdoms in 1914. But let us not forget that the kingdom given to the Lord and the Church, shown in Luke 12:32, differs from the kingdom given to mankind in Matthew 25:34. The kingdom given to the Lord is heavenly and invisible to man and will have no end. The reign of Christ for 1000 years over mankind is only the beginning.

At the end of his reign on earth he will separate the sheep from the goats and the sheep will say: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' We need not expect that people will see the Lord and his church but they will understand that he is reigning by the applied justice, just as no one ever saw Satan or his angels but understands that he reigns through the injustice that governs.

Now we see two rulers in this period while we are passing from one epoch to another, Satan, described in Luke 11:21 as a strong man and well armed, and the Lord Jesus shown in Daniel 12:1 as the archangel Michael, the stronger one who disarms and destroys the house of the former. { *Habakkuk 3:13* }

By faith we see the work of righteousness in the stone of Daniel 2:44, which smites the image. The world does not yet see because the Lord prophesied in Luke 17 that at the beginning of his reign the world would be as in the time of Noah.

His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and according to the prophecies the first act of his government on the spiritual plane is the resurrection of the Church in 1878. But on the human plane there was a visible event also in 1878. The work in connection with the beginning of restitution rights which Adam had, through the giving back of Palestine to the Jews, is the beginning of the 'putting forth of leaves' of the fig tree, a fact marked by the Berlin Congress in the spring of 1878. 1878 also marks the time for the 'widow' in Lamentations 1:1-2, who represents the capital of

Israel, Jerusalem, when finally the unjust judge (the reign of the gentiles) thought to do justice.

True justice was not done until after 70 years, in 1948, because the Lord Jesus prophesied that this could not be done until after 1914, after the expiration of the reign of the gentiles over Palestine and over the rest of the world. { *Luke 21:24* }

The year 1874 marks the end of Israel's jubilees, an event which took place every 50 years. At the end of each jubilee cycle the slaves were freed and the land and all other property was restored to its rightful owner. These jubilees end in 1874 even though Israel was only able to keep 19 of them.

This same year is shown by the prophet Daniel (12:12) where it says that blessed are those faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus who are alive on earth beginning in 1874, at the end of the 1335 years. The beginning of this period is marked in history by the overthrow of the barbarians of Rome in 539, the year which attests the beginning of the Papal reign.

The Lord's saints are blessed since 1874, for they 'see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion'. { *Isaiah 52:7,8* } The returned Lord reigns first in Zion, where he is known and loved, the year 1878 being the year of blessing for those dead in the Lord { *Revelation 14:13* } . Israel and all the nations (all the trees, Luke 21:29) are doing better since 1874 because since this date we observe not only the return of favor to Israel but also the deliverance of many peoples from the oppression of colonization.

We see this in harmony with the prophecy in Luke 21:39???. It is a period of national awakening, and not only this but an awakening which was proclaimed during the French Revolution under the banner 'the rights of man.'

As in Israel's jubilee year the people began to be freed, So the colonies began to be freed and the 'rights of man' began to gain ground. Our time is more favorable than that of the past although it is far from fulfilling the human ideal shown in Romans 8:19.

Someone has said: 'In order to understand the times in which we live we must first understand the past.' Since 1914 the Lord has been reigning also in the midst of the enemies of righteousness, which are also his enemies. He, with the rod of iron of his government, is crushing the 'house' of the 'strong man,' the kingdoms of this world, as if they were vessels of clay. { *Psalms*

110} Together with 1914, as in Egypt, the plagues began and these plagues will end with the death of the first-born of Pharaoh, who is the 'son of perdition'. { 2 *Thessalonians* 2:3}

This period is marked by great social unrest in which, according to the prophecy in Daniel 2:35, 'Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff... the wind (anarchy) carried them away, that no place was found for them; and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.'

If at the beginning of Christ's reign things in

the world do not go well, but instead get worse,

we need not be surprised, but should rejoice because these troubles are because the stone, the kingdom, the royal power of the Lord Jesus, is interfering in the problems of the world's governments and is entangling the plans of the nations. 'Thy wrath is come' says the scripture, but they do not see it.

The Lord must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet. { 1 *Corinthians* 15:25,26} We see, therefore, from the quoted text, that enemies will oppose his government. We need not understand that these enemies are only some bad people, but we must recognize the greatest enemy, Satan, who by the present evil systems opposes righteousness and resists the righteous one.

St. Peter encourages us with the words: 'Seeing then that all these things [the reign of evil] shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness'. { 2 *Peter* 3:11} In two of his epistles St. Paul writes that in the seventh period, that is in the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the resurrection of the dead will start, beginning with the righteous.

Let us read this prophecy from 1 *Corinthians* 15:51-52. 'Behold I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.' Here it is not speaking about the resurrection of the world, but only of the church, because at the resurrection only she will no longer be threatened by the second death { *Revelation* 20:6} .

In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 we read: 'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.'

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and So shall we ever be with the Lord.'

By the expression, 'we which are alive and remain,' it is understood that those saints which will be in the flesh after 1878 will be blessed according to the assurance given by the Lord in Revelation 14:13, 'from henceforth,' that is, since that date, because, though they will die they will not sleep in the grave but the moment of death will be the moment of change from human beings to spiritual beings. This change will be instantaneous or, using the words of the Apostle, 'in the twinkling of an eye.'

The resurrection of the world will happen a little after the binding of Satan, but they will be resurrected with human bodies since they were not called to heaven. Many (but not all) are called to heaven and few are chosen. There will not be a few on earth, but as it is written in Revelation 20:8, they shall be 'as the sand of the sea.'

In Acts of the Apostles 3:21, St. Peter connects the Lord's second presence to 'the times of restitution of all things.' The text says: 'Whom the heavens must receive until' —accent on 'until.' Therefore, this is saying 'until the beginning of his kingdom,' since the expression, 'the times of restitution of all things' is the time of the kingdom, for it restores man to the paradise which he lost.

And as I have said, on the human plane the Jews have priority. By God's permission they return to their land and bring forth leaves as the fig tree. Of course, this fig tree is not yet producing the fruit required of God. But however we look at the situation we cannot place their return in Palestine as something haphazard or a matter of chance. { *Zechariah 4:10*}

Reading Acts 3:21 and having prophetic proofs that the Lord is present, we see his presence is connected to the 'times of restitution.' We cannot say, without being in error, that the Lord is present but the 'times of restitution' have not yet begun because we contradict St. Peter.



In closing, please allow me to read 4 quotes from the writings of a Bible scholar who passed beyond this life in 1916. His name was Charles T. Russell. In his book *The New Creation*, which is the sixth volume of his writings, on page 663 we read:

‘This work begins first with the house of God, the Church, the New Creation; and, as already pointed out (Volume 2, Chapter 7), 1878 A.D. marked the date at which the ‘dead in Christ’ should rise ‘first.’ It is in full harmony with the Scriptures, therefore, that we believe that the apostles and the faithful saints of the entire age, down to our own day, are already glorified, already possessed of the glorious spiritual bodies promised them, but, because ‘changed’ and made like the Master himself, and hence, as spirit beings, obscured from human sight, beyond the veil. It is in full accord with this Scripturally built hope that we teach that each member of the New Creation still in the flesh will not need now to ‘sleep,’ and to wait for the time and establishment of the Kingdom, because the King and Kingdom already are here, the life giving work of the new dispensation has already commenced.’

In volume 4, written by the same author, on page 622 we read:

‘In describing the events under the Seventh Trumpet, this order is observed: (1) the power is taken by the Lord as King of the Earth, and his reign begun; (2) as a consequence the great judgment-trouble comes upon the world. We are told, prophetically, that the reign begins before the time of trouble, and before the resurrection of the saints and prophets; but that it will continue long after these (for a thousand years), until it shall have ‘judged’ all mankind, rewarding those who reverence the Lord, and destroying those whose influence is corrupting.’

In Volume 1, page 305, we read:

‘When, in the end of the Millennial Age, (at the end of the seventh trumpet) Christ delivers up the dominion of earth to the Father, he does So by delivering it to mankind as the Father’s representatives, who were designed from the first to have this honor. { *1 Corinthians 15:24, Matthew 25:34* } Thus the Kingdom of God lasts forever. And So we read in our Lord’s words: ‘Then shall the King say to them on his right hand (those who, during the Millennial reign, will have attained the position of favor by harmony and obedience), ‘Come, blessed of my Father... inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of

the world.’ This kingdom and honor prepared for man should not be confounded with that still higher kingdom and honor prepared for the Christ.’

In a brochure written by this same author, entitled, *What say the Scriptures about Hell?*, on page 70 (R2607), ‘And the kingdom prepared for them in the divine plan, from the foundation of the world, is not the kingdom prepared for the Gospel church. The church will receive her kingdom at the beginning of the Millennium.’

In conclusion, we who are called to work in the Lord’s vineyard need to arm ourselves with courage inspired by the holy Scriptures. For even if we were not hired until this eleventh hour, { *Matthew 20:1-16* } it is possible that we will receive the prize as those who were hired first.

Let us not look for that kingdom which will be given to the ‘sheep’ after they are separated from the ‘goats’ (the bands of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:7-10), but we should look for the kingdom given to the Lord and his church.

If we could personally ask the apostles and others resurrected since 1878 if the kingdom of God has begun for them, what would they say? I believe that they would answer us through the Lord Jesus’ words addressed to the church in the period of Laodicea, quoted in Revelation 3:21: ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.’

May the Lord bless you!

## **How Does the World Tempt Us? -Brother Jerome Gruhn, France**

### ***Symposium, Part One***

Dearly beloved in the Lord! ‘We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places’ { *Ephesians 6:12* }

These words establish and confirm to us that, as new creatures, we have enemies. The Scriptures give us the means by which we can battle flesh and blood, the human nature of fallen sinful man, as well as the rulers and powers of darkness, Satan and the fallen angels, who are extremely powerful.

From the moment that we demonstrate firm resistance to a temptation, resolutely defending the Lord and his cause, we become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The new creature possesses a new heart, a new will, a new ideal of love for God; God's truth, his plan and his will occupy first place.

Everything connected to this present evil world is more or less contrary to the desires of the Christian and his ideal of justice. The laws of this world favor selfishness. Human nature unceasingly presents us with possibilities; Satan considers fallen man as a tool and takes advantage of him in order to accomplish his own agenda.

We must guard our hearts from selfish principles and aspire towards the absolute law of the Golden Rule, which is love. We must act wisely, avoiding everything which produces irritation and discontent. Satan is not only the great adversary of God but also of all mankind. This is not a fairy tale, but a definite reality.

A careful examination of the record of creation in Genesis 1:26,27 reveals to us that God created Adam perfect, capable of good works and of resisting evil. But when he underwent the test of obedience, Adam transgressed the Divine Law and fell into sin and came under condemnation to death; and as a natural course, the death penalty was extended to all mankind.

The forces of evil which overwhelm mankind are pride, selfishness, the love of money, the desire to dominate, jealousy, hatred. These defects are the consequences of the fall, in which all find themselves since the transgression; they are evidence of sin.

This sentence of death has affected the race physically, morally and intellectually. All sin to which one has yielded, and every evil inclination entertained and cultivated, hardens the heart and makes a return to purity and virtue more difficult.

Let us be aware of the problem, because sin waits for an opportune time to seize someone entertaining evil sentiments in his heart and will cause him to commit an act which will lead to his downfall. The example of Cain, who lashed out against his brother Abel and killed him, is a perfect illustration.

Do we have to wait long before yielding to temptation? The innocent blood which fell to

the ground cried toward heaven, the seat of the supreme judge, until it was avenged. If a man hates his brother he is on a bad course which will lead to his ruin, because hatred will blind him.

After his baptism, Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. While in the wilderness, he fasted and was consumed by prayer and communion with the Father, but he wasn't alone; someone was lying in wait for him, the tempter, with the intention to subtly entice him to prove that he was the Son of God. { *Matthew 4:1-11* }

Adam was tempted in his role as lord of creation. However, the knowledge of good and evil was not included in his sovereignty. Jesus Christ overcame Satan by the appropriate use of the Word of God.

In Eden three lusts were apparent:

"(1) The lust of the flesh (the fruit was good to eat)"

"( 2) Pleasing to look at (that of the eyes)"

"( 3) Pride (to become wise)."

The three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness are parallel to the account of the temptation in Eden. We read in Hebrews 4:15, 'He was in all points tempted like as we are.' All this occurred in his human life. He was subjected to all of our battles against sin and the powers of darkness, and '... he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him'. { *Hebrews 5:9* }

Therefore our strength is only in the confidence of God, and in obedience to his word. Jesus dismantled the trap of the adversary. He suppressed all ambition, all desire of fleshly grandeur; he chose a path of abasement, of sacrifice, of the cross. He said to the Adversary, '... Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve'. { *Matthew 4:10* }

'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world' exhorts the Apostle John in 1 John 2:15-17. The world is an evil and corrupting fleshly spirit, which when combined with many different things causes those things to have a deadly influence, by binding them to its service. This spirit has reigned among men since the fall. The Apostle John was more specific, reducing the things which are in the world to three main forces, three passions

or lusts which render reprehensible all things with which they come in contact.

(1) The lust of the flesh is every action, every desire, every thought related to the power of the senses. { *Galatians 5:17* } Life after the spirit is in opposition with life after the flesh with its conflicts and deceptions. 'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'

(2) The lust of the eye arouses the lust of the flesh by the means of sight, and So there is a constant action and reaction between the forces of evil within and without. Even if it does not result in sin, the lust of the eye stands guilty in God's judgment. { *Matthew 5:8* }

(3) 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.' The desire for another's possessions is related to the love of money. This world's goods excite man's desires and provide the means, when they are in his possession, to become vain. They serve as a pedestal for his fortune and his talents. This is the third point, which the Apostle Paul labels 'the pride of life'. { *2 Timothy 3:1-3* } The man who possesses goods in abundance has a proud confidence.

The inventive spirit in man proposes remedies, but they are ineffectual, when compared to the effective remedies that God gives us. Our attitude toward the brethren demonstrates whether we are in the darkness which is passing away, or in the true shining light. The Christian who lives in love walks with a sure step, because love rids his heart from everything which could stumble him. He lives and breathes in the light.

To overcome the world signifies that in conforming ourselves to the terms of our consecration we rise up against the spirit of selfishness, which surrounds us on all sides, and continue to offer our lives humbly to God's service, to the Truth and the brethren. Let us leave to the world its selfish pleasures, desires and ambitions; those who are looking to overcome the world must flee from them. To be conformed to the spirit of the world is very easy, because one will not encounter any opposition.

The Method of Proving False Prophets in Israel { *Deuteronomy 13:3* }

The Israelites had agreed to become the people of God, to be separate from the heathen nations, to form a holy nation. It was appropriate then that God should test them. This trial was carried out through false doctors of the law and through false prophets, by permitting their false doctrines to spread with the intention of

leading the people astray and encouraging them to worship other gods.

Also, they provided demonstrations to prove that they had miraculous power. These signs and wonders were set up by Satan.

According to the word of God, everything that happened to fleshly Israel was for our instruction, as the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11: 'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition...' This text has an important application for spiritual Israel. God desires that only those who obey him and trust in him, even when they don't understand him, should be members of the elect. { *2 Thessalonians 2:10-12* }

God uses the wrath of Satan to accomplish his plans. The power to mislead, mentioned in the verses just cited, is working to lead astray all those whose faith is not solidly established upon the Rock, which is Christ, and all those who have not put on the whole armour of God, which is present truth. { *1 Timothy 4:1-2* }

Every error that is entertained obscures a truth and prevents it from being understood. Today we have reached the time when each one of us needs every facet of the truth. According to the admonitions of the Scriptures, we should trust in everything which has been proven, and many will be more or less contaminated by the errors and worldliness prevalent in our time. Only the elect will be protected. { *Psalms 91, 2Pe 2:9* }

It often happens that the humble and repentant ones are not highly regarded, and on the other hand, the proud are happy. { *Malachi 3:15* } 'And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.' They contentedly rejoice in temporal advantages.

The only thing necessary to be pleasing to God is to have a humble, loving and obedient heart as well as a submissive will; all of this cannot be developed and proven except by faith in God and in Jesus Christ. Consequently let us strive to obtain the assurance that these qualities give us and which will help us to be qualified for the glory which shall soon be revealed.

Let us not be mistaken by the devices which Satan frequently uses. He uses as many deceptions as possible to present us with false reasonings, which misrepresent the truth. They will creep up on a brother many times. It will also affect those who stumble or let themselves fall into error in a certain way, as agents to spread the

infection of false doctrine. The important thing for each child of God is to take care that there is no occasion of stumbling in him. { *1 John 2:10*} But let no one have any false illusions, because everyone will be put to the test.

It is with good reason that the prophet speaking of this danger characterizes it as a 'pestilence'. { *Psalms 91:6*} An epidemic does not spread unless people are in a condition of health that makes them vulnerable to a disease. It is much the same with spiritual sickness. It is not because they have insufficient light to understand the teachings of Christ that they become victims, but for a totally different reason, the condition of the heart which Solomon speaks of in Proverbs 4:23.

If our heart is haughty, vain, unsubmitive, presumptuous or even arrogant, the counsel of Solomon, 'keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life' is necessary more than ever So as not to be a victim of the epidemic. 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully'. { *Psalms 24:3-4*}

Sometimes our minds are limited where we are not able to discern that which has been offered or promised to us. God honors the human reason, this faculty with which he has endued his human creation, according to his likeness. Those who do not want to recognize this limitation, and the dependency of human reasoning upon divine reasoning, go from one extreme to another.

The error of the adversary presents itself on many fronts, as well as in exaggerated feelings due to one's personality, pride and unbelief. This also leads to a loss of reverence for God and for his precepts. Those who possess the Spirit of the Lord subdue these protests which oppose their reason. { *James 3:15-17*} If reason acts alone, it becomes a rule of conduct, along with certain principles which seem reasonable, and these become the criteria for judging all things. This leads to the loss of the spiritual things which the scriptures contain, and which are not able to be understood by those who do not possess the spirit of God.

In order to have a clear idea of this subject, here are a few examples which illustrate how the world tempts us. Angels urged Lot and his family to leave Sodom. 'And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.' Lot's wife, after starting

to flee, 'looked back,' coveting those things that she was leaving. {  
*Genesis 19:17,26*}

It could also happen to us as we flee the world, hastening toward the mountain of the Kingdom. We could have more attachment for the things we are leaving behind us than for those ahead of us. Only those who love the things of the Kingdom will reach the end of the course.

Everyone who has repented of sin in his life and starts and continues the work of reforming themselves to the best of his ability will develop a character from which they will derive the necessary benefits.

All of us present at this International Convention, whatever our nationality, are all subjected to the temptation of the world. None of us is exempt from being tested, which strengthens our faith. The thinking differs from country to country, and various factors come into play. Fascination plays a role. Let us always be careful and be good examples wherever we are. We should act wisely, always avoiding that which by nature could produce irritation and discontent.

Our habits and attitudes can engender a negative influence in others, whether it be in the position we assume when praying to praise God or the temptations of fashion. A correct balance should govern in all our affairs. To rid ourselves of all earthly ambitions requires that we make constant efforts in combating the old nature.

Victory requires character development, and a firm belief in the Lord. A striking example is that of Moses, who rid himself of all earthly ambitions, of glory and honor, sacrificing all for his brethren.

Our duty is not only to study the Lord's will, but also to consider well the circumstances and conditions in which we live, seeking to adopt a moderate manner of life which would be above all approved of the Lord, and secondly, one which causes the least amount of problems, inconveniences or displeasure to others. Then we can rest in confidence in the wise and providential overruling of the Lord.

'Abstain from all appearance of evil' the Apostle Paul exhorts in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, and 'hold fast that which is good.' This means to keep away from everything that is evil, from all forms of evil. The exhortation to us is to resist everything that is evil, whether the form is good or bad, and as much as possible, avoid those things



which we believe to be good, but which might be misunderstood in the sight of others.

The spirit of a sound mind prompts us to avoid everything which may even hint at having an evil appearance in order that our influence for the Lord and the truth might be that much greater. We have to examine everything and hold fast that which is good, to test everything and keep only that which passes the test of the Word of God and is in harmony with the holy Spirit. We should not hold to anything except that which stands these complete and reasonable tests and provings.

'But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed'. { *James 1:14* } In the terms used in the original text, expressions such as the following appear:

"(1) put to the test,"

"( 2) to sound the depths,"

"( 3) to be exposed to tests,"

"( 4) to be saddened by the test,"

"( 5) to persevere in spite of the test."

The temptations of Satan are all sorts of traps and snares to cause us to fall into evil and evil actions. Temptation begets a desire for that which is forbidden. This desire is tailored to each individual. It attracts and entices the will.

If the will resists, all is well. But if it yields, if it sides with the desire, it conceives a decision which quickly becomes an action. Having been conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin rears the inevitable consequence, death.

In this process, vigilance and God's help are crucial. It is a moment when the will, called to action by the desire, is getting ready to act. A new ideal of life grafted into a pure heart, begotten of the spirit through the word of God, finds itself in opposition to the selfish spirit of the world.

If our spirit is attuned to the spirit of God, our character will be blameless. On the contrary, if there are contacts with the world, there is a danger of being full of selfishness. Let us remember the

drop of water in the ink, and the effect of the drop of ink in the water.

It is clear that our surroundings influence the manner in which we will develop. If its influence plays an important role in our life, the temptations which always proceed from the same source, from the same instigator, the adversary, will become increasingly refined, increasingly subtle and will have an increasingly destructive effect.

‘Forget thy father’s house’ we are advised in Psalms 45:10. In spite of family attachments and entreaties to delay Rebecca’s departure, she directed her affections toward the stranger to whom she was engaged and decided to leave immediately. She could hardly wait to be with him. Her case well illustrates our test. We must fight the love for a father, mother, brother, sister; for a house or property; for one’s own ease and comforts, when this love rivals our love for Christ.

All those who think as Rebecca did will say with the Apostle Peter, ‘Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls’. { *1 Peter 1:8-9*}

Dear brethren, may the Lord help us to be ever vigilant against the temptations of the adversary, in order to always be in harmony with the Divine Word.

## **How the World Tempts Us-Brother Liviu Chiorean, Romania**

### ***Symposium, Part Two***

Dear brothers and sisters, I feel honored to partake of this spiritual feast, where our beloved Heavenly Father allows us to meet together now when the time clock indicates that we are living in the end of the harvest work, and are seeing that the Father permits some others to enter this wonderful work.

We rejoice, dear brothers and sisters, in the presence of our beloved heavenly bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, as chief reaper, who does the marking with the seal, that is, with the holy Spirit, for that is the seal, as we read: ‘For him hath God, the Father, sealed’ with the holy Spirit. { *John 6:27*}

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, I count it a great spiritual blessing to partake in this International Convention where we were looking forward to meeting all together. May the Father of our Lord Jesus, our Father, be praised and glorified.

As the sun, inconceivably huge, can be seen in the little drop of dew, and the huge oak tree is hidden in the little acorn, and as in each unseen cell there is a part of our life, So also with each word or letter of the Bible—God’s book—the holy and life giving Truth is contained for all those who study it and apply it in their daily life.

In 2 Timothy 3:16,17, the Apostle Paul says: ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.’

We must not be surprised that God allows temptations to assail us, because if we had no temptations, it would not be possible for us to have victories over sin and the adversary. All these are because we are in the school of Christ and we must not be spared temptations, but be prepared to face them in all circumstances.

The nation of Israel was called to be separate from all the nations of the world. { *Ezra 10:11* } In order to make out of them a typical kingdom, they had to separate from everything that God disliked, and it cost them much, because of the imperfection of their flesh which desired to be in line with the world at that time.

So it is with us. We are called to be separated from everything in the world and try to have aspirations according to the new, wonderful and holy call of God. ‘Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust’. { *2 Peter 1:4* }

The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 2:1,2: ‘And you were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world....’ We must not forget that the Bible is the book of God’s mysteries and that it reveals its mysteries only to those born again through faith in the Lord Jesus and through the spirit of the Truth which comes from God.

Natural people cannot grasp the mysteries of the everlasting truth, for they must be spiritually discerned. { *2 Corinthians 2:14* } In Romans 1:21 the Apostle says: ‘When they knew God, they

glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.' But with us it is different. We have been called out of darkness into light, an enlightenment of the word of God which must progress continually until the perfect day in our lives. { *Proverbs 4:18* }

With all these advantages we must not forget that while still in this body we are double beings. The old man wants full control of the new one. That is why the Apostle James warns us, saying:

'Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwells in us lusteth to envy?' { *James 4:5* }

Here it is shown that the old man, or the old will, would like all of our energy used for our own purpose, to satisfy our own appetites and not give to the new man any possibility to develop. These appetites are stirred by the surrounding world which tempts him in different ways. Many try to escape the temptations of the world by isolating themselves, and appealing to different methods through which they think they could better control their senses.

But it is well to observe that we must make a difference between spiritual or inner isolation and physical isolation. Spiritual isolation is superior to physical isolation in a hidden or far away place.

An author tells us in his reports about those who in the early parts of this Gospel Age withdrew to solitary places, caves, forests and monasteries, with a purpose to perfect their inner state. But, alas! Often times in these places of withdrawal the world followed them in the form of evil desires and vain imaginations.

It is said about a young Christian, Jeronimus, that in the fervency of his young godliness he thought he could flee the temptations of the cities, full of licentiousness, and could improve his inner condition, if he lived in the desert of Syria.

In the middle of the enormous plain, dried by the heat of the sun, he sat alone in the company of wild beasts. His decisions were strong, his sufferings were great; he shed many tears of repentance. But in the middle of this loneliness he tells with tears of the vain imaginations which tempted him and allured him to the luxuries and pleasures of Rome, and which increased the torments of his soul, which he thought he had gotten rid of.

Therefore it is not enough to be isolated physically. The true inner separation must be a separation in the spirit, of everything which

could separate our heart from God, and this could be done in two things—our desires and our thoughts.

Our desires must have the proper object, and in a lot of cases these will be made manifest through our feelings. Therefore we are to be very attentive to our feelings, not to let our eyes look to anything which is forbidden. Our ears should be very attentive to what they hear.

In 2 Corinthians 6:17 the Apostle Paul says ‘Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.’ Let us separate ourselves, dear brothers and sisters, from all those who separated themselves from God. But let us unite ourselves with those who have the truth, in order to be able to unite ourselves with the God of truth, in order not to be tempted of this world with its empty forms which cannot satisfy.

There is yet another place of isolation where we can find refuge whenever we feel this world tempt us. Our Lord said: ‘When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to the Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.’

The world with its temptations does not respect age, and we can say that not only the young people are in danger of temptations. A good observer will see that things are not at all that way, but the world inspires appetites at any age.

The Apostle Paul says: ‘Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright’. { *Hebrews 12:15,16* }

Yes, beloved brothers and sisters, we may lose our birthright in earthly things, if we give free rein to our appetites and desires of our senses, turning our eyes to the plain of Jordan like Lot, to the goods of this world. It is written of Lot that he walked with Abraham, but Abraham walked with God, and that Lot had sheep, cattle and tents, but Abraham had besides these gold and silver, therefore, precious things.

Today, more than ever, we are tempted to look to the things of this world, forgetting our duty and our consecration vows. I would like to insert here a quotation from the Manna:

‘Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord’. { *Romans 12:11* } ‘If we bury our one or many talents under a weight of worldly cares and encumbrances which might be avoided or set aside; if we bury them under worldly ambitions for either self or family—whether this be by wasting consecrated time upon science, philosophy, music or art, or upon business, politics or pleasures, or in pampering pride or appetite—then as unfaithful servants we will sooner or later go into outer dark ness,’ into this world with its forms.

I would like to close with what the Apostle Paul says: ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.’

And this is what I wish for me and for you, beloved brothers and sisters, in order to hear the Lord’s approving voice: ‘Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things’. { *Matthew 25:23* } Amen.

## **Psalm 23-Brother Russell Shallieu, USA**

### ***Audio-Visual***

Nearly all vespers, of one sort or another, incorporate Hymns. This evening’s service will be devoted to one particular hymn. A hymn that is perhaps one of the best known and loved, but, strange as it may first sound, rarely, if ever, sung.

For those of you who may already be trying to guess—it is not the song of ‘Moses and the Lamb,’ although we do hope we may one day be privileged to sing that hymn too. Nor is it the So. The hymn we’re speaking of is Psalms 23. And, in case any of you are still puzzled, we remind you that ‘Psalm’ means ‘Song of Praise.’

Think of it, we have a whole hymn book that we scarcely ever sing any songs from! In trying to capture the sentiments of this Psalm we hope that each of us will receive an added blessing.

Ps 23 is located approximately half-way through the Bible and is among the shortest in length—being only six verses long. But, from another standpoint, it may be considered as among the longest, since it expresses the life-time of the Christian.

What we will attempt to do this evening is twofold. First we’ll suggest a lesson that may be drawn from each verse. And, we

remind you that these are only suggested thoughts. And, by no means considered to be comprehensive.

Then, we'd like to capture in music, poem, or vision, the sentiment of each verse. To try to enter into David's feelings of devotion when he expressed these thoughts—to relate them to our selves.

The next time you think of this Psalm we would hope that in your heart you will be able to say more than just 'Oh, how lovely,' rather relate to its true sentiments—'How comforting, how encouraging—how blessed!' This we would suggest is like the difference between saying or believing that Jesus is the Saviour; and saying or believing that he is your Saviour!

It has been said, and I quote:

'Understanding the twenty-third psalm does not come that easily. Its imagery conceals as well as reveals, and not every commentator interprets it the same way. For some it is all about sheep and their shepherd, but others insist that only the first three verses talk about sheep. The last three, they feel describe a dinner guest with his host. Still others believe that there are three pictures in the psalm: A shepherd with his Sheep (verses 1-2), A Guide and a Traveler (verses 3-4) and A Host entertaining his Guest (verses 5-6). If scholars disagree, we might suppose that ordinary men would throw up their hands in defeat. They do not.'

The 23rd Psalm has a message for each one of us, scholar or not. For, as with many other scriptures, the greatest blessings are not always those that are of a doctrinal or prophetic nature but often of a practical nature.

And, one final consideration before we begin. It has been said: 'Since this is David's song, we know that his expression of trust is not the carefree unconcern of a child.' We'd like to keep this in mind as we ponder these verses. David's life was filled with both 'mountaintop' as well as 'valley' experiences. Not only was he the heroic slayer of Goliath, the devoted friend of Jonathan, a lover of music and an able King; but, he was also a haggard fugitive, an adulterer and a murderer.

He slew his enemies as any ancient monarch did, but when Saul became an unrelenting enemy, David took only Saul's shield when he could easily have taken his life. As a father, he had watched his baby die, and had wept when Absalom, an ungrateful son, was slain as he led a rebellion against him.

It is probable that the words of this psalm were penned in David's later years, after many, if not all, of these experiences. This is a psalm written by the greatest king Israel ever knew and he pictured his relationship with God as that of a sheep to his shepherd!

Pre-Recorded Song Follows

The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me the by the still waters.

He restoreth my soul.

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness

for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

I will fear no evil.

For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparedst a table for me in the presence of mine enemies.

Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

And, I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever, and ever.

'The LORD is my shepherd: I shall not want.' 'Jehovah is my shepherd. I shall not want.' If someone were to ask us—'Who is the 'Saviour?'' we would likely respond—'Jesus.' Likewise, if we were asked 'Who is your Shepherd?' Again, we probably would respond—'Jesus'!

Both of course are correct answers—but we find in the testimony of scripture that the Heavenly Father is also our Saviour and as expressed in this psalm, He is also our Shepherd—'The Great Shepherd.'



But what makes even more of an impression on us is that we, like David, may use this little, but important pronoun, to say: ‘The LORD is MY shepherd.’

‘Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight...’.  
{ *Hebrews 13:20-21* }

In consecrating ourselves to do the will of God, we have each used this pronoun and have made this declaration. But, having submitted ourselves to the Shepherd, have we been sheeplike? From the writings of Bro. Russell—‘The Sheep Characteristics.’

‘In designating his people ‘The sheep of my pasture’, { *Jeremiah 23:1* } the heavenly Father chose a very significant and fitting emblem of the kind of characters he is now seeking. The special characteristics of the sheep are meekness, docility, lack of self-confidence, and obedience to the shepherd in whom they fully trust.

‘The true sheep will listen intently for the faintest sound of the shepherd’s voice. It will respond quickly to his call; it will watch for his guidance. Let us manifest all these most desirable traits of character, and ever keep close to our heavenly Shepherd and Guide, dwelling under his loving care and watchful eye.’

Sheep require care, more so, than any other livestock. And So it is, that the Heavenly Father cares for us. ‘Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you’. { *1 Peter 5:7* } ‘For the Father himself loveth you...’. { *John 16:27* } When David was singing this, we might imagine how he was praising the LORD for all that he had done to enrich his life and supply him with what he needed, for life abundant.

Indeed, the LORD will see that we too, as New Creatures, are provided for, and will not lack disciplines, trials, instructions, guidance, encouragements, reproofs, and assistance necessary to our attaining to life everlasting. ‘... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him’. { *1 Corinthians 2:9* } ‘... no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.’. { *Psalms 84:11* }

‘Your Father Knoweth What Things

Ye Have Need Of" { *Matthew 6:8*}

"Our Father knows what things we need"

" Each step along the way,"

" His eye of love doth never sleep—"

" He watches night and day."

" He knows sometimes, like ripening grain,"

" We need the sunshine bright,"

" Again He sends the peace that comes"

" With shadows of the night."

" Sometimes our pride would fain unfurl"

"Ambition's flaunting sail, —"

"And then He knows we need to walk"

" Humiliation's vale."

" Sometimes He takes our eager hands"

" And folds them on our breast,"

" He gently lays our work aside, —"

" He knows we need to rest."

" Sometimes we need companionship,"

" Sometimes, 'the wilderness,' —"

" How sweet to feel He'll know and give"

" The state that most will bless!"

" Then let us leave it all with Him,"

" Assured that, come what may,"

" Our Father knows just what we need,"

" Upon our pilgrim-way."

‘He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.’ Sheep are very skittish, unless they are free from fear, pests, and hunger, they will not be easily led to rest. Consider how the Father has given us a peace ‘which passeth all understanding’ —‘And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus’. { *Philippians 4:7* }

And rest—‘There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God ... Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief’. { *Hebrews 4:9,11* } ‘I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God’. { *Isaiah 34:15* }

Most sheep country is dry and semi-arid. But those spoken of here are green pastures—as if it were a ‘land flowing with milk and honey.’ Pastures are at their greenest in the peak season of spring and summer. Livestock that feed upon the rich forage, and bees upon the many flower blossoms, produce a corresponding flow of milk and honey.

But these pastures don’t just come about by themselves. They must be cleared, cared for and cultivated by the shepherd for proper grazing. Think of how the LORD removes the poisonous plants and roots of bitterness to make way for the seed of his own precious word. He removes the large stones and rocks from the field of life, lest they do harm. He can even remove the rocks of stony unbelief much like that which is spoken of in the book of Ezekiel. ‘... I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.’ { *Ezekiel 36:26* }

So it is that the LORD has prepared the way for us. Every measure of obedience to his will is greatly rewarded. ‘Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.’ { *Matthew 5:6* }

(PAUSE)

Indeed we are in the season of the harvest, with an abundant measure of green, life-giving pasture. What could be more favorable than the pastures of Divine favor—we have the printed Word—the Bible, the writings of the Seventh Messenger,

opportunities to attend studies, and as at this occasion, to be assembled in convention.

All these blessings, So that, as Paul once declared: 'For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father... That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man...'. { *Ephesians 3:14,16* }

As suggested earlier, sheep are skittish, and consequently are also fearful of rushing water. The shepherd therefore provides 'quiet' or as the Hebrew suggests 'smooth-flowing' waters. He does this by building small dams to block the current of the stream.

(PAUSE)

The LORD likewise controls the manner in which we are exposed to the life-giving waters of truth. Instead of a rushing torrent of difficult doctrine he permits us to drink of the smooth-flowing waters. We are first nourished with the milk of the Word, before we feed upon the meat of the Word. And, as scripture states, the meat is provided to the Church in 'due season.' 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee Give me to drink: thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water'. { *John 4:10* }

Pre-Recorded Song:

Beside the Still Waters of Peace

"Beside the still waters in pastures of green"

" the shepherd is leading where all is serene."

" By day and by night he will always be seen"

" beside the still waters of peace."

" For He's the good shepherd that died for the sheep,"

" His own he has promised to keep."

" He lovingly watches and guards while they sleep"

" beside the still waters of peace."

"Beside the still waters the sheep find their rest."

" The shepherd stands by that none can molest."

" The flock by His presence is happy and blest."

" Beside the still waters of peace."

"The sheep know his voice and they go not astray"

" for Jesus will guide all the way."

" In paths that are righteous he leads day by day."

" Beside the still waters of peace."

" Beside the still waters of peace."

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.' Sheep have a habit of wandering away from the flock. Often a sheep becomes interested in one clump of grass—and then another, and still another—until it has strayed so far as to be separated from the shepherd and the rest of the flock.

When night falls such a condition is perilous, the sheep being an easy target for predators. Particularly if it has become 'cast'; the term for a sheep that has rolled over on its back. This evidently is a fairly common occurrence, particularly for those sheep with a heavy fleece. Not being able to right itself, it may perish, sometimes within a few hours. 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall'. { *1 Corinthians 10:12* }

As soon as the shepherd becomes aware of the sheep's absence he retraces the day's journey until he finds it. He then usually carries the sheep back to the rest of the flock upon his shoulders. 'What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing'. { *Luke 15:4-5* }

(PAUSE)

'There were ninety and nine that safely lay

In the shelter of the fold;

But one was out on the hills away,

Far off in the dark and cold—

‘Away on the mountains wild and bare,

Away from the tender Shepherd’s care.

But none of the ransomed ever knew

how deep the waters crossed;

‘Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through

Ere he found his sheep that was lost

Out in the desert he heard its cry—

Sick and helpless, and ready to die.

‘Then all through the mountains, thunder-riven,

And up from the rocky steep,

There arose a glad cry to the gates of heaven,

Rejoice! I have found my sheep!

‘And the angels echoed around the throne,

Rejoice, for the Lord brings back his own!’

If a sheep develops a habit of straying, the shepherd will break its leg. In the days that follow the sheep with its splinted leg must rely totally upon the shepherd; for the smallest stream looms like a giant river, the tiniest knoll rises like a mountain. ‘For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth’. { *Hebrews 12:6* }

(PAUSE) Sometimes the allurements or weaknesses of the flesh will cause us to go where the grass appears greener. Indeed, the scripture declares: ‘All we like sheep have gone astray’. { *Isaiah 53:6* }

The Lord will carry us through some experiences, and for others, chastise us. If rightly exercised we will remain close to the Lord and stop straying; and, indeed declare: ‘He restoreth my soul’; He reclaims it from the clutches of death.

‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it’. { *1 Corinthians 10:13* }  
If on the other hand, we continue to stray, it is only a matter of time before we perish at the hands of the adversary.

The verse continues in a similar vein—the Hebrew bears out the thought that: ‘He leads me in right paths.’ Even as the shepherd directs the sheep along the right trail, the safe trail, out of many that cross the terrain, So too with the Christian—the LORD will make clear to us which is the proper path for us to walk in.

‘Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day’. { *Psalms 25:4-5* } ‘Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies’. { *Psalms 27:11* } ‘And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed’. { *Hebrews 12:13* }

Just as there are those paths made by robbers to lead a flock aside to attack the shepherd and steal his sheep; and there are paths that have been made by the winds that have blown across the sands, that lead to nowhere, So too are the worldly paths of life. The greed and selfishness of mankind leaves behind a legacy of ruin and remorse. ‘There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.’ { *Proverbs 14:12* }

In our case, God’s guidance has more to do with what we are, rather than where we are. But, just as a shepherd will use a ripened piece of fruit to cause the sheep to follow him, So too, we might say, the fruits of righteousness are those which we seek after. If we are in the right path. And, even the weakest lamb in the flock will know his voice and hear him say, ‘This is the way: walk ye in it.’

‘Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.’ It has been suggested that this verse may read something like this: ‘But one of the paths through which the Shepherd takes his sheep is the ravine of deep darkness.’

Early in the year the flock will graze in the lowlands, but as summer comes the shepherd leads his flock to better grazing land, on the mountains high above. In order to take the flock to the better

land, however, he must lead them through some treacherous and threatening ravines.

Hidden in the shadows in the dark pathway are dangers—serpents coiled to strike and wolves ready to pounce upon a sheep to destroy it. Yet, the sheep go through this dark ravine because the shepherd has led them there.

He Leadeth Me

In pastures green? Not always; sometimes He

Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me

In weary ways, where heavy shadows be.

Out of the sunshine, warm and soft and bright,

Out of the sunshine into darkest night;

I oft would faint with terror and with fright,

Only for this—I know He holds my hand;

So, whether in the green or desert land,

I trust although I may not understand.

And by still waters? No, not always so;

Ofttimes the heavy tempests round me blow,

And o'er my soul the waves and billows go.

But when the storm beats loudest, and I cry

Aloud for help, the Master standeth by,

And whispers to my soul, 'Lo, it is I!'

Above the tempest wild I hear Him say,

'Beyond this darkness lies the perfect day,

In every path of thine I lead the way.'



So, whether on the hill-tops, high and fair,

I dwell, or in the sunless valleys, where

The shadows lie—what matter? He is there.

And more than this, where'er the pathway lead,

He gives to me no helpless broken reed,

But His own hand, sufficient for my need.

So, where He leads me I can safely go;

And in the blest hereafter I shall know,

Why, in His wisdom, He hath led me so.

So it was, that the Heavenly Father as our Great Shepherd appointed Jesus as the Good Shepherd to lead the way.

'I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly'. { *John 10:9-10* }

'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand'. { *John 10:27,29* }

Although the adversary is at every turn in the path, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour', { *1 Peter 5:8* } and our Christian walk is marked by trials, disappointments or dilemmas, our confidence can be secure in the Lord.

This valley of the nighttime of sin and death indeed is dark, but it is the appointed way. '...Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take his cross, and follow me'. { *Mark 8:34* } 'These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'. { *John 16:33* } 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you'. { *1 John 3:13* }

Without the valley type experiences and growth therefrom we will not be able to climb up to the so-called 'Mountaintop' experiences.

Rightly exercised by these experiences we can move to higher ground. But even while in the valley the Lord provides us with refreshment, for it is in the valleys that the rivers, streams, springs, quiet pools and richest forage are. His word and comforts are there in very deep troubles, whether it be an experience of bereavement or a broken heart.

‘Thy rod and thy staff...’ The rod, a club-like instrument about two feet long, usually of oak with a round head whittled from the knot of a tree bough into which sharp bits of metal were pounded, was a rod of defense against predators such as wolves and serpents; or more commonly a rod of chastisement to disobedient sheep.

It is from this that the western colloquial expression of ‘rod’ came about—referring to a pistol or gun. It was the rod of God’s word that Moses used in the sight of the Egyptians, it was the rod of God’s word that Jesus used against the temptations of Satan (‘that Old Serpent’). And it is the rod of God’s word that causes our flesh to be brought into subjection.

(PAUSE)

The shepherd also uses the rod to count, as well as examine closely the condition of his sheep. He parts the fleece to see if there are any unseen problems. ‘And I will cause you to pass under the rod (staff), and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant’. { *Ezekiel 20:37*}

We, being mindful of God’s ever present watchfulness over us, which in itself is a comfort to us, should also be in an attitude of self-examination. ‘Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether’. { *Psalms 139:3-4*} ‘Cleanse thou me from secret faults’. { *Psalms 19:12*}

The staff. Longer in length, with a hook at one end—for gentle correction, to guide and direct. Also, it’s used to pull aside branches when sheep become entangled in a thicket, or to beat back the high grass to drive out serpents in the path, or for catching or lifting sheep out of holes into which they fall. On other occasions it is used to lift newborn lambs to their mother, if separated, so as not to pass along the smell of a human.

The Heavenly Father permits providences to come our way to gently guide, comfort or correct. The staff and its use implies his qualities of longsuffering and kindness. ‘Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God

of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God'. { 2  
*Corinthians 1:3-4*}

Pre-Recorded Song

288 In English Hymn Books

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want:"

" He makes me down to lie,"

" In pastures green, he leadeth me,"

" The quiet waters by."

" My soul he doth restore again;"

" And me to walk doth make,"

" Within the paths of righteousness,"

" E'en for his own name's sake."

" Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,"

" Yet will I fear no ill;"

" For thou art with me, and thy rod"

" And staff me comfort still."

" A table thou hast furnished me"

" In presence of my foes;"

" My head thou dost with oil anoint,"

" And my cup overflows."

" Goodness and mercy all my life"

" Shall surely follow me;"

" And in God's house forever more,"

" My dwelling place shall be."

'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.' For sheep, the summer range or high country in some countries is called the 'mesa' or by interpretation: 'table.' This is the table the Shepherd prepares for his sheep. As with the lowlying pastures, the poisonous plants must be removed and the shepherd must take care to prepare the land, including placing salt and minerals at strategic points.

As a flat plateau, the sheep are literally in the midst of their predators. Summertime is also the worst time of the year for insects—fleas, gnats, flies, and mosquitos. These are a constant annoyance to the sheep, driving them to restlessness, irritability and even frenzy.

As a remedy the shepherd mixes spices and sulphur with olive oil, then covers their heads with it—immediately providing relief from the noisome pests. It has also been suggested that the oil acts as a repellent against vipers, which would otherwise come out of their holes in the ground and inflict their poisonous bite upon the nose of the sheep.

In a similar sense, it is also true of our experience. Although in the midst of our enemies—the world, the flesh and the devil—as New Creatures the Father anoints our heads with 'the oil of gladness.' 'Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows'. { *Psalms 45:7*}

The anxieties and petty annoyances of life are put in perspective when the Lord So anoints his people with his holy Spirit. 'Take therefore no (anxious) thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof'. { *Matthew 6:34*}

How easy it is to then say: 'My cup runneth over.'

'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.' For sheep in the care of a good shepherd, goodness and mercy are a 'sure thing,' this is in contrast to a shepherd which is only interested in profit, no matter what the cost. Sheep in such circumstances are scrawny, sick and disease ridden. Their chances of getting through a severe winter are, at best, very poor.

Staying in the care of the LORD greatly enhances our life. We can see and experience on a daily basis how the LORD has led us all the way. We can give praise and thanksgiving to the Heavenly Father that we have been and can continue to dwell in the household of faith.

Looking forward to the prospect of that glorious reward, upon our resurrection change, to dwell in the heavenly courts—the house of the LORD. All this is in contrast to the sick condition of the world. ‘And we know that we are of God, but the whole world lieth in wickedness’. { *1 John 5:19* }

Not only do we experience the goodness and mercy of the LORD but we can, in turn, show it to others, that our lives may be a testament of that which the LORD has worked in us. If we live up to the claim that the LORD is our shepherd, it should be said in some measure, as Jesus said: ‘... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...’. { *John 14:9* }

‘And when the chief (head) Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away’. { *1 Peter 5:4* }

Audience Sings Hymn 284, USA Hymn Book—Close

### **The Night Cometh—Brother Henri Peau, France**

We are going to talk about the night. This term is used in the Bible to describe different periods of times.

The Night of Sin: 6000 Years

During the period of time when sin has been permitted, it has been for mankind a dark night that will never be forgotten. That period of time has been also a terrible night of weeping, sighing, pain, sickness, distress, crying and death.

The scriptures explain to us in many places that this period of time is called a night of death and of sleep. Why of sleep? Because we have the hope of the resurrection. This resurrection is made possible by the sacrifice of our Lord.

The apostle Paul, by the words he uses, explains that the situation is a heavy burden for mankind. In Romans 8:22 he says: ‘We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now.’ We often associate the word ‘creation’ with ‘groaning’ to show the

state in which it is: the 'groaning creation.' In fact the creation has been groaning for more than 6000 years because it is incapable of delivering itself from the damaging effects of sin and its terrible ending, death.

During that period of time man has been fighting without ceasing, and he is still fighting against sickness, suffering, affliction and death. Fortunately that condition will not be for ever because God has put a plan into action that will put an end to this situation.

That period of time is also called the dark ages because men had their judgments blinded by doctrines of demons, and have been hindered in their progress and in their intelligence by doctrines from the past. It was a time of ignorance and superstition. It is also a time of slavery because men are slaves of sin. '... Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin' { *John 8:34*}

The scriptures are telling us, and we know it is true, that the world has been under the sentence and curse of death for six thousand years. The period of time from creation to now has been a time of hard experiences for men, a night of crying and of suffering, a time of darkness and of obscurity. In fact the Word tells us that 'darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the people'. { *Isaiah 60:2*}

Why did God let the reign of sin and death, injustice and suffering, pain and evil be established? Why doesn't he intercede with mankind, according to his grace, goodness and love? Is it just for God to bring millions of beings into life in such disadvantageous conditions on earth such as weakness, sin and the influence of Satan)?

Actually, the hereditary weaknesses, imperfections, sadness, pains and sufferings in which we were born are a just and adequate punishment. Those sufferings are part of the sentence of death inflicted by God, and they end up in death.

The apostle Paul explains the process that ends up that way in Romans 5:12,18,19. 'Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and So death spread to all men because all have sinned ... through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men ... by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.'

The permission of evil has, as a goal, to educate mankind, as well as angels, about the ravages of evil and to create in them an

eternal, lasting disgust for evil. But the permission of evil will finally end up being something even greater.

Its main goal is to manifest the perfection, the majesty and the just authority of the divine law and to show to all men and to all angels the catastrophic consequences that result in the violation of this law. This lesson, once learned, will endure, and will be of great value.

Ps 30:5 expresses the situation symbolically, and shows us the cause. We read: 'His anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.' The evening in this verse corresponds to the time in which of sin was allowed. It corresponds to the period of 6000 years in which God's anger has been manifest upon the evil doers.

Job confirms this thought when he says in Chapter 14 verse 13: 'Oh that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!' Here is a very simple statement about the hope of the resurrection in which Job believed. He didn't wish to see perpetuated the present conditions of sin, sadness, distress and pain. He was disposed to be hidden in oblivion (the condition of death) until the curse, the wrath, would be removed from the earth and replaced by times of refreshment.

We know, by the way, that this time of anger, that has lasted already more than six thousand years, will come to an end in the great day of vengeance, in which divine justice says there will be an additional affliction for mankind because it had disobeyed the laws of justice, and did not take the opportunities and the privileges that were available.

Let's read Romans 13:12. 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.' What kind of night was Paul talking about? According to bible chronology the first six great days of creation, which ended with man's creation, were periods of 7000 years each. The seventh day, the last day of the week of creation, is also a period of 7000 years.

The Bible tells us on that day God is at rest. Genesis 2:2 says: 'God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.' Since we read in 2 Peter 3:8 that 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day' we can consider that the 7th period of 7000 years is also a week of 7 days

of 1000 years each. Let us remember that Adam, according to divine sentence, died the day he sinned. He did not reach 1000 years. He died in the first day of that week of 7000 years.

When the apostle Paul wrote the words that we read in Romans 13:12, more than 4 days of the 1000 years had already passed, and the 5th day had begun. For the 4000 years passed, sin, darkness and death reigned following the fall of man. Thus the apostle could say very truly, when he was looking back, that this great night of darkness was far spent and the day was coming soon.

By the prophecies he was familiar with, and by the revelation the Lord had given him, the apostle was able to assert with conviction that a glorious day of freedom from the slavery of sin and death was going to come. He was talking about the wonderful seventh millennium of the reign of Christ.

Thus to conclude this first part of our lesson, we can remember that the period of time from Adam's sin until the return of our Lord, that we call the second presence, is a long night that we can call the night of sin.

Death: The Individual Night

The Lord Jesus said in John 9:4: 'I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work.' This text introduces two ideas: the one of day and the one of night. What do these terms mean?

According to the context we understand these words were spoken by the Master when he was about to perform a miracle, that is a work of God. The day in which our Lord had a chance to work was short. It corresponds to the time he was on earth, at the time of the first advent.

For each disciple of the Lord, for each one of us that are consecrated to his service, there is also a day when we can work. It is a short day in which we have the possibility to exploit our talents, to develop the fruits of the spirit, to spread the truth, to help brethren in their earthly pilgrimage.

We need during that day to take advantage of each of the occasions that are offered to us, of each opportunity that comes to us. In fact, for each one of us also, a night will come when death strikes us; from that point on we will not be able to do anything for the truth. All opportunities to work will end. That is why the prophetic



words in Ecclesiasties 9:10 are very appropriate and very important. We read: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'

This statement concerning death is very clear and without ambiguity, being applicable not only to the wicked but also to the just. It is applicable to all mortals. Then there are neither good nor bad deeds; we neither glorify nor curse God; we don't think good or evil; there is neither holy nor impious knowledge; neither heavenly nor any other wisdom, in this condition of death.

Ps 115:17,18 also shows clearly that during our present life we have to work with God, because after death it is not possible. We read: 'The dead praise not the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord.'

We could also consider that some physical handicaps, and old age, are in a way a night, because in those states what we would like to do may be tremendously diminished, or even impossible. It is a kind of individual night in which we are strongly tested on our patience. Facing that result we can rejoice that we are still able to be active, and we can encourage each other to be active while we still have the possibility.

The Morning Comes and the Night too: the Crucial Point of the Trouble

Since we have spoken about the night of sin which lasted 6000 years, it is logical to expect a morning following the night. There is a morning that was promised. According to Malachi 4:2, the morning is announced by the rising of the sun of righteousness which brings health in its healing rays. It is true that during the time of the first advent, and the time of the early church, a great light shone. But darkness came very quickly and the Gospel Age was a time of thick darkness. It is even called 'the dark ages.'

All during that period, as in the middle of the night, the disciples of the Lord benefited only from the light from one lamp. We read in fact in Psalms 119:105: 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' The Apostle Peter himself, talking about the prophecies, explains the need of light for those that follow the Master.

He indicates that we find this light in the study of the Bible, and that thanks to this light, we are guided until the morning of the new

day. 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn (the millennial morning) and the day star (the proof of the second presence) arise in your hearts'. { *2 Peter 1:19*}

The light that shines now in a large way resembles the one that shone upon the early Church. In both cases it is the light of the Parousia, the Presence, of the Son of Man. This light is a consequence of Christ's presence. But as the prophet in Isaiah 21:11,12 says, 'Watchman, what of the night? [The watchman said], the morning cometh, and also the night.'

Then in this morning of the rising of the light, a consequence of the return of Christ, we need to expect another time of thick darkness, another night. A night will come then, a darkening of the heavens will be noticed, a great national storm will break out.

Thus, if we can say that because of the return of Christ to be present in earth's environment, the morning has come, nevertheless before he is entirely introduced in the glory of the light of the Millennium the great storm of the time of trouble has to transpire. As the prophecy of Daniel 12:1 says: '... there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.'

We already live in the time of trouble, because, according to my understanding, it develops by steps. Nevertheless, according to these prophetic words we still anticipate the final phase, the darkest time of the trouble, whose peak will be manifested by an unprecedented anarchy. It is to this phase that the texts apply, the ones we have been looking at in our discourse.

Thus, as our Lord's example, we ought to do the deeds of him that sent us. We ought to take each opportunity to assist the Lord's cause. We ought to share the truth with those that have ears to hear. Let us do this while it is still day, while it is still possible, because those opportunities we have will be taken away from us very soon, most likely forcibly.

Signs That Will Show Us

That the Night Has Come

A Sign: The Picture of John the Baptist. We remember the accusations John the Baptist made concerning the illegitimate union of Herod and Herodias, and we know what it represents in

the antitype. We know that Herod represents civil power, and that Herodias, his illegitimate wife, represents the ecclesiastical power of Christendom. That religious power wishes and desires a union and cooperation with the civil power.

Ties of friendship and of cooperation have to be formed between those two powers sooner or later. If, by a lack of knowledge of history (like my own), we are not able to detect or to prove that this process has started, nevertheless we can be assured that what is predicted in the biblical prophecies will be realized. Then, at that time, we will be able to identify the fulfillment. The prophet Isaiah instructs us to stay away from that union.

He says in chapter 8 verse 12: 'Say ye not A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say A confederacy.' In the Revised Standard Version: 'Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy.' The words of this prophecy are directed to us to help us differentiate ourselves. The union of the churches or the federation of the churches is not what God wants when he speaks of the unity of the Church.

As consecrated people, we have nothing to do with this joining of religious organizations. We should go away as far as possible So as not to partake of its plagues. That is the advice in Revelation 18:4: 'I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.' By our behavior, education and example, we declare that this union is illegitimate and we ought not to be a part of it in any way, even if invited to join.

This union, when it will be brought to fruition, will be for the members of the Church, for the faithful, a preliminary warning, a sign that the final test of faithfulness is near. As the behavior of John aroused the anger of Herodias who had a strong influence upon King Herod, and succeeded in having John beheaded, So the behavior of the John class, which we wish to be, will arouse their anger in the antitype.

That anger, at its peak, will cause the night to come, the one predicted by the Master, in which there will be no work possible. It is the same night that the prophet Isaiah referred to when he said the night comes. Our condition will be such that we will not be able to do any reaping work, because of imprisonment or some such reason.

As John did not come out of the prison except to be beheaded (that is to die), So our deliverance is on the same condition. Probably many of us will go through similar conditions, and only death will enable us to pass to glory, if we are worthy.

Another Sign: Noticing that the Door is Closed. The closing of the door could be indicated by a state in the world that would prohibit all occasion to preach the truth, that would not allow anyone to manifest their consecration by the symbol of baptism, and would not allow anyone to develop and prove his love and fidelity by being active in the Lord's vineyard.

We know that the door will be closed sometime during the harvest. We believe that the door will be closed by the time of trouble, because according to the teaching of the scriptures, such as the texts already mentioned, there is a period predicted wherein no one will be able to work, and this is before the full establishment of the millennial day, before it begins completely.

Let us walk in the narrow way that we may have the privilege and the opportunity to work now with our Lord, developing in us the fruits of the Spirit, following his example, and sacrificing our earthly interests. By acting this way it is obvious that we are not approved by mankind in general. We are rather the object of mockery and insults, rejected and even persecuted.

But these facts result from our activity, from how we are seen and perceived. There is an external manifestation of the development that grows in us. Our behavior, our words, our attitudes are our ambassadors to the outside—this is what the world sees. Whether it likes it or not does not matter. We still can do the work we are told to do now.

So if the open door means having the privilege of faithfully sacrificing our all until death, then when all opportunities to do So are stopped must correspond to the closing of the door. This closing of the door signifies the closing of the narrow way, and it marks the impossibility for anyone to consecrate and to be committed to it.

That door (of opportunity to enter the narrow way) will be closed once the night 'when no man can work' has come. At that time those whose characters have not been sufficiently developed by faithful service, those that have not proven their dedication, their love and their zeal for the Lord and the truth, will not be able to do it anymore. They will have the evidence that they are part of the

foolish virgin class, and that they let the wonderful opportunity to suffer for the Lord and his cause, go by.

At that point the complete number predestined to form the church will be reached. All those that will be part of it will have been called, tested and judged worthy to be part of the little flock. They will have demonstrated their faithfulness. The harvest will be then finished and the winter of the time of trouble will arrive to accomplish its work. The closing of the door will be manifested by the stopping of the spreading of the truth. It is obvious that this phenomenon will not be sudden, but rather gradual, as it is predicted by the word of God.

Knowing that these things will happen in the near future, we can nevertheless encourage those that have a desire to serve God to consecrate now. Since the night is not yet here to the point of forbidding activity in the service of the truth, there is still time to be engaged in the narrow way.

The fact that some still wish to consecrate is sufficient to prove that the time is still favorable to sacrifice. If someone has this desire he may take the occasion to sacrifice, to serve the master, and to enter the course. When the night of darkness and intense opposition comes, we will see it. It will then be impossible to enter into the service of God.

How Can We Explain this Situation?

What Other Conclusion Can We Arrive at?

What Should Be our Attitude Then?

When the facts occur, we will understand that the door is closed. We will understand that all the wise virgins will have been selected and that there will be no room more. We also will understand that the true servants of God would have been sealed in their foreheads (that is intellectually) and then the four winds will be loosed in action as recorded in Revelation 7:1-3.

‘And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till

we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’ It is in the midst of the final whirlwind that the last members of the Elijah class will be changed and gathered to the glory of the kingdom.

When that night arrives the harvesters will end their work. The final work of the Gospel Age will be complete, and all the elected that form the bride of Christ will have been sealed in their foreheads. God will not permit anything to interfere with his work before it is accomplished.

We can be assured that our change cannot come until our Job is complete, if we are among the more than conquerors. Our activity will be gradually diminished until it becomes totally and definitively non-existent. Then we will need to hold on, and patiently wait while the Master works on our deliverance.

It is possible that some may remain during part of that dark night of tribulation. Perhaps Revelation 14:12 can be applied in this case: ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’

The way to resist in this situation was explained to us by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:13: ‘Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.’ We don’t know how long we will have to resist but we can be assured that faith and patience will be necessary.

Having such a future, we need to take every opportunity offered to us to put on the armor, to develop our faith and exercise our patience. The moments of calm or peace God permits us to have are for the purpose of preparing us for the trials to come. All our Christian life follows this process: a period of peace, a period of storm, then again peace, and again storm...

What Comfort Do We Have?

Where Do We Find It?

We find a wonderful comfort in the words in Psalms 91:4-7: ‘He shall cover thee with his feathers... thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.’

We read also in verse 15: 'He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him.' In these verses the night in verse 5 as well as the trouble in verse 15 correspond to the night when no man can work. The end of verse 15 says deliverance may come through death and the first resurrection.

What Stage Are We At?

The process of tribulation started with the first world war. That war greatly weakened the nations and governments. It swept away royalty with their former ways. It accelerated the increase of knowledge and vastly increased discontent among men. That event worldwide has been the first trigger of the trouble.

The Bible tells us that a second phase is expressed by the term 'earthquakes.' It refers symbolically to all the revolutions that daily shake different parts of the earth. Modern history tells us much about such events, and this comforts us in our understanding of the biblical prophecies on this subject. We have witnessed such events.

There is predicted a third phase in this process of trouble. It is the darkest phase. It is illustrated by the term 'fire.' Of course it is a picture, because the physical earth will not be destroyed by fire as some denominations believe. Earth was created for habitation, the Bible says. The fire mentioned is not literal but symbolic. It designates a period of anarchy, a very difficult period. It is during that terrible time of trouble that our master will be manifested to the world by bringing peace and calm.

Thus we understand, after this short description, at what stage we are. We are at the door of the third phase, anarchy. The discontent of men grows greater and greater, demands are more and more frequent, and the number of rebellious people increases. More and more often the authorities are helpless in certain situations, and we witness a growing number of people that do not respect the authorities, or the police, or the government. All that creates an unhealthy condition, near blowing up. The explosion will come. We are aware of it.

Lots of prophecies relate to this day of darkness. All of them enlighten us about an aspect of what is going to happen. Let us read some passages in Joel chapter 2.

‘For the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess [this describes very well the period of trouble and distress], as the morning spread upon the mountains [the millennial morning spread on the nations, the morning is rising, the time of trouble also, the two events occurring simultaneously], a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it [we know this is about the army of the Lord, designating all the discontented masses] even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth... Before their faces the people shall be much pained, all faces shall gather blackness... The earth shall quake before them...’

Here is a description of what that night is going to be all about, of what is going to happen in the time we consider the peak of the trouble.

The prophet Amos described that period when he said in Amos 5:18,20: ‘Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light... shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?’

Zephaniah’s prophecy in 1:14-18 also shows the way the process of trouble finally reaches its peak in anarchy. We read:

‘The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness... and I will bring distress upon men... neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy...’

In conclusion, we will recall some well known thoughts to help us maintain confidence at the coming of that night, that could otherwise make us weary. We know that all that happens in this world is by God’s permission. Everything has to take place according to the plan of God and nothing is going to stop it. If we belong to God, if we maintain ourselves as children of God, then we are safe.

Let us remember what happened with the disciples in Matthew 8:23-26. We read: ‘And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in



the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 'And His disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.' Thus we understand that if we are in the same ship as our Lord, there is no danger because he has the power to stop the tempest and to restore the calm. As long as we stay in the ship we are safe.

Stop the tempest, restore the calm: this is what our master will do when the time of trouble has accomplished its work in the world. But before the calm comes, the members of the church will be delivered by death and by the first resurrection, some before the peak and some during the peak.

For the members of the Great Company, we know that according to the book of Revelation they need to wash their robes. They need to go through that terrible time. May we be considered worthy to escape all those things by being taken soon. Amen.

## **Let Us Not Be Weary in Well Doing-Brother Jan Kopak, Poland**

Ga 6:9

Dear brethren, beloved in our Savior Jesus Christ! Taking advantage of the privilege of appearing before you, I desire to convey to you the warm brotherly greetings from the fellowship of God's people in Bialogard.

My theme is taken from the words of the Apostle Paul recorded in the letter to the Galatians (6:9). The first sentence of this verse constitutes the title of our present consideration: 'Let us not be weary in well doing.' I quote verses 9 and 10: 'And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.'

The Apostle's encouragement to do good is obvious, and it would seem to not require further analysis. However, in my opinion, the idea of good works and their significance in achieving salvation is misconceived by many Christians.

Therefore we need to examine thoroughly in the light of the holy Scriptures what the subject of 'doing good to all, and especially the household of faith' entails.

While writing to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul was contending with Judeo-Christian views. These alleged that in addition to accepting Christ, one needs also to obey the rules of the Law.

The Law given to the nation of Israel was supposed to elevate this nation to the highest moral standard. According to God's plan, the Savior of the world had to come from this nation, and the rich moral rules were essential in achieving this purpose. All the same, the Apostle proves that since the coming of Messiah and his fulfillment of the Law, those who accept Christ, despite the fact that they are Jews by birth, are free from the rules which otherwise every Jew had to comply with. In Galatians 2:16 we read: 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.'

The Law constrained all to do good in all areas. The ten commandments are the summary of profound moral rules concerning good works. Whoever carried out those rules was justified and could have fellowship with God. Additionally, everyone who obeyed the Law had the promise of God's blessings. In Deuteronomy 6:17,18, Moses recalls God's words: 'Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers.'

While contending against the idea of keeping the Law, the Apostle Paul does not advocate negligence of good works. To the contrary, he pointed out that there is a profound morality in the Law which transcends the limits of time. The Apostle says in the letter to the Galatians (5:14): 'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

Later, in the last part of his letter, he writes that every Christian has a responsibility to do good always, and to all: 'And let us not be weary in well doing:' The Thousand Year Polish Bible renders these words in the following way: 'Let us not be slacking in doing good,' which means that we should not neglect well doing and should not grow tired and discouraged while doing good. The Apostle directed similar words towards brethren in Thessalonica: { *2 Thessalonians 3:13*} 'But ye brethren, be not weary in well doing.'

The wise man Solomon, in Proverbs 3:27-28, encourages well doing saying: 'Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.'

Likewise, the Apostle James recommends that our faith should be substantiated by deeds—more exactly, by good deeds. 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?'. { *James 2:14*} Faith alone, separated from the realities of life, cannot exist, '... it is dead, being alone'. { *James 2:17*}

The problem of doing good works has existed from the beginning of human history. It appeared immediately after our first parents sinned—with their first sons Cain and Abel. When Cain decided to kill his brother, God said to him: 'Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him'. { *Genesis 4:6-7*}

Cain, however, did not want to do good and did not rule over sin. The Apostle John explains that Cain was not a worker of good, and thus became the killer of his only brother. { *1 John 3:12*} We quote: 'Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.' This mark of Cain has been over humanity from the first beginnings, but especially now it has reached great proportions.

Although evil reached such a high level that good works are hardly visible, God planned that ultimately good will triumph everywhere and eternally. This he portrayed first in the Law and then through the sending of the Savior.

The Savior, Jesus Christ, during his presence among people, demonstrated how one should attempt to strive to achieve the condition in which good will reign and evil will be no more. The Apostle Paul during his sermon in the house of Cornelius { *Acts 10:38*} said: 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.' The Lord Jesus devoted his whole life to exemplify how goodness will be the result of his sacrifice. Many examples of miraculous healing and the miracles of raising people from the dead were to make his

followers aware of the enormous grace which will flow to mankind in due time.

The teachings and examples from the Savior's life made it clear that one has to acquire the qualities of good character first. Simply put, one has to bring forth good fruits. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said in Matthew 7:17: 'Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.'

Again, admonishing the pharisees, he said in Matthew 12:33-35: 'Either make the tree good, and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. 'O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.' Similarly, God through the prophet Jeremiah said: 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil'. { *Jeremiah 13:23* }

In the New Testament's teachings directed towards new creatures, emphasis is on noble actions and perseverance in well doing. This determines whether those who strive to be accepted in God's eyes will be able to develop their characters after the Savior's image. The Apostle Paul writes: 'To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality; eternal life'. { *Romans 2:7* } We have to recognize we will not receive glory, honor and immortality by good works alone. Nevertheless, continuance in well doing is necessary.

The Apostle Paul writes: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them'. { *Ephesians 2:8-10* } The Apostle explains that we are called to do good works, not as a result of good works, lest any man should boast. Whatever we received in the past or will receive in the future is due to God's limitless grace.

In the light of these statements we can notice a mistake in the views of many people, including many Christians, who believe that through their works, however good and noble, they will earn eternal salvation. We have to understand well that doing good works is the means of developing the wonderful fruits of the holy Spirit. In the Manna of February 5, Brother Russell writes:

‘Coming to the Scriptures to ascertain God’s will, we find that the great work which God asks of us is not work for others, but work in ourselves, subduing, conquering, ruling self.

‘Everything else, therefore—our service for the household of faith, and our doing good unto all men, by home and foreign missions, etc. —is subservient to this most important work within.’

It is this spirit that permeates all the teachings of the holy Scriptures directed to the followers of Christ. Mutual good deeds towards one another are very important. The Apostle Paul, in Hebrews 10:24, recommends that our fellowship should provoke one another unto love and to good works.

Love towards the brethren is the main measuring rod of Christian spiritual growth. Jesus, when giving a new commandment, said that love will be a sign by which others will recognize his followers. The Apostle James in his letter writes: ‘If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well’. { *James 2:8* } This is then the meaning of good works in the light of spiritual law, the law of liberty.

The Apostle John, called the disciple of love, writes: ‘Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love’. { *1 John 4:7-8* }

Very often brethren have a mistaken view that a good deed counts when it is renowned. We forget that the Lord gave us examples of his teachings and deeds which indicate that even the smallest deed which comes from a pure heart is recognized and highly appreciated by God.

We would like to recall the scene which took place at the Last Supper when the Lord emphasized the importance of even the smallest service. The Lord said: ‘If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet’. { *John 13:14* } Service in small things is a very important parameter in shaping character. Brothers or sisters who perform minuscule services, but do them with devotion and engagement, are able to develop important character traits, which constitute the fruits of the holy Spirit.

Dear Brethren, the Apostle James writes: ‘Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom’. { *James 3:13* }

Only through good works can we demonstrate our wisdom and worth. Various disputes and wise dissertations do not have any value if those who partake in them do not exemplify good works in their lives, works which are the result of piety and love. The Apostle also writes: { *James 4:17* }

‘Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.’ Those who neglect the natural responsibilities of life are in great danger. No ambition justifies negligence in fulfilling responsibilities which are the outcome of our vows of consecration. All who made a covenant of sacrifice are required to lead an honest, noble life, full of good works. All the activity in the little affairs of every day life prepares the followers of Christ to do greater works, after they have become overcomers.

By consecrating our all to serve the Lord, we made the decision to use all our possessions for his service, and we became his stewards. Proper use of those possessions constitutes a test of our consecration and we will be held accountable for their use. If someone that is consecrated has a talent for multiplying material possessions, he or she has to understand that the Lord will hold him or her accountable for the use of his or her material things. Are they used in service to others and for the increase of the Lord’s work or wasted for selfish purposes?

The Apostle Paul recommended that Timothy should admonish the rich to use their riches properly. In 1 Timothy 6:17-19 he writes: ‘Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works; ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold onto eternal life.’

All received means and privileges should be used in humility with the realization that the Lord will hold us accountable and evaluate us accordingly. The Lord Jesus, in the parable of the talents, demonstrated that one who is faithful in little things will be in charge of important and challenging work. He talks about it in Luke 16:10: ‘He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.’ In these statements and admonishings we find a lesson. The lesson is to not neglect unpopular and sometimes humble works.

In order to test us, the Lord puts us in particular circumstances where our responses and attitudes determine our victory. Humbling

which occurs under those circumstances may be a blessing and may contribute to a transformation of our character.

The Apostle Paul, experienced in various situations, could say: 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'. { *Philippians 4:12-13* } He was tested in all things and experienced humiliation. He says: '... there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure'. { *2 Corinthians 12:7* }

The 'thorn in the flesh' allowed the Apostle to perform many services no matter how humble they were. His example is worth following. The Lord's people during the Gospel Age should take an example from these. Also, similar standards will be set in the Millennial Age for mankind.

The Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:12: 'Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.'

Doing good to others is very important. There is a saying: 'actions speak louder than words.' We sometimes say, rightly so, that one good example is worth more than one good sermon. Examples of Christian living have great import not only in the shaping of our characters but also in proclaiming the Gospel.

Even though some actions might not be appreciated by unbelievers and enemies in this age, they will be appreciated by them in 'the day of visitation,' the 'times of restitution of all things.'

As bearers of good news at the end of the Gospel Age we have a special responsibility that our mission be evidenced by good works. First of all, we have to serve one another, those who are of the same faith. We have to help them in reaching the main goal of the high calling. This goal is the most important and of the first priority for those who follow the example of the Apostle Paul, who writes in *Philippians 3:14*: 'I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.'

So far everything points to the fact that this goal is still before us and everything else should be subservient to it. Helping one another to achieve this goal is the responsibility of all who treat

their consecration seriously and have the hope of reaching the finish line.

In our consecrated life, we often desire to perform renowned works, works which would entail a large part of our fellowship, while circumstances force us to perform menial, unpopular activities. We are faced with the situation which requires a large measure of humility and patience.

Raising children, care of a handicapped member of the family, or helping the elderly require a lot of understanding and self-denial. Being constantly in the presence of people who require intensive care gives us an opportunity to test ourselves, to see if with humility and sympathy we will help bear the disabilities and trials imposed on our dear ones. We have to remember that illnesses that touch members of our family are also designed to test those who take care of the afflicted. The encouragement of the apostle to not be 'weary in well doing' applies very well in this situation.

Often the Lord is saying to us: I do not require of you to do great things, but I do want you to perform this little, less significant activity for the well being of your dear one, that by doing it you will be prepared to perform an important service in the future. Similar principles will apply in the future and the Lord Jesus portrayed it in the parable of the sheep and goats. { *Matthew 25:31-46* } In verses 35 and 36 he says that the righteous will be judged on the basis of good works.

I quote: 'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' In verse 40 the Lord explains: '... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'

Dear Brethren, how often we are unaware that we pass the opportunity of small service to the Lord alone. How often we are oblivious to the fact that some ungrateful task can be worth as much as great work, on the scale of victory. How often we lack strength and patience while taking care of a terminally ill person. It is hard to submit to such a trial.

Possibly it is a lesson not only for us but for those around us. We have to appreciate the services of all the brethren. Services of sisters in hospitality, in taking care of the sick, in the visiting of



lonely and afflicted brethren, are extremely important in every day life.

This kind of well doing in serving the household of faith is highly regarded by the Lord. The Lord Jesus said: { *Matthew 10:41-42* } 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

'And 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.' It is important that all services should not be forced, but done willingly and with devotion. Thus they will be received as if it were a fragrant gift to the Lord.

In the second part of our verse the apostle writes that if we endure in well doing 'we will reap in due time if we faint not.' The apostle says that the due time belongs to the future if in our present experiences we have proved to be overcomers.

The harvest is for gathering the fruits of your labor. The harvest of the future depends on how fruitful is the work of our life. The apostle writes: { *2 Corinthians 9:6* } 'But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.'

This sowing—sparingly or generously—is exhibited in the daily fulfilling of our vows of consecration. How much heart involvement we put in our daily sacrifice determines the measure of grace received from the Lord. Through this grace we will be accepted by him when the time of reckoning comes for us. May we hear the words of the Lord: 'Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord.'

Beloved in Christ! Let us take advantage of the apostle's admonishment: 'And let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.' Let us avail ourselves of every opportunity, no matter how small, to serve others, and especially those who are of the household of faith, fellow companions of the narrow way.

May we thank God for all the privileges he gives us, because we won't know beforehand exactly what the Lord wants us to learn from them. Let us be faithful in small things, and the Lord will

reward us with the participation in the great work which he will accomplish in the near future.

May our heavenly Father richly bless you dear Brethren with all his goodness and give us all that which we desire the most—the riches of his grace. Amen.’

### **Freedom: Inheritance of the True Church and a Basis for the Unity of the Truly Consecrated-Brother Milos Lupsor, Argentina**

(Unable to attend, replaced by Brother Merski)

Joh 17:3,6-26

’Stand fast therefore in the liberty where with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage’. { *Galatians 5:1* }

Changes in the events and circumstances of our days have motivated the Lord’s truly consecrated to scrutinize the Scriptures, to prove and establish the fundamental principles of freedom and the unity of the believers. To be instructed and know the truth about these points, and other themes related to the faith and our hope, we have as the only basis, the Lord’s word. And bear in mind that the Christian’s last trial is love: 1 Corinthians 13.

Having the above in mind, a sectarian spirit cannot exist in those that search for God’s approval. Freedom is the first blessing that we receive from the Lord when we become His followers. Slavery’s ties to sin, error, and ignorance, and the fear of men, are broken as we enter into Christ’s freedom, and as we read in Romans 5:1, ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.’

And in Romans 6:12-14 we read, ‘Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.’

The liberty in Christ does not annul our conscience or our right to look into, scrutinize, and reason on the themes and teachings related to life, and our service to the Lord. It is our obligation to

proceed in this manner, that is to say, to look into everything and to retain what is good, according

to our capacity. 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him'. { *Proverbs 18:13* }

Paul exhorted us against the spirit of partiality or sect. Due to this, by the measure that we become detached from sectarianism, we broaden our sphere of liberty in Christ and His Word. Separating ourselves from sectarian organizations does not mean that we are forming another sect. On the contrary, it means that we do not agree with the faith, doctrines, forms, methods of practice, and imposing the sectarian spirit. It means to defend our liberty to scrutinize the Scriptures, and then, through the truth, to reach the unity of the Lord's true people.

Paul exhorted us in 1 Corinthians 1:10, 'Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind.'

While the apostles were alive, the Church was faithful to the Lord's teachings and kept relatively free of the sectarian spirit. When the apostles died, the Great Adversary of the Truth gradually introduced methods and ways to preach the faith contrary to the spirit of liberty in Christ. With time, the great ecclesiastical system developed, so that everything related to the faith, doctrines, and forms of worship was elaborated and imposed by the Councils.

Today, big religious groups with their doctrines and ways of service in many aspects contradict the spirit of liberty and unity proposed by Paul. Only in the Scriptures do we find the basis for the union in freedom of the believers consecrated to the Lord.

There are seven points, or bases, that I consider fundamental to reach this union. Someone might say that there are more than seven, others that there are less, but all the other subjects are related to these fundamental points.

In the first place, I want to mention the gift of grace and faith in Jesus Christ, and the keeping of His Word. Jesus said to the Jews that believed in Him, 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'. { *John 8:31,32* }

In the second place, the receiving of the spirit of Truth. The Galatians were in danger of falling again into serfdom. The exhortation to them and to all believers is the following, 'O Foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?' { *Galatians 3:1,2*}

In the third place, to be convinced that God is our father. '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'. { *Romans 8:15*}

In the fourth place, the experience of only one baptism. 'Know ye not, that So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?'. { *Romans 6:3*}

In the fifth place, to become a member of the body of Christ's Church. 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; So also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit'. { *1 Corinthians 12:12,13*}

In the sixth place, the conception or call to only one hope, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you'. { *1 Peter 1:3,4*}

In the seventh place, the grace and possession of only one faith in God the Father and in Jesus Christ his Son, 'For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. { *2 Peter 1:17*}

We will maintain our liberty in Christ if we adhere to these principles. As Paul exhorted us in Colossians 2:6-10, 'As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, So walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not

after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.'

And in Colossians 2:18 and 19: 'Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntarily humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.'

These seven fundamental truths are grouped by Paul in only one place, Ephesians 4:4-6, 'One body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all.'

We can summarize the Apostle words as follows: The Author of Unity, one God and Father: Jehovah. The center or base of Unity: Jesus Christ. The door to Unity: only one Baptism. Link to Unity: only one Body. Unity's Nature: only one Spirit. Finality and purpose of the Unity: called to the same hope. Testimony to the Unity: only one faith.

What does this expression of 'only one faith' consist of? Brother Russell wrote on this subject the following: 'This 'only one faith' is So simple, and coherent that all can understand and accept it; the faith is not a collection of incoherent creeds and doctrines difficult to accept by reason and by those that with honesty follow the Lord.'

The Apostle Paul established the fundamental principles of this faith in 1 Corinthians 15:3,4, 'For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received (fundamental as truth or teaching on which must be built and with which all other teachings must harmonize), how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.'

We also read in 1 Timothy 2:4-6, 'Who [refer ring to God] will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.'

God manifests in these words his love to a sinful and needful mankind. On the basis of Christ's ransom price all the members of

the human race that accept Christ as their personal savior, and harmonize their lives with God's will, can obtain forgiveness for their sins, and be reconciled with God, justified and restored to life.

This is the Gospel that God announced to Abraham saying: 'And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice'. { *Genesis 22:18* } That seed has been in preparation since that time, and particularly with Jesus' first advent the call and preparation of the spiritual part of the seed with Christ as the head was initiated. As we read in Galatians 3:29: 'And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

And when this preparation work is finished, then the task to bless all the families of the earth will be initiated, as we read in Acts 15:14-17, 'Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up.'

In these few words we see the plan of salvation for the consecrated during this epoch. They inherit life and glory in the celestial sphere with their Lord Jesus Christ, as well as the blessing of all people, through this channel, Jesus and his Church. Thus, we read in Isaiah 25:6-8:

'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. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it.'

God does not force anyone to accept these blessings, either us or mankind. We are free to choose our own way. But if we choose the narrow way that leads to life, we will enter this freedom that cannot be compared with any other that the world knows, the glorious freedom of the sons of God, freedom from sin, prejudices, and ideologies of this world.

And as we have read in John 8:31,32, the only way to that freedom is the Word of Truth. 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my

disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall  
make you free.'