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## Presentation One

# Welcome Discourse

Brother Romain Mlotkiewicz (France)

*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, Fulfill 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 Hebrew 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.

## **Christ Present Among Us**

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.

## **Importance of Prayer**

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. Psalm 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).

## **Our Dual Fellowship**

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 — An Ornament of Fellowship**

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 fellow-ship 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. Blessed are those who dwell in thy house, ever singing thy praise! (Selah)" (Psalms 84:2-4). 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.

## Presentation Two

# What is Truth?

Brother Robert Goodman (USA)

*Beloved* brethren from around the world, it is our privilege to bring you the love of your brethren in the United States with special love from our class in Orlando, Florida. We all appreciate so much the privilege of being a part of the family of God and for being allowed to be with you today.

### **The Vital Question**

The theme verse for our thoughts today comes from the book of John. This question was asked of Jesus by Pilate on the morning of his trial. "... And Jesus said unto him, the reason for my birth and the reason for my coming into the world is to witness to the Truth. Every man who loves the Truth recognizes my voice. To which Pilate retorted, What is Truth?" (John 18:37-38, Phillips translation).

This is a question we hear posed every day in the world. The Bible Students are often referred to as "truth people." We are keenly interested in Bible study to learn, prove, discuss, and witness to the Truth. We have a real zeal for the Truth! Yet, if you go to any church, every single one claims to have the Truth. With so many conflicting beliefs, not everyone can be correct. So the question remains, how do we know we have the Truth?

### **The Source of All Truth**

The Bible provides the definition, foundation, and basis for the truth. We are told: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth" (John 17:17). God's word, the holy scriptures, are defined as the source of truth. To this we say amen. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16), or the traditions of men, but the true word of God. But we realize that the Bible has been described as "a harp upon which many tunes can be played." So how can we know what we believe is right?

We have full assurance that the scriptures are true and right. "But above all, remember that no prophecy in scripture will be found to have come from the prophet's own prompting for never did any prophecy come by human will, but men sent by God spoke as they were impelled by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21, Weymouth in Modern Speech translation). The Apostle Paul gives us further assurance of this principal in his second letter to Timothy, where we read: "All scripture is inspired by God, and is useful for teaching the faith and correcting error, for resetting the direction of a man's life and training him in good living. The scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17, Phillips translation). We are assured over and over that the scriptures are inspired of GOD. So if we have faith in GOD, we must believe in His message. Therefore we

have a responsibility to seek to understand His word and not to embrace the fables and traditions of men. Remember that “God ... is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

## **God’s Word is Everlasting**

God’s word, like God himself, is everlasting. The Scriptures declare: “For I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6). We are told repeatedly that the Truth is constant and unchanging. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:8). In Psalms we read: “For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalms 100:5). Further we are assured “The word of the Lord endureth for ever, And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25).

## **Truth is a Reflection of God**

The true word of God reflects the facets of God’s character. His word shows forth his attributes of love, power, wisdom and justice. The Truth is reasonable and harmonious. We are told: “The works of his hands are faithful and just, Firm are all his precepts” (Psalms 111:7). But in order to gain this understanding we are told “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

To accomplish this we must pray for the enlightenment of the holy spirit, we must study the Bible topically, we must discern the use of symbolic language, we must keep in mind the times and seasons, we must note the surrounding context, we must study types and antitypes, and we must harmonize the Old and New Testaments. If we do these things and pray for the holy spirit, we are told “God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit: for the spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).

## **Who Will Understand?**

We are told “Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:14). So we should expect that only a few will find the Truth. For we know, “The Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous” (Proverbs 2:6-7). God is the one who reveals the Truth unto men. As it says, “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25).

We should not be surprised that those in the world do not understand the Truth. But we are assured, “The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but which is made manifest to His saints” (Colossians 1:26). Yes, His saints or consecrated ones are given to know the mysteries and the deep things of God. Ask a Bible Student what is truth and they would doubtless explain the glorious plan of God.

## **God’s Plan Revealed**

God’s plan as revealed in His word is a simple one. The Bible starts with creation and man’s fall from grace and it concludes with man’s redemption through Jesus Christ and eventual restoration. This is summarized in the Psalms where we read: “Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy

spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth'' (Psalms 104:29-30). The scriptures are divided into two parts, the old covenant and new covenant, commonly referred to as the Old and New Testaments.

God's character is revealed within the context of the Bible. He is a loving God who's attributes are illustrated in the four foundations of his throne; wisdom, justice, love and power. The God of wisdom who foreknew the end from the beginning. The God whose justice demanded that father Adam and all his descendants pay the price for disobedience. The God of love who provided a plan for the salvation of the whole world of mankind.

The God whose all-encompassing power created the world and man, raised his only begotten son, will ultimately resurrect the whole world of mankind and restore the earth. A God of overwhelming glory, as we read: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14). This is our God whose character will be fully revealed in the kingdom, when all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest.

God, the master architect of all creation, created earth to be inhabited forever. As we read, "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:18). We know that although man has ravaged the earth, the scriptures say: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever" (Ecclesiastes 1:4). Yes, the ecclesiastical heavens and the earthly governments will pass away, but the literal earth, as the scriptures promise, will abide forever.

## **The Creation of Man**

God created man from the dust of the earth to inhabit the earth. But this dust was itself inanimate and lacked that special spark called life. We read that "GOD breathed the breath of life into Adam and he became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). It is here that the LORD defines the meaning of the word "soul." GOD created man in his own image and likeness. Not in his physical image, since God is a spirit being and man is an earthly being. This would not make sense since the scriptures clearly teach that earthly and spiritual bodies are different.

The apostle Paul tells us, "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another" (1 Corinthians 15:40). God created man in his image with respect to man's ability to be a reasoning, creative being with free will and a conscience to help him discern right from wrong. It was not good for Adam to be alone, so God created him a helpmate, Eve. God desires communion with his perfect creation, a desire which will be accomplished in His kingdom to come.

## **The Entrance of Sin and Death**

God gave Adam a commandment that he could eat of all of the trees in the garden, but of the tree of good and evil he should not eat for if he did, in that day he would surely die. It was a simple and precise concept: obey and live, disobey and die. Adam and Eve lived perfectly in the garden for a period of time. But Satan materialized in the form of a serpent to exalt himself above God, to deceive man, and try to disrupt God's master plan.

God, knowing the end from the beginning, permitted this deception, for he created man with free

moral agency. Satan lied to mother Eve when he said to the woman: “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). Her misconduct was followed by Adam’s willful transgression and they and all their descendants have suffered the consequences of their disobedience. But father Adam did not die in that 24 hour day. As the Apostle Peter tells us, “A day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day” (2 Peter 3:8). Adam died at the age of 930 years, during the thousand-year day of his life, just as God had stated. As a result of father Adam's sin, all the world of mankind has since suffered from the consequences of sin. Indeed, the sins of the father have set the children’s teeth on edge.

Adam’s transgression marked the beginning of the reign of sin and death upon mankind. As we are told in Romans, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men” (Romans 5:12). And since Adam’s fall, all have suffered sin’s consequences and passed into the sleep of death. For as we read, “but the dead know not any thing ... for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave where thou goest” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10).

The grave, the pit and hell all come from the same word signifying not a place of eternal torment, but rather a condition of oblivion or non-existence, likened to sleep, where there is no consciousness. But God assures us of a hope for those in the grave: “Them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (Daniel 12:2). This is a promise that is yet future.

## **The Redeemer and His Bride**

Our loving God did not leave mankind hopelessly in their sin-sick, dying condition. He provided hope through his marvelous promises. We read “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death” (Hosea 13:14). In God’s due time, this promise did come true. We know that God posed the question: “who shall I send?” The immediate response of the Logos (Jesus in his pre-human existence) was “Here am I, send me” (Isaiah 6:8). “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4).

Jesus’ miraculous birth marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the deliverance by a messiah spoken of by all of the prophets of old. And he came to accomplish the purpose stated in Luke: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Yes, Jesus came to perfectly fulfill the law and provide a better promise to all mankind. In Romans we are told, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Jesus was able to fulfill the law because he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. And we are given further assurances of a reawakening by the apostle Paul, “For since by a man came death, by a man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:21).

Jesus invites a select group to follow him and to share with him a new and living way. This is the way of sacrifice and suffering which Jesus chose. As the psalmist reveals, “Gather to me my saints [consecrated ones], who made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalms 50:5). And those that find the narrow way, like Jesus, are required to daily lay down their lives on the altar of sacrifice. As a result they have given up their earthly life rights and are in judgment of their very lives at this time.

This covenant by sacrifice was symbolized by water immersion when Jesus, at the age of thirty,

was baptized at Jordan. Submission to God's will is described as being dead, not physically dead but rather putting of one's own will to death. We are told "Precious in his sight is the death of his saints" (Psalms 116:15). Just as Christ's death began when he was baptized at Jordan, the death of the footstep followers of Jesus begins when they confess their sins and enter into a covenant with God to do his will. From this point on, their self-will is reckoned dead.

These are those who are referred to as the true and living church and there are special heavenly promises laid up for them. We are told that, if faithful, they will receive glory, honor, immortality, and will reign with Christ for a thousand years. This is the class that lays hold of the heavenly promises provided in the scriptures. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption ... if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:14-15,17). Part of this adoption is to eventually claim the crown proclaimed by the Apostle Paul: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" ( 2 Timothy 4:8).

## **The Beauty of the Ransom**

And to help the consecrated ones fulfill their covenant vows, the Lord grants them the enlightening power of the holy spirit. Just as when Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist saw the holy spirit descend upon him like a dove. And from that point on, the holy spirit provided the power, guidance and knowledge necessary for Jesus to perfectly carry out the will of his father in heaven.

The power of the holy spirit, combined with a total submission to God's will, allowed Jesus to perfectly fulfill the law covenant and cancel the debt incurred upon all mankind by father Adam. The Apostle Paul explains, "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" ( 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

Yes, Jesus was that "anti-lutron" or corresponding price for father Adam. We read: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). We are assured by the Apostle Paul when he states "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Our Lord Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law, the mission for which he was sent. He willingly gave himself at Calvary's cross, to redeem the whole world of mankind. And Jehovah God raised his only begotten son from the dead so that he could sit at his right hand. As it says, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

We are told "All flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6). Jesus' ransom sacrifice was not limited to the righteous but will be offered to the whole world of mankind. We read, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Mankind is now going through a great time of trouble such as has not been since the beginning of

the world. This is the time when Jesus is separating and harvesting the final footstep followers who will reign with him during his kingdom. The great culmination of this time, called Armageddon, looms on the horizon. This last monumental spasm will accomplish the final purging of the old systems, necessary before God binds Satan and establishes his kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness.

## **A New Beginning**

Then will be the time of the restoration described as “The times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). God’s kingdom will provide the vehicle to free the whole world of mankind from their sin-sick, dying condition. We read: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). A new earthly and heavenly arrangement, where God’s law will rule them like a rod of iron.

This will be a glorious day when all that are in their graves will be called forth unto a salvation. We are told: “Thy dead men shall live ... Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (Isaiah 26:19). We are assured, “There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). The Lord further proclaims, “Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves” (Ezekiel 37:12-13).

We are told, “Marvel not at this for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth” (John 5:28-29). The whole world will rejoice in the glory of the true and living God when he calls them forth from their graves and restores them to perfect earthly conditions. What a joyous reunion it will be!

This is also a time when there will be peace, safety and love for all of mankind. We are told, “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it” (Micah 4:4). Further we are assured, “I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent” (Zephaniah 3:9). Faith will not be necessary, “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Mankind will live in peace and harmony, as we read in Isaiah: “And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. ... They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 65:21, 23-25).

This is a time when the earth will be restored to the perfect state found in the garden of Eden and beautifully described in Isaiah, “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom ... they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, Be strong, do not fear; your God will come ... Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf

unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (Isaiah 35:1-7 NIV).

## **The Test of Time**

The majority of mankind, having personally learned by their own life experiences the cost of sin and disobedience, will gladly go up that highway of holiness to “at-one-ment” with God. So that when judged at the end of the thousand year kingdom, they will be able to withstand the lies of the adversary when he is loosed for a little season to try to deceive mankind.

Those who do not come into conformity with God’s law, like Satan and his fallen angels, will go into death. Not a death of eternal torment, but a death of everlasting destruction as we read: “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The last enemies to be destroyed will be death and hell (the grave).

This will usher in the ages to come when mankind will once again be perfect and in true communion with God. As we are assured, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

This is God’s marvelous plan for the whole world of mankind. To many it may sound too good to be true, but we know that it is true. We are told “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). A plan so complete and so perfect that it exceeds our highest expectations.

So there you have it: the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. It’s a beautiful story, isn’t it? Do you believe it? Do you really believe it? Do you have faith in it? Does it motivate you? Have you hearkened to the voice of the Lord?

## **The Affects of The Truth**

Is belief in the Truth enough? We find the answer in the parable of the sower. As it is written, “He spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it, and other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, and his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand” (Luke 8:4-10).

The 15th verse explains the seed that fell on good ground. “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). When we make a consecration to God, we are planting our lives to God’s fertile ground.

Having truth is only partially about having knowledge. The real evidence is its transforming effect on our lives. The Truth is not so much about filling up a vessel as it is about the process of emptying one’s vessel in sacrifice to others. The Truth is not so much about lighting a fire as it is about sustaining a lifelong blaze. The Truth is not so much about building an intellect as it is about acting with wisdom. The Truth is not so much about feelings as it is about developing heart condition. The Truth is not so much about filling a mind as it is about transforming a character.

The Truth must be a fire in our hearts. If we live the Truth, we don’t have the Truth, the Truth has us! This is when our lives become living epistles in Christ. This is the meaning of being living stones. This is the meaning of being dead in Christ. This is the meaning of consecrating our ALL!

## **Our Wish For All the Brethren**

We are told to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This is what Bible Students the world over do with energy and zeal. This causes us to change from what we are, to what we must become. We desire that the Truth might come alive in each of our lives and inspire our hearts to good works. We desire that the Truth might have a transforming effect on our lives. “For this is the will of God concerning you, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

We desire that the seed planted in our hearts might be nourished that it might be fruitful in spreading the Truth that we might do all to the glory of God. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen” (Romans 11:36 NIV).

## Presentation Three

# Daniel 12:1-6

Daniel Symposium, Part One Brother Erich Weiglhofer (Austria)

*Dear* brethren in the Lord! The theme for our consideration today is taken from the book of Daniel, chapter 12, verses 1-6. We will begin with verses 1-3:

“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

### **Who is Michael?**

When we examine verse one more closely we can ask the question, “Who is Michael?” There is only one archangel in the Bible whose name is Michael. Michael means “one like God.” Jesus himself referred to the prophecies of Daniel with the following words: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). We also know that these words were part of His answer to the question posed by His disciples, when they asked him for signs of his second presence and the end of the age. Jesus clearly shows us that He is the Michael of prophecy, and that great tribulation and distress will mark the end of the age and His second presence.

We know, dear brethren, that it is not only necessary for us to have a knowledge of God’s great and precious promises in order to receive the divine nature and the inheritance of the kingdom, but also it is very important for us to understand the Biblical prophecies which point to the time in which we live. If we didn’t have this knowledge, we would certainly be just as confused about the events of our day as is the great majority of mankind. The present age will end as it has been mentioned with a time of trouble the likes of which have never been seen. Even if we do not understand all of the symbols used in the Bible to depict this great time of trouble which is currently in the earth, there can be no misunderstanding that the present world will end, and that in God’s new world, his promise to bless all the families of the earth will be fulfilled (Genesis 12:3).

### **The Second Presence**

We live today, dear brethren, in the presence of our Lord, and we see that He is invisibly making preparation for the future kingdom. Do we fear that this evil world is coming to an end? Do we fear the things which are coming to this earth? We can answer this question with “No.” We do not fear the future, but we do have a great fear that we may not be able to finish the race set

before us, and we have great reverence for our almighty creator.

We rejoice that this present evil world is ending and that it will be replaced with order, over which our Lord Jesus, the highest official, will reign (Galatians 1:4).

We are shown in many prophecies how the end of Satan's world was foretold, and that the nations of the earth and the many elements of society will clash and ultimately be destroyed. Therefore, many various symbols are used in order to better teach us the details. In the time of trouble, in which Satan's world will be destroyed, fire is a symbol. Fire is mostly known to man as an element of destruction and it describes the furious human passions which lead to the unraveling of order.

The end of the age is told to us beforehand by prophecies. In 1 John 2:15-17 it states: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

## **Social Order Passing Away**

From these scriptures it is clear to see that the world which passeth away is not the earth, but rather the social order of mankind on earth, which is called "the world" in this passage. The Greek word which has been translated world is *kosmos*, which simply means order or arrangement. In this connection and in other prophecies the meaning corresponds to the general meaning of social order.

In John 16:33 Jesus speaks to his disciples: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." In John 16:11 the adversary is designated as the "prince of this world." It is consequently an evil world; a world, which is characterized by sin, ambition, lust, oppression, crime, war, sickness, pain, and death. Yes, with all of this evil, we are right to abhor the world. Who wouldn't rejoice in seeing such a world come to an end? We do not rejoice in the terrible conditions and events throughout the world, but we rejoice because we know that the time is near when God through his Son will step in and bring an end to the horror. So all thinking men should welcome any proof that the end is near and that a new world will take the place of the old one, a world in which goodness, peace, health and happiness, yes even eternal life will be the inheritance to those who obey the laws of righteousness and right.

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken, some to everlasting life, and others to shame, to everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). The prophecies refer here to the dead, who sleep in the dust of the earth, and here a very beautiful symbolic language is used, which reminds us of the lives of our first parents. When Adam was condemned to death, the Lord said: "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

A similar expression is found in the prophet Daniel as a proof that all who have lost their lives because of Adam, will be resurrected to life through the redeeming power of Jesus Christ, who gave himself a ransom for all.

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). Here we are told in this verse of two

classes. The first class, the wise which shine as the brightness of the firmament, is the little flock.

In Matthew 13:43 they are referred to as the shining of the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The second class, which shines forth as the stars, is a lesser light. This class in the future kingdom is the class in which Daniel will be one of the princes of the earth. Psalms 45:16: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). But whether Daniel had a large amount of understanding given to him, or whether he was given visions, he had to close the book and seal it until the time of the end. When the time of the end would come, there would be more research and knowledge would be increased. It appears that the increase of knowledge which came suddenly over the earth at the time of the end, contributed much to the prophesied time of trouble.

## **The Time of the End**

We can clearly see the prophecies of Daniel in fulfillment today, and we see clearly that we are living in the Time of the End. Our generation was given the opportunity to experience the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus already explained to us that his presence (parousia) would be like a lightning which comes out of the east and shines even to the west. (Matthew 24:27) The correct thought expressed by Jesus is that his presence would be characterized as a light or as a great, worldwide increase in knowledge.

In Daniel 12:5-6 Daniel gives us a description of the conversation with the following contents: "Then I Daniel looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?"

Let us closely consider the symbolic meaning of both of these verses. We know that water is a symbol of truth, and we can interpret the river as a flood, since much water causes flooding. Brother Russell wrote in the third volume of Scripture Studies that the Time of the End had its beginning with the French Revolution. Many of the truths which flooded France at that time and were saturated with blood, are generally accepted today by all civilized peoples and nations. But back then these truths were too strong and too suddenly put into place. Here was a flood, with the end of Papal power as well as the beginning of the days of temptation, or marked as the Time of the End. Upon this flood (from a prophetic standpoint) stood the messenger of the Lord to proclaim the end of the time, times and half a time.

Regarding the question: "Who was the man clothed in linen?" we can answer, it was Br. Russell. He was the only man who could have been clothed in linen and we know also that this pictures the righteousness of the saints. In Revelation 19:8 it is written: "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

With even clearer and more direct words we read in Matthew 24: 45-47: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods." I believe it is not difficult to recognize that wise and faithful servant is Br. Russell.

Dear brethren! I would like to end my discourse with the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote to the Thessalonians: “We are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:5-6).

What happiness it is to live in this time of the end and not be in darkness and to be able to recognize the meaning of these world-shaking events which are happening over the whole earth. The world is collapsing and we are without a doubt very near the end of the Time of the End. May this knowledge and certainty cause us to look up and to lift up our heads, knowing that our redemption and the redemption of all mankind from death through the kingdom draweth nigh, yes, even at the doors (Luke 21:28 and Matthew 24:33).

May God bless us all! Amen.

## Presentation Four

# Daniel 12:7-12

Daniel Symposium, Part Two Brother Nicolae Zoicas (Romania)

*Beloved* brethren, our lesson today will be from Daniel's prophecy, chapter 12:7-12, which we will first read and then try to untie its mystery, a mystery that was not explained to Daniel, the prophet of God, even if he was given the task of writing it. Here is the text: "And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto the heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, 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. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

## Daniel's Prophecy

The Book of Daniel contains a prophecy that was fulfilled gradually during the dominion of the four universal empires: BABYLON, MEDO-PERSIA, GREECE and ROME. The verses that we will analyze today contain periods of 1260, 1290 and 1335 years, periods of the fourth empire, the Roman Empire.

Nowadays, it is not a secret anymore to the Lord's people that these dates, referred to as days, are, in fact, important years in the history of the Christian Church. The first period, of 1260 years, is hidden in verse 7 under the name "a time (one year), times (two years), and an half (half a year)," totaling 3½ years. In Revelation, we find the key that will open this lock of the times, which we will consider later.

We return for a short time to the book of Daniel 7:23-35, where we read: "... The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms upon earth, and shall tread the earth down, and break it into pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

We notice the similarity with chapter 12:7 (a time, times and an half). In both Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7 there is the mention that the sons of the Most High will suffer because of a power (or a horn) during the fourth empire, the Roman Empire. This power of the empire, this horn, the

papal horn or the papal power was different than the other 7 powers of the empire. I said 7 and not 10, because 3 of them fell and in their place came the papal system.

Revelation 12:14 writes this: “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, times and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” The woman in Revelation represents the saints of the Most High in Daniel’s prophecy.

## The Key to Daniel’s Prophecy

Now we will find the key of the mystery; it is in Revelation 11:2, 3. In verse 2, we are told that the Temple’s court will be trod underfoot for forty-two months and verse 3 tells us that the two witnesses will prophesy in sackcloth for 1260 days. Along the same line, chapter 13 verses 1-10 describes a beast (the same beast from the book of Daniel); verse 5 relates that “power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.” The forty-two months of 30 days each, equals 1260 days or 3 ½ years (coded). A time (1 year), two times (2 years) and half of a time (half a year).

It is obvious that both the prophecy from Daniel and the one from Revelation refer to the same events in the history of the real Church (and of the false church at the same time). They also refer to the same period of time, and these three symbols were coded, so as to not be known until the “time of the end”:

- (1) “a time, times, and an half” or 3½ years;
- (2) “forty-two months”;
- (3) “one thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

Dividing the 1260 days by 42 months gives us the length of each month in these prophecies to be 30 days. Those months, multiplied by 12 months — a literal year — form a coded year of 360 days and not 365 days, the length of a literal year. These things are clear, now that the time of understanding has come.

Something that had to be hidden in Daniel’s days, it is important to be known now. That is that the three and a half times represented 3½ coded years of 360 days each, totaling 1260 days. Those days represented just as many years; 1260 days = 1260 years by the calculation method given by God in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4-6: “I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Therefore, both the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation talk about the time of the Papal reign, in which time the two witnesses — the Old and the New Testament — as well as the people who supported the Word of God had much to suffer. This time is the period between 539 AD and 1799 AD, when the decree of Justinian, the emperor of Constantinople, was applicable. The decree was given in the year 533 AD, but was instituted only 6 years later, 539 AD, when the Ostrogoth barbarians were driven away from Rome. This decree empowered the Bishop of Rome as the leader of the entire Church. In 1799 AD, this period ended with Napoleon’s overthrow of the papal power. We’ll meet again with the year 539 AD in the book of Daniel. For this is the starting point for both the 1290 years of Daniel 12:11 and the 1335 years of Daniel 12:12.

The 1290 years overlaps the second part of the 2300 years of Daniel 8:13,14. This prophecy con-

cerns the first coming of Messiah and the laying of the eternal sacrifice (Daniel 9: 23-27), followed by the entire period of the uncleanness of the Sanctuary that culminated with “the daily sacrifice” being taken away, “the abomination that maketh desolate” being set up, the treading under foot of the Sanctuary and of the host and eventually the “cleansing of the Sanctuary.”

## **Cleansing of the Sanctuary**

The period of the cleansing of the Sanctuary is from Luther’s time (1517 AD) until Miller’s days (1844 AD), during which the reformers tried to heal Babylon (Jeremiah 51:9). In 1846 AD, the Daughters of Babylon formed a union of the so-called “Evangelical Alliance,” separating themselves from the Sanctuary class and leaving it clean, as told in Daniel 8:14.

The 1290 years from Daniel 12:11 come to an end in 1829 AD, the beginning of the Miller movement. That movement reached its peak in 1844 and had as a result the cleansing of the Sanctuary 2 years later, in 1846 AD. This ended the “2300 evenings and mornings” — years. This movement was the crowning of the general tendencies of illumination and cleansing that the Lord triggered, during this period throughout the Christian world in Asia, Europe and America.

The year 1829 AD is important; by Divine providence, the previously sealed meaning of 1260, 1290 and 1335 days started to be revealed at this date (Daniel 12: 10,11).

The first two periods of 1260 and 1290 days are contained in the prophecy of the “2300 days” from Daniel 8:14. This started in 454 BC with the “command to rebuild Jerusalem” and ended in 1846 AD when the great unclean doctrines of “The Holy Trinity,” “immortal soul,” “eternal torment” and others were taken away and the crowd of merchants was thrown out of the spiritual Temple.

The last period of 1335 years has its starting point in 539 AD, also, which takes us to the end of the 19th century, in the year 1874. The Angel Gabriel calls “happy” all those who reach this year [Daniel 12:12, Rotherham translation]. Why is that?

The happiness comes from the fact that 1874 is the year when the ones who were cleaned through the reformed movement, the class of the virgins in Matthew 25:1, saw clearly from the prophecies that the day is dawning and the morning star has arisen — their dear Lord Jesus returned, as Bridegroom, as Reaper and as King. He returned to gather for God the “first fruits” — the members of His Church — with whom He will turn the Earth into a paradise, blessing all the “families of the earth.” This blessing will follow after he finishes gathering all the wheat, burning all the tares and plowing the whole land in order to put the seeds in a for a “second harvest.”

## **1874, 1878 in Prophecy**

The year 1874 is a large harbor in which lay many different ships from different cardinal points. The time doesn’t allow us to talk in more detail about all the prophecies that connect the biblical chronology and Israel’s jubilees to 1874 AD.

The year 1874 is the beginning year of the 7th Thousand years. It is the year when the “7th

trumpet,’’ which is described in Revelation 10:7, started to sound, revealing to ‘‘His servants’’ The Plan of God in all its splendor. It is the ‘‘Jubilee trumpet’’ that started sounding on all planes — in the ecclesiastic heavens and on earth; see Revelation 11: 15, 19.

In this year, 1874, our returned Lord already had prepared a ‘‘wise and faithful servant’’ that he appointed to be the seventh angel who will powerfully blow his trumpet in the ecclesiastical heaven and proclaim the following message of Revelation 11:15-19: ‘‘the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.’’

In earthly matters, in the year 1874 the first labor union in the world was established, that protects, shouts and fights for the rights of those who work. Since then, this shout extended from individuals to nations, bringing more and more people toward freedom and towards profiting from the goods of this earth, that for centuries were available only to few.

And this shout for freedom — this jubilee trumpet — continues to sound louder and louder — just as it did on Mount Sinai at the inauguration of the covenant with the typical kingdom of God; sounding in the midst of the lightening (that lighten all the human rights), in the midst of the thunder (the loud shouts for righteousness), and in the midst of the earthquakes (the social revolutions); making the mountains crumble deeper and deeper into the sea (that is pressure on governments to come down to the requests of the masses).

As in the type, during all this time, the whole mountain (the whole kingdom of this world that is about to become the kingdom of God) is covered with fire and smoke (the burning of all that is unrighteous), scaring the people with these unexpected manifestations, to prepare their hearts to receive the New Covenant of life from the hand of the Anti-typical Moses — Christ.

The Great Jubilee of the earth has started. The great events of the Lord Jesus’ reign have started. The year 1874 is the beginning of a week of years, similar to the 70th week of Daniel 9:27. That week of 7 years was the last week of favor for the Jewish nation. Its beginning was the year 29 AD, at the baptism of our Lord and the beginning of His harvest work within the Jewish nation; in the year 33 AD was His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, as King, and the condemning of Jerusalem; the year 36 AD meant the ceasing of favor for the Jews as a Nation and the entry of the Gentiles into favor as Spiritual Israel, marked by the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile.

In 1874 AD the reversal of that process started. It is the end of the last week of favor for the Nominal Spiritual Israel (the Gentiles) and the gradual start of the national favor of the Jewish people. Similar to the previous time, the same King, not riding an ass, but in power and glory, enters His Spiritual Temple in the year 1878, in the middle of the last anti-typical week of favor of the nominal spiritual Israel.

The earthly Jerusalem receives also a small share of blessing: prophecies regarding the Jewish nation begin to be fulfilled; these prophecies foretold the cessation of the curse over Jerusalem given by the Lord in the year 33 AD, a curse that lasted 1845 years, until 1878 AD, the Congress of Nations in Berlin. That was a period equal to the time of national favor that they experienced prior to their rejection (Isaiah 40:2)

The year 1878 was the year of the birth of a pair of twins (just like in Rebecca’s case): the

resurrection of the Church and the resurrection of the Jewish nation from the valley of dry bones — Ezekiel 37. The year 1878 is also the end of the 1845 years of favor for the nominal church; it was cast away from divine favor as a system or channel carrier of light, shown by the choosing of a new channel that is used now; this happened because it became a Babylon of confused creeds. It is the year when the shout of Revelation 18:2-4 starts: “Come out of her, my people.” It is the time for the beginning of the Gospel Age harvest.

The year 1878 begins the return of the planet into the dominion of man. The repossession of the land by the Jewish nation is the beginning. “But the glory, honor and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Romans 2:10). Since then, the 7th trumpet announces a message of growing righteousness.

The year 1881 is the end of the last week of favor for nominal spiritual Israel, during the Lord’s second presence, when the “fishing net” was pulled to the shore. It is the year of the end of the general call, but it is not the end of the election or “the closing of the door.” The fishing net has been pulled to the shore and the sorting of the fish has started. The sorting of the fish is actually the separation of the true Christians from the other Christians, the other fish. It is the same harvest work as in the case of natural Israel, just that now it is represented by the separation of wheat and tares.

The year 1881 is also the first symbol of the new transition, of the return of favor to the special instrument needed for this work — the Jewish nation, by which the blessing will be extended to all the nations; in this year, 1881 AD, the first school of agriculture was opened after only 3½ years from the opening of Palestine’s gates for the Jews! Therefore, these two workings, the heavenly and the earthly callings, are active together during this transition period, the first of them decreasing, and the latter one increasing, just as God says through the prophet Amos (Amos 9:11-15).

There would be many more things to say about the return of the favor to Israel and about the resurrection of the Church in the year 1878; also about the time given to the four universal empires until the year 1914; about the “stone which smote the image” of Daniel 2 and about many others. I end with the hope that we will have the opportunity to talk about those issues in our private conversations, in our correspondence or at other conventions. Until the fulfillment of the words of Jeremiah 31:34, “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord,” until then “blessed are your eyes for they see and blessed are your ears for they hear”!

May the Lord bless you!

Presentation Five

# The Last Reformer, The Seventh Star

Brother Aleksander Mistarz (Australia)

*Dearly* beloved Brothers and Sisters in our Dear Savior Jesus Christ! I would like to greet everyone with the peace of the Lord and to convey to you cordial Christian greetings from the Polish Class in Melbourne, Australia. With the grace and help of the Lord we would like to consider now a subject, the last reformer — the Seventh Star.

## **The Mystery of the Seven Stars**

In Revelation 1:16, we are told about “seven stars” which the Lord had in His right hand. In verse 20 the Lord says: “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candle-sticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”

Seven Churches stand for seven periods of the Church during the Gospel Age. Each of these had its own star, that is, an angel or a messenger (Revelation 2, 3). We understand that the angels represent seven reformers, the messengers of the Lord who gave light, teachings, which depended on the amount of spiritual understanding which the Lord gave to them.

These seven stars were being held by the Lord “in His right hand.” Which means that they were the closest to the heart of the Saviour. That is why the Saviour talked to the angel, the messenger who served in spiritual things, and through him He spoke to the Church. From this we see that the Lord had His tools in the Gospel Age through whom He acted for the good of His Church. None of the seven reformers was inspired — infallible. The twelve stars of the Church, the apostles, were inspired. A lot could be said about the seven reformers, but our subject is the last reformer, Charles T. Russell and his work.

## **A Faithful and Wise Servant**

In the Harvests of the Jewish Age and the Gospel Age the harvester was and is Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:11, 12, Revelation 14:14,15). During the Harvest of the Jewish Age the Lord was visible and He did not need a special servant. He Himself did His work with the help of His apostles. In the Harvest of the Gospel Age the Lord is present, but not visible. That is why He has chosen a faithful servant through whom He gave food for the right season.

If someone knows the truth proclaimed by Br. Russell, he must admit that it is impossible that he could have given it from his own wisdom. What he gave is above the wisdom of any man.

The previous reformers were reforming immoral customs, fought against worshipping of idols. They stirred up zeal towards God: they spoke against greed and abuse of the clergy, against corruption, against the mass, sacraments, against the doctrines of the Trinity, immortal soul, purgatory, baptism. However, none of them presented the Divine Plan of the Ages, this deep truth, this concentrated solid food for the mature, for the perfect, for the alert. He was the main servant and helper of the Lord, whom the Lord himself called a “faithful and wise servant” (Matthew 24:45-47).

The food which the Lord gave through him was for the time of the Harvest of the Gospel Age. These doctrines were to be a sickle for dividing wheat from the tares, from nominal Christianity from unripened wheat. Were such truths given? Yes!

First of all, it has been generally preached to the class of the “virgins”: “Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.” Then a booklet *Food for Thinking Christians* was widely spread. Then *The Divine Plan of The Ages*, that is, the first Volume of the *Studies in The Scriptures*, was published. The teaching of the First Volume can illuminate a man, may take him out of the darkness of Babylon and set him upon his feet. Its chapters bring forth a wonderful light. Its teachings are so great that common people are not able to appreciate them.

The next five volumes are an expansion of the first. Even if Br. Russell would have had more wisdom than he possessed, he would not have been able to write down all these teachings of the truth out of his own capability. These teachings are from God. The Lord has returned, as He forspoke, and is serving His people with the food in due season. The truth which the Lord proclaimed through His servant, was to seal “the servants of God.” For this purpose trouble has been held back — Rev. 7:1-4.

## Truths Proclaimed

Now let us consider what the Lord proclaimed through His servant.

(1) Times have been fulfilled; come out of Babylon my people. That is why chronology was given. It pointed out, on the basis of the scriptures, that the year 1874 ended 6000 years of sin and the time for restitution has come. That is why the first chapter of *The Divine Plan of the Ages* was entitled “Earth's Night of Sin to Terminate in a Morning of Joy.”

(2) It has been pointed out what Babylon means and why we should be separate from it. Their faults and sins have been revealed — the faults of the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant Churches and the whole so-called Christianity.

(3) It has been explained that our Lord is to come for the second time on earth and that He will come as a spiritual, invisible being. It was proven that since 1874 our Lord is present, though He is invisible.

(4) The Divine Plan of the Ages has been revealed — a relationship between the Lord and man. An answer was given to a question which torments many people and which is a stone of offense for many, that is, why God permitted evil and what is the punishment for sin, is it eternal torment?

(5) A purpose of the first and the second coming of our Lord has been explained, also, why 2,000 years had to pass between the first and second coming. For even though Jesus died for all, none of the people living in the present evil world has been able to profit so far from the death of our Lord.

(6) Two kinds of natures, human and spiritual, have been explained. Because of the ransom given by the Lord, the whole mankind is to be given the right of restitution, that is, the right according to which every human being that will be willing to submit and to keep God's law will be able to achieve eternal life in a perfect condition on earth. This is to happen when a group of faithful followers of Christ will be chosen and taken to heaven and will attain a change from human to spiritual nature. These things are coming to an end.

(7) Times of Gentiles have been explained, their beginning in 606 BC and the end in 1914. Symbolic meanings of Jubilees and the Great Millennial Jubilees have been pointed out, as well as blessings of the beginning of this day, blessings of the 1335 days of Daniel and the meaning of the day of the wrath of God.

(8) In 1876 it has been explained that the end of favor towards Gentiles, in 1914, will begin the period of favor towards Israel, that this nation will be regathered to Palestine, that it will be the first nation to undergo restitution and then through them the whole world of mankind will gain restitution. Also, it was stated that the Great Pyramid in Gizah, Egypt, confirms the Biblical teachings through measurements and numbers of its passages.

(9) The character of our Heavenly Father has been explained, as well as the pre-human existence of our Saviour, His nature during His first coming and after His resurrection, His unity with the Father and the unity between His little flock and Him. It was pointed out what the Holy Spirit and its relation to the Father and the Son is.

(10) It has been explained what the New Creature is, as well as its calling, development, rights and duties. It was shown how the law of love is the only law which directs the New Creature and how its only aim is to develop love to such a degree as to become one with the Father in heaven, through Jesus Christ.

(11) Justification through faith and works has been explained, as well as three covenants: Abrahamic, Law and New, also the meaning of the soul and the meaning of Biblical Hell.

(12) The meaning of the tabernacle in the wilderness was given, its sacrifices, ceremonies, the antitypical priests and the Levites, that is, the Great Company and the Ancient Worthies and their works and blessings in the future.

The above mentioned truths and many more which we have not mentioned were a sickle used by the Lord to lead His people out of Babylon and to seal them on their foreheads. All this was conveyed with the help of the wise and faithful servant who had helpers in his work.

Brother Russell was a pastor elected by 1200 ecclesias. He organized and directed an office of studies which employed 70 pilgrims. Apart from that, he conducted a helping office consisting of 700 speakers who devoted themselves part-time to the preaching of the Gospel. Since 1879, the

bi-weekly Watchtower, Herald of Christ's Presence, was published.

50 million copies of His books were published. This literature was published into many languages: English, Polish, German, French, Swedish, Dutch, Norwegian, Russian, Ukrainian, etc. 4,000 news-papers published his sermons, which were read by over 50 million readers. Pastor Russell was known in almost every home in the U.S. and Canada.

During the 40 years of his work he traveled about 1 million miles, which is over 0.5 million kilometers, which would be a distance equivalent to 40 times around the earth's equator. He gave 30,000 sermons and wrote 50,000 pages. His writings were published into 35 languages. Sometimes he answered 1,000 letters a month. Let us add to this about 50 million copies a year of the Bible Students monthly. That was his work during the harvest of the Gospel Age.

## **Sealing of the Foreheads**

Because the sealing of the foreheads of the faithful servants of God was a unique work, the Lord gave a picture of Br. Russell and his work in Ezekiel 19. In this chapter, the sealing of the foreheads of God's people with the truth is shown, together with the killing with the sword of error of those that are not sealed. This is happening in a city — in Christendom. This is a big city called in a spiritual sense Sodom and Egypt, and that is where our Lord was crucified (Revelation 11:8). Just before Israel was about to leave Egypt, its first-born were under the cover of the blood of the Lamb, as it were sealed; so likewise, before mankind becomes free, the antitypical first-born must be sealed.

A man with linen garments with a writer's ink-horn by his side represents the wise and faithful servant, Brother C.T. Russell and his faithful co-workers, who are "sealing the servants of our God in their foreheads" (Revelation 7:3). The Lord proclaimed that those who were not sealed should be destroyed by six men. We don't think that this destruction means literal death, but rather a destruction of the faith in the true teachings of the word of God, and in particular in the ransom of Christ.

These were teachers of errors and false teachings, who grafted these in the minds of the unsealed, that is the unfaithful, as it was written: "... them that perish (are rejected); because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved (so that they wouldn't receive the highest reward). And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion (and not the truth), that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth (given through the Lord with the help of the faithful servant), but had the pleasure in unrighteousness (human teachings)" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

Brother Russell, as a wise and faithful servant, was very meek and humble. He always proclaimed the virtues of God, Jesus Christ, the glorious Divine Plan, and never of himself. Br. Russell's goal was to exalt God and Jesus Christ, and not his own person. That is how we recognize that he was the wise and faithful servant of the Lord, and at the same time the true one, because in him were fulfilled the Lord's word: "He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness (lies) is in him" (John 7:18).

## **The Sickle of Truth**

The teachings of the sickle of the truth were so sharp and powerful that whoever came to know them and was sealed with them; his forehead, the mind, became hard and powerful as a diamond (Ezekiel 3:1-9). Thanks to it, he was able to with-stand those who were against the truth. This truth has an unsurpassed harmony. This servant of the Lord not only received a command to seal the foreheads of the Lord's people, but also to throw fire (sharp truth) on a city (nominal Christianity) (Ezekiel 10: 2,6,7). And that is what Br. Russell did, particularly through the teachings of the first and the fourth volumes.

There are those who feel that Br. Russell gave some good things but made many mistakes as far as chronology. To these we reply that Br. Russell was not mistaken. The Lord used him to reveal the truth about the fact that in 1874, 6,000 years were ended and the 7th thousand years had begun. And at that time the Lord came for the second time on earth.

## **The Second Presence**

The Lord returned first of all to His servants. This is proven by the fact that the Lord according to His promise served us with food in a due season (Luke 12:37). We have partaken of this food. He has enlightened us and helped us come out of Babylon to the freedom of the glory of the Children of God. We have been rejoicing in this truth until now and we feel protected by our Good Shepherd.

Br. Russell stated that, according to the Scriptures, the Gentiles times were to last 2520 years, and that they started with the dethroning of the last Jewish king, Zedekiah, that is, 606 years before Christ, and ended in 1914. He foretold this many years before this date, and his statement was fulfilled. The Lord said: "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down by Gentiles, until the times of Gen-tiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The word "trodden" means not only ruling but also persecution. The word "Jerusalem" here means not only a city, but also the nation of Israel.

So, when Jesus said that Jerusalem would be trodden down until the times of Gentiles were over, it meant that the nation of Israel would be under the violence of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles ended. The entire Palestine was taken from the Jews and given to Gentiles. In the middle ages, Popes organized a few crusades to regain Palestine from Pagans. Hundreds of thousands of armed people and knights, the prime of Europe, went to take over this area from Pagans.

Is Palestine — Jerusalem — now in the hands of Pagans? No! Is Jerusalem, the Jewish nation trodden by Gentiles? No! At present Jews live in Palestine, they have their own government, their own country, language and so forth. If Palestine belongs to them and is under their rule, and they as a nation are free, then Jerusalem is no longer trodden down and the Times of the Gentiles are over. This fact cannot be refuted.

A very well known episode of conquering Jerusalem, by Gen. Allenby on December 9, 1917, without one shot being fired, additionally shows how the Lord showed mercy to the Jews, and gives us a witness as to how in a simple and yet a miraculous way He delivered them and Jerusalem from destruction.

The fulfillment of these facts proves that: (1) Br. Russell was a servant of God, the last reformer who delivered good food in due season, (2) We are correct in holding and defending these

teachings, (3) Chronology is correct.

Where was a misidentification? Br. Russell thought that the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's statue by means of a stone, was to be fulfilled earlier than it is actually taking place. Were Br. Russell alive today, he would not have dismissed Chronology. Chronology is rooted in the Bible. He would have, however, dismissed the thought of a quick crumbling down of the statue. This thought of his was not based on any chronological point. No one can prove that Br. Russell stated that it was so.

## **Smiting of Nebuchadnezzar's Image**

Daniel 2:34-35 says: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind 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."

From this description we cannot conclude that everything is to happen quickly, in one moment; rather the quoted words show events developing in stages. To understand this better, let us consider a Biblical example. When the Lord promised Israel Palestine, some imagined that this would happen immediately. However, the events developed differently.

There were those who murmured for this reason, so the Lord told them in Exod 23:29-30 "I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land."

If in the case of one country, a change of people and government required many years; then a change of living conditions for the whole world of mankind requires even longer.

Our respect and reverence for the last messenger engenders a danger of worshipping him (Colossians 2:18). Even the Apostle John, in the book of Revelation, undergoes this temptation twice. It is worth noticing that he was not condemned for it, but rather gently admonished (Revelation 19:10, 22:8, 9). Such an attitude seems more proper than a rejection of the messenger and his message.

If Br. Russell gave a statement which is not supported by the scriptures, then it should not be accepted. We are obliged to check everything and to accept only those teachings which are supported by the Bible.

However, let us remember that Br. Russell devoted all his talents to the Lord's service. He never had a holiday; he worked constantly until the end of his life on the work which the Lord had given him, so that he could say: "I have done as Thou has commanded me" (Ezekiel 9:11).

Let us continue with patience in whatever we have learned. The time and moment will come when our patience will be rewarded. "For you have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36).

To this end, I would like to thank the Brethren who have put forth their efforts into organizing this convention. But first of all, I would like to thank our Heavenly Father for blessing our efforts, so that with His help and protection we could meet here. I would like to wish all the Brothers and Sisters at this convention, as well as myself, that the words from the Holy Book, which we have heard, and Lord willing, will still hear for a few days, will become our spiritual strength and comfort. May we receive new strength to continue towards our appointed goal.

May the Lord bless us. Amen.

## Presentation Six

# The Time and Work of the Harvest

Brother Radu Rotarescu (Romania)

“*And* in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into My barn” (Matthew 13:30).

Dear brethren in our Redeemer Jesus Christ, thanks be to our Heavenly Father for the fact that He kept us until now in the Truth as a seal of the ones ransomed amongst the nations, as “a first fruit” for God. The subject “The time and the work of the Harvest,” upon which I would like us to meditate together, is of a special importance because it concerns the gathering of the most precious harvest: “first fruit,” “first born,” “the seed of Abraham,” through which, when it shall be all gathered up, God will bless “all the families of the Earth” (Genesis 12:3, Romans 11:25-33).

Here are just two statements from God about the value of this class and about the circumstances of its harvest: “ ‘They will be mine,’ ” saith Jehovah of hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession’ ...” (Malachi 3:17). “Our God cometh, and ... He calleth to the heavens above and to the earth ... Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Psalms 50:3-5).

The gathering of this class is so important and glorious that all prophets have written about it and were interested in it, and even “angels from heaven want to look into it” (Acts 15:14-18, 1 Peter 1:10-13). The harvest is brought about by Our Lord himself and he relates it to two situations and two different periods:

(1) A Present Harvest of Natural Israel, as his words tell us: “Behold I say unto you ... the fields are white, and NOW ready for harvest” (John 4:35-38, Luke 3:7-17).

(2) A Future Harvest of Spiritual Israel (that is made of Gentiles and Israel together), that we get from his words: “... at the time of the harvest, I WILL SAY to the reapers, gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles and burn them; but gather the wheat into My barn” (Matthew 13:30, Romans 9:6-8).

From these scriptures, as well as from others that deal with this subject, the thought emerges very clearly that *the Lord of the Harvest is present during each harvest*, and he directs that work. (Matthew 9:38, 24:30-31). At the first harvest the Lord was looking for “the lost and scattered sheep of the house of Israel,” calling all them that were his, sending the disciples two by two with the sickle of that day’s present truth, into all of the cities of Israel where he would go, so

that all the inhabitants would hear the message and have the opportunity to follow Him (Matthew 10:5-6, Luke 10:1).

During the second harvest, as the first, we see that the Lord has the *same interest* in sending the workers to all of his sheep with the message of truth, or the sickle of the harvest truth, for the same purpose, that is to hear the news of the presence and of his messenger, and be able to “come forth and greet Him” (Matthew 24:31, 25:6).

## The Time of the Parousia

For the Lord’s people it is very important to know the “time of their visitation,” to know the Object, Manner, and Time of their Lord and Bridegroom, Jesus’ return, for it is at this time that a change of work, from sowing to reaping is to be done — a great “work” of harvest. “The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 13:30, 47, 48; 9:36-38; Luke 10:2).

There is a danger, similar to what had happened to natural Israel, that by not knowing the time of their visitation, some of those who think of themselves as Spiritual Israel would not work the great and urgent works that the Chief Harvester has to do — Jesus Christ returned for these; and there are also others who would find themselves in drastic opposition with these works!

One who carefully studies the Scriptures will notice that the period called “the time of the end” is rightly called so, because in this time period, not only the Gospel Age will end, but at the same time all the prophecies about the end of this age will come true (Daniel 11:40, 12:1, Matthew 13:39, 49). This period is the most fertile in events, because it is during this time that the first harvest must be gathered up and taken, and the field — the world (Matthew 13:38) — must be cleaned, ploughed, and prepared for other sowings and another bigger harvest, of the Millennial Age (Exodus 23:16, Amos 9:13, Revelation 14:1-7).

The importance of the events in this time of harvest cannot be appreciated enough in all their grandeur. Even the world will not know, until the powerful unknown agents now working will finish the work they were assigned. We must observe that this harvest of the Church of Christ does not concern others of other religions, such as Mohammedans, Brahmins, Buddhists and others, but only the ones of the Christian religion, from amongst which the Saints must be gathered from, to be united with the Lord in the present “great harvest” and then in the great work of restoration of the world.

The beginning of the time of the end was 1799 (Daniel 11:40), when the power of the great oppressor of the “holy people” was crushed, and “his dominion was taken away” (Daniel 7:25, 26). God prepared His faithful ones, “His holy people,” “His Sanctuary,” for the great blessings that He decided to spread out to them during this time of harvest, when the Lord, the beloved Bridegroom, will be present to lead the “great work” of gathering the members of His Church. In His wisdom, God did not overwhelm his people with the great beam of light that enlightens His saints today, but led them slowly, step by step, cleansing them first of the papal imperfections they still had. This “elite” of His people, forming the Sanctuary, was freed from the Papal straying because of the Reformation’s cleansing movements at the end of the 2300 days, in 1846, as it says in Daniel 8:14.

In the year 1846, two years after the prophesied tarrying of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-5), expected in 1844 because of calculating the parallel starting with the birth of Jesus instead of his baptismal, his holy people, his little flock, were even more dedicated to studying the prophecies of his Word. When at the end of the 1335 days, in 1874, the watchmen received the wonderful message: “Behold the Bridegroom! Come ye forth to meet him!” (Matthew 25:6), they spread the news further to the sanctuary class. And ever since, all the members of the sanctuary class that have heard and recognized this message of the harvest continue in their work of spreading the news until it will be heard by all consecrated Christians. This message indicates very clearly Jesus Christ’s presence as a Bridegroom, Reaper, and spiritual King, and that He establishes a spiritual kingdom during this harvest of the Gospel Age, a harvest which will extend into the Millennial Age.

In Isaiah 52:7-13 God speaks of the present mission of the feet members of Christ’s body, to spread the good news to their brethren in Babylon of the beginning of their Lord’s Kingdom, therefore implicitly of his presence, as much as the persistent calling addressed to his people to “come out of Babylon!” In Psalms 149 God shows us a different mission of the same class. Honored by being his people, his spokesmen, they announce to the multitudes and their leaders the truth that will “bind” their expectations and will “take vengeance” on them.

The manner in which God will establish his kingdom can be seen in the type of the establishment of his typical kingdom — natural Israel — in Canaan, as well as in the many other Scriptures concerning this momentous event. Although Jesus is the king of peace, yet due to the great opposition of Satan’s kingdom he will have to take action in the first phase of the establishment of his Kingdom, not as a Prince of Peace, but more as a General of an army. Because of this the first phase of the establishment of his Millennial Kingdom is called “the Day of Jehovah,” a phase with a work of snatching and destroying with the purpose of beginning a new phase of building and planting, as it says in Jeremiah 1:10, Daniel 2:44, Joel 2, etc. Actually, it is a normal phase — the first phase of establishment — that is being exercised in any antagonistic kingdoms.

## **Five Evidences for 1874**

The year 1874 as a date of the *parousia* (presence) of Christ and a beginning of his functions as a Bridegroom, Reaper, and King, was represented by God in many ways and instances. Here are five examples.

(1) The typical cycles of jubilees in Israel, ingeniously hidden in 19 cycles of 50 years, providentially supported for them to be full, plus the rest of 51 cycles unfulfilled of 49 years each; that totals to 70 typical cycles, as many as were foreseen (2 Chronicles 36:21, Leviticus 25:10), totals 3449 years. These years being counted from the first entrance in Canaan, since the typical jubilees started, were ending at the beginning of the antitypical jubilee, in 1874, the same prophetic year of Jesus Christ’s Glorious King’s return. (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume 2, Chapter 6).

(2) Two proofs will confirm this testimony — The Law and The Prophets — the two being absolutely independent of each other yet they are very alike in clarity and persuasiveness.

(3) The wonderful Parallelism between the Jewish Age and the Gospel Age teaches us the same truth, with complementary features (Volume 3, Chapter 7).

(4) The Prophet Daniel, in Daniel 12:1, also indicates our Lord's second presence, but in a way that would remain sealed until the foretold events that would have to take place before it would be accomplished and pass into history (Volume 2, Chapter 5).

(5) "The Stone Witness" — the Great Pyramid in Egypt (Isaiah 19:19-20) testifies unshakably to the same date and purpose of the return from Heaven of our Lord in 1874 and the beginning of the "restitution of all things," as the Apostle Paul tells us in Acts 3:20,21 (Volume 2, Chapter 10).

Yes, we recognize the "prince of the covenant," the "mighty god," the "everlasting father" (Daniel 11:22, Isaiah 9:6), the one that arose at the end of the 1335 days (Daniel 12:1, 12) with power and authority to bring the completion of the restoration of all things (Revelation 11:15-17). If all the proofs show that we live in the time of the harvest, let us notice what the Scriptures tell us about our rights, privileges and responsibilities as servants of the one that came to harvest the Earth (Revelation 14:14-16).

## **Rights, Privileges, Responsibilities**

If during the harvest of Natural Israel the chief harvester, Jesus, sent disciples "two by two" to carry the "sickle" of that day's present truth, then he will also do it in the present harvest and reveal it to His scattered sheep. The same chief harvester wishes and asks that his disciples in this age carry his Truth "sickle" to all the sheep of spiritual Israel, scattered and captive in Christianity's Bab-ylon (Matthew 24:16-18). As the "barn" of the Jewish harvest, where all the wheat was gathered, was a new spiritual society where the Truth was reigning, separated from the nominal class, in the same way we see that during the harvest of Spiritual Israel there is a gathering of the wheat in a new spiritual society, where the Truth is also reigning, separate from nominal Christianity (Matthew 3:11, 12, 13:30, Revelation 18:4, Volume 3, Chapter 6). Here, in this new spiritual society, takes place the work of sifting, sorting and finally storing into the heavenly barn.

In the parable of the tares among wheat from Matthew 13:24, the Lord shows us important things in the explanation he gives in verses 36-43. We see that the wheat that came out of "the good seed" of truth, sown by Jesus, represents the true children of the Kingdom, the ones truly consecrated, the inheritors, and the tares that came out of the straying seed of Satan represent those that are Christians only in name, those that say: "Lord, Lord!" but don't do and don't intend to do what he says (Luke 6:46).

The reality is the same as in the type: the early sprouts of the tares can't be distinguished from those of the wheat, except by a knowledgeable one; as growth progresses, the stems will mature, generating red flowers and black seeds. The entire plant is toxic, attacking the central nervous system and causing, depending on the quantity, apathy, paralysis, and even death! The tares are mistaken some-times for brand/embers, which is a disease of the true wheat manifested through the posture of the wheat straight up, because of some fungus that eats its grains, leaving a black dust behind. This disease could typify the spiritual disease of disobedience and pride of some brethren, which if not treated in time leads to death! While the tares can't be "treated," the sick wheat can be saved if the treatment is applied in time. That is a responsibility of the children of God! (1 Corinthians 5:5, James 5:19-20, Jude 23).

In this parable we see that from the very beginning the wheat class had to grow in the ground among the tares, forming thus the Christian world or the nominal church, but at the harvest time the separation *must* be made between these classes. Through the message “allow both to grow together until the harvest” we are told the proper time for this work. By not following this timeline, there would have been a general upsetting of the world (or of the ground) before the time established by God, as well as a confusion among the wheat and tares class.

## Who Carries Out This Work?

The Lord tells us in Matthew 13:30, “in the time of the harvest, I will say to the *reapers*, “First gather up the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.” In Matthew 24:30, 31, he tells us that “then” [when the Son of Man shall be present] “He will send His angels with a great trumpet shout, and will gather up his elect from the four winds, from one edge of heaven to the other.” There is no doubt that the “reapers” and the “angels” in these two places are the same class, and represent all His true followers that carry out the “great harvest,” just as at his first advent! Those faithful to his promise must know the time and the season of this work of harvest very well, just as the Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:4: “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief” (Matthew 13:11).

To illustrate the change in character of this work at the end of the Gospel Age, our Lord gives us the dragnet parable (Matthew 13:47-50). “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered fish of every kind.” After it is full, the fishermen take it in to shore, sit down, separate into containers what is good and throw out what is not. The same will be at the end of the age (or harvest, Matthew 13:39). All that still want to work with the Lord must obey his commandments and not waste any more time just fishing, but be part of the actual work of “separation” and “gathering into containers.”

How “great is the harvest” is very clear from the Lord’s words quoted above from Matthew 24:30, 31. We notice that the Lord’s interest for true wheat is exactly the same as at his first advent. It is similar to Luke 10:1, 2 where we are told that then he sent his reapers “two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come,” and Matthew 9:35 tells us that then “Jesus went about *all* the cities and the villages” for this purpose. Matthew 24:30, 31 tells us that “then” He “will send” his angels to gather his elect “from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” What does this Scripture mean to us? Do we have the same purpose and interest, and to the same extent, that the Lord is asking from us in preaching and gathering his elect? If so, blessed are we!

If during the Gospel Age it was told to some disciples not to try to separate the wheat from the tares, today those that are ready, those that are obedient and worthy of the Teacher’s favors, receive the knowledge of his plans and his decisions from him, in such a clear way, that they *recognize* they are in the time of harvest, his voice says to them: “throw in the sickle” of present truth and “Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” (Revelation 14:14-16, Psalms 50:5).

It is interesting that the sickle of truth is the one that binds the tares, and also gathers the wheat into Christ’s barn, setting it free and giving it the free-dom it had in the beginning. We could

discern three bindings of the tares that take place through the harvest of the wheat:

(1) first, the binding of the tares takes place in the mind of the faithful one, that makes him feel free of it's binds;

(2) A second one is the indirect binding, or self-binding, that the tares are doing to themselves because of the fear of the Truth, through restrictive and conservative measures, binding with its doctrinal limits all individual thought and study and therefore the reform — which prepares them to be thrown into the fire.

(3) A third binding is done through the special tools of “counting, counting, weighting and dividing” (“mene, mene, tekem, upharsin”) that already started the “burning” process, and will carry it out soon in the fire of the great time of trouble that will end the Gospel Age (Daniel 5:25, Revelation 18:18, 21, Matthew 13:40-42).

## **The Sickle of Truth**

This sickle of truth must develop and attract in a true unity of heart ONLY the true class, to try it and separate it from the nominal multitudes. While the wheat is fully enjoying the freedom that Christ gave it, there is a clear distinction between the wheat and the tares which are bound tighter and tighter by the doctrines that keep the tares shackled in that specific confession. By the message “Come forth, My people, out of her” (Revelation 18:4), it is understood the duty of the wheat — of “the children of the kingdom” — to come forth from Christianity’s Babylon and enter into the new society of wheat, even here, on this side of Jordan, as it was at the first harvest.

In Isaiah 52:11-12, by the message “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence! For ye shall not go out in haste ...” The Lord is drawing his people’s attention in Babylon, that besides their duty to depart they also have the mission of reapers — a mission that each member of the body of Christ has during the harvest — with “a great sound of a trumpet” to preach the message that gets them “out of Babylon,” that they may all hear the true Reaper that has to bind the tares and gather all the wheat from the land (Matthew 24:31, Volume 3, Chapter 6).

It is a mistake to assume, as many do, that the destruction of the tares in the furnace of fire, weeping and gnashing of teeth from Matthew 13:42, means a literal fire and torment beyond the present life. The entire parable belongs to the present age. Not only the wheat and the tares are symbols, but the fire also symbolizes the great time of trouble that will end this age, when the tares will be destroyed and out of which only the wheat class is promised to escape (Luke 21:34-36).

## **Bride Not Yet Complete**

After the destruction of the tares is described in the parable, the Lord declares that “then the pure ones will shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” From this statement we deduce that the Church is not yet glorified in the glory of its office as the kingdom of God, and that it will be uplifted before the end of this harvest’s final phase of complete burning of the tares. Then the “sun of righteousness” — whose glory will be the Christ complete, will fully rise and it’s rays will bless, restore, cleanse and wash the sin and fault from all humanity, and will destroy the

incorrigible in the second death.

The first official act of our Lord as a King in 33 AD was to disavow the church of natural Israel; in parallel, in 1878, he disavowed mystic Babylon by the message “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Revelation 18:2). Truly, on the field, in 1878 the Lord began to “shout with a great voice” this judgment from Revelation 18:2 by the voice of the seventh angel, “the faithful and wise servant,” Pastor Russell, as well as through this “cloud of witnesses” of his house, and even through the voice of “stones” — the world’s reporters — that published the preaching of Pastor Russell on the front pages, free and in an incomparable number — even compared to all the Christian pastors taken together.

This new message, that was announcing the presence of Christ and the beginning of his kingdom, shows God’s truth, and at the same time denounces the doctrinal and practice errors of Babylon. It was the message of Jehovah in Psalms 45:10, 11 to His humble servants: “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house [Adam and the human ties, hopes, wishes and ambitions]! So the King [the new king, Lord Jesus] will desire thy beauty. For he is thy Lord; and reverence thou him [devote your life to his great present work].”

The wonderful reward for the class that does so is shown in the following verses. “The King’s daughter [the daughter of Jehovah, for this is Christ’s Bride’s title] within the palace is all glorious ... She shall be led unto the [Great] King in brodered work” — the robe of righteousness given by Jesus, embroidered with the Christian virtues! Great shall be the joy in heaven and on Earth when she shall be given the complete entrance into the King’s palace. Many shall say: “Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready!” (Revelation 19:7). Then, “the daughter of Tyre [the world’s powers] ... the rich among the people, shall entreat thy favor ... I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the peoples give thee thanks for ever and ever” (Psalms 45:12-17).

Who are they that will obtain these favors? They are the “called ones, elected and [stayed] faithful” (Revelation 17:14). Truly wise will be those consecrated ones who leave aside the world’s delusions with the human perspectives, hopes, wishes; and instead wait and wish with all their heart for the great encounter with The Beloved; they will be found ready and proven worthy of the glorious uplift promised, as fiancée, the Bride of the Lamb.

So, taking the lamp (God’s word) and coming forth to meet the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-12) means to leave everything and to follow Christ during this time of his presence; that is to leave Babylon, where the virgins primarily lived until they heard the shout: “Behold the Bridegroom, come forth and meet Him!” This is true, because, as in the Jewish harvest, the Truth revealed by the Light of the harvest shows very clearly this separation of the wheat (the children of light) from the tares.

If it is clear that the sickle of Truth will make this separation, then it is clear that it must be carried and handled by someone! We are told this very clearly by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:14-15: “How then shall they call [believe] on him [when he comes the second time] in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how

shall they hear without a preacher?’’ The careful prepar-ing of lamps through the reverent study of ‘‘every Word that comes out of the mouth of God’’ and of the message that he gave his people through the Laodicean messenger — ‘‘that faithful and wise servant’’ (Revelation 3:14, Matthew 24:45) — reveals the fact that the wise virgins have the oil of the Holy Spirit of consecration and obedience! (Revelation 3:20-22).

## **Appreciating the Privilege**

Those that have such oil will also have its light, and thus appreciating the privilege, they will quickly and gladly follow the ‘‘Lamb, wherever he shall go’’ (Rev. 14:4). The Lord warns us, saying: ‘‘No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back [just like Lot’s wife] is fit for the kingdom of God’’ (Luke 9:62). We must fight to be fit for God’s kingdom, just as our Lord told us: ‘‘Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door ...’’ (Luke 13:24-30).

The announcement of the Bridegroom’s presence, the coming forth to meet him and the entrance with him into the wedding chamber, are events that continue until all the wise virgins shall be ‘‘sealed on the forehead’’ with a knowledge of Present Truth, sufficient to separate them from Babylon and make them worthy of entering with the Bridegroom for the banquet prepared.

Then, when the message of the harvest shall be heard by all true Christians, and when all the virgins shall be tried through this truth, the Door of any opportunity, of any possibility, shall close and no one will be able to enter anymore. The Lord tells us: ‘‘I am the one that opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one will open’’ (Revelation 3:7).

Do you work to ‘‘redeem’’ minutes, hours and days for the preparation of your wedding garment and your lamp, and for the ‘‘coming forth to meet the Bridegroom,’’ following Him in all His present works? Are you full of interest and fervent zeal for the present mission of carrying the truth’s sickle through ‘‘all the cities and villages’’ of the ‘‘Christian Judea’’ around you (as at the first harvest), working in the great work of burning and binding the tares and of gathering every wheat into the barn — ‘‘from one edge of heaven to the other?’’

Are you *using every opportunity* for ‘‘spreading the virtues of him that called us from darkness to his glorious light,’’ trying to find out if there is someone interested in hearing the message of truth?, or are you patiently waiting for them to look for you and for them to ask you first?

The foolish virgins will earn the oil of life of their promised consecration, through EXPERIENCES imposed on the ‘‘goat sent in the wilder-ness’’ class (Leviticus 16:7-10, 20-22), and then knock at the closed door, wishing to be allowed to come in as the WILLING SACRIFICING class of the Bride and saying: ‘‘Lord, Lord, open to us! But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not! [as My Bride — she is behaving differently from Me!] (Matthew 25:10,11).

Those ashamed of him and of his words now, being thus careless towards their privileges and duties, even if they are clean in heart as virgins, they are too overwhelmed with this world’s cares, and fearful of being disapproved, mocked and persecuted by this world for Him and His cause.

The Lord shall be ashamed to declare these foolish virgins as part of his bride when he shall reveal himself in glory and power with all His saints — his faithful messengers, the wise virgins, uplifted and glorified with Him (Luke 9:23-26).

The feast of faith, this discovery of the precious present truths, began immediately after the 1335 days were ended (Daniel 12:12) in 1874, at the beginning of the harvest and of the prophesized blessings, “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the 1335 days!” and still continues! But ... for how long?

By the way prophecies are revealing themselves ever more clearly in the increasing light of the events, it looks like the “winter” when ... it will be impossible to run in this running arena, as our Lord said: “And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a Sabbath” — the complete Sabbath of the Church at the end of its race — when the door shall be closed forever for this wonderful heavenly calling! (Matthew 24:20, Rev-elation 7:1-4).

The Door closed, as we can see, is an event that does not concern the world at all. It is the door to the celebration of the wedding; it was never opened for any but the consecrated, for the virgin class (Luke 13:24, 25, Matthew 25:10-12).

Dear brethren, let us take advantage of these golden opportunities, benefiting from this feast of truths that our dear Savior, Bridegroom, Reaper and King, present for the second time, gives us in the antechamber of the wedding hall (Luke 12:37), from where we can catch a glorious glimpse through “the door” still opened for entering into the great celebration of his wedding as the Bride. As the hymn says “Our lamp is trimmed and burning!”

May God help us so! Amen.

## Presentation Seven

# Consecration

Brother Donatus Ariwodor (Nigeria)

*Dear* brethren, I bring Christian love and greetings to you from your dear brethren in Nigeria. It is a pleasure to be with you all here in fellowship. This morning we will consider a subject vital to us all, namely Consecration.

### Definition

Different authors have at different times by divine guidance defined the word consecration, with a common focus. The Psalmist David, in his treatise, defines consecration in Psalms 40:8 as, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” In Psalms 50:5 it is written, “Gather my godly ones to me, those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” In King Solomon’s work, in Proverbs 23:26, it is written: “Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways.”

Matthew recorded (in Matthew 10:38, 39) our Master saying, “And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew tells us in Matthew 16:24, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. “Brother C.T. Russell, in R2134:1, defines consecration as “... a complete turning away from sin and the world; a thorough turning of every sentiment, hope, ambition and desire unto the Lord, and into harmony with his divine plan.” How harmonious!

Consecration, therefore, may be defined as entering into a covenant relationship with God, sacrificing the flesh and all its interests, in delightful obedience to His will. It means a total denial of one’s self even unto death, for the purpose of life to come which He has promised. It is a total surrender of one’s will, including life, to God and in its place an acceptance of His will, come what may, even unto death, without murmuring, a symbolic beheading.

### Due Deliberation and Forethought

Just like one intending to build a house should sit down and cost it, so would one count the cost before going into such a relationship with God (Luke 14:28). This is because it will cost him not only worldly ties, but also family ties and affection, all that may come into competition with this relationship or covenant with God, as we can see from the following scriptures. Matthew 8:21-22, “And another of the disciples said to him, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead.” Also, Luke 9:61-62 states, “And another also said, I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home. But Jesus said to him, No one, after putting his hand to the plow and

looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’’

Matthew 10:37-39 admonishes us, ‘‘He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me.’’ Brother Russell tells us in R2072:2 that ‘‘The Lord would not have anyone take upon himself the responsibilities of this relationship without due deliberation and forethought.’’

## **Quest For Righteousness**

The Psalmist tells us in Psalms 116:12-14 (NAS), ‘‘What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people.’’ *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume One, page 196, tells us: ‘‘Such find themselves at once thinking and acting as the new transformed mind prompts, even to the crucifixion of the human desires.’’ Matthew tells us in Matthew 11:29, ‘‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.’’ John confirms that Jesus came with authority in John 6:38, ‘‘For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.’’

## **The Calling**

Matthew 11:28, 29 invites us, ‘‘Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.’’ While Romans 12:1 admonishes us, ‘‘I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.’’ Ephesians instructs us, ‘‘There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling.’’

Psalms 51:17 tells us that ‘‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.’’ Matthew 5:23, 24 counsels us, ‘‘If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.’’ Mark 12:30 reminds us that we must commit our all to God. ‘‘And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’’

Lastly the Apostle James declares in James 4:6, ‘‘But he gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’’

## **Bringing Self Under Subjection**

Paul admonishes us in Romans 6:13 that we must mortify the flesh. ‘‘... and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.’’ Paul continues to elaborate on the theme of subjecting the flesh in 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27. ‘‘Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself

should be disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 11:31, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” Also Galatians 5:24, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” James 1:26, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”

## **Leading People to Make a Decision**

Joshua 24:15, “... choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” In 1 Kings 18:21, “... How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”

In Matthew 11:29-30 we are encouraged, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. Luke 14:28 advises us, “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Romans 12:1 urges us to make an unreserved consecration, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Brother Russell in R285:4 tells us, “Urge them to promptness ... to a full confession of the Lord and of the Truth.”

Lastly Paul conveys the thought in 2 Corinthians 6:1, “... and working together with him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain.”

## **Spiritual Support in Fulfilling Our Consecrations**

Deuteronomy 31: 6 encourages us, “Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.” David comforts us in Psalms 41:1 (NAS), “How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The LORD will deliver him in a day of trouble.” And again in Psalms 91:11, “For he will give his angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.”

Paul counsels us in 2 Corinthians 12:9, “And he has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.” Hebrews 4:16 reminds us of our special privilege as Brethren, “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.” The author of Hebrews instructs us in matters of contentment, Hebrews 13:5, “Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for he himself has said, I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.”

Brother Russell in R5942:4 sums up the thoughts conveyed in all the promises quoted. “The Lord’s grace is sufficient for all and for every time of need.” His Word, the Bible, is an anchor to the Soul.

## Rewards of Consecration

Jesus encourages our New Creatures in Matthew 25:21, “His master said to him, Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.” And again in Luke 12:32, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.”

The Apostle James tells us in James 1:12, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love him.” We are refreshed by the Apostle whom Jesus loved in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.”

We are told in Revelation 2:10, “... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Brother Russell tells us in R5499:3 that “The expression, ‘the crown of life,’ is another way of saying the reward of life: and this life is on the highest plane.” In other words, the “Crown of Life” may be defined as inherent life or Divine nature just as our Lord now is” (1 John 3:2).

Lastly the Apostle John in Revelation 14:1 tells us, “And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads.”

## Experiences Involved

Difficult experiences are necessary to develop the Bride of Christ. Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:25, “It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

John 15:18, “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you.” John 17:14, “I have given them thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” 2 Timothy 3:12-13, “And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” 1 John 3:13 (NAS), “Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.”

1 Peter 4:12-14, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of his glory, you may rejoice with exultation.” Brother Russell also reminds us in R2415:3, “The Lord’s followers in the present time are called upon to suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake.”

## Forfeiting Earthly Rights

Deuteronomy 18:1-2, “The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the Lord’s offerings by fire and his portion. And they shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.” “God thus typified the fact that the antitypical Levites would not have an earthly inheritance, but rather the spiritual or heavenly inheritance” (R5023:2).

Matthew 13:44-46, “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”

Matthew 19:21, Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” Luke 14:33-34, “So therefore, no one of you can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

## **Consecration Gives Joy, Peace, Etc.**

Psalms 40:8, “I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart.” Mark 10:29-30, “Jesus said, Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for my sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.”

John 15:11-12, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” Romans 14:17, “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22-24, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Hebrews 12:1-3, “There-fore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

## **Consecration in the Old Testament**

Exodus 28:41-42, “And you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests.” Leviticus 8:12, “Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to consecrate him.”

## **Liability to Second Death**

Matthew 12:32, “And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the age to come.”

1 Corinthians 3:17, “If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”

Hebrews 10:26-27, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”

Hebrews 10:38, “But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.”

1 John 5:16, “... There is a sin unto death, I do not say that he shall pray for it.”

## **Singleness of Purpose**

Matthew 6:24-25, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” John 4:34-35, “Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.”

Galatians 1:10, “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”

Galatians 6:14-15, “But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Philippians 3:13-14, “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” As Bro. Russell said (R1885:3), “We observe the Apostle’s singleness of purpose, ‘this one thing I do.’ He did not try to do several things. If he had, he would surely have failed.”

James 4:4, “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

## **Age for Consecration**

1 Timothy 4:12, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” Brother Russell elaborates on this text in “Studies in the Scriptures,” Volume 6, page 529. He states, “A child bred to and reared in such an atmosphere of love may be expected to desire to please the Lord and to obey him from the earliest moments of his consciousness; and from the time he reaches ten to twelve years of age he should be encouraged to consider the propriety of a full consecration to the Lord.” John 6:37-38, “All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.”

## **The Meaning of Consecration**

“Henceforth, I shall have no will of my own. Whatever is your will, Father, shall be my will. I shall do anything you will have me to do ... I have given up my life. Direct me through your providences and through your words that I may see your will and do it” (R5085:3).

“God first, self last ...” (R5958:5). “Consecration to God will insure a searching of his plan revealed in his Word, that we may be able to spend and be spent for him in his service, in harmony with his arranged and revealed plan” (T119).

## **Typical Consecration (Leviticus 16)**

“The sin offerings of this Day of Atonement were two -- a bullock and ... the Lord’s Goat.” (R4034:5, see Tabernacle Shadows, pages 39-48).

## **Antitypical Consecration**

Numbers 4:39, “from thirty years and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered the service for work in the tent of meeting.”

“Jesus reached the age of 30 and ... was permitted to offer himself without spot to God as the World’s sin offering ... ‘Lo, I come to do thy will, O God’ ... There the Redeemer became the antitypical ... bullock ... He ... completed his consecration at Calvary, crying, ‘It is finished’ ” (R4969:3, 6). “The Lord’s goat represented all the Lord’s ‘little flock’ of faithful followers” (T63). “... all that was done with the bullock was repeated with the ‘Lord’s Goat’ ” (T61).

## **Consecration Versus Sanctification**

Consecration is a definite step taken at a definite moment; the yielding up of the will and all to God. Sanctification contains this thought plus the process of the development of character to full maturity. This must then be maintained to the end of our course. (R5876, last paragraph)

## **Voluntary**

“God does not demand that we shall sacrifice our lives in his service, nor for any other cause. Sacrifice, therefore, is set forth in the Scriptures as a voluntary act” (F151). “The Father seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). “... Never did Jesus or the Apostles urge worldly people to become disciples of Christ. They merely preached ... and accepted those ... influenced by the great facts set forth, ‘sit down and count the cost’ (Luke 14:28)” (R5454:4).

## **To be Followed by Performance**

“It is not all over when we consecrate ... for the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the Most Holy by the high priest, wherewith to make atonement for sin, are burned outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:11). “When we sacrifice our will we should not entertain the thought, now I have done my part, let the High Priest do the rest ... we are to continue to fill up the sufferings of Christ” (R4900:5).

## **How We Come**

“While we present ourselves to God, we do not come to him directly with our presentation. We come through the great High Priest ... the Redeemer” (R5423:6).

Dear brethren, we hope that by these scriptures, and these comments from Bro. C. T. Russell, our comprehension of consecration is improved. Let us, who have devoted ourselves to God, be encouraged to follow through with our pledge by a consecrated walk in the Lord. And may those who are approaching unto God, counting the cost, be encouraged to proceed. No service could be more noble, no commitment a greater privilege, and no reward so grand.

May the Lord help us all. Amen.

## Presentation Eight

# ‘‘Eretz Yisrael’’

The Land of Israel — the Holy Land we Love

Audio Visual Brother Russell Shallieu (USA)

*Nowhere* on Earth are the hopes and aspirations of so many centered — as in the Land of Israel. For Muslim, Jew, and Christian the promise of deliverance, in one way or another, is inexplicably tied to this land.

<< {Items set off by angled brackets pertain to the visuals shown during the presentation.} 2  
Peter 1:19 — ‘‘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. >>

As Christians, and particularly as students of God’s Word, we are keenly interested in ‘‘the more sure word of prophecy’’ (2 Peter 1:19). That God indeed has chosen Israel above ALL others — to be a spectacle among all nations and peoples. That God has specially favored this land and its people — that, in His due time, they will be a light unto the world. And that Israel’s crown jewel — Jerusalem — will be a city set high upon a hill, unto which ALL people will come and worship!

<< Jeremiah 3:17 — ‘‘At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem.’’ >>

Jeremiah’s prophecy here calls attention to the Earthly phase of the Kingdom for which so many have prayed for so many centuries! The blood of many a prophet, martyr, and Jew, has been shed upon its soil; yet none as important as that of our Savior. Poetically, one might say that the stones DO cry out — to those who listen — and they testify of things past, present, and future.

The intent of this program is to take you, in sight and sound, to this Land of Promise ... to catch a glimpse of the past as it mingles with the present, and even more importantly, to look with our mind’s eye toward the future.

Zechariah 2:8 — ‘‘For thus saith the LORD of hosts ... he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.’’ No place on earth is so precious to Jehovah God as:

<< ‘‘ERETZ YISRAEL’’ — The Land of Israel — the Holy Land we love. >> (Read text)

<< Hebrews 11:8-10 — ‘‘By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with

Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” >>

The story of Israel begins a long time ago — when a man of great faith stepped out on a promise. Thus, the land which today is called Israel — was then called The Land of Promise or The Promised Land.

Genesis 12:1-4 — “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him.”

Genesis 15:13-15 — “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger

in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”

Genesis 15:18 — “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”

<< Jericho >>

The time finally came to pass when Israel would cross the Jordan and possess the land. Joshua sent two men to spy secretly on the city of Jericho — and it was here in this city that Rahab hid them. Joshua, full of faith, “said unto the people, Sanctify your-selves: for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” (Joshua 3:5).

Joshua 3:13 — “And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.”

<< Joshua 6:24 — “And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. >>

And so Israel crossed the Jordan River dry-shod. And the LORD delivered Jericho into their hands in a battle which was famed abroad; even to this day. Jericho is among the oldest cities still occupied in the land of Israel. But archaeological digs testify of many failed attempts to make this place prosperous and permanent. The many levels excavated leave clues to the numerous times that Jericho rose and fell — most notably in Joshua’s day.

Eventually the land was divided and Jericho was apportioned to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:21). It was here that Elijah smote the waters, and he and Elisha crossed over the Jordan River dry-shod. It was here that the waters were sweetened by Elisha.

<< 2 Kings 2:21-22 — “And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake. >>

It was here that Zedekiah was captured as he attempted to evade Nebuchadnezzar. It was here that John the Baptist had his ministry which reached its pinnacle with the baptism of Jesus. And it was here that a man of small stature, a chief tax collector, whose name was Zacchaeus, stood taller than others when he “saw” who Jesus really was (Luke 19:1-10).

Today Jericho is but a shadow of its former prosperity. Now occupied by Palestinians bent on the destruction of Israel, Jericho has no hope of a future — fulfilling a curse of the past. Joshua 6:26 — “And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho.”

<< Masada >>

There are few places that have had the distinction of being first a resort — and later a cemetery.

<< 1,345 feet (410 meters) high >> << approx. 1000 feet (300 meters) long x 2000 feet (600 meters) wide at the summit >>

For King Herod — Masada, which commanded an unprecedented view, served as a summer resort. No longer “alive” with the activities of its days of splendor — the archeological remains of a Frigidarium, Tepedarium, and Caldarium — that is Cold, Warm, and Hot baths — speak of a time when the pleasures of life were not denied those who were in a position to afford them.

Yet, Masada also “speaks” of a time when the valor of a mighty and imposing Roman Army was conquered by the death of a small group of zealous Jews. High upon this precipice its fortifications served a sanctuary to nearly 1,000 (960) Jews fleeing the iron legs of Rome.

<< Masada = “stronghold” >>

The name Masada has its derivation from the Hebrew words Mesad and Mesuda, meaning “stronghold.” In the 1st Century AD, as Jerusalem was aflame, the inexhaustible forces of Rome descended upon this last bastion of resistance. Unable to assault the mountain, which was Masada, by ascending its narrow, winding, steep paths, Rome under the direction of General Flavius Silvas, with forced Jewish labor, built still another of its engineering marvels — an assault ramp which rivals a mountain in size!

It was no easy task to accomplish this feat. In preparation the Roman Armies built 8 Camps. And to prevent the Jews from escaping the mount they built a 5,000-yard (4,600 meter) wall around Masada. As the Roman army advanced toward the summit, its battering ram was set afire. Victory for the zealots seemed within reach — had it not been for an unfavorable wind that caused the fire to change direction and spread across the mountaintop fortifications.

Lest they fall into the cruel hands of their predators — their only escape was to take the

“victory” from the Roman sword — by their own hands. Lots were drawn and 10 set about their bloody task. All was quiet when Titus’ forces made their entrance into that mountaintop sanctuary after a siege of nearly 3 years. Between them and victory lay the corpses of a 1000 faceless enemies.

<< “Masada must not fall again!” >>

Today, every Israeli soldier is initiated upon this mountaintop to the oath: “Masada must not fall again!”

<< Engedi >>

Our journey through Israel continues, only a short distance, to Engedi, which translated means the “Spring of the Kid” or “Spring of a Young Goat.” Only after one has traveled by foot or horseback for days on end, and met face to face with the scorching heat of the Judean Desert with its rough and unforgiving terrain, does the word Oasis take on a very special meaning. The Judean Desert compared to the Oasis Engedi has been likened (by G. A. Smith) “as one of the driest and most poisoned regions of our planet.” It is no wonder then that David sought refuge from the wrath of the aging King Saul at this sanctuary.

<< 1 Samuel 23:29-24:2 — “And David ... dwelt in strong holds at Engedi. And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. >>

Along side its flowing waters grow a variety of aromatic plants for which the area is famous.

<< Song of Solomon 1:14 — “My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.” >>

The goats after which it is named are nearly always within eyesight. What was then a natural paradise, sought for by men after a long journey, even now affords the same to a traveler of a different sort, the tourist. When Jerusalem is restored, and the Temple built, the prophecy of Ezekiel 47 speaks of the waters of life flowing out from the Temple Mount to heal the waters of the Dead Sea.

Ezekiel 47:7-10 — “Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi [at the north end of the sea] even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets.”

While these scriptures speak of the northern part of the Dead Sea being healed — of the southern reaches of the Dead Sea we are told that: Ezekiel 47:11 — “... the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.

<< Jordan River >>

Unfortunately places like Engedi serve the water needs of only a few — like a small fountain in a desert. The amount of fresh water for agriculture and daily needs on a country-wide basis is enormous. As demands for this resource continue to increase in Israel, Jordan and Syria, the likelihood of war also escalates, for water is a commodity which is a finite resource, precious as gold, in an otherwise parched land.

<< Mount Hermon >>

From the year-round snow-capped peaks of Mount Hermon comes Israel's most abundant source of water. Three headwaters to the Jordan have their beginning in this northernmost portion of Israel — the Hazban, Dan, and Baniyas.

<< Baniyas Falls >>

The Baniyas is perhaps the most well-known for its beautiful waterfalls and basins, amidst a narrow and lush gorge. Unfortunately, the natural beauty of this location is scarred by its reputation as a place of worship to the Greek god "Pan," or "Paneas" hence, the derivation of Baniyas. In earlier, Biblical times it was also a recognized location for Baal worship when the area was known as Caesarea Philippi.

The Jordan, or Yarden in Hebrew, has been used symbolically to illustrate the downward course of humanity. Starting from the lofty heights of Mount Hermon the Jordan winds its way rapidly downhill as part of a rift valley which is the lowest depression on Earth. From its upper reaches at Lake Hulah (230 feet / 70 meters above sea level), only 6 miles / 10 kilometers to the south at Lake Galilee it has dropped to 656 feet / 200 meters below sea level! At the Dead Sea another 65 miles / 105 kilometers "as the crow flies," or 150 miles / 240 kilometers as the Jordan winds about, it drops to the lowest point on Earth, nearly 1,300 feet / 400 meters below sea level.

But, the Jordan is also known to us as the location where John the Baptist had his ministry which introduced the Messiah.

<< Matthew 3:13-15 — "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." >>

<< Galilee >>

Though born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth, it was in this region of Galilee that our Lord spent the greater portion of his ministry.

<< Capernaum = Village (Kefar) of Nahum >>

Although other villages were nearby, including Magdala and Gadarene, Capernaum was Biblically speaking perhaps the most notable. It is believed that Capernaum was inhabited in the 1st century BC to about the 7th century AD. The remains of this village exist even to this day.

<< Matthew 4:13 — “And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast.” >>

It was the village nearest to the Jordan River in the region. Unlike numerous other Biblical locations whose whereabouts are not even remotely known, Capernaum is fixed by Scripture rather precisely. It is described in the Bible as being lakeside, more particularly, upon the shores of Galilee. And, it is identified as a customs post near the political border between the territories of Galilee and Philippi. It was here that Jesus displayed the power of life over death with the healing of the centurion’s servant: Luke 7:2 — “And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.”

Luke 7:6-10 — “Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.”

“When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. “And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.”

Most importantly this was the home of those who would become Jesus’ closest disciples. And it was here that he performed his most remarkable miracles and taught the multitudes — laying the groundwork for his eventual entry into Jerusalem.

<< Matthew 15:30 — “And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and he healed them.” >>

<< Mark 1:34 — “And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not [prevented] the devils to speak, because they knew him.” >>

<< Sea of Galilee, Gennesaret, Kinneret, or Chinnereth Sea. Harp shaped — 13 miles (21 km) long by 8 miles (13 km) wide >>

It was upon the Sea of Galilee that: Matthew 8:24-27 — “There arose a great tempest ... 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. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” And, again in this region, another, whose name was Jairus, sought Jesus.

<< Mark 5:22-23 — “And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.” >>

<< Mark 5:41, 42 — “And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.” >>

<< Matthew 14:15, 16, 20, 21 — “And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat ... And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.” >>

It was upon the shores of Galilee that Jesus fed the multitudes with 5 loaves and 2 fishes.

<< Matthew 15:29 — “And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.” >>

And, overlooking the Galilee, Jesus would teach them what would come to be known as the “Beatitudes.”

<< Matthew 5:3 — “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” >> (Read text).

<< Matthew 5:4 — “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” >> (Read text).

<< Matthew 5:5 — “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 5:6 — “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 5:7 — “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 5:8 — “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 5:9 — “Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 5:10 — “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 5:11 — “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” >> (Read text)

<< Matthew 13:16 — “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” >> (Read text)

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven.

<< Blue Galilee >> (The following are words to the song)

I stood by the side of the murmuring sea

Of Galilee, Blue Galilee.

When the sunshine, its beauty revealed unto me,

Blue Galilee, Sweet Galilee.

Then I thought of my Saviour who years long ago

Came to tell the glad story, his love to bestow.

As He stood by the side of that murmuring Sea,

Of Galilee, Blue Galilee.

I sailed in a ship on that billowy Sea

Of Galilee, Blue Galilee.

While the voice of the tempest was saying to me,

Blue Galilee, Sweet Galilee.

Then I thought of the hearts that once tossed on the waves, /

When they cried in their peril to Him who could save.

How the Master spoke peace to that billowy Sea,

Of Galilee, Blue Galilee.

<< Matthew 11:23-24 — “And thou, Caperna-um, 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. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.” >>

But Capernaum, in spite of the wondrous deeds performed there, failed to receive the Messiah. The faith of a gentile Roman centurion proved to be greater than those to whom he had come. Even the devils knew who he was but the Jews refused to believe.

<< John 6:66 — “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” >>

And many of his disciples left him because of his hard sayings: John 6:56 — “He that eateth my

flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.’’

The disciples had walked and talked with the Master for nearly 3 years. But, it was after Peter’s declaration, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” that the Lord began, in rapid succession, to unfold some of the greater truths that they had not yet perceived: that true discipleship had a great cost — even as our Lord was now being prepared for his death. But attached to this costly sacrifice there was a glorious promise given his disciples.

<< Mt. Tabor >>

To impress upon their minds this glorious promise, he took the three disciples who were dearest to him: Peter, James, and John, “up into a high mountain,” most likely Mt. Tabor. It was here that they were given a vision of the Kingdom in Glory — as our Lord was transfigured before them.

<< Matthew 17:1-2, 5 — “And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. ... While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud over-shadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” >>

They had longed for Israel’s deliverance, not fully realizing that all the prophets (saints) of old (represented in Moses) were to be readied for a work that was even greater than they had imagined. That the antitypical Elijah would truly “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the dis-obedient to the wisdom of the just.” The Master spake of a heavenly kingdom whose work would extend not only to Israel but to all peoples.

It was here, 2000 (1,938) feet (590 meters) above the Plain of Jezreel that Peter, James, and John saw the vision.

<< Matthew 17:9, 11 — “And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. ... And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.” >>

They would later pass it on — to us — as they wrote of the Gospel and the one who first delivered it.

<< Jerusalem = Yerushalayim = Dwelling of Peace >>

Of all the sites in Israel, one is preeminent — Jerusalem. No where else on Earth do the holy places of the three monotheistic world religions lie so closely together.

<< 1 Kings 6:1 — “And it came to pass ... in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel ... that he began to build the house of the LORD.” >>

Under David, the greatest King Israel ever knew, God showed favor. But because of his transgressions and because he had shed much blood, the LORD determined that Solomon, his son, should build the Temple that David had so desired to construct. The dream was David’s; he

had prepared abundantly for it — but the reality was to be Solomon's.

1 Kings 6:21- 22 — “So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold.”

1 Kings 6:38 — “And in the eleventh year ... the eighth month, was the house finished ... according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.

1 Kings 7:51 — “So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.”

1 Kings 8:10 — “And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD.”

1 Kings 8:62 — “And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD.”

1 Kings 9:3 — “And the LORD said unto him ... I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.”

1 Kings 10:1-7 — “And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all

that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.”

Where now stands the Dome of the Rock, once stood the Temple arrayed in beauty. Perhaps the most fitting remembrance lies not in what is seen there today but the name given the temple mount by the Arabs, the Haram esh-Sharif — that is, “The Noble Sanctuary.”

<< Deir El Bahari >>

Without comparison, the Temple was famed abroad — even so much so that the Queen of Sheba, representing Egypt in its day of Glory, was captivated by its beauty and excellence and perhaps patterned her own mortuary temple after its likeness.

But Jerusalem, like its shadowy past, was again to fall prey to an unholy force. No sooner had Solomon died than Jerusalem became polluted by the likes of Athaliah and Ahaz. Though never regaining her former glory, there was a measure of consolation and favor during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah.

Christianity gained its foothold under Con-stantine in AD 326, long after our Lord had made his triumphant entry in AD 33. But this was merely a form of Christianity and was not patterned after our Lord's example. The simplicity of our Lord's ministry and even his death has been blanketed by the ornate trappings and vestments of a "Priest-hood" that sets itself above, and beyond, the people and their spiritual needs.

<< Golgotha and the Garden Tomb >>

In stark comparison to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the traditional Roman Catholic location of Calvary and our Lord's burial place, is "The Garden Tomb." Where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is adorned with gold, statues, and ornate wood and stone carvings, there is a place, which — in a quiet and unobtrusive way — proves that God has hidden much from the so-called "wise and prudent." The Garden Tomb is situated northward beyond the reaches of the Wall surrounding the Old City, hence fulfilling a requirement of the law that a dead body should not pollute the city.

Matthew 27:59-60 — "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."

Abutting a rock ledge, in which is hewn a Grotto or burial chamber, is a peaceful garden with an olive press. Instead of the oppressive odor of burning incense and vessels containing "holy" water, the fragrance of a freshly watered flower garden greets the visitor. Instead of the vain repetitions of "Rosaries," those seeking the Lord are found in quiet prayer.

Nearby, upon a knoll, as if to testify, are three trees. Golgotha, the "Place of the Skull," the place where the vengeful anger of the mobs under the Prince of Darkness took the life and dignity of one who gave his all, that we should live! Yes, the stones do cry out, for upon this rock outcrop can be seen the face of a skull. Matthew 28:6 — "He is not here: for he is risen."

History is careful not to forget — though people do. However, the day will come when all will have to acknowledge and remember and believe. And what better testimony of this fact than that of our Lord's resurrection when Peter and John witnessed the empty tomb. Or, Mary's testimony of a conversation with a "gardener."

<< John 20:15-16 — "Jesus saith unto her, Wom-an, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master." >>

<< Deuteronomy 32:43 — "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people." >>

Their testimony and the testimony of others will one day avenge the blood of the prophets and the blood of the One whom God sent!

Israel is a country which occupies a mere 8,000 square miles (20,700 square kilometers), for the

American Brethren about the size of the State of New Jersey (7,845 square miles). Never has there been such an international concern for one single place on Earth! But this concern has been under the rule of Divine providence.

Within these walls, which have stood witness to the millennia of Israel's struggle for peace, there have been cries for blood and there have been many tears shed. But the prophetic clock continues to advance, as the LORD's appointed time approaches, when the splendor of the past will visit her again. But unlike a past marred with failed expectations, the promise of Messiah's Kingdom is one which will endure ... forever!

All eyes must be focused upon Israel as this age draws to its dramatic climax, and the Kingdom so long prayed for, comes ... to become a great mountain ... to fill the whole earth.

<< 'ERETZ YISRAEL' — The Land of Israel — The Holy Land we love. >> (Read text)

## Presentation Nine

# Israel of our Days

Brother Lech Czerniak (Poland)

*In* Matthew 24:32, our Lord teaches us about the signs of His presence and the end of the age. He urges us to watch the fig tree, saying “Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer [is] nigh.” The parable about a barren fig tree in Luke 13:6-9, and words of the prophet Hosea, convince us that the fig tree spoken about by our Lord symbolizes Israel.

In Hosea 9:10 we read: “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig tree at her first time ...” Branches of the fig tree become soft as early as in winter. Revival of the branches and putting forth leaves by the fig tree mean that summer is coming — for us it is a sign of the Kingdom of God drawing near.

In the “time of the end,” Israel is an important sign for believers — it is a hand on the Divine clock. Likewise, earlier prophecies have been precisely fulfilled, so today many prophecies are being fulfilled in Israel as well. Some of them refer to the return of the Jews to their homeland.

Everyone of us will admit that these events are part of our contemporary history, events of our day. The Israelites have had no homeland for many centuries, they would roam all over the world, but they had never lost their living hope to return to their land. This hope was based on a strong faith they had.

Israel gathered in the “promised land” is a political reality of our days — arousing admiration of both those studying Bible prophecies and other people. Israel is reviving as a country, while many other strong governments are getting weaker and weaker, and many great systems are falling apart; conflicts and commotion harass existing countries.

This revival attracts the eyes of the believers. We, as humans, are deeply moved by what is happening in Israel — the violence and terrorism, in many cases the death of innocent people. We believers realize the fact that God is the One who controls these events. God is gathering Israel back and showing to all nations that He fulfills His promises.

## **The Reason for Regathering**

Despite the time that goes by, the gathering of the Jews progresses in spite of their bad behavior. What is the reason?

It is to be a witness to all other nations. It is mentioned in the prophecy of Ezekiel 20:41,44: “... when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and *I will be sanctified in you* before the heathen. And ye shall know that I [am] the

LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.”

The prophet Jeremiah, in chapter 29:14, also mentions about the fact that God has not forgotten His people: “And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.”

A similar thought is expressed by the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 36:24. God makes us sure, that the whole nation has the possibility to return to their homeland. It is spoken about in Isaiah 43:5-6: “Fear not: for I [am] with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Some Jewish activists, in the past, made attempts to create their own country in Africa, in South America, and in Siberia in Russia. But those attempts failed, since the prophecies clearly say, that the nation is going to be gathered no elsewhere but in the “promised land.” It is mentioned in the prophecy of Ezekiel 11:17: “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you *the land of Israel.*”

The same prophet adds in chapters 36:34-36: “And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities [are become] fenced, [and] are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined [places, and] plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken [it], and I will do [it].”

We can see today a blooming of the land of Israel — a bloom such as there has not been since the time Jerusalem was pulled down in AD 70 and the Jews cast out from their land. The nation grows despite some tensions and conflicts with the Arab nations. This country, having become a desert under strange governments throughout centuries, began to transform into a garden — since the time the Jews began returning to it and established their own state.

## **Peculiar Examples**

Their return to the revived country have been sometimes strange. We can use an example of the Yemenite Jews. Few of us may have heard of it. They lived in Yemen — a country located on the southern corner of the Arabia land. They were convinced their fathers arrived there in the time of king Solomon. From that time on they were cut off from the Israel community. They suffered from severe persecutions throughout the last centuries. They lived in ghettos, though their language and religion remained the same, such as when they lived in the time of king Solomon.

This isolation of the Yemenite Jews lasted until 1948, the time Israel re-established its sovereign state. Contemporary Israel prime minister Ben Gurion encouraged them to return to the homeland. Transport airplanes were sent to the Aden airport in order to pick them up and take them back to their homeland. When the Israel government sent representatives to them, the

Yemenite Jews did not quite understand what was going on. They saw the airplanes and feared to get on board. But immediately after they read the words of Isaiah 40:31, explaining that God would send for them and would carry them back to their land on eagles wings, they went on board the airplanes with no fear. About five thousand Yemenite Jews returned to Israel using this air bridge. How moving the return to their homeland was. Some of them, welcoming the land, took off their sandals and kissed the Israel soil.

When prime minister Ben Gurion was asked what role the Bible played in the revival of the country, he stated, that they would have done nothing without the Bible. "The prophecies said, that we would return to our land, and it has happened. Prophecies say, that this desert country would become green, and we have made it green." Today, we can see the fulfillment of these words.

Let us see how amazing it is, happening before our very eyes. Most important world events have a direct or indirect connection with Israel.

Transformations in the former Soviet Union in the 1990's and some national conflicts in that region made Jews leave that land. According to statistics, 1.7 million Jews have left the former Soviet Union. Later events have changed the amount of Jews still inhabiting that region.

When the Jews were enabled to legally emigrate to Israel, many of those who had been concealing their descent, then decided to reveal their nationality. The number of Jews still inhabiting the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the 1990's is estimated to be 3-4 million.

The prophecy of Isaiah 11:11-12 announced a further gathering of the Jews: "And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

The fall of communism in Albania and Ethiopia enabled those Jews to leave. Mighty rulers, not willing to let the people leave, have been overthrown. In this way, the words of Isaiah 49:25 were fulfilled: "But thus saith the LORD, 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 thy children."

A few thousands black Jews were taken from Ethiopia with airplanes within 36 hours. Those Jews, called the Falashas, were harassed by the government of Ethiopia as well as pushed away from the rest of the Jewish community. Their fellow believers did not want to accept them, due to the color of their skin. Although a few defended them, one still had to wait for the fulfillment of the idea that they would treat one another as brothers.

Then in 1973, a great Sephardic Israel rabbi, named Jossef Oradia, confirmed that their origin was the nation of Israel. Public opinion in Israel was slowly getting used to the thought of bringing all their black brothers from abroad, back to the "promised land."

In 1984, the “Moses” operation began — it was an air bridge, by which 12,000 Jews were transported from Sudan to Israel. Although the operation was to be carried out in secret, it failed.

Then prime minister Sudan Nimeiry, a muslim, who had agreed regarding the evacuation, later had to quit his position. After the operation, the Israeli government would gradually buy consecutive groups of Falashas, in exchange for military arms for Ethiopia. This fact, although denied by Israel, was later confirmed by the American Congress.

The next air bridge was organized for the rest of the Jews in Ethiopia. They would wait for a few days in the front of the Israel embassy. The fall of the Haile Mariam regime, as well as an appeal to the Ethiopian guerrillas made by president Bush, enabled them to leave.

The prophecy of Isaiah 49:22 has been fulfilled, in which we read: “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in [their] arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon [their] shoulders.”

The “Solomon” operation took 36 hours. 16,000 Jews were carried during this period of time. First of all, the Israeli army counted on the new comers, since approximately 60% them were under 18, and the soldier skills of the Ethiopians were well appreciated in Israel. The army also simplified the new comers integration. Most of them were not educated and met industrial civilization for the first time. There were still race and religion barriers. The Ethiopians would keep a different “Keiss” ritual. Some of the towns in Israel rejected them, fearing creation of “enclaves of social backwardness.”

## **Completely Regathered?**

Are we able to say, that Israel has been completely gathered to its land yet?

The voice of Zionists, appealing to settle in the “promised land,” has moved the hearts of the most zealous, and most often the poorest representatives of this nation. The rest have had difficulties in leaving their own factories, shops, households and moving to an unknown, desert, and dangerous land.

Currently, it is estimated that approximately 30% of the world’s Jews live in Israel. The events of the last few years clearly show that the gathering of the Jews has not yet been completed. Within the past 3 years, more than 300,000 Jews have left the Commonwealth of Independent States for Israel. It is predicted that there may be as many as 2 million Jews still in the former Soviet Union region.

Some express apprehension as to where to accommodate such a great number of newcomers. Are not the words of Isaiah 49:19-20 being fulfilled: “For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place [is] too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell.”

Today, many Jews leaving the Commonwealth of Independent States do not go to Israel, but instead go to the USA or western Europe. They are mentioned in the prophecy of Ezekiel 20:38:

“And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I [am] the LORD.”

It is strange that during the time of greatest danger for the nation of Israel, just prior to the conflict in the Persian Gulf, the emigration of Jews to Israel did not cease. According to statistics, December 1990 was the month in which there would come the greatest number of Jews in the whole 40 year history of Israel, even though foreign airlines canceled their flights to Tel Aviv.

The prophecy of Ezekiel 36:33-35 speaks about the rebuilding and blooming of the land of Israel. Today, after many years, one can travel through contemporary Israel and verify that those words are true. New settlements, rebuilt cities, fertile vine-yards and gardens in the desert — everything looks as foretold by the prophets.

In 1948 Israel was reestablished as a country, and since that time it has been in the center of world events. As foretold by the prophecy in Zechariah 12:2-3, Israel has become a burdensome stone to all nations, and on which some nations have already stumbled. Israel’s enemies, having much larger military forces, attempted to wipe Israel off the map of the world. But Israel would make it through all the wars, strengthened. Jerusalem was established as an eternal, capital city of Israel.

## **Burdensome Stone for the Nations**

Currently, it is a main burdensome stone for the nations. Israel’s enemies do not realize they raise against God. The prophecy of Isaiah 42:13 says: “The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.”

At present, there are continuous peace talks with the Arabs, in which according to some concepts, a price for peace to Israel is to give Samaria and a part of Judea back to the Arabs. We can see that the “land for peace” doctrine, thanks to which a peace agreement was made with Egypt in exchange for giving back Sinai, is losing Jewish support in the face of a constantly intensifying emigration to Israel, as well as Palestinian terrorist attacks.

In spite of protests, the construction of new settlements for the new incoming citizens of this country goes on, according to the prophecy of Zechariah 10:9-11: “And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and [place] shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.”

These words clearly indicate that Gilead — namely the land on the East coast of Jordan, which the Golan Heights are a part of — as well as the Lebanon mountains will be a place for the Jews coming to the “promised land.”

The prophet mentions two empires from which most of the Jews would come. They are Assyria

and Egypt. Once they used to be powers of the con-temporary world. Assyria was to have its pride taken away. Egypt was to lose its scepter.

## More Interest in Jesus

It is interesting that the Jews are interested in the Bible and Jesus, more and more. Not that long ago, if a rabbi mentioned anything about Jesus, the Jews would leave the synagogue. Today it is different. Jesus is spoken about in Israel, more and more often. Groups of Messianic Jews are increasing, who courageously proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah. One can everywhere hear a noise of bones coming together, of which the prophet Ezekiel prophesied in chapter 37. The language of David and Solomon can be heard in the “promised land” again.

According to the Talmud, the coming of the Messiah to this nation is foretold by an unusual plant. It is a plant similar to a vine and is called *lcetaff* in Hebrew. It is described in the Talmud as follows: “It grows at night, it sets forth leaves before noon the next day, and at noon it fully blooms; the fruit is formed in the afternoon, and it gets ripe in the evening.” Today, this plant can be found all over the land of Israel. There are Jews who conclude from this that the Messiah has come already. For others, a more convincing argument is the plan to reconstruct the temple in Jerusalem, the reconstruction foretold by the Old Testament.

We know precisely from prophecies that the nation of Israel must accept Christ as their Savior. It is going to be the most difficult truth for them, and their acceptance is a necessary condition for fellowship with God, according to the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for [his] only [son], and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for [his] firstborn.” “And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God [is] my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [is] my strength and [my] song; he also is become my salvation ... Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great [is] the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee” (Isaiah 12:1, 2, 6).

Not until then will God be able to make a New Covenant with Israel, and use it as a tool in restoring back all the people to His fellowship. (Zechariah 8:23)

Beloved brethren, the return of our Lord to Zion has begun before our very eyes. Let us rejoice in this return, as well as the blessings that will soon come to all mankind. We know the return of grace for Israel is the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, being present for the second time. He is the arm of God, performing this work.

Dear brethren, looking at this work let us strengthen in spirit and help one another in the fight of faith, so we may eventually become winners of our everyday trials and experiences. Let the Lord bless you in this special time. Amen.

Presentation Ten

# The Will of God and His Guidance

Brother David Lightfoot (England)

*Greetings* and love in our Lord Jesus Christ from your brethren at West Wickham, England.

Now we can only begin to explore together a few of the many aspects of this vast, thought provoking subject, “The Will of God and His Guidance.” The thoughts that I bring you today are arranged in two parts.

First, what is The Will of God for Us, now, as new creatures in Christ Jesus? My key scripture for this is Romans 8:29. “Whom He did foreknow [or fore-approve], He also did predestinate [or fore-appoint] to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Secondly, How Are We Guided as we follow in the steps of our Master? My key scripture for this is Psalm 32:8. “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye.” Let us proceed to ...

## **Part 1: “The Will of God for Us”**

(1.1) We will start by considering “The Will of God” in general terms.

We call God “The Creator,” and so He is for Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” He was not created Himself but He is the author and architect of every-thing that ever has or ever will be created. In the broadest sense “the will of God” is everything that He intends to achieve. When our God plans something, it happens! Formulating the plan first and then skilfully guiding it to flawless completion in every detail is fundamental to the way God works. Because He is almighty, His purposes cannot be thwarted.

Because of His detailed foreknowledge, there never has been anything to catch Him by surprise. Acts 15:18 confirms this. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” Romans 4:17 talks of “God who ... calleth those things which be not as though they were.” If He has decided something will happen, there is no power that can prevent it! Hebrews 4:3 gives a similar message in the words, “the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

(2.1) And so God began to implement His Plan.

He started the clock of history ticking when He created the Logos, the Word of God. This was His first creative act. We have two amazing scriptures which reveal details of this time when God was no longer to be alone. Paul tells us in Colossians 1:15 that Jesus is "... the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." This, John says, was the beginning. John 1:1, 2 say, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a God. The same was in the beginning with God."

"In the beginning" — was this not when time started; time that would mark out for all His creation the unremitting progress He would make in achieving all the provisions of His plan? Time would show, not only that He had marvelously and perfectly devised all the interwoven and intricate details of His plan, but also that He would achieve everything He planned, without interruption, exactly to its built-in time scales.

The Logos, or Word of God, was, of course, Jesus in his pre-human form. He was to be God's agent by whom all other things were to be created. And so it is written, in John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." Colossians 1:16, 17 declare similarly that "... by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

He was to be the expression of God's nature, character and will to all His intelligent created beings. What he made would speak of God's almighty power; of His infinite wisdom; and of His love and worthiness to receive the obedience, the worship, the praise and the love of all His intelligent creation. Because "the Word was" subsequently "made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth," all will ultimately have opportunity for fellowship with their wonderful Creator (John 1:14).

(1.3) What is the will of our Heavenly Father following the revelation of His glory through Jesus, the Word?

"The Word being made flesh" marked the turning point in earth's history. The long-promised coming of Christ had happened. Following his sacrificial life, death upon the cross and resurrection, a new phase in the implementation of His will was revealed. This was the revelation, following the gift of the holy spirit at Pentecost, that the Christ was to have, not one, but many members.

Romans 12:5 encapsulates this doctrine. "We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Let us see how our key text in Romans 8:29 fits in. The context, in verses 28-32, tells us, who have hope of joint heirship with Jesus, at least three things:

(1) that His will is that we should be conformed to the image of His Son,

(2) that His Plan envisages four steps to achieve this. These are to predestine (or fore-appoint), to call, to justify (or declare righteous) and to glorify (or make glorious), and,

(3) that God takes charge of the lives of His saints by working all things together for that good which He is doing to them and intends to do by them in their future reign with Christ.

As we look at the way the Bible reveals how God takes charge of the perfecting of each member of Christ, we are overwhelmed by the intricate and detailed planning of our glorious God and His loving care; by the scope and power of the divine mind. Surely David caught something of this awe and amazement when He exclaimed, “If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Psalm 139:9, 10). Jesus assures us in Matthew 10:31, “Fear ye not ... ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

In Romans 4 Paul shows us how God, knowing His own power and working with Abraham through his faith, was able to make promises stretching far into the distant future, knowing that these would come to pass because of His own wisdom and power and because others, like Abraham, would also, in faith, subjugate their own wills to the will of their God. Thus Paul continues, in Romans 5:1, 2, by extolling the value of the faith our Heavenly Father nurtures in us. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

Thus by faith we too can call “those things which be not as though they were!” (Romans 4:17) and believe that our Heavenly Father’s works in each member of the Christ “were finished from the foundation of the world” (Hebrews 4:3). This is in line with Paul’s conviction regarding His own hope in Christ in 2 Timothy 1:12. “I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” When our God plans something, it happens!

Because our Heavenly Father knows the characters of those whom He is perfecting in Christ, and He knows His own skill, He is able to foreknow the outcome of His work in each of us. This certainty of our Father’s ability is the whole basis of our conviction that, having been called as new creatures in Christ Jesus we shall, by daily and hourly pursuit of the doing of His will, at the end of our earthly course, be ushered into His presence with exceeding joy.

Jude 24 speaks of “Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” This can be true only of those who, like their Master, by consistent, unflagging effort seek always to subjugate their wills to the will of their Heavenly Father.

Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). And Paul tells us in Romans 8:9, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Lack of his spirit of humble obedience and constant delight to do only his Father’s will, would show that we are not his. Jesus himself confirms this. “By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7: 20, 21).

(1.4) Why it is essential that our constant desire and unremitting effort to do the will of our

Father which is in heaven is demonstrated?

His requirement is to prepare all the remaining members of Christ ready to rule with him in the Millennial Age. With this in view God seeks to:

- (1) Prove our humility and our complete obedience to His will, even unto death,
- (2) Produce in us the character likeness of Jesus Christ which will make us fit to rule over the earth as joint executors with Him of God's Plan, and
- (3) Give us the necessary experiences in this present evil world that will train us to join with our Head in dealing sympathetically with mankind during that rule.

In the case of our Saviour, Hebrews informs us that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, today have I begotten Thee. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:5, 8). If Jesus must remain humble and learn obedience while here on earth, how much more must we!

Following our consecration to do only our Father's will and our begetting to the heavenly hope in Christ, we must be thoroughly tested to ensure that our obedience to the will of the great Creator is complete, unshakeable and everlasting. Just as Jesus was tested to the limit, so we are subjected to whatever trials are seen to be essential to test our allegiance to the will of the One who called us.

The reason is plain. Our hope, expressed in 2 Peter 1:4, is that "... ye might be partakers of the divine nature." 1 John 3: 2 confirms this hope. "... we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Our hope is thus to be immortal, possessing the infinite powers inherent in the divine nature. It is clear that complete and everlasting commitment to the will of God is essential in every member of the Christ. There will be no unpolished gems in His special treasure! We must be fully tested and perfected!

(1.5) Now let us consider how the Will of God interrelates with the free will He has given to mankind.

It is clear that God, as the Creator of all, has a perfect right to impose His will on all the creatures that He has made. Paul demonstrates this right to us in Romans 9:17. "The scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee." The end was that after repeatedly resisting God's will to let Israel go from Egypt, Pharaoh finished by being drowned with his army in the sea. God's will prevailed!

Romans 9:19-21 adds, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? Who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

On the other hand we see examples of mankind exercising their free will every day without any reference to what God's will for them might be. History demonstrates that pursuit of selfish desires has resulted in civilizations going downhill morally, especially because Satan still

continually works to that end. We call this “the permission of evil.” Thus we have the message of Ecclesiastes 8:11, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

Yet even fallen man can draw back from evil. Paul points out in Romans 2:14-15 that if “the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” These then “shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.” God does not force anyone to do His will but He has, at times, intervened to stop excessive evil. He sent the flood in the days of Noah. He destroyed wicked Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone.

However this is not the remedy to sin that God seeks, for when you are dead, you cannot do your own will or God’s! He tells us He desires “all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). We know that only the incorrigible will suffer the second death of Revelation 21:8.

But God’s relationship with those with whom He has a covenant is different. Perhaps the best scripture to demonstrate this is Deuteronomy 11:26-28. God invited Israel to choose whether they would obey Him or not. Through His servant Moses He invited them to choose either His blessing if they obeyed His commands or a curse if they did not. So, while asking them to choose, He solemnly warns them that He will surely react to their conduct.

Previously they had agreed to be obedient to Him in the words of Exodus 19:8. They had “answered together ... All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.” To underline the seriousness of this commitment, it was subsequently reaffirmed in a solemn ceremony in which Moses enacted a covenant between them and their God. This involved sacrifices to the Lord, the blood of which was sprinkled on the altar and the people, and reading “the book of the covenant in the audience of the people.” They then reaffirmed, “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:3-8). From this we learn what a great privilege it is to be taken by our God as a special people in covenant relationship with Him.

However, this does also mean that He will take positive steps to encourage us to keep to our part of the agreement! In the case of Israel He still holds firm to His covenant after thousands of years. Israel is once again an independent state and its people are undergoing chastening experiences in proof of this! He wants to bless but in love He corrects His children that err from His will with a view to delivering to them the promises He has made to them.

(1.6) But what of us? What is the relationship between our will and the will of our Heavenly Father?

We see from the word of God that there are two sides regarding God’s will for the church of Christ. On the one hand we have God progressively work-ing His will in each of us to make us ready to inherit the kingdom in Christ. On the other hand we are exhorted to progressively prove what is His will for us that we may consistently do it.

Let us look again at that Romans 9 passage where Paul affirms God’s right to do what He pleases. Here Paul talks, in verse 23, of making “known the riches of his glory on the vessels of

mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.’’ Romans 12:2 exhorts us continually to endeavour to do His will as we seek always to obey the command, ‘‘Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.’’ God works in us and we are ‘‘workers together with Him.’’ Paul beseeches us that we ‘‘receive not the grace of God in vain’’ (2 Corinthians 6:1).

For us, having presented our ‘‘bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’’ in Christ (Romans 12:1) and having been ‘‘sealed with that holy Spirit of promise’’ (Ephesians 1:13), we know that we too are in covenant relationship with our God. In this situation we have given up our own wills and, with our Lord and Master, we also say, ‘‘I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart’’ (Psalm 40:8). If we should fall short of this ideal we, like Israel of old, can expect correction.

But, unlike most of them, each true child of God will welcome His fatherly discipline in his life. We have that wonderful promise of correction in Hebrews 12:5, 6, 10. ‘‘My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth ... that we might be partakers of his holiness.’’ If we treasure the knowledge of His scrutiny of our every thought, word and action; if we seek to endure the necessary painful experiences in life, which are permitted or sent to remove our dross and continually purify that which is gold; then we can rejoice that we are His well-beloved children, received and blessed by Him.

So, ‘‘Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy’’ (1 Peter 4:12, 13). What wonderful promises of loving fatherly care are here for us! But let us take good care to respond to His love with enthusiastic obedience! ‘‘Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not’’ (Galatians 6:9).

If we do not know what is the will of God for us now, how can we do it? This question brings us to the second part.

## **Part 2: How are we Guided?**

Obviously our Heavenly Father’s will is clear to Him in every detail but, as Ecclesiastes 5:2 informs us, ‘‘God is in heaven, and thou upon earth.’’ The implication is that, unless He reveals it to us, we cannot know what is in His mind. But my key scripture for this is Psalm 32:8 because it shows the Lord’s eagerness to give us His guidance. ‘‘I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye.’’ Let us see how this works out in practice.

(2.1) What does ‘‘I will guide thee with mine eye’’ mean?

The Revised Standard Version says, ‘‘I will counsel you with my eye upon you.’’ This verse therefore reveals that guidance has two sides to it. On the one hand we see the Heavenly Father, completely aware of all that is going on in each of our lives, organizing our experiences and trials in a way that He knows will encourage our development as new creatures in Christ Jesus.

On the other hand we, aware that His eye is always upon us to scrutinize all our thoughts, words and actions, are constrained by our love for Him and His ways, always to want to seek to do His will and what is pleasing in His sight. To receive knowledge of the will of God, guidance must not only be given by the guide, but also received and acted upon by the guided one.

(2.2) The word reveals that certain other character traits, in addition to love for God, are essential for the Lord's counsel to be put into practice in our lives.

In Psalm 25:4, 5 David, surrounded by enemies of truth and right, sought the Lord's guidance. "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." The subsequent verses of Psalm 25 give a number of these essential character traits that the saints must either possess or develop. Verse 9 shows that meekness is required. "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." Verse 10 shows that obedience to His requirements is required. "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." Verse 11 shows that a penitent spirit is required. "For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Verses 12 and 14 show that reverence is required. "What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and He will shew them His covenant."

(2.3) How does our Heavenly Father guide us?

He has, of course, provided us with a number of channels of guidance by means of which we are richly provided with knowledge of His will. These seem to me to fall into 4 main categories which are:

(1) The word of God, our principal source of guidance. Psalm 119:105 confirms this. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

(2) The Holy Spirit, the means by which we are enabled to rightly interpret the word. John 16:13, "When ... the Spirit of truth, is come, it will guide you into all truth: for it shall not speak of itself; but whatsoever it shall hear, that shall it speak: and it will shew you things to come."

(3) By chastening (teaching) experiences. Heb-rews 12:7 and 9 tell us, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" and

(4) The circumstances He weaves around us, opening and closing "doors of opportunity" to have His purposes achieved. Paul was assured by the Lord that he required him to visit Rome, in Acts 23:11. "... the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."

Let us look at these 4 categories of guidance in a little more detail.

(2.4) What guidance is given to the saints of the Gospel Age in the word of God regarding His

will for us?

In general the Bible points us to the requirements of our Heavenly Father and gives us instruction in how we may cooperate in His work. Here are just two examples:

Our Father wants us to be thankful. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, “In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” We should indeed be thankful for the great honour that is ours in Christ, especially in view of our own utter unworthiness. He has set us apart for His use, both now, and in the future age. He is engaged in the wonderful work of conforming us “to the image of his Son” (Romans 8: 29). No wonder we are thankful. No wonder we “rejoice, and [are] exceeding glad: for great is [our] reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). This is important, for a thankful heart is a heart wholly in harmony with our Father’s purposes.

1 Peter 2:11-16 give us God’s will regarding how He wants us to conduct ourselves in this present evil world. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conduct honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation ... For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men ... as the servants of God.”

This scripture is about getting our priorities right. It is putting the will of God first, but also complying with the requirements of earthly governments where these do not conflict with what we discern to be the will of God. 1 Peter 3:17 adds that “it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

These two examples demonstrate how rich a source of guidance is the word of God regarding both the main, important component parts of His will and for the conduct of daily living by each of his children.

(2.5) What are we told regarding the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

It is the means by which we are enabled to rightly interpret the word. It is the guide “into all truth,” the revealer of God’s own sacred secrets to those who are given the blessing of seeing and hearing (John 16:13). Matthew 13:16 says, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” Our Heavenly Father delights to share with us a knowledge of His plans and His specific requirements for us to enable us to intelligently cooperate in the preparatory work He is now carrying out in our hearts and minds.

No humble and reverent seeker need be without this helper alongside. Jesus informs us in Luke 11:13, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?” Let us ask that we may receive this wonderful influence and “find grace to help in every time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

(2.6) What have chastening (teaching) experiences to do with the will of God being achieved?

It is not sufficient to know what God’s will is for us. We must live His will. His discipline is designed for this purpose. This teaching and discipline is essential for us who were “shapen in

iniquity.’’ We need, not only the covering of Christ now, but also we need the sin within each of us permanently removed. We can echo David’s prayer, ‘‘Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me’’ (Psalm 51:5, 10). As we were reminded in Hebrews 12:7 and 9, the disciplinary experiences we receive are the evidence that the Lord regards us as His children needing His loving correction day after day. Hebrews 12:9-11 tell us that by willingly subjecting ourselves to our Father’s chastening hand and cooperating to the best of our ability in His work we will gain life, be made ‘‘partakers of his holiness’’ and yield ‘‘the peaceable fruit of righteousness.’’

(2.7) Our loving Father also guides us by the circumstances He weaves around us.

We sometimes talk of the opening and closing of ‘‘doors of opportunity’’ to have His purposes achieved. Let us look at some examples. Sometimes the Lord overrules things that are of major strategic importance in the accomplishment of His will. In other cases He overrules things with a more immediate impact. Thus Paul received his night visions telling him to ‘‘Come over into Macedonia’’ (Acts 16:9) and later assuring him that he was required to visit Rome (Acts 23:11). ‘‘... Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.’’

But the Lord’s work through him of establishing so many Gentile churches during his lifetime by traveling from place to place, was greatly multi-plyed by the preservation of his wonderful epistles which were often written when confined in prison. When thus deprived of His freedom no doubt he would have to strive to keep in mind his own words in Romans 8:28, ‘‘We know that all things work together for good.’’ That ‘‘good’’ has been amply demonstrated even to this day! Paul speaks of his physical trials and of his particular concern for the churches in 2 Corinthians 11:21-28. He wrote, ‘‘apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches.’’

Paul could have fretted to be free to visit the saints whom he so much loved. But we see the transcending wisdom of our wise Father who arranged the circumstances in which Paul was impelled to write his many Epistles. This ensured that he would continue to be the Apostle to the Gentiles all down the Gospel Age.

O that we might remember this lesson if we have times when we feel our desires to serve the Lord are constrained by circumstances which we are unable to alter. Let us then tell the Lord that our conviction remains that He is in charge of our lives and circumstances even though our ‘‘wisdom’’ may tempt us to doubt. We do not know what greater good He may work in us and through us because of the very chains that seem to hold us down.

## **Epilogue**

My prayer is that we will be inspired by considering our deep involvement in our Heavenly Father’s plans for all His creation. May our faith and hope rise to a more comprehensive

appreciation of His ability to finish His wonderful work in us. May He help us more earnestly to submit to His will day by day and look for His guidance to engage only in those activities which we perceive to be His will for us.

Amen.

Presentation Eleven

# Waiting for the Sons of God

Brother Kenneth Fernets (Canada)

*Sister* Carmelita and I are very happy to be with you at another International Convention in Poland. We bring sincere Christian love from Can-ada, the Dawn family, the Pilgrim Department, the General Convention and our family. To the Convention Committee we thank you for your labors of love. Our class sends Philippians 1:27 (NAS), “That you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Romans 8:19-22, “The whole world waits eagerly for the revealing of the Sons of God.”  
Romans 8:23, “And not only this, but also even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as Sons, the redemption of our body.”

What is the world waiting for? What are we waiting for? We are waiting for that morning when there will not be a cloud in the sky. A perfect morning. No more dark clouds. No more war machines, No more dying.

Let's go back for a moment to the first advent of our Lord Jesus. Matthew 7:13, “Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction [or dying process] and many are those who enter by it. Verse 14, for the gate is small [speaking of the narrow gate] and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.”

Under the reign of sin and death there is now a “broad road,” which was begun by father Adam. We see the degree of selfishness, lusts of the flesh on TV, the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Its grade is downward and away from God. It has been determined that there is only 24% good on the internet and 76% is towards evil. The world of mankind does not have much of a choice.

## **The Narrow Way**

But there is a way of life, into which you and I may turn. And we have. We thank our God who has called us out of darkness. John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but through me.”

Its gate is faith, and at present it is a very difficult road to travel, even after it has been found. This gate and narrow way have been open for 1969 years. Comparatively few of the human race have ever seen or known of this path, and “few there be that find it.” What is the reason that only a few find it? 2 Corinthians 4:4 (KJV), “The God of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ ... should shine unto them.”

Why does our God of love make the narrow way to life so obscure and difficult that only a small number of the race have any opportunity of even knowing of it? The answer is, that God's purpose of mercy respecting the world is to let all have an experience with the wages of sin (death) and then through Christ to end the reign of sin and death under Satan, and inaugurate a reign of righteousness and life under Christ — the Kingdom of God.

The narrow way now open from Pentecost until now is only provided for a special class, called variously in Scripture: "the Church of Christ," "the Bride," "the Temple of the Living God," "the Elect" or select, "the Body of Christ," the "Little Flock." To these it is a narrow way, and the gate is difficult, to insure that those who enter shall be faithful. The way is rugged and difficult to insure that all who continue in that way, faithful to the end, shall be "overcomers" (Revelation 3:21).

These will be of strong character. Why? The special service for which we are being selected demands that we shall be tried as gold is purified, in the furnace of discipline, that we may be vessels unto honor and meet for the Master's use, when His time shall come for us, with our Lord and Redeemer, as "the seed of Abraham" (Galatians 3:16-29). And when we, with him, are made "kings and priests" we shall reign over the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10). These few points, just presented, constitute one part of why the world is waiting for the revealing of the Sons of God.

There is another part to this question. According to the Bible presentation, our Lord died for the sins of the whole world when he gave his life as an offset for Father Adam's life, which had been forfeited because of sin. The death of our Savior will be sufficient for the whole world. Why? Because the whole world are sharers in Adam's penalty by heredity.

The merit of Christ's death is sufficient for the sins of Adam and for the sins of the whole world, but it has not yet been applied, or paid over, either for Adam or the world. It has merely been put on deposit. Where? Into the Father's hands, without any application for anybody.

The scriptures show us for what purpose the application is to be made; namely, that after our Lord's second coming, after the apokalupsis, and the setting up of his Kingdom, he will apply the entire merit of His sacrifice on behalf of Adam and his race, in order to satisfy the requirements of divine justice.

The full penalty of original sin will thus be paid; the race of Adam will be released from that condemnation, and then will begin the work of restoration. Meantime, while waiting for the application of the blood to the world, our Father imputes that merit of Christ on behalf of the Church. That is why, as expressed in Hebrews 9:24, Christ Jesus appeared "in the presence of God for us," when he ascended on the 40th day.

## **Imputed to the Church**

Christ's merit is imputed to the Church. To impute is not to give. To give Christ's merit would mean to make it applicable to Adam and all the human race. Jesus is not ready yet to give it to Adam and all the race, for to release Adam and his race just now, from present conditions, would not be the best plan.

This question was asked to Brother Russell on October 15, 1916. “Would it be proper for us to suppose that the world might begin to receive its share of restitution blessings while some of the members of the Church are still in the flesh?”

His answer: “No! This would be an impossible thought. The whole merit (value, worth) of Christ is mortgaged by the imputation which Jesus has made of his merit to the company consecrating during this age. This mortgage must be released fully, completely, before the New Covenant can be sealed and put into operation for giving restitution blessings to Adam and his race. Hence, we are not to expect any restitution, either of the ancient worthies or others, until the Little Flock shall have passed beyond the Veil ...” (Reprints 5973). This was Brother Russell’s thought.

Let us observe it this way. First of all, the word imputation is a similar thought to endorsement. If a man endorses a bank note for \$1000, or \$10,000, he does not give even one cent. Rather, he imputes the value of the money. This transaction illustrates to us the work of imputing merit to the Church.

The Church is not qualified to enter into sacrifice with God. We are imperfect. But Jesus, having a credit in the hands of God, imputes a share of that merit to those who present themselves in consecration. On the strength of that merit, He becomes a guarantor to those who wish to become his disciples.

No more than this would be necessary, for our consecration is to sacrifice, and we need merely to sacrifice what we have. Our Lord imputes his merit to the Church, which offsets what we do not have, whatever we are lacking by reason of heredity. When we shall have finished our contract this merit will be released — just as in our example, when our note is paid, the endorser is free.

Our Lord Jesus becomes the guarantor, or endorser, or imputer, of his merit to all who make a consecration to God. When all these things shall have been accomplished, then this merit of Christ, having been fully released from all this imputation, will be applied in full measure to the sealing of the New Covenant, of which Christ is the mediator. Then and only then will his kingdom be the mediatorial government for the blessing and uplift of the world.

Another point of interest. A proposition has been made to the followers of Christ, which are you and I, since Pentecost. It is that we lay down our human lives sacrificially, just as Jesus did with his life. But when we present ourselves in consecration (Romans 12:1), we are members of the sinful race of Adam. God does not want to deal with us, for we are under condemnation.

However, God’s plan provides that Jesus can become a guarantor for those who desire to become his footstep followers in sacrifice. On his account our sacrifices are accepted as a part of his sacrifice, that we may also share in his glory.

## **Justification by Faith**

Another point of interest is Justification by Faith. Jesus already has put into the Heavenly Father’s hands — that is, in the hands of justice — a meritorious credit to the value of his human life, which he laid down sacrificially in obedience to the divine will. That sacrifice, which is

sufficient for Adam and every member of his family, is waiting in God's hands, to be applied in due time — at the time appointed for the beginning of Christ's 1000 year reign for the blessing, uplifting and restoration of the world.

Jesus is an Advocate for those who desire to become his followers. Jesus appropriates, or imputes, to us his merit, which is to his credit in God's account. This imputed merit is equal to all our imperfection. It is therefore said to justify us from all sin, from all condemnation. Therefore not until all the merit of Christ imputed to the various persons who have made a consecration during this Gospel Age shall have been released will the full merit of Christ's sacrifice be available for actual restoration for Adam and all of his race.

So it is with us who become Christ's disciples. Jesus endorses our notes. He becomes our guarantor, or surety, that we will fulfill our engagement that we will lay down our lives. Until our lives are laid down, this imputation is like an embargo on Christ's merit, which is in reservation to be applied on behalf of the world. But as each one of us dies, all imputation of merit on behalf of that one is at an end, because our contract is fulfilled.

## **Our Lord's Consecration**

First of all, our Lord's consecration when he was thirty years of age, which he symbolized by water baptism, represents the giving up, the surrender, of his life to God. The life which he surrendered was a perfect human life, one to which he had a full right. St. Paul tells us that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," having received his life from Jehovah God. He surrendered the full equivalent of Adam's life and perfection. But he did not surrender his life to Adam; he merely put it into the Father's hands without giving it to anybody.

During the three and a half years of his ministry our Redeemer laid down his life. He completed that work at Calvary, saying there, "It is finished." He there finished his baptism into death. He continued his self surrender to the end. But he has not yet made any application of this human life to Adam and his race.

Our Lord has merely put it into the Father's hands. He simply surrendered his life in harmony with the Father's plan (Luke 23:46, 1 Peter 3:18). When the Heavenly Father raised him up on the third day, he made Jesus a spirit being. He was put to death in the flesh and was raised a spirit. This quickened one of the new nature had a new life as a reward for his obedience in permitting his earthly life to be taken from him.

So when the Lord Jesus arose from the dead and ascended up on high forty days later, he retained all the rights that he ever had. But when he ascended up on high, he did not apply the merit of his sacrifice for the world of mankind; otherwise the whole world would not now lie in the wicked one (1 John 5:19).

If our Redeemer had made an application of his merit for the world when he ascended, it would have taken away the sins of the world; but he did not do this. Romans 8:1 tells us that the church alone has escaped from the condemnation upon the world. Nobody else except the consecrated class has had merit and justification from Christ.

How does our Lord apply the merit to the Church? Directly? No. If he were to apply his merit directly, it would give the church human life, human perfection. But God has some better things for the Church — that the Church might attain to the same divine nature to which Jesus attained. How does the Church attain this? By following in the footsteps of Jesus.

This signifies that as he sacrificed his human life, and laid down his earthly rights according to the will of the Father, so all who would become members of his bride class must do the same. They must surrender their earthly life in order to be associated with him. Only “if we suffer with him” will we “also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12). “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Then John 12:26, “Where I am, there shall also my servant be.”

During this Gospel Age, if we are faithful, we too will attain to the same divine nature, the same glory, the same immortality — the difference being that our Lord will always be head over all, the chief over all the Church, which is his body, and that we will always be his members in particular, the Church in glory.

During this Gospel Age, to this Church class who become his disciples Jesus imputes the merit of his sacrifice to the extent of covering our blemishes, our imperfections. He will give his merit to the world in due time, but now he is making an imputation to the Church.

In consecration the Church class, you and I, voluntarily surrendered our earthly nature. Jesus does not give to the Church at the present time any part of the ransom sacrifice, but merely imputes to us, counts to us, that part which we might have had if we remained a part of the world.

When Jesus died he did not pay over a ransom as an offset for Adam. When Jesus was raised from the dead he had not paid a ransom, and when he ascended to the Father he did not pay over a ransom for the world. He laid in the Father’s hands the merit of his sacrifice.

He has been imputing of this merit down through the Gospel Age to his Church only. But when he is about finished imputing to the Church, the work of giving to the world restitution will begin. Before it begins, the merit imputed (loaned) to the Church must be actually paid over to divine justice as the basis for human restoration.

## **The Jewish Atonement Day**

Another Point of Interest. The work of the Gospel Age is typified by the Jewish Atonement day. On that day the high priest, first of all, did what? He killed the bullock. That bullock represented our Lord Jesus, the perfect man, and the priest represented our Lord as a new creature.

He typified the consecration of the human nature and also the condition of the new creature, still in the fleshly body, typed by the priest in the first holy.

Our Lord was in this condition of the holy during the three and a half years of his ministry. At the end of the three and a half years, having finished the work of sacrificing himself, having burned the antitypical incense, he passed inside the second veil.

On the third day our Lord arose on the other side of the second veil on the spirit plane, fully

perfected as a new creature, no longer in any sense of the word a man. When he ascended up on high, as the greatest antitypical high priest, he took with him the blood. The blood signifies the life of the sacrifice. He appeared “in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24), and there sprinkled of the blood on the mercy seat. This sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat was to make atonement for a certain class. That atonement we see was made only for the priests and the Levites — not for the world (Leviticus 16:6).

After the high priest had finished making the atonement for the priests and the Levites, he went out into the court again and there began a different work. Our Lord made application of the blood for the antitypical priests and the Levites, when? During the ten days between his ascension and the descent of the holy Spirit at Pentecost. This application for sins was followed by the pouring out of the holy Spirit at Pentecost, the evidence that divine mercy had come.

Between the 40th day to the 50th day, Leviticus 16:17 was being fulfilled. “There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.”

In this type, after the priest had offered the bullock, he then proceeded to the next part — the killing of the Lord’s goat. A goat is inferior to a bullock. The Lord himself was typified by the bullock. The Lord’s goat symbolized the faithful members of the Church. The Church was not fit to be priests, and could not be priests until the great high priest had made an imputation of his merit for them. Therefore, the great high priest who offered the bullock also offered the goat.

Now we see the conclusion of the whole matter. In the type the blood of the goat was taken into the most holy and was applied not for the priests, not for the Levites, but for the people. The blood of the goat was for the people (Leviticus 16:6-15). These two sacrifices represent all the sacrifices of the Gospel Age — the superior sacrifice was that of the Lord Jesus, and the inferior sacrifice was that of the Church.

When the last member of the Church passes beyond the veil is when the blood of the goat is taken into the most holy and presented on the mercy seat. This merit is released again when the last member of the Church is glorified. Then and only then the whole value of Christ’s sacrifice will be ready for appropriation for the world of mankind (2 Peter 1:4).

## **Mankind Redeemed in the Kingdom**

This work, of then appropriating the merit of Jesus on behalf of the world, is left until the kingdom age, when the redeemer’s kingdom will make man’s restitution privileges a real boon. As soon as the merit of Christ is appropriated for the world, he will immediately take charge of the purchased possession. He will then take his great power and reign. Then to all those redeemed ones for whom he will appropriate the merit of his sacrifice; he will be ready to give the long promised restoration blessings (Revelation 11:15).

When Christ is King — what then? The glorious reign of righteousness begins. Satan is bound for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3). The Lord intervenes on behalf of Israel. “Peace, be still” — at last. Satan is restrained from deceiving mankind and the world will be forced to respect the laws and Kingdom of God.

Then the Kings Highway will be open also (Isaiah 35:8). The Prince of Light, Christ head and body, will rule over mankind, to assist the world of mankind up the Kings Highway of Holiness, leading to life everlasting. It will be open to all who desire righteousness. Then, and only then, the Sun of Righteousness will arise (Malachi 4:2). Christ will open the blinded eyes that all may see the light of the knowledge of the goodness of God as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). The human race will have their eyes of understanding opened to see and appreciate the “true light” — until “every man that cometh into the world” has been enlightened (John 1:9, 1 Timothy 2:4-6).

The true knowledge of the Lord will fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea (Jeremiah 31:34). There shall be no longer a necessity to teach every man his neighbor, saying, “Know the Lord,” because all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, when the Lord’s kingdom shall have come and his will is done on earth as it is done in heaven.

All will know the plan of God. When Christ is King, the evidences of the truth will be so clear and convincing that none will have excuse for disbelief.

Man will also learn that Christ died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; but more, they will see and feel the restoration work begin in themselves and in their fellow man (Acts 3:19-21, Ezekiel 16:48-50, 53-55, 60-63). They will see righteousness ruling the world unto or toward life — today it is toward death.

Mankind will see great changes in the climate of the earth, “because he that hath the power of death,” that is the devil, will no longer be the “prince [ruler] of the power of the air” (Hebrews 2:14, Ephesians 2:2). “The wilderness and the solitary place shall rejoice” and “the earth shall yield her increase” (Isaiah 35:1, Ezekiel 34:27). A covenant of peace will be established. All sickness and disease shall be restrained and “nothing shall hurt nor destroy in all God’s holy kingdom” (Isaiah 11:9). Mankind will forever enjoy the goodness and greatness of God (Psalms 145:1-21).

Through the Prophet David Jehovah God said to His son, “Ask of me and I will give thee” the gentiles, nations, people, “for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psalms 2:8).

This we believe is close at the door. The Lord is about to take possession of the Church, which is the jewel class of the whole world. The blessings which he then will give are human restoration to the race of Adam, and bringing the whole earth, their home, up to the grandeur of the Garden of Eden. This work he will share with his body, the bride.

Now we know why the world is still suffering and groaning, waiting for the complete revealing of the sons of God (Romans 8:19, 22-23). The Church has to be glorified first.

My prayer on your behalf is that somehow, some way, we as a united body can be part of that promise made to Father Abraham to bless all the families of the earth. Amen.

Presentation Twelve

# What will Happen in Israel?

(From Now until the Mediatorial Kingdom)

Panel Discussion Brother Kenneth Rawson (USA)

Brother Robert Gorecki (USA) Brother Lutz Ruthmann (Germany)

*From* 1967 War to the Mediatorial Reign.

Ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict Israel captured Bible (East) Jerusalem	Psalms 83 Zechariah 12:2, 5, 6
Trickle immigration of Russian Jews	Jeremiah 3:12, 14, Isaiah 27:12
Jubilee Trump sounds — over a million Jews emigrate from Russia (Assyria)	Isaiah 27:13, Jeremiah 16:14, 15
In Peace Process land has been lost. Maybe more will be lost (they will regain).	Obadiah 18, 19 (Jewish Publication Society) (KJV, delete words in italics)
Might be temporary peace	Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11
Israeli-Arab War	Isaiah 11:14, Zeph.2:2-10, Obadiah 18-20 (JPS), Micah 7:11, 14 — Before time of trouble over.
Large emigration from Christian world (Egypt) — US, France, etc. Further emigration from Russia	Before or after Israeli-Arab war (Zechariah 10:10) Isaiah 11:14-16 — After Israeli-Arab war
Israel commits great sin while lovers forget her	Jeremiah 30:14, Ezekiel 39:25, 26
Unwalled and dwelling in peace	Ezekiel 38:11
Invasion of Gog and Associates	Ezekiel 38, 39
Lovers forget her. How? Perhaps by going for the spoil themselves	Ezekiel 38:13, Lovers — Western Powers Jeremiah 30:14, Ezekiel 38:12
Rebels rush out to defend land and are purged out	Ezekiel 20:38
God fights for Israelis who look to Him	Zechariah 12:8
God destroys forces that invade Israel	Zechariah 12:9, 14:3
Israel as a nation accepts Jesus	Zechariah 12:10-14
Anarchy sweeps back to home countries	Ezekiel 38:19-21, Volume 4 pages 556, 577
Some of Gog escape and tell home-people they saw the glory of God	Isaiah 66:19
Home-people respond and bring all Jews left to Jerusalem as a peace-offering	Isaiah 66:20
Gentiles say to Jews — we will go with you for God is with you	Zechariah 8:20-23
Gentiles serve and bow down before Jews. This humbling makes them teachable	Isaiah 60:6-16, especially 14
The “heavens” (glorified Church) rejoice that God has “glorified Himself in Israel”	Isaiah 44:23

## Background

The preceding chart is offered in the spirit of dialog. Ezekiel 20:32-38 shows that the current regathering of the Jews is represented by Israel's exodus from Egypt. Just as God smote the sea and the river to deliver ancient Israel from Egypt to enter the Promised Land, so God will smite a symbolic sea and river to deliver Jews from a symbolic Assyria (many identify as Russia) and Egypt (many identify as the Christian world). (Zechariah 10:9-11, Isaiah 11:15, 16).

## **Five Million Jews Still in the Former Soviet Union? (1999)**

The following is a news release from Israel, Arutz 7 — Many more Jews may be living in the former Soviet Union than previously believed. So says Prof. Yirmiyahu Branover, chief editor of a new encyclopedia on the topic of 1,000 years of Russian Jewry. Speaking to Arutz-7 today, Branover said that research for the encyclopedia has turned up some surprising facts about the Jewish population of Russia. “Our editors chose a representative sample of towns and cities throughout the former Soviet Union,” said Branover, “in order to determine the current Jewish population there. The results were astounding. In Kasnodaur, the latest figures were that 1,150 Jews lived there. But our researchers found that in fact, 12,000 Jews live there — despite a low birth rate and the departure of many Jews! In Berditchev, instead of the 500 Jews believed to be living there, there are actually 3,000!”

Branover added that researchers were instructed to consider only those who fit the criteria for Jewishness under Jewish law. “All told, our studies indicate that some five million Jews still live in Russia,” he said.

“Until now, the Jewish Agency, Hebrew University and other groups have assumed that 1 to 1.5 million Jews live there. This had an impact on such questions as to how much effort to invest into strengthening existing Jewish communities there. It also of course affected perspectives on Aliyah (Jewish immigration to Israel). If our information is correct, we have an obligation to go ahead and facilitate the Aliyah of these Jews, and to ensure that they will be employed once they arrive.”

## **Questions**

- (1) Will there be another Arab-Israeli war in which Israel will acquire more, but not all, of her Promised Land?
- (2) Will the United States and Western powers (Christendom) start a war against the Arab nations? Some use Jeremiah 25:15, 21, 26 to suggest this.
- (3) Will there be a large number of Jews from the former Soviet Union that will yet immigrate to Israel? Also, will there be a large immigration of Jews from the Christian world — United States, France, etc.?
- (4) Is the invasion of Ezekiel 38, Zechariah 14:1-4 and Zechariah 12:8, 9 yet future? What nations will be involved? What will be their motive?
- (5) When will her lovers forget Israel (Jeremiah 30:14)? What great iniquity will Israel be committing at that time? What will Israel be receiving from God when her lovers forget her?
- (6) When will Israel as a nation accept Jesus?
- (7) Will there be a further return of Jews to Israel after Gog's invasion?
- (8) Will Israel be a blessing nation in the Kingdom?

## Presentation Thirteen

# Strengthened with Might in the Inner Man

Brother Iosif Iliesiu (Romania)

*For* this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love ... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” Ephesians 3:14-19 (RSV).

God’s people do not have a permanent city, but through various experiences of life, through trials and heart pain, they direct their steps towards the heavenly homeland and they need much strengthening, much faith, courage and steadiness. In fact, the children of God cannot reach the end of their path without these characteristics. That is why the Christian is told to not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season they shall reap and not be tired (Galatians 6: 9).

One of God’s children who joyously desires to reach the promised kingdom cannot allow himself to become a prey to weariness and weakness, but he needs to strive daily to refresh and multiply his might, so at all times he would be able to make the necessary steps according to the Truth’s requirements.

## **Not Our Own Might**

The Lord repeatedly warned His people not to fight with their own might and with human energy, but rather to walk or run on the narrow way of life. The people of God from olden times were be-seechd to wait for the Lord in submission, being assured that He would renew their strength. God always strengthened the might of those full of courage, of those who practiced faith and trust in Him. After years of experience under the Lord’s leading, the Singer of the Psalms learned to say: “The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. The LORD is the strength of his people, he is the saving refuge of his anointed” (Psalms 28:7-8).

When the Lord gave the prophet Zechariah a vision of a lampstand with seven lamps and two olive trees, which represented the Church during the Gospel age and its service of witness, Zechariah was taught by an angel that the service shown in the vision would not be fulfilled by human wisdom and might: “... Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts” (Zechariah 4:1-6)

This is one of the most important lessons that a follower of Christ should learn at the beginning of his Christian journey: that the Lord is the source of the Christian's might and only through the strength of God's spirit will the Christian be able to do God's will and to fight successfully against the powers of the evil one, in order to support their life on standards of righteousness and high holiness, and in order to make the necessary progress in their pilgrimage.

When at the beginning of the age the Lord parted from his disciples and gave them the mission to be His sent ones and to spread the Gospel, he clearly "... commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem ..." Acts 1:4, but wait there until they would be clothed with power from above.

It was like he would have wanted to say: "Beloved disciples, I wish before everything else that you learn that you do not have any strength or wisdom within yourselves to do anything. I have given you a great and important responsibility, that by entrusting you as My Apostles, you will bring the heavenly news before people and you will be the special carriers of light for the Church throughout the entire Gospel.

"You have to understand that you have no strength and no might within yourselves to succeed in this mission; you will be able to do this only to the degree that you will be humbled and fully submitted in God's hands, to be used by Him and to be strengthened and helped by the Spirit that you will receive in a few days after I leave. Therefore, wait until you will receive the promised blessing."

Even if he wasn't one of those to whom the Lord gave this mission at the time of His leaving, the Apostle Paul fit exactly the Lord's requirement when, at his time, he was called in His service. His epistles show that in a short time he acknowledged that the strength and the source of his might was from the Lord, when he says: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phillipians 4:13).

This is a beautiful and simple statement of a man who, from a human standpoint, had good reasons to be proud of his knowledge and his talents. Even at the end of his earthly journey, we notice how humble and at the same time how full of hope he was when he said: "I have fought a good fight ..." (2 Timothy 4:7). He was not seeking glory in the perfection of his flesh, for he continually says that he has to fight in order to keep his body in submission to the Word and the Spirit of the Father, and in order to have the mind of Christ.

Dear brethren, we notice that he learned to say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." (Galatians 6:14). He gloried in the power and wisdom of the Lord that were given unto him through the Holy Spirit, by which he faithfully fulfilled his mission as Christ had sent him.

What great and honorable humility we can notice, beloved brothers and sisters, in the Apostle Paul! Surely we can believe that this changing of his mind was done by a good fight, based on self denial, while saying: "this one thing I do." And in his enthusiastic zeal, he also says: "... That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (Philippians 3:13, 10, 4-15).

In the end, the Apostle Paul says: "... I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7); he did not glory

himself with the many, many ecclesias he had brought to life, or with the many whom he had converted and baptized into the Christian faith. He did not glory in himself with his knowledge of the Word of God, nor with his oratory, nor with the multitude of his epistles or with his suffering in prisons that he endured for the Gospel's sake. On the contrary, he simply found glory in faithfully fighting the "good fight" of faith 2 Timothy 4:7; that he fought as good as he could against all the surrounding sins and against all of his own weaknesses.

And neither did he glory in himself with establishing a new faith in lands untravelled by the other apostles, or that he explained the Gospel in the most clear and positive way, and thus many generations after him would praise God and His people would be blessed.

No, he simply found glory in keeping the faith that God gave him through His Word, that faith that he received and has shared with all the people of God. He kept this faith; he remained faithful in this faith and lived his whole life for this faith. He had never forsaken this faith for a bowl of red pottage — earthly favor or advantage. On these two things — that he was in submission to God's word and he fought with all his might to defend it — is based his hope for a crown of life and for the Joy to be with his Savior. These are favors given in the kingdom to all the faithful, at His appearance in glory.

Beloved brothers and sisters, what a great encouragement this information is, even for those "poor in spirit" among God's people! It is not because of our spiritual or fleshly might, it is not because of the wonderful things or some deeds we have done for the Lord, His cause or His people that we can hope for the eternal glory.

## **Using Our Talents Faithfully**

Yet, we need to use faithfully all our talents and use all the opportunities that the Lord offers to us, just as the Apostle did. Beloved brothers and sisters, none of us can say that we do not have at least one talent, as the Lord tells us in Matthew 25:15. The Apostle Paul also tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:2: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

In the manna comment for June 22nd, Brother Russell helps us with a wonderful explanation of Matthew 25:15 and says: "... But the 'talents,' being distributed according to every man's ability, represent opportunities for the service of God along the lines of such abilities as we possess. They may be talents of education, or money, or influence, or good health, or time, or tact, or genius, with opportunities for their use in God's service."

## **Keep the Faith**

We need to keep the faith. In no circumstance are we allowed to deny it. We cannot be unfaithful in order to win someone's favor, and we cannot stop from telling the Truth as it is, just to avoid the frowning of some. The Truth is the messenger of the Heavenly Father. We keep the faith in our journey, by respecting His principles that form our faith. If we do this successfully, then we fight like the Apostle, the good fight of faith. In his Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul says: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

In the March 15th manna comment, "the wise and faithful servant" gives us an illustration of the

abounding and beautiful life of faith by saying: “It is not enough that, by faith, we receive the first impulse of life, but, having passed from death unto life, by the same means, we must continue to receive and appropriate spiritual nourishment, that we may grow thereby: we must walk by faith, following the leading of the Holy Spirit through the Word of truth.

The life of faith is an individual matter, as well of the heart as of the head. It is far more than an acceptance of doctrines which we consider Scriptural and therefore true; it is the assimilation of that which we have proved to be the Truth, so that its principles become our principles, and its promises our inspiration.”

While we find ourselves in the fight of life and we struggle against the enemies, we have to know how we can be strengthened with might in the inner man through the Spirit of God.; we have to know how we can receive a rich measure of the Spirit that strengthens.

What Christian hasn't experienced, in the struggles and the discouragements of his journey, that practicing the great privilege of prayer is one of the most important methods by which we can share this power and might from above? It is priceless to have this great privilege of coming in contact and communion with the Great Spirit, the Father of all spiritual creatures.

One of the Lord's servants, whose writings show a great and deep experience in searching the Word and finding God's Truth, proves in a sure manner that patience and perseverance in prayer, the secret communion with God, and actually the deep searching of the soul in His presence and through the study of His Word (by which we can reach the true knowledge about ourselves and about the things around us) are of great importance in our spiritual prosperity and in receiving the divine might.

This is not the only purpose, we also receive spiritual might in order to work for God, for our brethren, and to protect ourselves against any worldly spirit. Elijah the Tishbite was a man having the same senses we have, and he was in the midst of the darkest decadence and surrounded by those whose hearts were distant from God. He saw failing, even the most faithful of the sons of men. He saw the flood of evil rising around him, and the light of Truth quenching quickly.

Baal's altar took the place of Jehovah's altar and the shouts of Baal's priests were louder than the holy hymns of the Levites; and in a few words, all that he saw was a huge pile of rubble and ruins. He was moved and cried because of this; yet he did more than that: he seriously prayed to God and acted without hesitation — even risking his life — to straighten out things, to the glory of his Lord. And God, seeing Elijah working after His will, gave him a memorable victory that awakened the seduced nation and brought her to the way of truth.

We have the right to say: it is good, it is vital to seek God and to wait for His answer. Not only that this will lead to happy results shown in God's answer to our prayer, but there is a sweet comfort in this practice itself. What a joy it is for the tried and disciplined faithful ones to find themselves alone with God, in intimate communion with Him! What a blessing it is to rise from the present burdening situations and to sit in the rest and the healing light of His presence! Let us all then wait for the Lord in everything.

It is good to turn the hardships of the day into an opportunity to often draw ourselves close to the

throne of grace, and thus exercise a positive influence not only in our hearts but also around us (Manna Text and comment for June 25<sup>th</sup>). Doing so, we will be comforted and encouraged while personally waiting for the Lord, for His promise has always been fulfilled: “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). Wonderful and precious promises! Let us fully try them ourselves!

We must come often in the presence of God with the true feeling of our needs. The more we feel our needs, the more we will have the spirit of prayer; and this is the spirit that we need. Yet there are many who turn their prayers into some kind of god — they allow their prayers to stay right between them and God. How often some are disappointed because of their formal prayers, which are just outward words and expressions, which don't carry a blessing within themselves? This is a dangerous snare! We have to be careful at all times that our prayers are the expression of our natural spirit, and not the superstitious feeling of a duty.

Not only as individual children of God, can we be strengthened with might in the inward man through the daily exercise of our privilege of holy communion with God, but also as congregations of His people, by uniting our prayers and talking to one another about various parts His holy Word, we can edify and encourage one another in this most holy faith.

A practice that is painfully neglected among Christians (even though it is so useful) is the brethren praying together. We cannot expect the Lord to pour His refreshing mercy over those who are content in their cold and careless state. The Word says: “... Ask and ye shall receive ...” (John 16:24). How can we expect more, if we are content with what we have? May every true Christian strive to awaken his faith companions that they will seek the Lord in prayer and in the study of His Word; then everyone can be sure that happy results will be noticed in a short time.

## **Growing Gradually**

The clear teaching of the Scriptures shows that the strengthening with might of the inward man doesn't happen in one moment, but gradually through the years, depending on how the heart obeys the teachings of the Lord through His Word. And not just that, but this strengthening is pre-sented as a realization that requires joint work with God in edifying our faith, hope and love.

We remember one of the types, that a child is one of the types that the Scriptures use to show us the gradual development of our faith life. Even though some of the Lord's people can be older in their natural aging, in their spiritual life they could still be children. The apostle advises those “new-born babes” to desire and strive after the milk of the Word of God, after the simple and elementary truths and after the fundamental principles of the Truth.

The clear teachings of the Holy Scriptures are those referring to: (1) The perfection and the glory of the original man, who was created in God's image and after His likeness. (2) Man's fall in sin and the death punishment, through a process of decay, as the original text says: “Dying thou shalt die.” (3) Man's ransom from sin and death, based on the payment of an appropriate price, meaning the sacrifice of the perfect Man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a Ransom price for all. (4) The restoration to the original state, the release of the redeemed man from the consequences of sin, to be done in God's due time according to His arrangements.

Those who receive these truths with the faith of a child, and who strive to eliminate all evil, wickedness, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking in their lives, those who live worthy of this salvation, considering the sacrifice of their life as a wise service, and who fully consecrate to God, they are received by Him as His children and heirs, as spiritual children.

The Word of God says that these little ones are very cherished. Our Lord talked about them when he told Peter "... Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). The Lord loves them so much that he warns the false teachers with these words: "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (Mark 9:42). And He also shows His serious care for these little children of His family in the example of a meek shepherd who takes care of a weak, lost lamb, when He says: "... Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:6-14).

Yet, even if those babes in Christ are given a special care and are very loved by the Lord, because of their weakness and lack of experience, and even if their meek and teachable spirit is an example for everybody, it is not God's will that they will stay babes forever. He recommends to them the milk of the Word, so they could grow and develop from the childhood state and reach the maturity of the spiritual life: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine ..." (Ephesians 4:14).

There has to come a time in the life of every healthy child of God who progresses in growth, when he is able to leave the first teachings about Christ, by imprinting and rooting them in his spirit to a level that he doesn't have to learn them over and over again; but he needs to grow in the spiritual strength and might, and in grace, as well as in knowledge towards perfection.

The Apostle Paul reproached some in his day for not growing in this manner, saying: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe" (Hebrews 5:12,13).

Therefore, God's people have to live not only with milk, but with the whole word that comes from God's mouth. Some of these words that come out of God's mouth are the truths mentioned earlier as being milk, while others contain deeper truths. The strong meat is for those who, after being educated with the milk, grew in knowledge and developed solid strength and steadiness of Christian character.

The apostle says that this "strong meat" is for the mature people, for those whose sense of judgment learned, by experience, to discern between good and evil. He also warns us of the frightening consequences, in case of failure.

## **A Time of Contradictions in Teachings**

It is most important that God's people will not accept as strong meat, as deep spiritual truths, anything that is more or less dirty, mixed with error or human teachings, with sophisms and speculations! Today, there are many people who call themselves teachers in spiritual things, and who strive to teach to others their faith and their knowledge, while they more or less ignore

God's message given through the Prophets, Jesus, the Apostles, and the Laodicean Messenger and say: "... I am rich ... and have need of nothing ..." (Mark 7:5-13, Revelation 3:14-22, Matthew 24:45).

Not all of today's teachings are sound; many contradict the true ones, and this is how Satan tries to cause quarrels and misunderstandings. Not believing the Truths that the Lord gives in our day is a sign that maturity has not yet been reached; contradiction and fighting against present truths is a dangerous thing! Doing so, we put ourselves in the class of the false witnesses — as the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:15 — and not in the class of the wise virgins that form the Church — that is the Bride of the Lamb, of which it is written that "... in their mouth was found no guile ..." (Revelation 14:5). How careful we need to be with what we accept and what we support!

It will be admitted that much of what is propagated today by some teachers is very unhealthy and uncertain, and it does not carry the proof of the Lord's Spirit, for it is not supported by the Word of God. There are various teachings based on assumptions that are not fully supported by the Word of God and there are various teachers who publish them and try to attract followers, just as the Apostle tells us.

Their service is not refreshing or edifying to the saints in might, in strength and in all the characteristics of a new Creature in Jesus Christ. That is why the Apostle requires from the faithful ones to be humbled in their hearts and to practice great care and might in their spiritual judgment of discerning good from evil.

If the children in Christ will be fed with mixed milk — a mix of truth and error — that constantly causes confusion in ideas, the result will be that they will get sick and will eventually die, unless they will leave the spoiled food and will look for the pure milk. Frequently the children in Christ are not very diligent and zealous in searching for the pure milk of the Word; and oftentimes many who think of themselves to be "mature" in faith are completely careless when they offer contaminated milk to the children.

In 1 Timothy 4:16, the Apostle Paul warns Timothy to watch, saying: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Therefore, it is possible that the strong meat or deeper truths could get more or less dirty or infected with a mix of errors and falsities, so the one who feeds himself with it will shortly get spiritually sick; he will become weak and power-less, as the Word shows us (Galatians 4:15-28, 2 Timothy 2:15).

It is of great importance for all of God's sincere children to take the apostle's advice in their hearts and to only desire pure, unspoiled food, be it milk or strong meat, while rejecting any other foods. If we nurture ourselves with the pure word of God, we have to reject without hesitation any imitations from Satan. This is the best way to escape all the snares of error: "... and the sheep hear his voice ... and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:3-5).

It is not necessary to know the strangers' voices in order to flee from them; all that we need to know is the voice of the Good Shepherd. This voice will keep us away from the misleading influence of any stranger's voice. When I need to warn some Christians of the false voices, such

as “the divine mystery of Christ’s humanity,” I don’t consider it a loss of time to discuss these misguided teachings; with God’s help, I want to equip the sincere Christians by explaining the teachings of the Scriptures regarding the Truth.

Let us also consider the Apostle Paul’s warning in 1 Peter 1:5: “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” The apostle tells us in this scripture that we will be kept by the power of God, and this should be a very important subject of our meditations.

Oh, how some have prided themselves in their own abilities during times of ease, but when passing through severe experiences have shown to be a painful example of instability, misguided because of their trust in self, and consequently fail! This shows us that only those who are “strong in the Lord” will have the strength to escape the Adversary’s wickedness. Whatever important spiritual talents we would have, and however excellent our speaking or writing activity in the service of the Truth would be, we would still not be fully fit for God’s service if it weren’t for the power of the Holy Spirit coming over us to sanctify our life and keep us from the snares of our way.

The measure of the spiritual might — God’s power in our life — will always equal the degree in which we’re cleaning all the dirt of the flesh and of the spirit. This has to contain an accurate acknowledging that all our deeds would be worthless, if we were not in the Christ or if we would leave him.

Truly, we cannot have any strength in our patience and cannot do any good spiritually until the power of God works in our fully consecrated life and continually leads it by his Holy Spirit. The scriptures remind us that our assurance comes from Him; therefore, trusting our own wisdom, intelligence, skill and persuasive abilities means we do not appreciate the fundamental truth; however, a shameful experience will wake us up to the appreciation of this truth!

In his epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul writes that “... in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these [separates himself from all lawlessness], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:20-21). This is only repeating what was said earlier; it teaches us that the human desires and dirty flesh and spirit are obstacles to the spiritual understanding of God’s things and for the kind of service that leads to eternal life.

The law for typical Israel said that a sacrifice must be brought in a clean vessel. If the vessel wasn’t clean, the sacrifice had to be rejected as improper, for it would not have been accepted by the Lord. This law was not revoked by Christ’s law. Long before the Apostle wrote about it, the four young men in Babylon lived it when they decided to remain spotless. That story was written for our teaching now, at the end of the ages.

Will we keep all these? May the Lord help us. Amen.

Presentation Fourteen

# A Practical Guide through Today's Crazy World

By Solomon the Wise

Vesper Service Brother Len Griehs (USA)

*The* world around us changes constantly as technology brings new opportunities for people to spend money. The rising standard of living brings new toys with questionable value. Think of the electric shoe polisher or the automatic pencil sharp-ener. Is your life a better quality because of them? Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 5:11, “When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?” Man works hard to obtain what is of questionable value.

However, merely accumulating goods does not satisfy most people in the world. Everyone has their own idea about what it would take to make them happy. In the United States, groups with special interests pay money to others to petition the government for their own interests. Listen as we hear a list of some of the special interest groups registered in America.

## **Reader #1**

The American Heart Association  
The American Hair Replacement Association  
The Council on Non-Theatrical Events  
The Friends of the Earth  
The Friends of the River  
The Friends of the FBI  
The Jogging Association  
The National Swimming Pool Institute  
The Sauna Association of America  
The Scale Manufacturers Association  
The National Association of Name Plate Manufacturers  
The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead River  
The National Association of Blind Hispanic Radio Broadcasters  
The Committee in Support of Existing United States Tariff Policy with Respect to Honey  
The Pattern Recognition Society

For those of us who aspire to something higher, what is important? The apostle Paul offers his advice in 1 Timothy 6:6-8, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought

nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be there-with content.” What we accomplish, how much we own, who we know is all useless unless we have peace and contentment.

Think about what is important to you as the choir sings this first song, “Rejoice in the Lord.”

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice,  
all ye that are upright in heart,  
And ye that have made him your choice,  
bid sadness and sorrow depart.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.

Tho’ darkness surrounds you by day,  
your sky by the night be overcast.  
Let nothing your spirit dismay,  
but trust till the danger is past.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice,  
his praises proclaiming in song

With harp and with organ and voice,  
the loud hallelujahs prolong.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Be glad in the Lord and rejoice.

What is important to you? In the crazy world around you, step back and remember what it is that motivates you. The key to happiness and reward in this life can only come from a life of communion with God. That will give you unspeakable advantage above others in this life, for it will give you the key to mental health and a life of happiness. The theme for our devotion this evening will be Proverbs 3:1-10. It provides a practical guide to overcoming the temptations and false rewards of this life. Let us listen to the words.

## **Reading #2**

“My Son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

For the rest of this vesper service, let us walk through this proverb and explore some of the practical applications to make our lives richer and set us further apart from the frivolous ways of the world.

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart.” Solomon repeated something very close to this in his fourth proverb: “My son, pay attention to what I say: listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”

## **Reading #3**

If you are over 40 years old, your heart has already beaten more than 1.5 billion times. When your heart stops, it will be too late to change your ways. So you might lose some weight, get more exercise, and begin watching not only what you eat, but also what’s eating you. Experts believe that stress is the single greatest factor in heart disease.

There is another vital organ called the heart — the spiritual heart. It, too, has throbbed millions of times with thoughts, affections, and choices. In the spiritual heart we determine how we will speak, behave, and respond to circumstances. Will we trust the Lord and choose to be gracious, patient, and loving? Or will we yield to pride, greed and bitterness?

Are we keeping spiritually fit? Let’s submit our spiritual heart to a fitness assessment. Weight:

Do we need to lose the weight of worldly burdens and cares? Pulse: Are we maintaining a steady rhythm of gratitude and praise? Blood Pressure: Is our trust greater than our anxiety? Diet: Are we enjoy-ing the life-giving nutrients provided by the truth from God's word?

Verse 2 of this proverb reads: "For they will prolong your life for many years and bring you prosperity." This does not mean that you will live longer, but that all your years, both young and old will be filled with pleasure if you keep God's commands in your heart. After all, what is it that makes people happy? Listen to the results of this study conducted by one of the leading universities in America.

## **Reading #4**

A Duke University Study was conducted to determine what makes a person happy. Here are the findings.

- (1) The absence of suspicion and resentment. Nursing a grudge was a major factor in unhappiness.
- (2) Living in the present. Much unhappiness stems from an unwholesome preoccupation with past mistakes and failures.
- (3) Not wasting time and energy fighting conditions you cannot change.
- (4) Cooperating with life, instead of trying to either demolish it or run away from it.
- (5) Forcing yourself to be outgoing with others, instead of retreating within, during periods of emotional distress.
- (6) Refusing to pity yourself or seek self-justification in easy alibis that make you appear noble to yourself or others.
- (7) Cultivating the old fashioned virtues of love, honor, loyalty, and thrift.
- (8) Finding something bigger than yourself in which to believe. Self-centered, egotistical, materialistic people score lowest of all in any test measuring happiness.

Do not the results of this study show that the path of following the Lord will result in the only true happiness? If you remember and practice the commands of God for your entire life, you will prosper as an individual — not in worldly wealth but in spiritual joy and happiness.

Verse 3 of our Proverb reads: "Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart."

In God's sight, no great person can emerge from spite and vindictiveness. Getting even is not God's way, but paying back evil with good. Albert Schweitzer (an early 20th century French humanitarian) summed this up well when he said, "The fundamental idea of good is that it consists in preserving life, in favoring it, in wanting to bring

it to its highest value. Evil, however, consists in destroying life, doing it injury, hindering its development.”

Let us consider the example of Joseph, who returned evil for good and over the long term, became God’s tool for preparing the nation of Israel for its inheritance in the Promised Land.

## **Reading #5**

His brothers sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt at the age of seventeen. He could have blamed his brothers, or thought about how his life would be different if only he were out of Egypt, or if his brothers had not rendered him such ill. However, Joseph was proactive. He worked on the principles of good — that God would bring good to him from any evil if he focused on putting God’s principles to work in his life. Within a short period of time he was running Potiphar’s household. He was in charge of all that Potiphar had because the trust was so high.

The day came when Joseph was caught in a difficult situation and he refused to compromise his principles. As a result, he was unjustly imprisoned for thirteen years. But again he refused to become bitter or let evil overtake him. He worked within the confines of his situation and soon he was running the prison and eventually the entire nation of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh.

It is much easier to blame other people or conditions for our situation. Or it is easy to say, that’s me, that’s the way I am. But God wants us to be responsible — to take control of our lives within the confines of our situation and to influence our circumstances by working with the circles of influence which we have. We do not have to be great orators, or be engaged in full-time witness work. We may be stuck in a small circle of friends or confined at home. But yet we can exercise His principles no matter the situation we are in. That is how we gain victory.

We will skip to verses 5 and 6 of the proverb. “Trust the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Can we take any better advice than this? Is it not God alone who can see the end from the beginning?

The word used for “direct” in this verse in the Septuagint version is also used in 2 Timothy 2:15 for rightly “dividing” the word of truth. In other words, we must build on the correct beliefs and principles or we are doomed to follow a path which leads to failure and death. Contrast the life of the Apostle formerly called Saul, whose convictions led him to kill and persecute the Christians, but who changed his convictions based on his experiences with the Lord; with worldly men such as Nero and Hitler, whose convictions led them to a path of destruction and evil. We must build our character not on our own convictions, but on the principles of God.

## **Reading #6**

“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fail ...” (Matthew 7:24).

In 1992, Hurricane Andrew destroyed thousands of homes in South Florida. Yet in an area where the wreckage looked like a war zone, one house remained standing, still firmly anchored to its

foundation.

When a reporter asked the homeowner why his house had not been blown away, he replied, “I built this house myself. I also built it according to the Florida State building code. Whatever the code called for, I used. I was told that a house built according to code would withstand a hurricane — and it did.”

Jesus talked about the importance of building our lives on a solid foundation. He said that the person who obeys His word is like a wise man that built his house on a rock. If we build according to his code, we will not be swept away when crisis hits with hurricane-like force. The tempests of temptation and the storms of suffering will not be able to sweep us off a solid foundation of faith. Adversity may come, yet because we have built according to the code of the unshakable Rock, we can emerge with our character strengthened.

Let us sing together number 41 in the Inter-national hymnbook, “The Solid Rock”

Verse 7 reads, “Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord and shun evil.” How often do we attribute to our own skills what really comes from God? Let’s listen to the wisdom of Bro. Russell’s comments on this verse, taken from the June 28 Manna text and the expanded reprint article.

## **Reading #7**

“Nothing is more dangerous to the child of God than self-conceit; it blocks the way to true progress and reformation of heart, and hinders true usefulness to others, and especially usefulness in God’s service; for his Word declares: ‘God resisteth the proud, but showeth favor unto the humble ...’ ” (And from Reprint 2894) “... we are sorry at times to find some to speak of the knowledge of the truth which they have received of the Lord as though it were something of their own achievement; as though some honor were due them as the inventors of the divine plan.”

Self-conceit certainly blocks our progress and the solution is to focus our life outward rather than inward. The more we are involved in putting effort into serving others, the farther we get from self-serving.

Verse 8 reads: “It shall be health to thy navel and marrow to thy bones.” The ancient wisdom of God is evident in this verse. Solomon understood the miraculous works of God’s creation, better than modern man wants to recognize. Listen to the next reading on this important word picture of the navel and marrow.

## **Reading #8**

In the fetus, it is through the navel that the umbilical cord connects child with the life source of mother. It is through that umbilical cord that all life-giving nutrients are received during the gestation period. If the cord is damaged or cut, life ceases to exist. And what about bone marrow? Oncologists use healthy bone marrow as a key in fighting cancer. A bone marrow transplant brings new hope to the leukemia victim.

Similarly, the word of God sustains us during our “gestation” period as new creatures. While we are developing on this side of the veil, we must have the wisdom and words of God fed into our body constantly or our life will never develop the way it should. Just as the cancer victim receives a new chance from the bone marrow injected into him, our own susceptibility to sin is supplanted as God gives us holy spirit to replace diseased human spirit. Without that transplant or transformation as Paul describes it in Romans 12:1, 2, we will die from the effects of sin before we can develop into the child of God.

Now the chorus will sing the song, “Adoration.”

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,  
God of glory Lord of love  
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee  
Opening to the sun above.

Alleluia, Alleluia, God of glory, Lord of love.

All Thy works with joy surround Thee,  
Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays  
Stars and angels sing around Thee  
Center of unbroken praise.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Earth and heaven sing Thy praise. Amen.

Verse 9: “Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase.” The practice of tithing was used throughout the Old Testament as a means of recognizing that everything came from God. However, tithing then was not as it is today. The tithing of the Old Testament was a giving of the first fruits. That was extremely costly for the farmers because the first fruits were the very best. They would command the greatest price in the market place. Brethren, that is what God expects us to give. Today’s Christians look at tithing and confine it to giving a certain portion of what remains from their disposable income. However, if we note the lesson from Genesis 14:20, where Melchizedek paid tithes to Abram, we will see that is a giving of our very best to God. Are we willing to share with God what we receive first, not what is left over? If we only share what is left over, those things become more important to us than God. Do we recognize that we are merely stewards of what we possess — that we are merely returning to God what is already his?

## Reading #9

There was a small church that was badly in need of repairs. Although the church never solicited donations, it found that it needed to have a fund drive to try to raise money to make the repairs. One of the congregation, a man who was of high moral character, regular church attendance, and a good family man, purchased a lottery ticket that would pay him one million dollars if it was the lucky ticket. He asked a fellow member of his church, who was known to be a devout Christian, to pray that his number would be picked. If it were, he would be able to meet the obligations of the repairs, single-handedly with only one-tenth of his winnings. The fellow member hesitated, and then said, “All right, but first let me ask you this: If you do not win, are you willing to pledge the same one-tenth of your weekly income?” The man looked surprised and dismayed. “But, I need that to live on,” he said.

The man’s heart was not right with God. His seemingly spiritual request was merely a cover-up for selfishness.

Verse 10: “So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” Brethren, the key to overcoming the temptations of this life is found in this verse. What is this new wine? The word in Hebrew is Tirosh, and has the meaning of “possessing.” It is called

new wine because that is the substance that goes to your brain very quickly. If we follow God's ways and recognize him in our lives — if we follow the admonition of this proverb — then our lives will be possessed by Him and our personal barns — our character and fruits — will reflect Him.

Some believe that Solomon wrote Psalm 127 in his later years. The very first verse says, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.” After building the temple for the glory of God, Solomon became far too lavish, too preoccupied with showy horses and chariots, too status-conscious in his marriages to many pagan wives. As a result, war and internal strife marred his kingdom, and his home was in disarray. Out of his bitter experiences, he had discovered at last the futility of going his own way.

Like Solomon, our own way is one of human wisdom and self-reliance. It can lead to frustration and emptiness. It is said that a self-made man worships only his creator. If we rely on God, trust him, obey him, and depend on Him, we will have great satisfaction and joy in this life as well as the life to come.

## **Reading #10**

To live content with small means:

To seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion;

To be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich;

To study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly;

To listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages with open hearts;

To bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasion, hurry never;

In a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common — this is to be my symphony.

We will conclude our vesper with the chorus singing “Surely the Presence.”

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place,

I can feel his mighty power and his grace.

I can hear the sounds of happiness

I see glory on each face

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place.

Surely the spirit of the Lord is in this place,

I can see the change He's making on each face.

His sweet presence and His mighty love

This vain world could never replace

Surely the spirit of the Lord is in this place.

May we have a sweet and pleasant sleep, knowing that the Lord is with us. Amen.

Presentation Fifteen

# The Two Feedings

Brother Ric Cunningham (USA)

*Good* day, brethren. We bring you the love and greetings of your brethren back home with whom we meet, the Oakland County (Michigan) Bible Students.

Our lesson today is taken primarily from the book of Matthew. We have always been on the look out to observe how the Lord arranged to do and say certain things in particular sequential order. Have you ever wondered, as you read through a gospel account, why Jesus said and did certain things when he did? Why did Jesus do this miracle at this particular time, instead of another miracle? Is there an overall scheme that Jesus happened to be following in these experiences? As I'm sure you've also noticed, you do see a pattern and a broader lesson emerges confirming the plan of God as we've already seen it from our topical studies. We rejoice because any little thing that can strengthen our convictions and our faith in the overall plan we receive as a gift from God and render Him thanks for it. That's basically what today's study is.

We would like to read in Matthew the 16th chapter, starting with verse 5. This is after Jesus had performed two miraculous feedings of the multitudes. "And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which, when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because you have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the 5000, and how many baskets you took up? Neither the seven loaves of the 4000, and how many baskets you took up? How is it that you do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."

We now have scriptural authority to look at these two feedings of the 5000 and the 4000 for a deeper spiritual lesson than the miracles alone as they happened. The Lord is telling us that we should look deeper into this. Jesus is really talking about spiritual bread, the truth, the word of God in its purity, which he gave; and beware of the polluted, contaminated and leavened word of God, the false doctrine of the religious systems of his day.

Brethren, what we are suggesting is that these two feedings represent the two harvests, the harvest of the Jewish Age, and the Harvest of the Gospel Age. One similarity between the two harvests is that the Master is present. He was present during the first harvest of the Jewish Age, feeding the multitudes spiritual truth, and he is present during the second harvest, the harvest of the Gospel Age, and he is again feeding those disciples that come unto him. We believe this first feeding represents the first advent.

## **The First Feeding**

We would like to look back to the first feeding recorded in Matthew 14:13-21. ‘‘When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart. And when the people had heard thereof they followed him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth and saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past. Send the multitude away that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said unto them, they need not depart. You give them to eat. And they said unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. He said, bring them hither to me. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and he took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven he blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples and the disciples to the multitude. They did all eat and were filled, and they took up of the fragments that remained 12 baskets full. And they that had eaten were about 5000 men besides women and children.’’

Starting back in verse 13, Jesus went out into a desert place. There he called the disciples out of the cities to follow him there. In the Bible a city quite often represents a nominal religious system such as the city Babylon, in Revelation, represents the Papacy. Here Jesus was calling the people out of the nominal religious system of his day under the Scribes and the Pharisees, inviting them to come out and listen to him. Jesus was of the tribe of Judah, he was not a Levite, so he was not considered qualified to be teaching religion. But he was the teacher sent of God. It was something unusual for them to go out and listen to Jesus teaching. Jesus was saying that now was a time of change, a change in dispensation. Come out unto me, I will feed you the true words of life. Those who were willing to leave the cities did follow Jesus out. There was a great multitude that went out, wanting to be healed. We think this represents that as followers of Jesus we all recognize that we need to be healed from our sin sickness. We go to our great physician to have peace with God, to be made whole in the sense of having a standing before the heavenly Father. He does heal us in that way, does he not?

We see here also, in verse 15, that it was evening. And we think that means that it was the evening of the Jewish Age at the first advent. The sun was setting on the Jewish nation for a time. Only a remnant would be found amongst them to hearken unto this new teacher.

The disciples felt that they should send the people back to the villages to buy their own food. So, also, at the first advent, it was difficult at first to believe that the Lord would religiously, or spiritually, feed or instruct his people outside of the religious system. But indeed, that was just the case. As remarkable as it seemed that they must leave behind this religious system that had served them so well throughout the Jewish Age, pictured by the cities, Jesus was telling them to come out into the desert, have faith, and he would feed them the words of life. Recall that in Revelation 14:1 and 4, the 144,000 who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion followed him where ever he went, and they were virgins, undefiled with women, that is symbolic harlots, false religious systems.

As Jesus was preparing to feed the people, he commanded the multitude to sit on the grass. All those who come to hear the words of life from the master must sit at Jesus’ feet. We must humble ourselves to learn of him. One of the things that so struck us in the vision on the mount of trans-figuration is the word of the Father that came down to Peter, James and John, Listen to him, Listen to Jesus. So here the multitude had to sit at Jesus’ feet to listen to him. Where else were they to go?

Before the feeding there was a giving of thanks to the heavenly Father for the meal. Likewise with us, we give thanks for the spiritual blessings and understanding we receive. This is a proper attitude: recognizing a need to be healed from our sin sickness, a separating from false religious systems, trusting in the Lord, wherever he may lead, following him out into a desert place, and humbly sitting at his feet, following his commands and instructions. Then we must partake of what is provided, we have to eat for ourselves.

We want to note that we are given some numbers. There were 5 loaves, 2 fish, and of the men fed there were 5000. We have no number for the women and children. Also, 12 baskets of fragments were collected.

## **The Second Feeding**

Now let us turn to the second feeding found in Matthew 15:29-38: “And Jesus departed from thence and came nigh unto the Sea of Galilee, and went up into a mountain and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus feet, and he healed them: Insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him and said, I have compassion on the multitudes, because they continue with me now 3 days and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples said unto him, whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were 4000 men, besides women and children.”

We suggest that the second feeding represents our Lord’s return at the Second Advent in 1874 AD. Again, he is feeding his people. Again he is calling his people out from the city condition into the wilderness condition to be fed. Revelation 18:4 states: “Come out of her my people,” that is, God’s people. Come out of Babylon, that city condition of false religion. “Come out lest ye be partakers of her sins and receive of her plagues.”

We notice in Matthew 15:29 that instead of being in a desert Jesus had gone into a mountain. We know from our studies of the Bible that a mountain symbolizes a government or a kingdom, and so our Lord returns to sit in his kingdom, set up his kingdom, from 1878 AD onward. The time sequence would be off if this mountain were at the first feeding. But, it is here at the second. It seems to fit.

Once again we are told that the multitudes that came out to be with him recognized that they needed healing. So too, those of us living now during the Second Advent, we realize our need for healing from our sin sickness also. And again, when they were healed, what did the people do? They glorified the God of Israel. And don’t we also glorify God for this wonderful ransom and atonement?

In verse 32 Jesus said, “that because these people journeyed with me three days and had nothing to eat I will not send them away fasting lest they faint in the way.”

Here is a suggestion that you might recall from the lesson in John 2:19-21 where Jesus said in part, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again ... but he spake of the temple of his body.” Bro. Russell suggests from Scriptures, that from the entrance of sin and death in 4126 BC there were 7 one thousand year days that make up the last 7000 year long creative day in which God rested. The first 1000 year day would take us from 4126 BC to 3126 BC. The second brings us to 2126 BC. The third to 1126 BC. The fourth to 126 BC. The fifth to 874 AD. The sixth to 1874 AD. The seventh to 2874 AD, or the end of the Millennium.

Jesus said that these three days they have been with him. So, the Christian church has been walking with the Lord in a sense from the first advent to the Second Advent. So we see that 33 AD (at Pentecost) fell in the 5th 1000 year period. That, we are calling the first day with Jesus. The sixth 1000 year period is the second day with Jesus. And, sometime after 1874 the church will be complete but we see we are in the 3rd 1000 year day of being with Jesus. That is the three days that they’ve been with the Lord.

Now it’s true that the church has been fasting for parts of three days in a sense. During this period, after our Lord was glorified, and the apostles died and fell asleep, until the time when our Lord returned in 1874, this interim period by and large was a time of fasting for spiritual food. Why? Because for 1260 years there was hardly any Bible study. And why was that? Because the Bible was kept in the practically dead language of Latin, the language of the Church of Rome, which only scholars could read. In Revelation 11:3 we read, “And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.” The two witnesses of God are the Old and New testaments. They were clothed in sackcloth and we know sackcloth represents mourning for that which is dead. There were very few morsels of Truth during that interim that relieved the saints from being totally starved to death. It was very much a time of fasting, until the Lord returned in 1874 and started providing the meat in due season.

Please notice that the time sequence wouldn’t work if this were at the first feeding. But because it’s at the second feeding it does work. It fits our picture.

## **Meaning of the Numbers**

At this feeding, we see that there were seven loaves and a few fishes. From the Sinaitic manuscript in verse 36 it says two fishes. We are told that 4000 men were fed, besides women and children. And there were taken up 7 baskets of fragments.

Now let us consider the math lesson of these two feedings:

$$5 \text{ loaves} + 7 \text{ loaves} = 12$$

$$2 \text{ fish} + 2 \text{ fish} = 4$$

$$12 + 4 = 16 \text{ units of food}$$

$$5000 + 4000 = 9000 \text{ men fed}$$

$$16 \times 9000 = 144,000.$$

Think for a moment that if one of those numbers were different, you wouldn't reach this conclusion. Think for a moment that Jesus' real purpose in giving the spiritual food at the First and Second Advents is to develop 144,000 mature Christians of strong Christian character pictured by the men. Only the men were numbered. It is just a picture or symbol of reaching the full stature in Christ, of full manhood. Paul in Ephesians 4:13 used that figure of speech, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

The women and children weren't numbered, picturing that they represent those that did not come up to that full stature of manhood by the things which they ate. Are there those who eat of the words of Jesus, who partake of the spiritual truths, who have been healed of their sin sickness, and have sat at Jesus' feet, a group that is not num-bered? Yes, the great multitude, which no man could number as described in Revelation 7:9. We suggest that the women and children who ate and were not numbered represent the great company who also ate and followed Jesus to some extent. But, only the ones who partook rightly and made full use of what Jesus provided, will be found worthy to be numbered among the 144,000, the Little Flock.

We had 12 baskets left over from the first feeding. We had 7 baskets left over from the second feeding. That must also represent something for us. We would suggest that those at the first advent, after Jesus had fed the people, that held forth the bread of life as these baskets did, were the 12 apostles. Revelation 12:1 tells us that there were 12 stars on the woman's head as she was clothed with the sun and stood upon the moon. This shows that woman picturing the Christian church was sup-ported by the Old Testament with the Law and the Prophets with their types and shadows, pictured by the moon, but it really was only a reflection of the Gospel sun, the message we have in the New Testament. But the 12 stars or 12 shining lights in the early church, were the 12 apostles.

By the time of the Second Advent, when our Lord returns, there are 7 messengers that have already come. It is a little bit different. But we do think it works. Revelation 1:20 tells us that the Lord had seven stars in his right hand which represent the 7 messengers to the seven stages of the church. So, also, throughout the Gospel Age, there were seven bright and shining lights that the Lord did use to feed his people the meat in due season. They held forth that bread of life that Jesus had blessed. And Jesus returns during the 7th period of the Church's development. And, in Matthew 24:44-47, we are told that he would see who was a wise and faithful servant, who was serving, and he would use him to be a blessed agent to be the dispenser of the meat in due season, Harvest Truths, to nourish the fellow servants.

Just think that there were 12 baskets left over from the first feeding, and 7 baskets left over at the second feeding, if those numbers were reversed, symbolically it wouldn't work. But because it is worded this way, in this sequence, it does work. It is not 6 baskets and 13. It is not 5 baskets and 4. It is 12 baskets and 7 baskets.

These numbers, if they were one different, or if they were reversed, taking place at the first feeding instead of the second feeding, or if being fed after 3 days happened on the first feeding and not the second, or if Jesus had sat in the mountain at the first feeding, and not the second, it would destroy this picture. Remember, in Matthew 16 Jesus told us to look for a deeper spiritual lesson regarding these two feedings, regarding doctrine. He is talking about the difference between true doctrine and false doctrine. And that is what we see. Jesus was feeding the true bread, the true doctrine, and the 144,000 followed him out of those cities, humbled themselves sitting at his feet, sought forgiveness for their sins, blessed and thanked God for the spiritual food, and obediently partook, and were properly developed.

## **Another Lesson**

Now we'd like to take a look at another lesson regarding eating in the book of Matthew. Please turn to Matthew 9:14 and 15. "Then came to him the disciples of John [the Baptist], saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." What did Jesus mean here? They were asking Jesus about literal fasting. John the Baptist's disciples literally fasted, the Pharisees literally fasted, how come Jesus and his disciples did not literally fast?

We know that at later times they sometimes did. But Jesus took the opportunity to say literal fasting is good but I'm going to draw out a prophetic lesson here. Who are the children of the bride chamber? We think that would represent the future bride of Christ, those who are interested in the bridegroom. This is the prospective church. Who is the bridegroom? Our Lord Jesus. Was Jesus with the prospective bride at the first advent? Yes. Was he feeding them spiritual food? Yes. We've just learned that. Could they fast when he was with them? Of course not, it would not be right. Why should they fast, when he was there to feed them. The bridegroom would care for his future bride. Of course he feeds them. Would there come a time when they would fast from having the spiritual food? Yes. That time was the 1260 year period during the Gospel Age until the time of our Lord's return.

I would like to suggest that since our Lord's return we are no longer fasting. Since 1874 we have not had to fast for spiritual food. We have a bountiful table. We have a feast of fat things laid before us. Are we partaking of it and eating of it? When the bridegroom was absent, the future bride did have a fasting for spiritual nourishment, and that time was during the dark ages, but, thank God, no longer.

This was prophetically portrayed in the Book of Amos 8:11. "Behold, the days come saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land. Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." That famine is a picture of the 1260 years of Papal supremacy when they kept the Bible out of the hands of the people. It was a time of fasting.

Do we read too much into this? We hope not. Is there anything here we didn't already know? No. We knew all this. But, can it strengthen our faith that the Lord did see a time when his children would be in a fasting condition for over 1000 years having very little of the pure word of God to feed upon? Does it strengthen us then to realize that the thing that causes the fasting to end, the spiritual blessings to flow, is the presence of the returned bridegroom, the presence of our Lord at the second advent, the second feeding?

The long sought after number is nearly complete.

Let us look at Revelation 3:20. This is a verse written for the 7th stage of the church, the Laodicean period, the period of the church from 1874 onward. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come unto him, and will sup with him and he with me." This is a special clue that we are given to understand that when our Lord would be present, during the 7th stage of the church, that he would knock. How does the Lord knock? Do we hear a voice? Of course not. Bro. Russell suggested that he knocks through time prophecy. We think that is really true. It is the time prophecies that give us the confidence to understand when our Lord returned and what he has been doing. We also have the signs of the times and they have been increasing more and more as we go along. This verse tells us that it would be a time when Jesus would be present as our returned bridegroom, and he would be at the door knocking. If someone will respond to the knock and open the door the Lord comes in to feed, eat, and fellowship together with him. This is a personal setting. It helps me to recognize that my Lord Jesus has returned, he is here. He is feeding me the word of God. And I don't want to refuse that. And I know you don't either.

With that, may the Lord add his blessing.

## Presentation Sixteen

# The Sufferings of Christ

Brother Jérôme Gruhn (France)

*Sr.* Geneviève and I are very happy to be able to take part in the conference at Polanica, and we thank the Lord for it. The subject of our discussion is based on the words of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:24 — “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.”

Our life is made up of segments some of which are sunny and some gloomy, of deep joys as well as of sadness. All these phases form to a great extent the plot of our daily experiences. The fabric of our character which is woven on the figurative loom throughout our entire active life will be either fine and of good quality, or coarse and of poorer quality, according to the skill and the care with which we weave it. Our daily life experiences are of a fundamental importance to us, and the manner in which we behave should be the object of our daily concern, because our successes or our failures will bring us either blessings or reprimands.

When the apostle declares that he is helping to “fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ,” or “that which remains,” he did not mean the sufferings had been incomplete. The sufferings of our Lord were sufficient for our redemption. Divine justice concerning the ransom was satisfied by the death of our Lord. We can add nothing to the sufferings endured by Christ. But what it does mean is that our Lord wanted to see us with Him in His Glory at the end of our sufferings. It is only then that we will be allowed to share in His glory, His honor, and His immortality. When we consider the sufferings of the Lord’s people, we can reason that divine justice is not opposed to additional sacrifices. Yet these sufferings are necessary so that the Body of Christ may attain its full development and reach full spiritual maturity.

God in His infinite wisdom has predestined the Church class which will be associated with Christ in His glory. It is for the members of this class that the merits of Christ were used during all of the Gospel age. The justification which we are profiting from is a free gift of God, but the High Calling is classed as a reward destined for the one who will overcome. God sanctifies us through the Truth, by granting to us the privilege of participating in the sacrifice of Christ, in His cup, the cup of the blood of the New Covenant. We take part in the baptism into death, in order to be finally honored with His glory. In this manner, we are committing ourselves to suffering and dying with Him.

In offering the cup to His disciples, the Lord was inviting them to participate in His sufferings, in that which remains of the afflictions of Christ. The offer to willingly share in the sufferings of Christ means that, by taking up His cause, by the death of our own imperfect human nature, we, the members of His body, are being asked to drink His blood, so that we may all participate in His sacrifice, and like Him, all the members sacrifice their earthly life, their hopes, their goals, and all the ambitions linked to the human will. The members of His body, like our Lord, thus

agree to sacrifice their lives and to defend the truth, in view of being part of the Royal Priesthood.

Our Lord drank the cup which His Father poured Him. How fitting it is, then, that God should use toward us the same proceeding that our Lord experienced. This shows us the necessity of such trials, not only because they are an opportunity for us to prove our faithfulness to the Lord, but also because God in His infinite wisdom foresaw the best manner in which to prepare a priesthood for the future work. This priesthood will have the task of blessing, of healing, of instructing and of uplifting all those who will be obedient and of good will.

## **Our Sacrifices Will End**

The royal quality of this Priesthood signifies that it will not always be a class that sacrifices, because these will come to an end. Then will take place the work of restoring mankind, of lifting it up mentally, morally and physically. Matt. 10:25 "It is enough for the disciple that he be treated as his teacher, and the servant as his lord." But God expects more of us, because He is keenly aware of our works, of whatever we deny ourselves, of our sufferings, our faithfulness and obedience. All those who constitute the branches of the true vine must bear fruit. John 15:2 "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit and of better quality."

It is our privilege to produce, to work, and to be the servants and ambassadors of God, thus accomplishing a preliminary work in the interests of the New Covenant. The words of our Lord are explicit concerning this. Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Let us thank the Lord, let us be happy each time that we suffer unjustly for His sake.

Every experienced Christian, when he reaches a certain level of spiritual maturity, is able to rejoice in the trials that crush him. These experiences fashioned according to the divine will allow us to better fight against the works of the flesh, as we keep in perspective the wonderful reward that awaits us in heaven. Let us learn to appreciate the saying: "we don't appreciate, that which costs us nothing." We must first be proved, before we can be approved by God.

As servants we should be happy to serve, not only when it brings us honor to do so, but also when our service is neither known nor noticed by others, or when this service begins to inconvenience us in the small things. God has organized matters in such a way that we are able to learn lessons in self-control, and that we are led to obey in all things and all of this willingly.

The spirit which Christ possessed must manifest itself in us and develop itself, so that we may be ready to carry out the work of the Master. "It is enough for the disciple that he be treated as his teacher." It is quite an honor to be treated thus, it is sufficient dignity, a sufficient reward, enough distinction, approval and recommendation by the Master for the disciple and servant. What more desirable thing could we seek for our condition than to be treated as was our Lord, even if this brings on ridicule, slander, violence, or self-denial. We should be filled with joy for the honor which is granted to us and for the communion into which we are brought through this.

## **Grateful for the Invitation**

We can be grateful to the Almighty for the invitation to become disciples of Jesus, through the merit of His sacrifice. It is by enduring difficulties as good servants that we draw closer and closer to the heights of perfection. To this end we need the help of the Lord in all the experiences of our lives. Hebrews 12:6-8 “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourges every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye illegitimate, and not sons.”

The afflictions and tribulations which befall the world are not marks of sonship, except in the case of those who are entirely consecrated to doing the will and the work of God. The pruning and the trials are not always the same in the family of the Lord. The degree of correction needed is different for each one of us. The experiences, hard as they may seem at the beginning of our course, are not always considered as blessings, but with time we realize that adversity draws us closer to God and develops in us the strength of character necessary to gain the approval of God. The methods that God uses are best suited to reveal whether we are His children or not.

If our Master needed trials to become perfected as a Son, how can we expect to be treated differently? God tests us, corrects us, and deals with us in such a manner that we may develop the sentiments in our heart and as well as our character. If it so happens that we do not learn the lessons through those trials which God permits, we will not be ready for the exalted state of the future.

No trial can befall us without being permitted by our Lord. We must possess the same sentiments as our Lord, who loved justice and hated iniquity. We must be scrupulously honest in our lives by means of obedience, submission and loyalty. This principle must be applied in every circumstance of life, in the great as well as the small things. Having made our covenant with the Lord, we committed ourselves to loving His law in a perfect manner. Our Lord did the same thing. Love for His neighbor led Him to die for all the other human beings.

We, today, have the privilege of doing the same thing. God would like to see in us the qualification of love for the brethren, the zeal to live, act, suffer and die in favor of those who are truly and actually the consecrated children of God. We must appreciate and practice this condition of the law, because it constitutes the principal requirement of God on our behalf. This leads us to cultivate in our hearts a deep love for everything that is just, noble, pure and holy. It is by believing from the heart that one attains justice, because from it flow all the sources of life. The more our heart is just, the more will our faithfulness be manifested by the works we do to the best of our ability for the sake of the Truth and the brethren.

God helps us in all our sincere efforts to develop our character. To this end, we need to recognize our own weakness, our faults, our imperfections and seek to correct these. They who judge themselves need less chastising from the Almighty, whereas those who respond continually only to the rod cannot be classed among the overcomers. Chastisements are not always a sign of God’s disapproval for mistakes committed. Divine Providence leads each member of the high calling in the path of suffering and self-denial. These are tests, destined to measure the degree of love and devotion to the divine will.

## **Suffering for Others**

The Scriptures teach us that our Lord Jesus was broken for our transgressions, and not for His own. Thus, in many respects, His disciples likewise suffer not for their own evil deeds, but because of the errors of others, according to the words already cited: "Now, I rejoice for the sufferings I experience on your behalf." For, just as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, in like manner our consolation abounds through Christ. The true servants of God rejoice in their sufferings for Christ and His Church.

It is relatively easy to glory in God in favorable times; it is much less easy to do so in times of tribulation. 2 Cor. 10:17-18: "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." No one bothers to correct illegitimate children, since no inheritance is reserved for them. But a father does preoccupy himself with his legitimate son. If God reproves us, it is because He is never wrong. In such circumstances, let us rejoice of this proof of sonship. His reproof is always just and beneficial. A lack of chastisement, or correction, is not a satisfactory witness in our favor.

Colossians 1:18: "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." The apostle Paul understood that he could not have part in the resurrection of Christ without laying down his earthly life. All those who would consent to suffering with Christ, even unto death, will be allowed to reign with Him.

Trials are necessary so that this new Mind can be developed. How could we ascertain our own spirit-ual development if we did not have appropriate signs? It is only by serious and constant efforts, by striving and praying, and by studying the Scriptures, that we grow as New Creatures. The new Mind, which shapes us to will and to do, grows day by day, and renders us more like our Lord. To the extent that we die for the things of the world, we are being resurrected with Him. We must continue to live such a new kind of life, all along until our trial period has ended. Then we will be rewarded according to the faithfulness we have shown throughout our life of sacrifice, in doing His will as completely as possible.

God answers our most ardent prayers by sending us the experiences through which we can progress and achieve a greater resemblance to Christ. It is, therefore, essential that we learn the necessary lessons to qualify for the present, and as well as the future, ministry. It is true that the present human condition affects our progress in following in the footsteps of the Master. For this reason, we must develop patience, determination, and obedience, and follow Jesus step by step, because we are walking by faith, not by sight. The light emanating from the experiences that surround us does not shine very far ahead into the future, just far enough to illuminate each subsequent step during the Second Presence of Christ. Let us be conscious of the fact that, as human beings, we are dead with Jesus, and let us renounce all the experiences and ambitions of this present world, in exchange for the precious promises offered at this time.

## Submitting Ourselves

It behooves us to reserve for God in our hearts the place that belongs to Him, submitting ourselves to Him in every circumstance and accepting His everlasting promises. Revelation 11:1: “And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.” The Word of God represents this measuring rod. Thus this temple, which is the church, is now being measured with the golden rule, called a reed in this text. It is by this rule that we must measure our thoughts and our conduct, during this time of the harvest, wherein the work of separating the wheat from the tares is actively taking place.

The Word of God and all the teachings of the present Truths constitute portions of the Lord’s goods. The treasures, both new and old, placed in reserve by Him for our benefit are actually those that define perfectly the characteristics, and the conditions, which must abide in this Church. The members of the temple class must differentiate themselves by the development of the fruits of the Church. They must be thoroughly grounded in the Truth, and keep themselves apart from all other religious opinions.

What is this golden rule which is so important? It is characterized by the greatest of all the commandments: Matthew 22:37-40: “... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This divine commandment constitutes the teaching of the law and the prophets. In emphasizing these words, our Lord gives us a new commandment: John 13:34: “... that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” The Lord ends His thought in Matthew 7:12: “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets.”

Faithfulness implies a supreme love for God, for the brethren, and for the world, and even for ene-mies. We cannot be representatives of God if we do not put into practice the law that He demands, which conforms to the principles of justice, of that which is right and good. He who tries to harm a brother exposes the latter to suffering, and by his reprehensible act proves himself unworthy of being joint heir with Christ in His kingdom. How vital it is for the disciples of Christ to retain these all important teachings. Love causes no hurt to one’s neighbor. The greatest proof of our faithfulness to God lies in our love for the brethren. This love is manifested by our desire to accomplish all those things which are pleasing to God.

If we have the Spirit of God, we must love our brethren whom God loves. Our behavior toward our neighbor will betray the feelings in our heart. It is our conduct that determines daily our reward before the Lord. Let us beware of this gnawing worm that destroys the root of our brotherly love, and poisons our mind. If we allow evil sentiments to penetrate our heart, they will surely produce evil fruits. Let us, then, put into practice in our daily lives the lessons we have already learned.

1 Peter 4:12-13: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy.” The apostle Peter would like us to understand that these trials constitute a

fire that must accomplish in us a great work of purification. This experience must be borne individually. To be found worthy, each Christian must participate in these fiery trials, must be touched by the flames. The true Christian will rejoice in his participation in the sufferings of Christ, because they prove to him that he belongs to the Body of Christ.

We rejoice at the thought that all these fiery trials come from the Lord. We thus have the assurance that everything that happens to us is in agreement with the purposes of God. The diversity of our difficulties comes from varying causes, but altogether they are considered as the unique and great test of the Church in this age. They are composed of numerous experiences, spread out through time, in order to permit us to be better ready and strengthened for the ones coming next. If we accept them graciously, the fire will exert a purifying influence in us, and will make us fit to inherit the heavenly Kingdom. Our faith enables us through our prayers to confide in God, to pour out our tears and to lean on His Providence. We are all like the child who answers his mother's question: "Why are you crying, my dearest? I am not crying, Mom, it's the troubles that are flowing."

Some of our trials can also stem from the adversary, but equally from the failings and imperfections of those surrounding us. It is those that come from the brethren that are the most painful and most difficult to bear. If we see in them the spirit of persecution, we are discouraged and less likely to feel a true appreciation for this trial. Let us endure all these trials without murmuring and with patience, knowing that they will produce in us a weighty assurance of eternal glory.

According to the Scriptures, our imperfect flesh is not taken into consideration, because it is subjected to the new will, to the Spirit of temperate, good sense. It is then as New Creatures that God tries us, because He knows us according to the Spirit, according to the will, the heart, and the intention. It is the New Creature that does the acceptable works which will be rewarded in the Kingdom.

We have a wonderful example in the three Hebrew companions who were saved in the days of Daniel 3:24-25. The scorching furnace into which Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown is a good typical illustration of the fiery trial for us. The Almighty intervenes to save them because their faith was great. "... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; ... But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image." Even if God were not to see fit to deliver them, they were determined not to violate their conscience. It should be the same for each one of us; we cannot dictate to God the means by which He is to deal with us.

The Almighty looks for firm traits in us, strengthened by faith, and it is for the sake of their development that all manner of evil is permitted to rule today.

## **A Great Purpose**

What is the purpose of a life so different from that of the world? It has a very great purpose, because victories in little things prepare us for victories in greater things, and make them possible. The effects of such a difference can be seen in all the affairs of life. The lesson of the three Hebrews teaches us that we must serve only the Almighty, and keep away from Mammon and its deceptive temptations. When King Nebuchadnezzar realized the effects of the law he had

passed, to his great surprise, he saw that those he had ordered thrown into the furnace were freed of their bonds, and even a fourth person of a very strange appearance was among them.

During the time of the actual harvest, the Reaper is present. The recognition of the Second Presence of our Lord is an essential and sanctifying Truth, indispensable to our perfecting. The ability to discern this constitutes proof of spiritual insight, just like at the first advent of the Lord. The test of the Jewish people consisted in discerning the time of their visitation. The Lord came to them in a manner they did not expect.

In our day, the test is similar. It is not a case of believing that our Lord comes, but one of being able to discern His presence. Only the watchers who possess spiritual insight can discern this presence. John 1:26: "... in the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not," said John the Baptist to them.

This thought enables us to see that a good many spiritual Israelites would stumble, by expecting the Lord in a manner completely different than the one in which He would come. It was just like at the end of the Jewish age. I Thessalonians 5:4: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief."

All who love justice rejoice in justice, just as those who love sin delight in sin. The principle of justice runs its course. He who sins must suffer as is told in Psalms 103:3-4. Experience is a lantern that lights only the way taken. If our sacrifice is performed with zeal full of love in the service of the Lord, the fat of the offering will rise like a sweet perfume; but if our heart offers it only half way, the high priest will find no pleasure in it. The sum of the sufferings, which is the reward of those who do good, shows, on the one hand, depth of loyalty and of zeal, and, on the other hand, the intensity of the hatred and meanness aroused in the adversary. II Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

There is no exception to this rule, and the knowledge of the harsh trials yet to come should reaffirm within us the cause of the Kingdom. The Lord is looking for those who will be ready to abandon everything to remain faithful to the stipulations of their covenant. That is why it is vital that the necessary trials burn out all the impurities in our characters and thereby strengthen all the elements which we need. Nevertheless, nothing will happen to us unless God permits it.

God leads us through thorny roads, through pathways that are wet with tears. It is good and comforting to know that He never ceases to guide and to lead us throughout our journey. The important thing is for us to recognize that He is directing all our experiences. In view of our spiritual needs, we should truly desire the lessons that are still necessary to us. In turn, God will give us the needed conditions so that we may develop the fruits of the Spirit. Be that as it may, or what-ever the trials, we should not weaken under the weight of affliction and adversity.

We should also not let the experiences of life, difficult as they may be, render us bitter and harden our hearts, and give rise within us to feelings which are harsh and devoid of love. Further, we cannot allow the feeling of our own justice to grow, because in suffering we develop the ability to assist others. We are all members of one Body. In the natural human body, when one part suffers, the whole body suffers, because there is only one and the same life there. When one part is happy, the whole is happy. It is the same in the Body of Christ.

## **The Privilege of Prayer**

Only the true children of God, those who by their faith, their justification and their consecration, have been recognized by God as His children, enjoy the full privilege of prayer. It is a great honor for us to be able to approach the Throne of grace. God is with us in all our afflictions, and His love and assistance accompany us in the midst of danger. He is our help. We rejoice in that we can imagine ourselves, figuratively speaking, in the Holy, and that we can share in the joys of the Lord. In this place where His presence dwells among us, He gives us as food the Shewbread, the light of the Golden Lampstand shines upon us, and we are allowed to approach the Golden Altar.

May the thoughts of the apostle Paul, which have been the subject of our meditation today, have an application for each one of us. ‘‘Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church.’’

May the Lord help all of us to make our calling and election sure. Amen.

Presentation Seventeen

# We Look for New Heavens and a New Earth

Brother Walenty Bywalec (Poland)

*Beloved* brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ, all partakers of this convention and all who listen to the Gospel of Jesus Christ about salvation for all. For our lesson today we will consider words of Apostle Peter which are very timely, and which in this very day take on a special meaning and significance. 2 Peter 3:13, “But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

We are one of the earth’s generations which was to live in very difficult and troublous times, which has surprised our civilization with extraordinary events. Almost every day we receive news about protests, strikes, military conflicts, places of inter-national tension, acts of terrorism. There is a sense of anxiety, fear and lack of domestic security among the nations, both in the cities and in the rural areas. Luke 21:25-26. “And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows. Men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world: for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” 2 Chronicles 15:5-7, “And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded.”

Lawlessness, violence, general demoralization is increasing. Incurable diseases are on the rise. The words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 take a special meaning under these circumstances: “But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power therefore. From these also turn away.” These negative characteristics, which can be clearly seen throughout the entire world, signify that we live in these times of the end, according to the words of Apostle Paul.

After the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001 all news reports from all the corners of the world were filled with these tragic events, which touched and moved almost the entire population. We could hear politicians and army generals, saying that the current world order had toppled down. People understood that their political and military systems supported by power structures could not guarantee security to the nations. We could hear increasingly stronger voices that the world entered into a new stage of history, a period of great, unpredictable changes.

The sense of anxiety and fear in people facing danger has also a positive influence on man's inner self, because new feelings of solidarity with these suffering ones emerge. Man notices another human being; they feel the need to help one another. For the first time in history nations began to cooperate, they helped one another to rise above political and religious divisions. Prophetic words that difficult conditions, trouble upon the nations will lead to peoples hearts being softened in order for mankind to be ready to receive God's Kingdom, were fulfilled.

This world is being shaken so that all the things, which are not helping mankind, would be destroyed and consequently the new world order could be built on strong foundations of God's justice. Hebrews 12:26-27, "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this [word], Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."

## **Times of the End**

"Times of the end" are the ending period of this present evil age. Apostle Paul speaks about them in Galatians 1:4, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father." This age is called evil because its ruler is evil. The prince of this world is Satan, who is opposing God. Apostle Paul calls him the god of this world in 2 Corinthians 4:4 "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

The words of our Lord recorded in the Gospel of John assure us that Satan is the father of all deceit, sin, death and all human grievances. John 8:44, "Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof." God, the architect of this world, permitted Satan to test Adam and his descendants. God at the very beginning determined that this trial period of evil for man would not last eternally, but it will end soon. Romans 8:20, "For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope." Romans 11:32, "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all."

In the Scriptures we read that God created a perfect world without sin, sufferings and tragedies. He permitted however a possibility for man to gain the experience of evil and gave hope of escaping from this difficult condition. Thus, man received a lesson of obedience towards his creator. Our Lord Jesus also went through a trial of obedience during his mission on earth. Apostle Paul wrote these words about Lord Jesus: "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:8-9). In laying down his life as a ransom offering for all, Jesus became "the author of eternal salvation" and he saved mankind from eternal death.

1 Timothy 2:5-6, "For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, [himself] man, Christ Jesus, Who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony [to be borne] in its own times." Prophecies of the Old Testament, the apostles, and our Saviour himself assure us that

there will be salvation for all people. 1 Corinthians 15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” However, before the resurrection comes, the present world order will have to be removed by our Lord, according to his own words: “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away” (Luke 21:33).

When speaking about destruction, our Lord did not speak about a literal destruction, but he had in mind the destruction of symbolic heavens and earth. Ecclesiastes 1:4, “One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.” These words inform us that the literal earth created by our Lord God will not be destroyed. We read similar words in 2 Peter 3:6-7, “By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” “The world ... being overflowed with water, perished,” but the literal heavens and earth were spared. People, reckoned as just, passed into the new world. Present heavens and earth dominated by evil are purposed for fire; they will pass away just as the first world passed away.

## **Heavens**

Heavens symbolize spiritual dominion; nominal churches which gather power in their hands, influence people’s faith in God and shape people’s sentiments. Heavens are powers which determine man’s salvation and his contact with God and condition this salvation on observing religious practices. These symbolic heavens influence the convictions of their followers; they subdue people, nations and civil powers. They have an influence on social and political life of a state.

When we read that the heavens shall pass away, we are convinced that it will not be the space that will pass away but religious organizations that are enslaving their believers. They will lose their power and might. The increase of knowledge, opportunity of education, exchange of information, and learning God’s truth cause people to stop believing and supporting their religions. The light of Christ’s presence will illuminate mankind so that it will get to know the true God, who wants all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:4, “Who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.”

## **The Earth**

The earth is the current world order existing among the nations in the world, recognized and respected by the international community. This order is maintained by present civil powers carrying out various forms of governments. The social protests, mentioned at the beginning of our lesson, are an evidence that people are not pleased with the existing condition. The present symbolic heavens (which are nominal church powers) and symbolic earth (which is civil powers) will pass away, giving way to God’s Kingdom.

## **New Heavens**

The New Heavens are New Jerusalem coming down from heaven; it is Christ’s authority and rule. The New Heavens will be Christ and the Church’s perfect authority. The old world order

will be removed under the control of this spiritual power and a new, perfect law will be established. Revelation 21:2, “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”

## **New Earth**

New earth will be a new order established by Christ on Earth. He will set up the fifth universal state, God’s Kingdom, that will encompass the entire world and will function on the basis of the law of the New Covenant. People’s sins will be blotted out. God’s will, will be ruling in His King-dom on earth as it rules in the new heavens. Matthew 6:10, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.”

## **Our Attitude**

We have mentioned that we are living in the times of the end of this evil world, and the events foretold by prophets of the Old and New Testament testify to this. Apostle Peter speaks about this in his second epistle: 2 Peter 3:10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

How should we live in this world being aware of these changes and waiting for the New Earth and New Heavens? Are we to protest and express our dissatisfaction, as does the troubled sea, which represents the displeased masses? Isaiah 57:20, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt.” Apostle John in Revelation 21:1 writes that when the Lord establishes his Kingdom, the troubled sea will no longer exist: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more.” It means that after God’s Kingdom is established, dissatisfied nations will not exist.

Instead of showing our dissatisfaction, we should strive to make our salvation sure, we should not let ourselves be deceived by various human philosophies. We should build our faith on Christ. 2 Peter 3:13-14, “But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.”

Our Lord Jesus said that when we would see these signs, which he prophetically foresaw saying: “when all this happens,” it would be information for us about our forthcoming salvation. One of those important signs is the rebirth of the fig tree. This sign does not have to be perceived by faith anymore, but can be observed with physical eyes and taken as a commonly known fact. The establishment of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948 was a historic event in which the prophecy of the fig tree was fulfilled.

Our generation is under a special trial of watching and it is being tried in this aspect. Since the salvation of the Church is near, we should strive

even harder to be part of this salvation. Romans 8:23, “And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for [our] adoption, [to wit], the redemption of our body.” The aware-ness that we live in the eve of great changes in the world should specially motivate us in the service for the Lord, in building our

characters and developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord refers to his involvement in the outcome of world affairs as the “days of Noah” or “days of Lot.” In that time our Lord will replace all evil and injustice with God’s Kingdom, which has been long waited and prayed for.

## **Day’s of Noah**

According to the Scripture, we understand that the “days of Noah” occurred during the existence of evil and injustice; at the time of the end of the first world. The “days of Noah” refer to the time of Noah’s life before the flood, from the moment when God spoke with him foretelling the de-struction of the first world. Genesis 6:5-7, “And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”

God instructed Noah to build an ark, which would save him from the waters of the flood. Genesis 6:13-14, “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.” From the words of our Lord we can conclude that the “days of Noah” illustrate the days of the Son of Man and the events that were to happen before the end of this world, in the time of evil (wars, human tragedies, etc); just like before the flood — before the end of the first world.

Our Lord spoke to the Laodicean church in a similar fashion that God spoke to Noah: Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” These words announce that the Lord will pass information to those who are waiting and watching for his coming. He speaks to those who open the door of their hearts in response to his knocking. Luke 12:37, “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 sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them.” Christ does not serve people personally, but he delegated his servant to distribute the food for that time informing about changes taking place in the world.

Our Lord says that our dispensation has to change. Everything that existed until now has to be destroyed because it cannot be repaired. Godless people will not escape punishment. But you should build an ark, which will ensure your survival and transition into the better world, into the New Heavens. Building an ark means having faith in Jesus Christ, consecration through baptism in water gives us this salvation. Apostle Peter explains it: 1 Peter 3:20-21, “That aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, [even] baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

It was not easy for Noah to believe that the flood would come, because there had not been any rain before. Similarly today; only few have faith strong enough to believe that God has sufficient power to fulfill what His prophets foretold. For sinners, those who did not believe in God and His promises, water was a destructive element. For Noah, however, it was salvation. Apostle

Peter says that: "... eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20).

The second, present world is left for fire. Fire, not so much physical, but symbolic, representing trouble, will be a punishment for godless people for their evil deeds. Apostle Paul writes about that in Thessalonians: 2 Thessalonians 1:8, "In flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus." While fire is a destructive element for the godless, it is a saving factor for believers. It tries and shapes our character, and helps us in reaching the highest reward. 1 Peter 4:12-13, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: But insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy."

## **Days of the Son of Man**

The days of the Son of Man is the ending period of the Gospel Age when Christ, present for the second time, changes the course of the con-temporary world, preparing foundations for the new world order. The believers, the antitypical Noah, see the changes taking place as a result of Christ's presence and his activity. They proclaim it to the others just as Noah did. Their words do not find a hearing ear because the world is busy with other "more important" things: "they eat, drink, they get married." It means that they will go on with their lives as usual till the very end, which will happen unexpectedly and astonishingly. Then no one will be able to do anything to get to the ark because the Lord will close the door. The calling and selection of the Church will be over. The Gospel Age, which is the last period of this present evil world, will also be finished.

All those who now believe in Christ are building the ark, they are working for their salvation. Their lives and activities are different from those of this world. Christ's followers do not join this world and its deeds. They "are not from this world" (John 17:15-16). "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world."

Lot found himself in a similar situation in Sodom. He was distressed when he watched others lead immoral and godless lives. Apostle Peter wrote about this in his epistle as a warning for the believers: 2 Peter 2:6-9, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, having made them an example unto those that should live ungodly. And delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed [his] righteous soul from day to day with [their] lawless deeds): The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the day of judgment."

This "sore distress" represents disapproval of the present evil and immoral life. It means recognizing the sin and evil deeds, which others have ceased to see as sinful. The world talks about sin in a positive and shameless manner. Also television, which shapes perceptions of most people, shows sin in the same way. Television, instead of being a medium for elevating man to a higher level of morality, is filled with violence, bloodshed, and this is prevalent. Sin is being promoted, which makes us used to it and accepting of it. Lot was distressed because he did not get used to the existing conditions. For him sin was sin.

## **Conclusion**

Knowing that this present evil world is ending and the New Heavens and New Earth are about to be established, let us prepare ourselves for this change. Let us be watchful and let us pray that we could enter the ark before the end comes.

The words of our Lord from Luke 21:31-36 take on a very special meaning today, “Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But take heed to yourselves, lest haply your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come on you suddenly as a snare: for [so] shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of all the earth. But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

2 Peter 3:17-18, “Ye therefore, beloved, know-ing [these things] beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him [be] the glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

## Presentation Eighteen

# The Faith of Abraham

Brother Petru Balanean (Romania)

*Beloved* brethren, our plan today is to meditate, in the light of the divine plan of salvation revealed to us by the second presence of our Lord, on Abraham's life of faith as a detailed type of the history of the true faith, of which we think we are a part of. Truly, as Paul says, Abraham was "the father of all who believe," circumcised or not circumcised (Romans 4:11, 12). It is therefore to be expected that in his life we should identify a general trend of the faith for all his seed, as well as specific trends of its distinct components.

We find that Abraham's life of faith had seven steps. Of these seven steps, the third and the fifth were steps of passing to a higher faith.

The **third step** is described in Genesis, chapters 14-16, and we will start with it, as this will clarify the first two steps. Lot separated from Abraham and established himself in Sodom. Sodom was not a free city, but with four other cities formed a coalition of five cities that were under the rule of a different coalition of four cities. After 12 years of obedience under the rule of the four cities, the five cities rebelled in the 13th year. In the 14th year the four cities overcame and took the people and the riches north, including Lot. In this situation Abraham fought for the cause of his nephew, Lot. With an army of 318 servants "born in his house" and three other allies he chased the four kings, defeated them in night battles, and recovered the people and the riches.

The special significance of this circumstance is accentuated by the fact that upon his return Abram was welcomed with bread and wine by Melchizedek, the king of Salem, king of righteousness and peace, and priest of the Most High (Hebrews 7:2). Melchizedek blessed Abram and then praised God for delivering the victory. Abram "gave him a tenth of everything."

We could think that Abram gave ten percent to God's priest because that was the number he evaluated for his insufficiency in front of the Lord. Ten percent is the human minimum: one finger out of ten. We could look at this differently — he defeated  $5 + 4 = 9$  cities and the king of the tenth city, Salem, was welcoming him with gifts. It was like the Lord was giving him the tenth city without a battle. But Abraham was righteous and acknowledged, by the ten percent he gave to the Lord's priest, that the tenth city belonged to God.

We could look at this picture as an exchange between Melchizedek and Abram — Abram first received the bread and the wine, and then gave in exchange the ten percent. The king of Sodom wanted to make a deal with Abram afterwards, wishing to keep his men and give Abram the riches; but Abram swore to not take anything for himself, so the king could not say later "I have made Abram rich." Abram said he would only take the food his warriors had eaten and the share of his allies: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre (Genesis 14:21-24).

Immediately after these things happened, “the LORD came to Abram in a vision, ‘Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.’” This approval from God is very similar to the one received by our Lord Jesus after overcoming Satan’s temptations. Abram asked: “O Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” Eliezer was Abram’s servant. Then the Word of the Lord came to him saying “This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.” “And he brought him outside and said, ‘Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” A memorable statement follows: “And he believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

We see that in step 3 Abram started a new kind of faith, one that leads to justification from God. During this step of faith Abram was promised by God that he would be a ruler. The quality that characterizes a ruler is justice. God rules over everything and “Righteousness and justice are the foundation” of His throne (Psalm 89:14). It is reasonable to think that a ruler sent by God must also be just, one hundred percent righteous, perfect.

We notice that in the parable of the pounds in Luke 19 an exact number of pounds (ten) is given to an exact number of servants (ten). We think that the ten pounds pictures the full measure of righteousness, and that every servant was given a tenth of it as a credit, with the goal of gaining the full measure and being appointed as rulers. Immediately after this, Abram wished to know more. Up to now, he made his steps of faith at God’s commandments, without asking for clarifications. “And he [God] said to him [Abram]” (Genesis 15:7-21) “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.” But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?”

God told him to bring a **heifer**, a **she-goat**, and a **ram** — all three years old — and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. The earthly beasts were mature and we can deduce that the turtledove was also mature; but not the young pigeon. Abraham cut the beasts in two. Then he stood by them for the end of a calendar day during daylight, and the beginning of a new calendar day — that would be the following night, after the sunset.

During the first day, while in daylight, God gave him two important pieces of information about his seed: (1) that his seed “will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years” but there will be “judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions,” (2) that the seed “shall come back here in the fourth generation” when the lawlessness of the Amorites would reach its climax.

We notice here that it is important to see the difference between our “deliverance” from the enemy’s land and our “entrance” in the land promised by God. “When the sun had gone down [the beginning of a new day] and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates’” — the land of ten nations.

What could Abram understand from the message the Lord had told him in both words and the overall ambience of the ceremony? The information offered was about his seed, which Abram

could see pictured by the slaughtered beasts. But as the seed of a tree has in itself all the characteristics of the tree, even so, the animals could picture him and his family.

## Step One

The first beast was a heifer. It is a beast that needs good, fertile pastures. Abram was the same at his first step of faith (Genesis 12). God took him out of Ur earlier, but moved him to Canaan only after his father's death (Acts 7:2-4), and said "To your descendants I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7). But when a famine came over the land, "Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there." There Sarai was only his "sister," and became Pharaoh's wife, which saved Abram's life; Abram received "sheep, oxen, he-asses, menservants, maidservants, she-asses, and camels." But the LORD afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues. Then Pharaoh sent Abram away with all that he had. "Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."

Abram was accompanied by Lot, who "also had flocks and herds and tents" (Genesis 13:2, 5). We see that in this first step of faith he behaved like a heifer, which cannot live without abundance. It seems that this experience taught him to appreciate better what are the real riches, specifically the gold and the silver. At this point we remember that the first temptation of our Lord Jesus was one of the flesh: to turn stones into bread.

## Step Two

The second animal, the second step of faith (Genesis 13). Back in Canaan from Egypt, because of their great many flocks, Abram and Lot had to separate, so there would be "no strife." Abram suggested the split, yet he allowed Lot to choose first, and Lot chose what he appreciated more: the lower, watered part of the land, which was "like the land of Egypt." The word "Lot" means "veil."

Abram was left with the high, weaker lands. "Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan" (verse 12). The word "Canaan" means "humiliated." It was good that he and Lot split, yet he gave up the best part of the land promised to his seed for the sake of peace with men. He was like a goat living among the stony hill bushes. But there in the high lands, God changed his loss into gain. Abram gained now all the "land" that he could see: "Lift up your eyes," don't be so modest, "and look" around "from the place where you are"; "for all the land ... I will give to you and to your descendants for ever." And then He promised to him: "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth ..." (Genesis 13:14-16).

He also told Abram to walk through the length and the breadth of the land and to stop being dependent on other peoples' opinions. After this event, Abram moved to Hebron ("alliance"), and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre. There he associated with the Amorites: Aner ["child"], Eshcol ["cluster (of grapes)"], and Mamre. ["lusty (in the sense of vigor)"]. Our Lord's second temptation came from the world: to make a special deed of faith that would attract the attention of the world.

## Step Three

We are now at step 3, which was begun by his fight for the just cause of his brother Lot. The third beast cut in half was a ram. It was not hard for Abram to understand that he was the active, fighting “ram.” The king of Sodom suggested a deal, but Abram rejected it. He was able to do this after he received the bread and the wine and gave his ten percent.

Our Lord Jesus’ third temptation was from Satan: Jesus would be the king of the world, but under the rule of Satan. After he overcame this temptation by The Word, the Evil one left Him alone, and He was served by the angels (Mathew 4:4-11).

Noticing that every beast appeared as a “double” with identical halves that formed one body, Abram could have thought that this represented his marriage relationship with Sarai. How well they formed one body! How wonderful was Sarai, his princess! “Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.” Like other holy women of the ancient times, she was adorned “with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious” (1 Peter 3:6, 4, 5). What a noble thought! Sarai respected her husband and she adorned herself in a manner that would be pleasant to God!

“When the sun had gone down,” at the beginning of a new day, the covenant was unilaterally ratified, by God alone. “When ... it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces.” The flaming torch that passed between the pieces would suggest the separation made by God among those halves, which would be the breaking of the earthly relationships in difficult circumstances. Later on, Abram was a witness to a fulfillment of this type when the cities in the Plain were destroyed.

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,” a land inhabited by ten nations. The Apostle Paul talked about this when he said that “through the righteousness of faith” Abram was promised to “inherit the world” (Romans 4:13). The whole “land” would belong to his seed, from the pagan poverty of the Euphrates which Abram and Lot left, to the compromised ‘Egypt-like’ prosperity in which the “righteous” Lot decided to stay. For Lot “saw that the Jordan valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt” (Genesis 13:10).

Since we are here, let us go back to the parable of the pounds which describes justification. Abram was now considered justified in the heavenly things because his faith and his justification equaled a pound — which is ten percent of the righteousness. He exchanged the “pound” for bread and wine, which was the only way to gain more “pounds,” more righteousness. The Lord knew that Abram and his seed would reach full justification, the “ten pounds,” so He promised him the land of ten nations, which would be the equivalent of the ten cities in the parable of the pounds.

For a short time Abram even became the ruler over ten cities, the  $5 + 4 = 9$  cities that were involved in the conflict, plus Salem, whose king welcomed him with gifts! The authority “over five cities” given to the one who only gained five pounds, could refer to the five cities of the Plain where Lot lived. Thus, we could understand that at His presence the Lord gives “authority” to the little flock over the earth and temporal “authority” to the “great multitude”

over corrupt Christendom.

But let us turn back to step 3. After the covenant, Sarai gave her servant Hagar to Abram, so he would have children with her. With or without intention, Sarai tried to fulfill God's words about a ruling seed coming out of Abram. Maybe Abram accepted this compromise, thinking of the sacrificed turtledove. The turtledove stays faithful to one partner for all her life. Yet Abram knew that the turtledove had to be killed and he accepted Sarai's plan. Thus the servant Ishmael was born out of a free man, Abram, and a servant, Hagar. Abram learned that both parents had to be free for the seed to be free, which meant that the parents had to be himself and Sarai. But this was humanly impossible. All that was left to do was to wait for the Lord's will to be done.

We see that the first three "steps" that led to receiving justification could be named: (1) the faith of the natural man, (2) of the servant, and (3) of the child. It lasted for 10 years, which would be a complete period from a human standpoint — from the entrance in Canaan till the begetting of Ishmael. The maximum realization happened because Abram realized that he had a minimal insufficiency of only 10 percent in front of the Lord, but only after Melchizedek suggested to him the need for more by offering bread and wine.

Paul tells the Israelites: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Yet the people of Israel did not receive Christ, the bread and the wine, and except for a few, they did not admit their insufficiency. Like Abraham, the Christian Jews, starting with the disciples, made this first step of justification. They had The Law as their foundation.

Thanks to our Lord Jesus, who "canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14), we do not have to make these three "steps" of faith where we would learn by our own failures. However, we notice that different aspects of the servant, child faith, have been manifested since then and we accept that the parable of the pounds also applies to us.

## Step Four

The fourth step of Abraham's faith is described in Genesis chapters 17 and 18. Between the third and fourth step, to be more exact between the birth of Ishmael and the birth of Isaac, 14 years went by! After Ishmael's birth, Abraham didn't try any more to help God with his own ideas and might. He waited for the "good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

After this long period of silence, the Lord appeared and said: "walk before me, and be blameless." From now on he was also required to have acts of faith, those acts that would be fully approved by the Lord. The Lord changed his name, Abram ("a high father"), to Abraham ("father of a multitude"), for the Lord told him that He would make a covenant with him and would make him the father of a multitude of nations and kings. He then made with him the covenant of circumcision, which regulated the special bond between God and Abraham and his seed. This covenant was to be inherited from father to son.

We understand that from this point on God considered Abraham to be "alive," from a resurrection of the dead standpoint. God would be known as "The God of Abraham" and later as

“of Isaac and Jacob”; but God “is not God of the dead, but of the living” (Mathew 22:32).

The circumcision of the flesh was a type of “putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ,” which means to be “buried with him in baptism.” This is followed by the “resurrection” with Him, “through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11,12). This “resurrection” is our return to a life dedicated to God, it is the resurrection of life brought to our “mortal bodies” through the spirit of the Lord. Its purpose is to be able to receive Isaac’s begetal, which is the new creation, Christ, for which we will present our justified bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 8:11, Romans 12:1, Galatians 2:20).

Paul wrote about this episode in the life of Abraham: “he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, ‘So shall your descendants be like the stars of the heaven.’ ” Then Paul wrote, “He did not weaken in faith” and didn’t look at the natural way to have children, “No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised” (Romans 4: 18-21).

Then he adds: “Wherefore also it was counted to him for righteousness” (verse 22, Diaglott) — for justification. What does “it” mean? We understand it to be the hope in the promise of the “resurrection” of his and Sarah’s bodies, so they could beget and have Isaac born. The apostle adds that this will also be “reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord ... who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Romans 4:24, 25).

The word “justification” has the meaning of “the act of justification” (see footnote in the Cornilescu Bible, Romanian translation); it is not anymore being “considered” justified by the passive acceptance of the heavenly promises, but rather being “made” justified very soon, after the baptism, through the “resurrection” of our mortal bodies. If this hope of the “resurrection” is in us, after baptism we can expect deep changes within ourselves; to pass from death to life, just like Abraham.

The name “Sarai” (“my princess”) was changed to “Sarah” (“princess”) for “she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her” (Genesis 17:16). The birth of Isaac was announced a year ahead, not only nine months ahead! Why?

At the time of the announcement, Abraham and Sarah were not able to beget. They didn’t hope for that. When they were told that they would have a son in one year, they both laughed with doubt. During the three months preceding Isaac’s begetal, they received critical lessons from God, which made them truly believe that they would be able to beget and have the promised son.

Perhaps the lesson that moved them the most was the destruction of four of the five cities of the Plain where Lot lived. But up to that lesson they had some smaller lessons. They learned that the things they thought over the years to be “old,” worthless in front of Him, now came back in a new light and became “new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). They were taught to not look for riches, yet now they were so rich that they could host God’s angels.

After this, the Lord promised Abraham that he would return next year, at the same time, when Sarah would give birth to a son, yet she laughed. Then the Lord revealed His plans to Abraham

— for He knew that he would be “a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him.”

When commenting on this aspect of the promise, Paul says: “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’ ” (Galatians 3:8). The Lord then continued by saying that Abraham would command his descendants “to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and good; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him” (Genesis 18:19, from Romanian translation). The Lord Jesus said that there is only one good, and that is to deny oneself and follow Him in doing joyfully the will of the Father (Mathew 19:21).

The Lord acknowledged to him His intention to destroy the evil cities, if what was told about them was true. For the second time, Abraham feels that he has to come to help, but this time he appealed to God’s righteousness, which guidance he accepted. He negotiated for God’s approval that the city not be destroyed if there would be fifty or even ten righteous people found in them. Fifty, so all the five cities would be saved, or ten, so at least one of them would be saved (Deuteronomy 29:23).

Abraham didn’t ask for less than 10. We think that he had a correct understanding of the justice which he gained during his past experience with God. “Ten righteous men” would mean God’s righteousness in that city, even if it was concentrated in only one person. That is ten “pounds.” But on the next morning, Abraham could see from Hebron how in the whole valley “the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace” (Genesis 19:28).

It is written that afterwards Abraham “journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb ... and he sojourned in Gerar” (Genesis 20:1). “Gerar” means “a lodging place.” It is possible that this sight reminded him of the smoking fire pot and the flaming torch that passed between the covenant’s sacrificed animals, “when the sun had gone down.” It is possible that in a secret, intimate way, only now did Abraham and Lot separate from their past. Both of them understood better than ever before that their whole being should be dedicated to their relationship with God. For Abraham it was enough to see the sight of destruction, while Lot had to experience it.

Abraham’s life changed in Gerar. We think that a critical change was the one concerning the water source. Gerar is in the south of Canaan, in the desert. There, the only source of water was the deep underground water. There, Abraham dug his own wells (Genesis chapters 20, 21).

Abraham found there a nation considered righteous by God; that was surprising for him, because it was a nation that was drinking water from the wells. When he arrived there, Abraham behaved in the same way he did when he entered Egypt during the famine. Sarah became only his “sister” so he could escape death and she was taken by Abimelech, king over a righteous people.

But the Lord kept Abimelech away from sin and he asked Abraham for explanations. As restoration, Abraham received “sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves” and the liberty to live anywhere in the country; Yet Sarah was told that Abraham received “a thousand pieces of silver” as her “vindication in the eyes of all who are with” her; and before every one she was “righted.” We can see in this a type of the ransom and of its results.

After these things, “the LORD visited Sarah” and she “conceived” and gave birth to Isaac. On

his eighth day of life, the baby was circumcised. Later, at the age of five, Isaac was weaned. The time of milk had passed away, now there was need for “strong meat.” This was the moment of the casting away of Hagar and her son. It was very painful for Abraham, yet unavoidable. The reason for this was that Ishmael mocked Isaac and Sarah could not tolerate it. This is how the mocking came between the brothers within the seed of Abraham. The mocker was a servant, yet bigger, while the mocked was a son, but smaller. When the son started with the strong meat, the servant mocked him. God approved the casting away as the only solution that would assure the so different future blessings for both sons. Abraham obeyed the requirements of the covenant with God, even if this caused him pain. He was a man of principle, of strength, which made those around him to look at him with respect and even with fear.

In Gerar, the “lodging place,” Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech (the father of the king) which was supported by Phicol (the powerful) that he would not betray him, or cast him away, for three generations and that he would respond with the same goodness that Abimelech had shown. We understand that the church was sheltered within the Church-State system, which was reckoned legiti-mate in front of God for three “generations,” but not for the fourth.

For the well that Abimelech forcefully took away, Abraham asked him to accept seven lambs as a proof that he dug it. For as long as the seven lambs lived, they were a little flock that only drank from Abraham’s well, the “well of the covenant.” When the little flock was not present in Christendom anymore, Christendom then forgot the Abrahamic covenant, and it seems that this happened quite quickly. Abraham symbolized this covenant by planting a tree, which showed the earthly rising of the kingdom of heaven.

## Step Five

The fifth step took place “after these things,” when “God tested Abraham, and said to him ... ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’ ” (Genesis 22:1-19). When Abraham received this commandment, he already considered Isaac as sacrificed. But, how about Sarah? How about Isaac?

We read that Sarah died in Hebron at the age of 127, meaning that Abraham was 137 at the time. This means that she died at the midpoint of the time period between the birth of Isaac and the death of Abraham — 137 is halfway between 100 and 175.

The last time when Abraham and Sarah are mentioned together is when Isaac was weaned and Ishmael was cast away. From this point up to the account of her death, there are only three records mentioned in the Bible: the covenant with Abimelech, Isaac’s sacrifice, and Abraham being informed that “Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor” (Genesis 22:20). Sarah is not present in any of these accounts.

On the other hand, both Abraham and Sarah are mentioned as examples of faith in Hebrews 11:11, 17-19. “By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive” (verse 11) and “by faith Abraham ... offered up Isaac ... He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back” (verses 17-19).

We consider that Ishmael’s being cast away, the covenant with Abimelech, and the offering of

Isaac were hard trials for Sarah that generated her separation from Abraham. Even when they were separated, they stayed husband and wife, the proof being that Abraham buried her in the same tomb where he would be buried — to wait for the resurrection. Their separation was surely for the greater good of both of them. This should not surprise us when we know that our Lord Jesus, the “seed” of Abraham, was left alone when facing the sacrifice.

Paul went through similar experiences and we also will, if we will walk all the way — “that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (2 Corinthians 1:8, 9).

How about Isaac? His father, who loved him so much, bound him and laid him upon the wood and reached for the knife! How much struggle was there inside of him?

After many years, our Lord Jesus, unheard by people, “offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered” (Matthew 26:38, Hebrews 5:7,8). After a short time he was given the ram to sacrifice, “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Abraham arrived at the mountain, built the altar, laid the wood, and bound Isaac. There wasn’t any word from Abraham, nor any struggle from Isaac. Abraham stretched forth his arm for the knife. Only then did the angel of the Lord stop him: “now I know that thou fearest God.” Thus Isaac was “resurrected” and the ram was sacrificed as a burnt-offering. It was the time for it. This was the ram of the covenant with the beasts cut in halves, when Abraham was told that he would rule over the earth. That ram was a strong one while this one was probably a weak ram, caught at the end of its strength, “caught in the thicket by his horns,” so a tired Abraham after three days of travel could sacrifice. So Abraham was on the mountain and the ram was burning. He was so glad, such an over-comer! More than overcomer! He defeated his own self, the old “overcomer.” Isaac was living! Abraham had brought as a sacrifice his justified body.

The Apostle James tells us the following things about this moment: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God” (James 2:21-23).

This means for us faith and brotherly love proved in works, as James writes in the same chapter. It means the application of the new commandment that our Lord Jesus gave: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34, 35). And yes, at this step, Abraham was one hundred percent justified (ten “pounds”), by a perfect faith proved in works.

His faith was so great that he “received the promises” (Hebrews 11:17) and even more: he respected God’s will and “feared” him, even if he could not understand the manner of His actions. Yet we see that he was considered fully justified after the Lord resurrected Isaac, with the sole purpose of sacrificing himself (the justified) for Isaac, the new creation.

We see that the way toward justification which was started with the third step, ended here at the fifth step. This is what the three steps achieved: step 3 — the faith in heavenly things is

considered righteousness; step 4 — the faith in the “resurrection” of the body to serve the “new creation” is considered as righteousness; step 5 — the sacrifice of the justified body in the interest of the “new creation” is considered as righteousness.

We notice the similarity with what Paul tells us: “But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

At the fifth step Abraham reached the sacrificing love stage (“agape”), after he set its foundation on righteousness. The “angel of the Lord” told Abraham: “By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son ... That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Genesis 22:15-18).

Paul says that thus God strengthened his promise with an oath, “that ... we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: Which we have as an anchor of the soul, [a hope] both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:18-20).

God also told him: “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because thou hast obeyed my voice” (verse 18). We understand that all the nations will be enlightened by the “seed” which is like “the stars of the heavens,” which represents our Lord Jesus and His Church in heavenly glory (Jeremiah 31:31, Isaiah 2:3). They will be restored to perfect human life and will be like the “sand which is upon the seashore,” like Israel. Eventually Satan and his own will be defeated, and the “sea” and the “night” will cease to exist (Revelation 21:1, 22:2-5).

## **Sarah’s Death**

The next event related after Isaac’s sacrifice is Sarah’s death. Abraham bought from the sons of Heth “the field and the cave” of Machpelah, all the trees that were in that field and all the other fields around. “Machpelah” means “double.” The value of the property was estimated to be four hundred shekels of silver, “current [money] with the merchant” (Genesis 23:15-18).

This number was mentioned before, at the covenant concerning the rule over the land. After four hundred years, the “seed” would be freed from its slavery, would receive great riches, and the oppressor would be punished by God.  $400 \times 360 = 144,000!$  360 is the number of days in a prophetic year. So when the “144,000” and the “double” fulfills, all the “seed” of Abraham is to be freed, which doesn’t necessarily mean entering “Canaan.”

Therefore, we and the nation of Israel were freed from “Egypt” in 1878, and the next step is the “return” to “Canaan” (Genesis 15:16). “Egypt” means “fortress,” and “Canaan” means “hum-bled.” A more specific meaning might be that Abraham and the ancient worthies wait to be resurrected, “born” by the “400” (The Christ) and to be made “princes in all the earth” (Psalm 45:16).

## Step Six

Step 6: Abraham looks for a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24). He only wanted someone from the “house of his father” in Mesopotamia. He fully trusted Eliezer with this mission; Eliezer represents the Holy Spirit. Eliezer found Rebekah, who fulfilled the expectations by showing love during the encounter at the well.

She found Isaac when he was out “to meditate in the field at the eventide.” She alighted from the camel, asked the servant if that was Isaac, “took her veil, and covered herself.” “And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent ... and she became his wife. It is a wonderful picture of the election of the Lamb’s “Bride” and also of the “wedding.” After we arrive at the point of sacrificing the justified man, we have to fully dedicate to be the Lord’s Bride.

## Step Seven

Step 7 was the marriage with Keturah, with whom Abraham had six sons. He was more than 140 years old at that point! “Keturah” means “perfumed” by the burning of incense. It is reasonable to think that this part of his life illustrates the New Covenant and its fruits: the restoration of mankind around Israel. Truly, most of the heart’s prayers were raised for “Keturah”: After the covenant typified by Sarai ends, mankind will be “born” out of death under the New Covenant (Galatians 4:24-28, Jeremiah 31:31).

Abraham died when he was 175 years old, “in a good old age, an old man, and full [of years], and was gathered to his people (Genesis 25:8). He died after one hundred years of life with God, and he was approved by Him.

Let us continue to follow our Lord, so that we might be approved in the end, “for it is God who worketh” in us and gives us “both to will and to work” (Philippians 2:13). To Him be the glory in eternities, Amen!

## Presentation Nineteen

# Traditions

Topical Study Brother Ryszard Armuzynski (Poland)

Brother Paul Brychcy (France) Brother Jan Litkowicz (Poland)

### Introduction — Bro. Ryszard Armuzynski

Dear brethren and sisters in Christ, the topic of our discussion will be based on the issue of tradition's influence on our consecrated lives, and how we abide by its rules. We will be introduced to the thoughts of three brethren who will share with us the fruits of their studies on the topic, as it is reflected in the perfect and spotless mirror of God's Word.

These brethren will also try to encourage you to study this topic on your own. It is often the truth that in the business of our every day life, we are prone to miss tiny traps and inadequacies which might have a negative influence over our spiritual lives, as we read in Songs of Solomon 2:15 (KJV) "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

### Br. Paul Brychcy

**Question 1**, Significance of the word "tradition"? — From the Latin *traditio*, from *tradere*, meaning: "to transmit, or convey, to pass on." From the Greek *paradosis* meaning: "thing given on the side or that which has been transmitted by word of mouth or in written form." Synonyms for tradition: to transmit, or, uses, doctrines, customs, habits, practices, teachings, manners, etc. Example: 1 Corinthians 11:2 (NAS) "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you."

**Question 2**, Acceptance by the Christian ecclesias of those traditions which serve to develop the church? — It is dangerous to change the commandments of our Lord. Example: Galatians 1:9 "As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed."

Philippians 4:9 "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you."

1 Thessalonians 4:1 "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God [just as you actually do walk], that you may excel still more."

In these three scriptures just quoted, it is shown that the word of God does not vary.

(a) Let us first consider the evolution of those traditions (customs) which are harmful to us.

Matthew 15:8-9, “This people honors me with their lips; But their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”

Matthew 23:13, “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.”

Today, because of tradition, people join the nominal churches or other systems, and live according to the precepts set up by those systems. Such precepts are frequently not supported by the word of God. For example: Saul of Tarsus followed with zeal the Judaic traditions, human precepts, which led him to persecute the Christians, and, in this manner, to transgress the commandment of God: “Thou shalt not kill.”

Another negative tradition: The Pharisees would not partake of any food without washing their hands up to the elbow. Mark 7:3-5 “(For the Pharisees, and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market-place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots). And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?’ ”

In becoming Christians, let us, like the Jews who believed in Christ, abandon the traditions of men.

When in Colossae, false teachers were encouraging brethren to practice this same form of worship. Paul warned the Colossians of this error and vain philosophy.

Colossians 2:8,14,16, 17, “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ ... having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross ... Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”

**(b)** Let us now consider the growth of the Christian through the use of good traditions.

**(i)** They are those which the Apostles received from the Lord and which were imparted to us.

1 Corinthians 11:2, 23 Concerning the celebrating of the memorial of our Lord’s death we read: “Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. ... For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread...” And this we have accepted.

**(ii)** The tradition, the teachings, the examples which the Apostles handed down are very profitable to us; such as working with one’s own hands, so as not to be a burden to brethren and other people.

Acts 18:3, “And because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they were working; for by trade they were tent-makers.”

Acts 20:34, “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.”

Paul also gave admonitions to the sisters: 1 Timothy 2:9,10 “Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness.”

He likewise gave advice to brothers, so that they would not teach the gospel for monetary gain. 1 Corinthians 9:13-15 “Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. But I have used none of these things: And I am not writing these things that it may be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one.”

**(iii)** Another admonition is to separate ourselves from all brethren who do not walk according to the rules or instructions given! 2 Thessalonians 3:6-11, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life, and not according to the tradition which you received from us.”

These important traditions, these precepts from the Lord and the Apostles, were written down so that they would not be changed. Revelation 22:18, 19, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book: and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

Many traditions change with time, and the country where one lives — For example: Our Lord wore a tunic (Matthew 27:35). For approximately 150 years in Western Europe, suits and ties are worn, and many brothers would be vexed if the chairman were not so dressed! Our Lord wore a tunic according to the tradition that was in Israel.

Certain traditions do come to an end — Such as circumcision. Galatians 5:2 “Behold, I Paul say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.”

If certain things edify, they can be accepted as precepts — For example: In our ecclesia, we have a custom of singing two hymns at the beginning of the meeting, and two at the end.

During the study, the chairman stands. Our Lord, when he was reading the prophecy in Isaiah, likewise stood, and after the reading, he gave back the book and sat down to comment. Luke 4:16, 17, 20, 21, “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and as was his custom, He entered the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written ... And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down ... And he

began to say unto them ...”

In England our brethren sing the hymns while standing. In Africa, our brethren sing to the sound of the tambourine and clap their hands. In India our brothers wear a long tunic. In Eastern Europe, as our Lord mentioned, the brethren greet themselves by saying “Peace” (Luke 10:5).

**Question 3**, The example to follow for our spiritual edification? — In a few words, it is to do that which gives glory to God, that which edifies us, and which is not an occasion for stumbling the weaker ones, as did our Lord, the Apostles, and those brothers and sisters who were zealous.

And as our Lord stated in Matthew 11:6 “blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me.”  
Thank you.

### **Bro. Jan Litkowicz**

Dear brethren in Christ, I think that as students in the school of Christ, we often receive different kinds of trials in life. When we follow our Lord in our sacrificial walk, quite often we encounter various problems, both in our personal and social lives. Our merciful God gathered us here into one fellowship. Therefore, in His holy name, being in harmony of same minds, we can bond together in brotherly love.

Let us imagine for a moment that at a certain point in our lives, a blackboard is put in front of our eyes with following questions on it:

How do I see the introduction of tradition into Christian ecclesias?

Are there such threats now?

Can we expect tests of our faith in these areas?

Does this problem have anything to do with Revelation 13:16-17?

This Scripture mentions that there is some-thing that is seen in God’s eyes as *a mark of a dangerous beast*. In the light of the Scriptures we see that this ravaging beast tries to catch “the little and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the enslaved.” It wants to mark all with the beastly seal, in those verses called “the mark,” “the name of the beast” or “the number of his name.”

Dear ones in the Lord, I admit that I have noticed the importance of this problem for the first time. Standing here before you, when I look at these questions regarding tradition, I know that I will not give educated answers. I can only notice that they are a set of warnings, perhaps pertaining to my personal or our social problem, which in a way could be associated with what’s called **tradition**. Let us think about these questions for a moment.

We all know that the world is still under the influences of evil. The above questions result from observed catastrophes happening on the narrow way of our individual, Christian walk. Only the Scriptures can help as these written instructions will allow us to:

Notice the problem,  
Locate it,  
And even neutralize existing danger.

In order to do that my predecessor in his approach to this issue, referred to the words of our Lord Jesus and to an encyclopedia definition of the term **tradition**. We are doing the same thing here and although we all come from different cultures and languages, in this matter however, we are to look for the warnings given by our Lord and the apostles.

Let us mention the words of our Lord from Mark 7:7, “But in vain do they worship me, teaching [as their] doctrines the precepts of men.” The Lord speaks about the destructive influence of doctrines of men, which by caring for the outward form, lose the influence of the divine spirit. We, on the other hand, having a desire to be God’s children, follow with diligence those things, which were given to the saints by God himself. Jude writes to us in verses 3-4 that we should “contend earnestly” for these things, because there are certain men who turn God’s favor into immorality.

Therefore, being taught by our Lord and the apostles, we know that these “human influences,” “vain delusions” pass from generation to generation, through ages and like a steamroller, systematically flatten spiritual matters. People are admiring the effects because nobody stands out, all are submissive. God’s children, however, can see with their spiritual eyes that the above-mentioned beast pulls this machine, crushes everything that ascends to heavenly realms.

Through centuries the divine favor is being flattened, steamrolled with these doctrines of men and transformed into a black asphalt of ceremonies, rituals, liturgies and religious rites, which in human eyes look like a beautiful highway of comfort and benefits. Despite this, the eyes of spiritual understanding enlightened with God’s influence can discern between the “narrow way” and the “broad way.” When God’s children notice the appearance of these enslaving influences, they ask God for His help and assistance.

The Laodicean period is not free from this influence of evil. The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2:1: “I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea” and in verses 5 and 8 he writes to us: “for though I am absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit.” “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.”

Dear ones in the Lord, when I was conversing with many brethren about tradition, I noticed that this term has negative and even destructive implications. To amplify this implication I will add what I read somewhere: “Tradition is an anonymous work which conveys customs and convictions of our predecessors and elevates them to holiness.”

We are thankful to our God for shining more light on this issue, so that we would not make anything equal with His word. If we happen to do so, we would put chains of slavery to human ideas on our own arms outstretched towards Him. Knowing this, the sons of God are careful and do not neglect spiritual snares; they continually put on the armour of God. Therefore, they are entering into a covenant with Him and thus into fellowship with the Lord’s people, not by any tradition but by the Word of God.

It is true that in our fellowship we gather thoughts of our brethren, we collect biblical religious literature and many seeing this, may ask how it relates to tradition? I think it all depends if the materials we collect contain tradition. When we collectively search for various Scriptures that cause our spiritual life to blossom in spring-like colors, which can be noticed even in the heavens, then these commentaries are not tradition. These are materials helping us to a faster and more accurate understanding of the Scriptures. It is also true that through this continual exercise of expressing our thoughts, we create certain customs, just as the Bereans did. Leaving tradition, we turn our attention to the Scriptures, knowing that God is the interpreter of His own plan. It is true that the unbelievers consider the Bible as tradition, because they do not acknowledge the existence of its sole Author, but we, having faith in God, believe in His truth.

We can notice here that: Tradition is concerned about physical eyesight, and therefore emphasizes packages, labels, frames and other limitations, which often are set anonymously.

God's Word points to the Author and the depth of His character. It tells the sons of God to enter into such liberty of God's glory in which there are no limitations in doing good. This liberty rises above worldliness and does not allow itself to be enslaved by human influences.

Being careful in using the word "tradition," I will mention that some common terms have reserved meanings. For example we know what the following terms mean: "his eminence," "his holiness," or "his highness."

I think that we can apply the term "tradition," with all of its meanings, only where it has its reflection. If we use it in reference to our faith, to our praising God, our personal or collective fellowship, which lack in ceremonies, liturgies and religious rites, we could be disrespecting our fellowship and ourselves.

Concluding this thought, I would like to add what the Apostle Paul described as the danger of traditions in 1 Timothy 4:7: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables. ..." We know that various Christian denominations — "women" — in joining with the spirit of the world, create these "fables — traditions"; "But thou, O man of God, flee these things ..." (1 Timothy 6:11).

## **Bro. Ryszard Armuzynski**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we all are perfectly clear that the things that have happened in the recent past are extremely important to us, and that they profess the closeness of the establishment of the Kingdom on this Earth. Therefore, the true Christian should have their spiritual vision and hearing properly trained, as it is written in Matthew 13:16 (KJV). "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."

We are all aware of the fact that we are living in the end days. The journey of the Church is close to an end. 2 Timothy 3:2 gives us a hint as to the kind of people who will have respect and advantage in these days — the type of character traits they have: their behavior, and the moral, ethical and religious beliefs they profess.

The Laodician Church which, in comparison to previous time periods, received a blessing of increased knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, is currently prone to the very subtle trials and temptations of today's life. We can see that each day we are confronted with situations that are

untypical and uncommon from the past, and we need to be able to live and deal with them.

Our youth are the ones most prone to these types of danger. They are faced with the kind of situation that Joshua found himself in, trying to make the right judgment as to whom he should serve: Joshua 24:15 “Choose you this day whom ye will serve ... as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

For each Christian, the task of decision making or choice selection becomes a form of an exam that is ultimately being graded by our Lord himself. The requirement, which we need to fulfill in order to pass, is our knowledge and the ability to use such knowledge throughout our life — our entire life. This is the reason why at this time I would like to shift your attention to two scriptures, which shine some light of understanding on the times we are living in.

Mark 7:7 (KJV): “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Matthew 15:3 (KJV): “But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?”

The cited verses present Jesus’ response to the accusations of disregarding rituals. This verse in the NIV translation reads, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?” This thought also seems to be in accordance with Strongs Concordance, where the word “rule” is marked as 3862 [*paradosis*] and has the following meanings: commandment, religious tradition, teaching, doctrine.

The word “tradition” does not appear in the Bible; nevertheless its use for the purpose of our discussion is appropriate, as it accurately describes the current situation in our society.

To gain a better understanding of this word, I have looked into an encyclopedia which explains that in Christianity, tradition is a process (and essence) of passing on of the truths of faith, which came from the spoken words of Jesus Christ and the apostles, continued in the church under the super-vision of the Holy Spirit; in the past even the truths not mentioned in the Bible.

If the tradition had been preserved and used in people’s lives in accordance with this definition, it would have proven that the teachings of our Lord and the apostles, contained in the Bible, are the only appropriate and true blueprint for each Christian, of how to live and what to do in order to receive salvation.

History has recorded and proven the fact that people had added other teachings to the truths of the Bible, which — as Jesus himself has noted — are teachings of men (tradition). Living in accordance with these teachings of men has gained popularity these days, both amongst believers and atheists. This is also apparent in the political arena.

Let us take note of the fact that tradition has flooded the schools, government agencies, and workplaces; each person who tries to isolate him-self/herself from the traditional beliefs, is prone to becoming misunderstood and often laughed at. How accurate and appropriate in this place we find the admonition recorded in 1 Peter 2:12, that we should set ourselves apart from the ungodliness and worldly temptations and live our lives meekly, justly, and godly.

At this point I would like to use only one example of tradition and the extremes it can take at the time of Christmas. In our country, these holidays are celebrated in a very spectacular fashion, which is visible in mass media, in the windows of peoples homes, on store displays and city streets. As people who know the Bible and the essence of truth that was left for us by our Lord and his apostles, we can only say that this is a prime example where the form takes over the significance, thus making us feel uncomfortable.

This holiday was introduced in the 4th century, in place of a holiday celebrating the birth of an undefeated god of the Sun — Mitra, observed on a day of the winter solstice, thus around 22 December. The first mention of this holiday we find in a Roman calendar from the year 354 AD. With time, this holiday has integrated several other folk customs and evolved into a several-day-long holiday; in Poland some relicts of Slovenian traditions.

2 Timothy 3:5 reads (KJV): “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

I have mentioned here only one of many examples, brethren, to increase your awareness on the types of trials we are facing; and the amount of self-denial and strength it requires for us to implement in our lives only those admonitions that come from the source of the Truth — the spoken teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles.

Presentation Twenty

# A Warrior for the Throne of Jehovah

Brother J. Udhayakumar (India)

*Loving* Brothers and Sisters, chosen by our Almighty Jehovah in Christ. I bring you the love and Christian greetings from your Indian Brethren and the Chennai Ecclesia to which I belong to. At the outset, I thank our Heavenly Father for having made me share his wonderful blessings with you all in this International Convention.

We, the Bible students, acquire more understanding by reading the scriptures with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 15:4, “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (All the verses are based on NIV Bible.)

In line with the thoughts and views of Apostle Paul, for the Glory of Jehovah, and for the benefit of our spiritual life, let us meditate on the experiences of Mordecai, “The Warrior for the Throne of Jehovah.”

## **Key Verse — Esther 10:3**

“Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews.”

Many examples and the past history of the Holy Scriptures has revealed that whenever the chosen people disobey God's commandments they are replaced by those who submit themselves and walk in the way of God.

## **Adam and Abraham**

First let us consider Adam and Abraham. God made only one man, Adam, in his image and to his likeness, and showered all the blessings upon him (Genesis 1:26-30). But Adam disobeyed God's words and was thrust down, and cast away from the Garden of Eden, where he enjoyed the eternal joy, peace and harmony, authority over all creatures, and above all the presence of God.

“Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts on the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground — everything that has breath of life in it — I give every plant for food” (Genesis 1:29, 30).

We understand, from the words of Malachi 2:15 “Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.” And in Genesis chapter 1:28 we read “God blessed them and said Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.”

Since Adam failed in producing godly offspring, God selected his friend and the father of faith, Abraham, in the place of Adam and promised him in Genesis 12:2, 3: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you, I will make your name great and you will be a blessing ... and all people on earth will be blessed through you.”

St. Paul gives an account about Abraham in Hebrews 11:12. “And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.”

Let us see some more examples in addition to this. Esau was rejected by God, and Jacob was selected in his place. “See that no one ... is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected.” We read so in Hebrews 12:16,17. The same is given in Romans 9:13 and Malachi 1:2, 3.

## **Saul and David**

God rejected the first king of Israel, Saul (1 Samuel 15:22, 23) and anointed the shepherd David in his place (1 Samuel 16:1, 2).

## **Israel and Gentiles**

God rejected his chosen people of Israel, we read in Romans 11:11. “Because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.”

Moreover Paul and Barnabas said, “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and did not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us” (Acts 13:46, 47, 28:26-28).

## **A Powerful Weapon**

We read in Acts: 1:15-20 about Judas, who was one among the little band of Christ; and shared the ministry. But he lost his inheritance for worldly things. As per the prophesy of the psalmist; his place was to be deserted.

In order to fulfill this prophesy, the remaining Apostles selected Matthias. But God's selection was different. From Acts 9:15, 16 we understand the Apostle Paul was selected directly by Jesus Christ. “Go! This man is my chosen instrument, to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

I need not explain more about St. Paul and his sufferings for the sake of Christ, because every Bible student knows very well about how this powerful weapon was used by our Master Christ.

## **“Lucifer, the Morning Star, Son of the Dawn”**

We know from the scriptures that Christ blessed his first creation, Lucifer, abundantly. We read:

He was created by Christ (Colossians 1:16, Ezekiel 28:15)

He was the anointed cherub (Ezekiel 28:14)

The morning star, son of the Dawn (Isaiah 14:12)

All the precious things of Earth was given to him (Ezekiel 28:13)

He had the seal of perfection, and was full of wisdom.

He was in the Garden of Eden, and upon the Holy mountain of God.

He was privileged to make his presence before God (Job 1:6)

Because of his pride, he is fallen (Isaiah 14:12)

Lucifer was against the throne of God (Ezekiel 28:16)

Fallen Lucifer tries to disturb and destroy God's people. About him, we need the advice in I Peter

5:8, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking some one to devour.”

## **Haman**

As we have seen above, Lucifer is against the children of God. Let us now examine the character of a noble man in the palace of Susa, who's hands were against the people of Israel, the children of Jehovah.

## **Lifted Above All**

The Persian King Ahasuerus, promoted, hon-oured and elevated Haman, and gave him a seat of honour higher than that of all the other nobles in his kingdom (Esther 3:1, 2).

## **Signet Ring Was Given**

“The King took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman” (Esther 3:10). This Haman was an Agagite. Agagites were the descendants of Agag, King of Amalek, whose hands were lifted up against the throne of Jehovah. This is evident in Exodus 17:16, “For hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord.”

God's hands were against Amalakites “from generation to generation,” and God wanted to “completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven” (Exodus 17:16, 14). “Then the LORD said to Moses, Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered” (Exodus 17:14).

Haman, the adversary of all the Jews, devised a wicked scheme against Israel to destroy them (Esther 9:24, 25). According to the plan of God, Ehud fought against Amalekites. Gideon fought against Amalekites. God asked Saul to attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belonged to them (1 Samuel 15:2). But Saul failed. Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs, everything that was good (1 Samuel 15:9). Hence he lost his throne.

## **God's Selection to Fight These Amalekites**

As we have seen that God's hand was against Amalek for generations, our heavenly Father raised up a little one, Mordecai, to fight against this Amalekite Haman.

## **Who is this Mordecai?**

Mordecai means little one, or worshiper of Mars. He lived in Susa, a Benjamite, whose family was taken captive with Jehoiachin (Esther 2:5, 6; 2 Kings 24:6, 15). We read: “Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate” (Esther 2:19). Mordecai's sitting in the king's gate confirms his holding a high position in the civil service of the empire.

Mordecai neither bowed down nor paid homage to Haman (Esther 3:2). When Haman saw this he was enraged and he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, but sought to destroy all the Jews. Here we recall that the Devil told Jesus to fall down and worship him (Matthew 4:8, 9).

## **Mordecai's Determination to Do the Will of God**

From the words of the Lord to Moses it is evident that the hands of the Amalekites were against the throne of Jehovah. Therefore, Mordecai determined to fight against them and do the will of God.

Though Mordecai well knew the jeopardy of one who was against Haman, who was second only to King Ahasuerus, yet Mordecai dared to be against him. Mordecai wanted to execute the words of God, which King Saul failed (and so he lost the favour of God), i.e., to destroy Agag the Amalekite and what belonged to him.

## **Helping the Queen**

All the Bible students know that Esther is a type of the little flock, the Bride. Mordecai's role was very important in exalting her to such a royal position (Esther 2:15, 20). Even after Esther became the Queen in the place of Vashti, Mordecai never failed to give instructions to Esther to do good things to Jews, particularly for their deliverance (Esther 4:5). We read in Esther 4:14, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place."

## **Waiting Patiently**

Mordecai saved the king's life. During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the King, giving credit to Mordecai.

When the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on gallows (Esther 2:23). But no reward was given to Mordecai (Esther 6:1-3). He was patiently waiting for nearly four years to receive honour and recognition for his action from the Persian king. But we understand it was the will of God to bestow the rewards to Mordecai through Haman, who was plotting to kill him (Esther 6:10).

This is what Peter refers to in 1 Peter 5:6, "Humble yourselves therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

## **Mordecai was Ready to Sacrifice His Life**

When Mordecai understood that Haman got sanction from the King to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish all Jews both young and old, little children and women in one day, he tore his clothes. He put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the city wailing loudly and bitterly.

Being a king's official, Mordecai should not have done so, violating the king's commandments. But he did it for the life of his people without concern for his own life. He also persuaded Esther to rescue her people (Esther 4:8). He told her to urge her to go in the King's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

## **Haman's Plan and God's Plan**

Haman not only wanted to kill Mordecai, who bowed not to him, but also all the Jews. So he said to the king, ‘‘There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it is pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put 10,000 talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business’’ (Esther 3:8, 9). Im-mediately he summoned the scribes and released order to reach all the 127 provinces in their own language, to destroy the Jews on the day of ‘‘Pur.’’

But God's plan was different. Haman and his people were killed by Mordecai's order with the consent of the same king. Haman planned to hang Mordecai and made gallows of 75 feet. But God's plan was different. When the King came to know the plot he commanded to hang Haman on the same gallows (Esther 5:14, 7:9, 10).

## **Mordecai is Exalted to the Place of Haman**

After Haman and his sons were hanged in the Gallows, Mordecai was brought before the king and honoured.

### **Signet Ring Given**

As a mark of Authority, the signet ring which was taken away from Haman was presented to Mordecai by the King (Esther 8:2). Queen Esther appointed Mordecai over Haman's estate. The Psalmist tells us that, like Mordecai, “those who trust in God will be surrounded by unfailing love” (Psalm 32:10).

King Solomon the wise wrote that “He who diligently seeks good, seeks favour” (Proverbs 11:27). James, in this regard, said “Humble your-selves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:10).

Still more, Isaiah wrote “For this is what the high and lofty one says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isaiah 57:15).

### **Mordecai was a Good Administrator**

When Mordecai was exalted to high position, he undertook as his prime responsibility to deliver his people from the wicked plot of Haman. The letter of deliverance with the seal of the signet ring was sent to 127 provinces. Mordecai summoned the royal secretaries and ordered them to write letters to

satraps, governors and nobles in their own language. He was very particular to make it reach the different places on time. They were sent by mounted couriers, who rode fast horses especially bred for the king (Esther 8:10).

The order was very wisely drafted. According to the king's edict the Jews in every city were granted the right to assemble and protect themselves, to destroy, to kill and annihilate any armed force of any nationality or province that might attack them and their women and children, and to plunder the property of their enemies.

We understand the wise administration was not of his own. Paul said in Romans 9:16, “It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.” In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that “We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

### **Mordecai Establishes “Purim”**

The day of deliverance was celebrated as a festival by the Jews. It was called Purim. It was instituted to commemorate the preservation of the Jews in the Persian Kingdom from the massacre with which they were threatened through the machinations of Haman.

The day of joy, Purim, was the day in which their sorrows were turned into joy and their mourning to a day of celebration. Purim is the type of the great deliverance of this world from the hands of the Adversary, Satan. It is nothing but the establishment of the kingdom of our Master, Jesus Christ. It is the day of joy and delight.

Isaiah gave a beautiful picture of it. “And the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them and sorrow and sighing will flee away” (Isaiah 35:10). “I will rejoice over Jerusalem, and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more” (Isaiah 65:19).

John gives a wonderful account about this great Purim in Revelation 21:4. “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.”

Mordecai and Esther sent letters unto all the Jews with words of peace and truth (Esther 9:30). This is what Isaiah says in Isaiah 52:7. “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns!” Also we read in Isaiah 32:18, “My People will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.”

After taking steps for the deliverance of his people, Mordecai left the king's presence, wearing royal garments. Mordecai's royal garments were of blue and white, a large crown of gold and purple robe of fine linen (Esther 8:15). The Royal Garments signifies many lovely things.

Blue represents Faithfulness.

White represents Righteousness.

Gold represents the Divine nature.

Crown represents Everlasting life.

Purple represents Sacrifice.

How great and wonderful was the destiny of Mordecai who had staunch faith in his God and had the zeal to deliver his people.

Before we come to the conclusion of our subject, let us ask why a Jew, who was under captivity in a foreign nation, dared alone to fight against Haman to deliver his people. What made him to have such zeal? It is very clear that he could not become the king. By nature he would never become the queen. He could become only a noble man, if at all he wanted to.

This signifies God's wonderful plan, in selecting Mordecai in the place of Haman. We have seen already that, Haman the Agagite, whose hands were against the throne of Jehovah, is compared to Lucifer the adversary.

Now Mordecai was raised to the noble position formerly occupied by Haman. This clearly shows

that the will of God Almighty is to select a group of people in the place of this “morning star, son of the dawn,” the fallen Lucifer.

Mordecai was prominent in the palace, his reputation spread throughout the provinces, and he became more and more powerful.

## **Making One's Calling and Election Sure**

In 2 Peter 1:3-8 we read, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” The knowledge of God made Mordecai steadfast in delivering his people; for he knew very well, if he would not have done it through Queen Esther, the deliverance would have been made with someone else.

Mordecai directed all his efforts to delivering his people. He added to his faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self control; and to self control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.

Through this Mordecai was eligible for the precious promises, and receiving the benefits of divine providence. If we understand and apply the experience of Mordecai, we can take part in the divine nature.

## **The Great Company**

From the scriptures we understand there are certain people who are specially called for certain jobs. Let us consider the Levites. Though the Lev-ites were selected for the priesthood, they had various duties. The Kohathites, as nearest of kin to the priest, held from the first the highest offices. They were to bear all the vessels of the sanctuary, including the ark itself (Numbers 3:31, 4:15, Deuteronomy 31:25). The Gershonites had to carry the tent hangings and curtains (Numbers 4:22-28). The heavier burden of the boards, bars and pillars of the tabernacle fell on the sons of Merari (Numbers 4:29-33). Thus we understand the difference in labor among the selected Levites.

Also, I would like to quote the words of the Aposle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:38. “But God gives it a body as he determines.” It is the will of Christ and the Church to give a position to the “Mordecai” class (the Great Company class).

Again in the same chapter, verse 41, we read “The sun has one kind of splendor; the moon another and the stars another, and star differs from star in splendor.” Among the sons of Jehovah, Lucifer had a special glory. Similarly there may be a place of special glory for the Great Company also.

Finally, Mordecai, a Jew, was second in rank to the king. He worked for the good of his people. So, in the divine plan of Jehovah, a group of people like Mordecai is being selected for the place of fallen Lucifer, second in rank to Christ, the Head of the Church, and the bride class.

They will work for the good of the people in the Lord's Kingdom. As we read in Revelation 7:15,

“Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple.” Amen.  
Presentation Twenty-One

# They Appear Before God in Zion

Brother Samuel Stalder (Germany)

*Dear* Brethren and Friends! Before we begin our discourse, I would first like to bring the greetings of the brethren of my home ecclesia in Frankenthal, Germany. Not all of them could be here with us, and those who remain at home pray for God’s blessing on you.

Many who read the Bible believe that Psalm 84 is one of the most beautiful psalms. It comes from the sons of Korah, the Korahites, who also wrote Psalm 8 and 42. The Korahites were descendents of the Levite Korah, who rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the desert. Numbers 26:11 tells us that the sons of Korah were shielded from the rebellion. It is probable that God saw a special gift in them and spared their lives. Then later they developed a line-age of temple singers.

Psalm 84 was a pilgrim song of Jews who went to the temple each year to pray and offer sacrifices. They would sing most songs when the temple first came into view. However, the singer of Psalm 84 isn’t singing of his love for a building, but rather for the dwelling place of the living God.

The Psalm tells of the house of the Lord for which many of us are longing. Even our Lord Jesus spoke of this dwelling into which he himself entered and in which he prepared places for his brethren: “In my father’s house there are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go therefore to prepare a place for you.” John 14:2 This verse from the Gospel of John, and naturally also Psalm 84, shows us ways in which we may enter the house of God. And those of us who enter this house will be near to God, yes, very near.

Please allow me to remark at this point on the translation of the word “house.” Some translations, including the King James Version, use various expressions for “home.” We should not be influenced by this, however, since we know from our studies that the correct meaning of the Hebrew word is “dwelling place” (Volume Four, page 652 in the English edition). This “dwelling place” is our goal. As followers of Christ we want God and our Lord Jesus to be near us. We also want to have a more precise understanding of what this dwelling place is which is mentioned in Psalm 84, and how we may “appear before God in Zion.”

Let us read Psalm 84 using the NIV translation: “To the director of music. According to gitteth. Of the sons of Korah. A Psalm. How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young — a place near your altar, O LORD Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. Selah. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each of them appears before God in Zion. Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty: listen to me, O God of Jacob. Selah. Look upon our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you” (end of psalm).

We would like to consider several aspects of this Psalm:

- (1) What is the dwelling place or the house of God and how are we to reach it?
- (2) Does God desire that we are near him, and if so, why?
- (3) In what way does God offer for us to be near him? Why would he want me near him? How does God want me to approach him?
- (4) What is our place in God’s house?

## Question One

Let us consider the first aspect: what is the dwelling place or the house of God and how are we to reach it?

A dwelling place or a house is the place where God feels at home. Mankind also needs a place where he feels safe and happy. This place is usually our home. And God’s “dwelling place is lovely” as the Psalmist says. It really is lovely in the eyes of those who love the Lord with all their hearts. But God is a spirit being and doesn’t need a physical home like we do. We must eat and sleep. Therefore his house fulfills other needs, such as praying and atoning, along with companionship and communication with him. Let us read Matthew 21:13 “It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer ...” This house accompanied Israel soon after their release from Egypt. After the epoch of the tabernacle in the wilderness — the tent — King Solomon built a tabernacle of stone — the temple. This temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. And then rebuilt by Zerubbabel, only to be destroyed once more.

At this point I would like to say something about the gate and the court of the tabernacle. Whoever enters the tabernacle must come through a gate and then land in the court, which was mentioned by the Psalmist in verse 2, “My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

Through study of the tabernacle we have learned what the antitypical significance of the court is. I think this principle can be applied to the court of verse 2. The court pictures the condition of justification, which requires belief in Christ. We have an example of this. In the tabernacle, during Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, only the Levites could enter the gate into the court of

the tent or the dwelling of God. (They pictured the faithful.) They were allowed to sacrifice with the utensils (see Leviticus 4:19, 20 and Tabernacle Shadows, page 20 English edition).

Both here in the tabernacle and in our Psalm, we see a description of how a consecrated Christian can have close fellowship with God in Zion. And this way to fellowship with God is possible only through faith in the ransom — the ransom sacrifice of Christ. Only the deeply faithful will actually appear in God's presence. Logically the path takes them through the court into the Holy, because God resides there, there in the "dwelling place," not in the court. So we have a heartfelt wish deep in our souls, that "my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." We receive deep joy from this.

So then, the court condition is one step on our way to the Holy. It is already a place of joy, because one is definitely closer to the house of God and can recognize some of the furnishings in the court, but we are still not in the close presence of God.

The goal of our walk is to reach the altar of God. Apparently this is the place where man can be at one with God. In Revelation 6:9 we see a symbolic altar in heaven. We read: "And when he [the Lamb] had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." This altar appears on first glance to be a different altar from the one in Psalm 84.

The Psalmist compares the altars of the Lord with the nest of birds, where they raise their young. This nest is home to the birds. In this place they feel safe. However, the altar in Revelation is a place or a home for the slain saints. How can we understand this? In the court there was a brazen altar, so that man could already receive a portion of his atone-ment while in the court condition, that is, the acceptance of the blood of Christ and the ransom. The brazen altar in the tabernacle typifies Christ's ransom sacrifice (Tabernacle Shadows, page 22 English edition).

And now the question is raised, can we feel at home at the altar of God ... there, where we receive atonement?

I think that we will need to find a dwelling for our new creature, just like the birds. When we look for one, we will find it at the altars of God. It is a symbolic place, since this is where we lay down our old lives in sacrifice. The threshold of the house of God: Jachin and Boaz (2 Chronicles 3:17). Still the way of the righteous leads further into the Most Holy, the actual temple. Here one must cross the threshold of the house of God.

Regarding this we read in 1 Chronicles 9:19 of the sons of Korah, who serve as the gate keepers at the threshold of the tabernacle. "And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, being over the host of the Lord were keepers of the entry" (see also 2 Chronicles 12:10).

There were gate keepers of the house. Certainly this was to keep out the unrighteous. And in the case of the temple there was something else interesting near the threshold. There were two pillars. These were in a sense also very large gate keepers made of stone.

So we read from the builder of the temple: "And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one

on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin [he shall establish], and the name of that on the left Boaz [in him is strength]” (2 Chronicles 3:17).

These keepers, both the Korahites and the pillars, have a meaning for the feelings given to the visitors of the temple. To some there was given a feeling of security for those in the house of God. The keepers Jachin and Boaz also held up the roof at the same time. This roof gave the feeling of protection from evil influences from the outside.

Jachin means “He shall establish.” The right pillar was called Jachin. It was in the direction of the north, or in the direction of heaven, where God’s throne is. Many Biblical scholars, including Rienecker, believe that these pillars bore an inscription. On the Jachin pillar the following could have been written: “The Lord strengthen your throne forever.” This saying went along with some prophecies which the Lord spoke. We will read one example from Isaiah 9:7 “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” The Lord spoke these words with reference to the throne of Jesus. The whole Christ will reign from upon this throne of David. By the way in which the Jachin pillar was constructed, the pilgrims of the temple had the feeling of trust and loyalty.

The name Boaz means “In him is strength.” The other pillar on the left, that is to the south, had the name Boaz. Also, on this pillar one could imagine the inscription: “In the Lord lies the strength of Kings.” (according to Rienecker’s Lexicon of the Bible.)

We think that both of these inscriptions could have had special meaning back then, even for Solomon, in reference to Christ. For Solomon, the builder of the temple, there were important promises regarding his throne over all of Israel. As you know, God granted Solomon’s throne security and strength. To this the Boaz pillar gave the feeling of reliable strength to the pilgrims. Since Solomon is a picture of the glorified Christ, so also these same promises refer to the throne of Christ.

For us Boaz and Jachin simply mean the sure and powerful carrying out of the Plan of God. When we enter the house of God, then the “strength of kings” is certain for us. And “the steadfastness of the throne of Christ” is also assured. Nothing and no one can change God’s plan, except for Him alone, as in the example of Jonah and the city of Ninevah. But right now we are considering the crossing of the threshold of the house of God and approaching his holiness. What happens next?

## **Question Two**

Our second question was: “Does God seek our nearness and if so, why? Does God want to be near us? Does He seek our nearness?”

We can say that this is why God builds His house for His people, so that they can be near Him. And he values the statement that “the tabernacle of God is with men.” (Revelation 21:3) If Jesus has invited us into the dwelling place of God, then I think that God would want to be near us. I know for sure regarding this question that God bestows special gifts to those who do not hesitate

in wanting to be near Him. Because God loves us.

If we speak of the strength and steadfastness of the throne of Christ and also of the strength of the kings, then we have great respect for God. Perhaps receiving this honor brings fear in some people.

The question arises “Is someone like me worthy to be drawn to God?” or “Can God love me?”

I would like to interject here that God doesn't want us to keep our distance and to fail to believe in such majestic symbols as Boaz, Jachin, and others. God wants your nearness and my nearness, because He loves us. He is pleased that we cross His threshold and enter His door as His children. This door is Jesus, our shepherd, who gave His life for our sins and for our shortcomings. Just this shows that God has great love for mankind, because He sent us His own son. We are told in I John 3:1-2 “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ... Beloved, now are we the sons of God.”

In what way does God offer his nearness to us? Why does He wish for me to draw nigh unto Him?

God does not shield us from all the struggles of faith nor from occasional difficult experiences. In spite of this, He wants to be our friend. Proverbs 22:11 tells us “He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.” In the Septuagint this passage reads: “The Lord loves those who have a pure heart.”

Love and friendship are something very similar. Love is the stronger emotion but is sometimes only one-sided, while friendship is always a connection which goes both ways. A further answer to the theme of friendship lies buried in Psalm 84. We will read again verses 5-8: “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength, till each appears before god in Zion.”

Yes, the personal friendship with God is sealed and secured in the daily experiences of life. It may be astonishing, but what is important to God is not our membership in a religious community, but rather our heart condition. Sometimes our experiences are difficult and then, in the truest sense of the word, we find ourselves in the valley of Baca, that is, the valley of tears. Sickness, loss of loved ones and friends, the difficulties of our careers and all that we encounter in the world can sometimes cause tears. However, through personal friendship with God these experiences, however painful, lead to the wellspring. In moments of weakness and helplessness, God strengthens you and me and provides us shelter.

In some translations there is a footnote to verse 6 that near Jerusalem there is a valley called Baca, which is also called the valley of lamentation. I think that with God's help and friendship, tears can be changed into blessings. We sometimes notice this only after the fact. In these situations, the valley of tears becomes the valley of blessings. How is this possible?

Our tears, which may be caused by bitter experiences, will be changed to sweet, refreshing spring waters. In every painful experience, every sorrow or defeat, lies the chance to draw out something useful.

In many Biblical stories we see that God is powerful to the weak and humble and that he shows them his love. The Bible shows us actual persons like Saul, David or Solomon, and that strength, power and pride are things which can lead a person away from God. Sometimes this is only temporary. The humble in the eyes of the world love God. And so we read in 1 Corinthians 1:27: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”

Our Psalm says that those who trust in the Lord set their hearts on pilgrimage. That does not mean that there won't be any obstacles or tears along the way. It is finally the narrow way, the difficult way, wherein we walk. The pilgrimage here is the goal. For us it is the goal to become a member of the heavenly family, a member of the body of Christ. My goal is to be near my beloved Lord, and to be able to bless all mankind on earth as they wander out of darkness into light.

You and I know that the Lord will prove each one whom he accepts into his large family. We read in Jeremiah 11:20: “But, O Lord, of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart ...” And so I try to create strength out of experiences and trials. I think that these experiences are important to the development of my own character. I fall short from time to time, and occasionally I am completely unsuccessful. Sometimes I don't always recognize in these trials and moments of doubt, that I can turn painful tears into blessings. And God doesn't always answer my prayers immediately, or in a way that I had hoped for. When I want to find strength in these moments, then I think of Zion. Sometimes I feel like I am one of those in Babylon, who cried, when they remembered Zion. “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion” (Psalm 137:1).

In general, Zion is hope and joy for me. Zion is the place where I hope to see my God and his lamb. And the mountain Zion is a symbol for the heavenly kingdom of Christ. “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion” (Psalms 2:6). Zion is the spiritual home of the body members of Christ from the 12 tribes of Israel. In Revelation 14:1 we read the familiar words: “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.” This Zion is not made of stone. For “Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet” (Acts 7:48).

We receive inner strength from God, for in this moment we leave the place of tears and receive new strength. We pour our hearts out to the Lord and show the Lord our innermost feelings. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his [that is, God's] righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

## Question Three

Now let's consider the third part of our question: How does God want me to approach him?

The goal is to walk the narrow way and come to the Lord and to the loving arms of our Father. We know also that the narrow way begins with a narrow door. We spoke earlier of Jesus as the door or gate. The Bible shows us in John 10:7 "Then said Jesus unto them: Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." This door is also symbolic: "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet" (Acts 7:48).

This door is opened through God's grace, for the Psalmist says in Psalm 5:7 "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear [respect] will I worship toward thy holy temple." If we enter this door – that is, Jesus – then we are received by a loving God, who wants to educate us in knowledge and patience. He seeks from us a pure heart. And Jesus helps us keep a pure heart before God. Proverbs 22:11 tells us that "He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend."

Basically I think that we can draw nigh unto God in two ways. First, through ecclesias, conventions, families, etc. Second, we can turn to him per-sonally, for example, through prayer and meditation in our rooms before we go to sleep. Both ways are important according to the scriptures. The greatest blessings come to you and me most often, when we walk daily with our Lord. That brings us farther up the narrow way.

It can also be helpful during our evening prayers that we reflect upon the events of the day and speak of these with our Lord. We gain little, however, if we approach this from an intellectual standpoint. A memorized prayer or formally spoken prayer doesn't help as much as a conversation with the Lord. Be simply honest to yourself and to the Lord. An accounting of the credits and debits of our heavenly bank account doesn't accomplish very much. When we draw ourselves honestly to him, then we avoid self-deception. And when we draw nigh unto God in order to do our duty of "com-pleting and making ourselves ready," then it is a good idea to reflect upon the reasons.

Can we come closer to God through study? Yes, I think this is possible. In study in the ecclesia we get a general blessing, which can be very beautiful. In personal study it is not bad to say a short prayer to gain wisdom and understanding about a par-ticular passage. Also, the meditation or deep reflec-tion on a specific scripture can be especially blessed, as we have learned from David in Psalm 1:2. It can bring us nearer to the Lord when we have inner peace. This nearness to the Lord at different occasions, alone or with others, is a part of the narrow way. Thereby we can get to know the friendship of the Lord.

In Psalm 27 we read in the 4th verse: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord [another translation reads: "to have joy"], and to inquire in his temple." God gives gladly and abundantly to those who love him. He will make no exception with us. Are we prepared to recognize his goodness?

## Question Four

Our fourth question is what is our place in God's dwelling place?

Our ranking in God's dwelling place is higher than Korah. And here is an even more important aspect for us who wish to consecrate to our Lord: Is there still a place for me in God's heavenly house, in the body of Christ? We have been waiting for the completion of the church since 1914, and our preaching and studies center around this theme.

How can I be certain, that the body of Christ and God's house isn't full yet?

I think that in this case we must look to Israel for a sign. Until Israel recognizes our Lord as her redeemer, it is still possible to be a body member of Christ.

So much about Israel. All consecrated and baptized followers of the Lord will have a specific part in His temple. We read: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The Korahites who wrote and sang our Psalm had their place in the temple back then, which was made of stone. They were known as both watchmen and singers. They were also witnesses of the wonderful thing that happened back then, when the spirit of the Lord filled the temple. These Korahites were blessed of the Lord and inspired by the spirit, as they expressed their feelings in psalms.

How much more has our Lord blessed us! We are allowed as living stones to be a part of the living temple. The yearning of the Korahites was very great. Let us express the same yearning possessed by the Korahites and expressed through their psalms. Let us with our whole hearts and in deep love for the Lord sing psalms of praise, psalms written in our hearts and poured out of our hearts — as the Korahites did.

At the end of their psalm they sang these simple words: "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you."

These simple words have moved me greatly. I hope for all of you that we can feel the blessings of the Lord, even today. And I wish for us all, that we soon may appear before our God in Zion. May the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

## Presentation Twenty-Two

# What is that in thine Hand?

Brother Tadeusz Wójciak (Poland)

*Dearly* Beloved brethren in Christ — Peace be unto you. We feel a great gratitude to-ward our Lord God, that we can think about the wonderful book of Holy Scriptures and the Divine Plan of Salvation of mankind. I would like to use this occasion to express brotherly greetings of love and Christian wishes from the Brothers and Sisters in the Naleczow class, where I am a member. I never thought that a day would come in my life when I would have the privilege of saying some-thing from the word of God in front of such honorable and numerous listeners. With the help of God and with a lot of love and understanding on your side, I will do my best to use this privilege.

Our subject today is based upon the words from Exodus 4:2 “And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, “A rod.” This was not the only question, which God has directed to-wards man. God asked Adam: “Where art thou?” He also asked: “What are you doing here Elijah?”

Similarly, reading the Bible and going through various difficulties, we ask many questions. Especially, in these difficult and unpeaceful times, we often ask the Lord for advice. In one of the manna comments we read: “We should preach the Gospel to people using questions, in order to make them think.” This is what our dear Savior did when, for example, He asked the Pharisees: “Was the baptism of John from God or from people?”

## **Moses**

The question from our theme verse, “What is that in thine hand?” the Lord directed to Moses. The person of Moses is well known to us, I believe. We remember the cruel Egyptian slavery where each birth of a child was not in joy but in fear, that he would have to die in the waters of the Nile. Moses was born in such times. Risking her own life, the mother of Moses decided to hide her son against Pharaoh’s decree. For three months she was feeding him and hiding him in the darkest parts of the chambers.

She would have managed to realize her plan if the child hadn’t grown so quickly. Finally he could be heard outside the house. If Pharaoh or his officers heard the voice of a child, the entire household would have been punished. There was a place where the Nile overflowed into a wide river, this is where the daughter of Pharaoh would go for her daily walks. She was known for her good heart shown to the persecuted Israelites. The mother of Moses had a clever idea. She put her little son into a basket and let the basket drift upon the waters of the Nile. She told her daughter, a sister of Moses to observe the basket from afar and to act when an opportunity would arise.

Why did the mother undertake such a plan, and not another for saving her child? She was simply fulfilling her duty, because there was a command that each male child should be given to the Nile. And that's what she did, only she placed him into a basket instead. This is a wonderful picture of the faithful during the Gospel Age. So, in this round-about way the child came back into the mother's arms. After a few years the mother brought him back to the palace, and the princess took him as her own son.

From that moment on, Moses' life was changed. He was dressed in expensive garments made from delicate linen. The priest from the temple initiated him into their knowledge. At his commands were servants and chariots. However, he was not alienated from his own nation. He did not become an Egyptian. He did not renounce his own brethren. All this was taken care of by his true mother.

The Apostle Paul talks about this in Hebrews 11:24-26: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

For forty years he lived a pleasant life, he even attained the dignity of an Egyptian priest, He diligently studied papyruses containing all the Egyptian wisdom. However, at night when he couldn't fall asleep he would think about his suffering fellow countrymen. He could hear the swishes of the whips urging them to labor under slavery. In his dream he could see the face of his mother full of tenderness, but a little sad and disappointed. And it came to pass that he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew. Saving his brother, he stabbed an Egyptian with a sword. The news spread quickly and Moses had to escape.

On the Eastern part of the Akaba spread the land of Midian, these were the descendants of one of the six sons of Abraham and his third wife Keturah. Moses set out on a trip about 450 kilometers on foot through deserts and wilderness. He sat down by a water well, and helped the daughters of Jethro to water the flock. The priest accepted him at his home and gave him his daughter as a wife.

A sudden change in living conditions changed Moses. This rich prince, once accustomed to comfort, now found himself in a harsh rocky country. On the top of the mountains, the volcanoes were often releasing smoke. One day, while he was leading the flock at the foot of mount Horeb, he saw a strange phenomon: a bush was flaming with bright fire and yet the bush was not burned up. This happened 40 years after his escape from Egypt.

The Lord told him that he should go back to Egypt and to Pharoah and to lead out his people. Moses started to shrink from doing this and asked: "And what if they don't believe that you, the Lord, have sent me." It is then that God asked Moses this unusual question: "What is that in thine hand?"

Moses knew what he held in his hand was a shepherd's rod, practical in tending sheep, helpful in defending against snakes, and handy in climbing rocks. This rod was everything that Moses possessed at that time. For the flock which he kept, belonged to his father-in-law. Finally, Moses agreed to go back to Egypt. And the Word of God states: Exodus 4:20 "And Moses took his wife

and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand.”

Why do the scriptures say “the rod of God?” Did Moses get this rod from God? Probably not. Why does he then call it the rod of God? What is the lesson for us here? I believe that’s the way it is with us since the first day of our consecration. What we have in our hands — whether it is something big or small — what we represent now, belongs to God. As Moses later used his rod according to God’s directions, so should we, His servants, use our time, our talents, as the Lord wishes.

We can learn a few lessons from this story as well. When the Lord gives us a work to do, we should feel our littleness and our inabilities. Besides, one should make sure that a given matter has indeed been commanded to us by the Lord, and is not a result of our improperly directed thoughts. We should be convinced that it was the Lord who has commanded the matter, and in Him we should trust. When we want to serve the Lord we should see what we have in our hands. The Lord is so good and wise that even the most humble talent can be used in His glory.

The rod represents authority. This was shown when the Lord commanded that Aaron, as the head of the tribe of Levi, should be His representative. When murmurings could be heard among the people, the Lord asked through Moses for the leaders of the twelve tribes to take their rods and to write on them their names and to bring them to the Tabernacle. The next day it turned out that the rod of Aaron had budded, and brought forth almonds. This story is given in Numbers, chapter 17. This proves that a rod stands for authority, and a hand for power. A rod in the Bible points towards a manifestation of the Lord’s power and authority.

## **Elisha**

A similar lesson is shown to us through the story of a poor widow who asked Elisha, the prophet, for help. She was in need; her creditors wanted to take her two sons to be bondmen. “What hast thou in the house?” asked Elisha. The woman answered: “Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil.” Then the prophet told her (2 Kings 4:3), “Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels, borrow not a few.” Then she was to enter her home, to close the door behind her, and to pour out the oil into the vessels. The woman obeyed this and she filled all the vessels with oil. She could sell it and thus pay back her debts.

## **Jeremiah**

Let us read the words of the Prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 18:2-4 “Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.”

What lessons can we learn from this example? Often we say that we are a leaking, clay vessel. The Lord tries to shape, to create us. But the responsibility is ours. It rests on the clay, which should allow itself to become a useful vessel. To achieve this, one must submit under the master’s hands, one needs to allow one’s self to be formed. Even a common vessel, when it is

adorned with beautiful patterns and colors, may be used to fulfill an honorary goal.

## Gideon

Looking back at the Lord's plan, at the history of the Lord's dealings with his people, we can observe many examples of how the Lord's power blessed little objects in the hands of a servant. Let us recall a period, the period of the Judges in Israel. They were in a new land, and still without any organized structure in their country. And already tormented by enemies. In the book of Judges, we read that the army of the Midianites numbered 135,000 disciplined and well trained soldiers, while Israel at the same time didn't have an army at all. It was then that the Lord called Gideon, who gathered 300 people. 300 people against 135,000 well trained soldiers. As Bible students, we know that every-thing here has a symbolical meaning. The calling of Gideon, the choice of his comrades, the wet and dry fleece as well as the way of drinking water.

Today, let us pause at the description of the last phase of the process of freeing the Israelites. Gideon has gathered 300 soldiers. They lighted torches and covered them with jars, so that they wouldn't be seen, and so they came close to the camp of the Midianites. And that is the way it is with us. People cannot recognize the Holy Spirit in our hearts, for it is covered with a fleshly lid of dying flesh. Only when the last member of the Church dies, and the jars are broken, will the glory of the Church be manifested and the Kingdom will be established upon the whole earth.

Let us come back to our story. Jars were broken and torches lighted up the camp of the enemy. The Midianites thought they were being surrounded by a huge army. Gideon, who represents Christ, gains the victory. The men of Gideon had jars, torches and trumpets. From a military point of view this was worth nothing, however, Gideon's soldiers had strong faith. The Lord blessed this faith and gave them victory.

Looking at this event described in the Bible, a question occurs: "Brother! Sister! What are you holding in your hands? What do you want to serve God with?"

## David

Let us pay attention to another very difficult experience in the life of Israel. This time Israel has a trained, ready to fight army. A huge valley divides the army of Israel from the army of Philistines. However, the Jews were frightened and humbled by a certain giant named Goliath.

Let us read the words from 1 Samuel 17:10-11, 16, "And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid. And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days."

Goliath, dressed in military armor, armed with a huge sword and spear, was mocking the Israelites. There were three sons of Jesse serving in the army. David, the youngest, was at home. One day his father sent him to bring food to his brothers. David overheard Goliath's slanders and asked (1 Samuel 17:26), "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

These words revealed the great faith of David. For him this wasn't just an army of Israel, or an army of King Saul or even Abner, the commander, this was the army of the living God. This

conviction of his heart inspired him to fight Goliath. At first King Saul was glad that there was a volunteer to fight. Later, however, he said that David should not fight, for he was but a youngster.

When Goliath saw a shepherd approach him, he laughed so much that the mountains shook, and pretending to be offended Goliath said, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” An unarmed young man with a slingshot in his hand came across the valley towards the mighty Goliath. David stopped by a stream, bent down and picked up five smooth pebbles. David took with him: his sling-shot, stick, bag, and five smooth stones.

The number five may be a symbol of the Church. Here are some examples: five wise virgins, five posts holding a cover of the tabernacle, the second cover above the tabernacle was made of goat skin and consisted of five strips.

With the help of a sling-shot and smooth stones, David went against a giant, grim enemy. Was this all that he had then? No. He had strong faith. Faith in God. David knew that the fight belonged to the Lord. 1 Samuel 17:45 says: “Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”

Both armies saw how this boy with stones fired from a sling-shot and killed Goliath. This demonstration of faith in God moves our hearts. Let us remember that we are the servants of the living God. When the armies of the evil one start to fight against us, let us not think about their power but remember David’s word’s: 1 Samuel 17:47 “And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hands.” Perhaps these are only five stones — fragments taken from the stream of the word of God, but if the fight is the Lord’s, we will certainly win. With these stones, texts from the word of God, we kill sin, and bring people the words promising happiness and joy in the future Kingdom.

## **Jesus**

Let us look now at the wonderful examples from the New Testament. Surely, Brethren, you would agree with me that the most wonderful character from the Bible, is Jesus Christ. He performed many miracles and even raised the dead. Let us look closer at one of the miracles of our Lord Jesus. This is given in the gospel according to Mark 6:35-44 “And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.”

In this event, we see the power of God revealed through Jesus. As can be concluded from the previous verses, the apostles wanted to go to a deserted place and rest a little. At that time, so many people were coming to Jesus that the apostles didn't have time for a meal. An attempt to find rest failed, for people followed them and were waiting for the words of Jesus. Information about green grass allows us to place this event in time; it was at springtime around the Holy Day of Passover.

Five loaves of bread were multiplied through God's blessings so that 5,000 people were fed. I believe there is a deeper lesson hidden in this event. Each Jew was obliged to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem. The following scriptures prove it: Deuteronomy 16:5 and Numbers 9:13. Jesus didn't go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Holy Day, because that is what he told a Samaritan woman at the well. John 4:23), "For the hour is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." At that time He made 5,000 people sit, so that together they made the shape of a rectangle with the dimensions, described by Mark, as 100 by 50.

Such a sitting of people had a symbolical meaning. The faithful, according to Jesus' words, were His temple. Let us notice that such indeed were the sizes of the courtyard. Exodus 27:18, "the length of the court shall be 100 cubits, and the breadth 50."

## **Widow**

Let us look at other events from the life of Jesus. Jesus is sitting in the temple in the vestibule for women. Many pilgrims passed by Him, they cast alms into the treasury. The rich put in a lot of money, but Jesus does not draw his attention and ours to them. Let us read the Gospel according to Mark 12:41-44, "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

This must have been a humble sacrifice, in comparison to the gifts of the rich people. However, for a poor widow, two coins was a lot to give. Jesus pointed this fact out to the disciples, stressing that the size of the sacrifice does not depend on the sum, but rather on its relation to the degree of wealth to the giver.

Dear Brother, dear Sister — let us remember this. A humble gift from the poor, which is a great sacrifice, like it was for the poor widow who with the two little coins, gave her might into the treasury, surpasses the sacrifice of the rich who does not even feel the loss.

## **Mary**

Now let us imagine the house of Mary. Jesus is sitting there together with His disciples and the risen Lazarus. At the door appears a woman holding something in her hands, she quickly approaches Jesus and pours on Him an expensive oil from an alabaster jar. Some express their indignation: "What a waste," but Jesus defends her. He said that by pouring out the oil, she has

prepared Him for His burial. The disciples didn't understand, because they didn't know that the hour was coming when Jesus would be crucified.

Everything that Mary had in her hands, she gave to her Savior. With this jar of expensive oil, Mary showed the Lord, gratitude for raising her brother from the grave. The Lord praised this simple act of devotion. I think you would agree with me that the smell of this perfume can be felt even today. This is a fulfillment of Jesus' words in Matthew 26:13 "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

How often we think in what ways we can serve others. How often we think: what should we do to become blessings to others? Then we should answer the question which the Lord asked Moses, "What is that in thine hand?" If our Lord appreciated so highly Mary's act of devotion that it should be preached wherever the Gospel would reach, shall not God remember our every thought, prayer, and feelings of love. How often a pen can be used to bless others. We can so easily with the help of a letter and without many finances, bring comfort to a lonely brother or a weak sister.

## **Paul**

Once again, let us go back to our thoughts to the first Church of Corinth. We can observe there various people working, publicans, farmers, fisher-men. Among them are two hard working individuals who are busy with a lively conversation. They ask an older one, "What is that in thine hand?" In his stretched out hand we see a needle with thick thread. Can you guess who we may be talking about? This is the Apostle Paul, called by God, who left his position of a Pharisee. Addressing him, one of the rulers said, "You are out of your mind, Paul, your great learning is driving you insane."

He leaves everything, takes into his hands a needle and makes tents. To raise money for his missionary trips. Acts 18:1-3 "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers."

Paul's work was difficult but thanks to it, his service to the first Church could be financed by himself, in this way he was not a burden to anyone. Let us observe love and devotion of the Apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."

Dear Brother, dear Sister! What is that in thine hand? We represent various professions. Do we think about them as various ways of serving the Lord? Do we pray for the Lord to open our eyes for the privilege?

In the past, God blessed the rod of Moses, the empty jar of Gideon, the stone of David, the perfume of Mary, the penny of a widow, and Apostle Paul worked day and night with His needle to preach the Gospel.

I think you would agree with me that what we have in our hands and can use to serve others are in fact our prayers. The Bible says that those that wait upon the Lord, gather new strength.

## Prayer

We must find time for our prayers, to pray for those brethren that go through various difficulties and trials. We should pray for the Kingdom to come as soon as possible, so that all the pain and illnesses will be removed from the surfaces of the earth. Let us remember that prayer is one of our privileges that we were given to serve others.

And how should a true, full of faith prayer look?

(1) Prayer should come out of an inner need. When our life is quiet and comfortable, our prayers become monotonous. When we are in a crisis, our lives are shaken by danger, illness, or the pain connected with the passing of a beloved person, then our prayers become fervent and warm. Someone once said that ‘an arrow which is to reach heaven must be released out of a bow which must be pulled to the utmost.’

(2) One of the conditions of an effectual prayer is coming to the Father with a sincere heart. From the epistle of Hebrews 10:19-22 we read: ‘‘Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.’’

(3) The prayer should be simple, full of faith, and without any questions.

(4) We must not hide anything from God or keep anything to ourselves. But everything must be presented to Him in prayer.

(5) The most valuable prayer is the prayer which is followed by deeds. In the New Testament, prayers were often followed by fasting. It is important that a prayer would come always first, for example, before a meal.

(6) We are to avoid selfish prayers. This is shown also in the Lord’s Prayer; first we are to ask for the Kingdom to come, only then we add ‘‘and give us this day our daily bread.’’

(7) With prayer we are to honor the Lord God; we are asking the Great God for great things.

(8) Always, we must make sure that we are fulfilling the will of God, for to pray in the name of Jesus means to pray according to His will: 1 John 5:14 ‘‘And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.’’

(9) Our prayer life should be successful, as we read: John 15:7 ‘‘If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’’

(10) One needs to pray constantly. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, ‘‘Pray without ceasing.’’ Always, we

need to look for the Lord's will. A good example here can be Nehemiah (2:4), who preferred to live always in the fortress of the Almighty, than to visit him from time to time.

Thanks to prayer, we can carry a beam of light to cold and dark places, we can light a lamp of hope in the darkness of doubt. Thanks to prayer, we can remove the shackles from the hands of prisoners. We have to carry refreshments to those who are spiritually weak.

Reading and mediating on the Words of God is no less useful. If we say that prayer is a breath, then studying is food. The Savior said in Matthew 4:4 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Brethren! Have you ever worked so hard that you would not have time for a meal during the entire day? And how often we do not have time to read a passage from the Bible daily, or to prepare for a meeting. And if we do not read the Bible, our prayers are not so efficient, for it very often happens that answers to our prayers are in the Scriptures. Reading textbooks and listening to talks brings certain blessings, but it can never substitute the daily study of the Word of God in our homes and with our families.

Let us, then, make a firm resolution that every-day we will read a passage from the Bible, even a short one. So that in answer to the question "What is that in thine hands?" we could point towards the most wonderful of all books.

## **Fellowship**

For a Christian, fellowship is very important. Fellowshiping with other Christians means giving out, understanding, and communication. All these words contain an idea of giving, not taking. On the other hand, if we all give, we will all receive; this is true fellowship. Such fellowship was shown in the Scriptures in various pictures.

(1) In 1 Peter 2:5 we read: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." This is a beautiful picture showing our fellowship, not only with the Lord, but also with each other. In each building a stone lies upon a stone, and next to a stone. We all, I believe, want to fit into one corner stone, that is, our Lord. Now let us look at this from a different perspective. Do we try to be adjusted one with another? How does it show in our classes and families? Has the fellowshiping we have just had helped us to get adjusted?

(2) Another picture of our fellowship is a shepherd and sheep. Our Lord is our good shepherd. We are his sheep. John 10:11, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Farmers know that a sheep, which is separated from the flock, finds this difficult and longs for fellowship. And how is it with us? David was a good shepherd of sheep; later he was a good shepherd for the nation of Israel. Let us consider such a hypothetical situation. It might have happened that defending his sheep, David might have lost his life. Then his work would have ended, he wouldn't have become the king of Israel, their shepherd. It's quite different with our Lord Jesus. He gave his life for his sheep. However, he still remains our faithful and good shepherd.

(3) Another example of our fellowship can be found in the world of plants. John 15:4-5, "Abide

in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.’’

If you try to cut a plant from its root, it will fade and die. So it is with us. Without the Lord’s help, without the help of brethren and the class, we cannot do anything significant.

(4) Our fellowship is represented also by the Scriptures through a picture of fellowship in marriage. The Lord has decided that this should be inseparable, husband and wife are to help each other in all matters and under all circumstances. Ephesians 5:31 ‘‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.’’ Our fellow-ship is shown in an example of such a good marriage. We should likewise be united in love, longing, a common goal and a desire to be together.

(5) Another example of fellowship is a human being, body and soul. Colossians 1:17-18 ‘‘And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.’’

(6) Another example of brotherly fellowship is bread. In order to become a part of bread, the grains need to be grounded, this shows our sacrificed will and a loss of our individuality.

Let us not miss fellowship in our gatherings, let us reconcile ourselves with God, let us comfort each other, the more so as we see the day approach-ing. Let us read the words of Amos 3:2-3, ‘‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Can two walk together, except they be agreed?’’ Let us remember the words, which God has spoken to us. He has known only us during the Gospel Age. He has blessed us generously. However, He is to punish all our acts of disobedience. Have not we agreed to walk with God?

## **Something Else?**

Perhaps we are holding something else in our hands? Is it a prejudice? An unthoughtful word? An unpleasant look? Perhaps, as time goes by, we are closing our hands against our brother. Will we be praised for such a gesture, ‘‘thou good and faithful servant’’? Let go out of your hands everything, which does not become a true Christian. We serve God, the Truth, and the brethren with what is the best in our hands.

## **Jacob**

At the end, allow me, brethren, to present a little digression. We will draw our attention to Jacob, a wonderful character of the Old Testament. Jacob buys the right of the firstborn, and needs to leave his home for Haran. On the way there he feels tired, and falls asleep on a stone. He has a dream about a ladder. Jacob calls this place Bethel — the house of God. Genesis 28:18-22, ‘‘And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be

with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.'

Bethel stands for a gathering of the Lord's people. Like Jacob, we have made a vow to the Lord, shown in pouring oil upon the stone. The Lord promised to bless us as He blessed Jacob; bread and clothing is promised to us.

Jacob promised to give a tenth, we have sacrificed everything. If we deduct everything we use for ourselves and our families, it would be good if the tenth part would be left for the Lord.

Did God keep His promise given to Jacob? Genesis 32:10, "I had only this staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups." And how was it with Jacob? Having crossed the Jordan and having made peace with his brother Esau, he lived in Canaan, where his sons, because of revenge, killed the inhabitants of this land. Then the Lord tells Jacob to go to Bethel. Genesis 35:1-4, "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: And let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem."

The Lord blessed Jacob richly, Jacob promised to be obedient to the Lord. Where then did the strange gods come from? Let us be careful that something like this would not happen to us. After many years in the Truth, many spiritual and fleshly blessings, let us be careful not to find in our home — in your heart — strange gods. If something like that would happen, however, let us behave like Jacob. Let's throw them away from the heart and bury them, so that they wouldn't tempt with their glitter. Let us follow Jacob's example. Genesis 35:14 "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon."

Do we have in our home — our heart — an altar where we lay our peaceful offering of thanksgiving? Jacob poured wine and oil on an altar. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Wine stands for joy and zeal in the Lord's service, that was, for example, a characteristic feature of the Apostle Paul. Acts 20:24, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

May this typical oil and wine be always present in our consecrated lives.

Presentation Twenty-Three

# That They All May Be One

Brother Evhen Dovhan (Ukraine)

*John* 17:21-23, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”

A commentary to the Scriptures says that this is unity in love and goals. We read from John 11:49-52, “And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, ‘Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.’ And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

## **Our Lord’s Prayer for Unity**

Can we now see unity among Christians? We can’t see this unity. A question arises. Has the Lord’s prayer for unity been heard? To answer this question we must consider what “Christianity” did Jesus have in mind?

Our Lord’s prayer concerned the true Church. He was praying for those who were following in His footsteps. Let us return to our commentary to this verse; this is unity in love and goals. Unity in love between Father and son is shown in John 3:16. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Out of love the Son agreed with the will of the Father, to give His life for us and the whole world. We read in John 15:12, 13, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

The Apostle Paul says of our Lord in Hebrews 10:5-7, “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

It was ordered by the Law to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus gives a new commandment in the Gospel according to John 13:34, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.” Our Lord loved us to such a degree that He gave His life for us. He desires that we would

imitate Him. He gave this new commandment before He was crucified, however, He knew that this moment was drawing near. During three and a half years He was giving His life, healing the sick and preaching about the Kingdom of God.

## **In Unity with God and Christ?**

A question arises: are we in unity with the Father and with Christ in love? Do we have the love which leads to unity on this side of the veil? Let us turn to the writings of the disciple of Love, the Apostle John. In John 2:15-17, we read: “And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

“In John 4:7-21 we read, “There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat). Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” The Apostle John explains how we can be in unity with the Father and with Christ.

## **One in Our Goals**

Let us return to the commentary to the idea that we are to be one in our goals. Paul writes in Phillipians 3:10-14, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 the Apostle says, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the

mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

We know that after the sin of our first parents, the unity with God was broken. People were divided according to nations and various parties, but Jesus prayed for those who accepted Him to continue in unity. We read from Galatians 3:26-28, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

## **Unity of the Body**

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Apostle writes that we are baptized into one body, which is the Church. Are we in this unity? Do we feel that we have a better education, or are better off? I believe that those that have been reached by the Lord’s prayer for unity, do not make such differences but continue in brotherly unity. In Romans 12:5 the Apostle Paul writes, “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”

I would like us to draw our attention to the words upon the unity of the body mentioned by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, “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. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

The Apostle compares the earthly body of men to a spiritual body, which makes the Church. The unity of the Church is being shown here. He admonishes against divisions of the body and for members to take equal care of each other.

In Ephesians 4:3 we read, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” Are we trying to keep the unity of the spirit? Looking at the gatherings of the Lord’s people outside of various religious groups we see difficulties in understanding important teachings of the scriptures. This causes a loss of unity of mind and spirit. We should remember that we are living

during the times of the end; these are difficult times about which the Scripture inform us. We live during the Harvest, and the Harvest is the division of the wheat from the tares.

In 1 Corinthians 10:12 the Apostle Paul says, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Psalm 25:9 states, “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.”

## **Humility**

The Lord can lead us only when we are humble. He teaches us how we should act, He teaches us a true understanding of His word and the times in which we live.

What does the word “humble” mean? According to the Concordance, humility is a feeling of lowliness. Similiar words are written by the Apostle Paul in Phillipians 2:3, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

From the May 27th Manna comment we read: “In lowliness of mind let us each esteem one another better than themselves” (Phillipians 2:3). Paul exhorts that all shall cultivate the grace of humility, and that in every affair each shall take heed that “nothing be done through strife or vain glory,” that self-laudation and strivings for pre-eminence be thoroughly put away as the greatest enemies to the Spirit of the Lord and the blessing of the church. On the contrary, each should have that lowliness of mind which can see the good qualities of fellow members and appreciate some of these qualities at least as superior to his own. All the talents, and all the abilities, need never be expected in any one person in any congregation. So, then, everyone may, if he be of lowly mind, see in others certain good qualities or graces superior to his own, and should delight to recognize these and to esteem their possessor accordingly.”

If the Lord God is to lead us, we are to have a humble heart. Only then can we remain in unity with God and with Christ and with those that are His. This is possible only when there is an agreement.

Our Heavenly Father and our Saviour are in complete agreement with each other. And that means in unity. Unity without agreement is impossible, be it at home, in the family or in the congregation of the Lord’s people. We are to be in agreement with the fundamental teachings which cannot be changed. In Matthew 18:19 Jesus says, “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”

## **How Good and Pleasant**

Psalm 133:1-3 says, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” This beautiful Psalm talks about our Lord, the Church and the unity between the Head and the Body, about the Holy Spirit, about the blessings shown in the dew, about eternal life. It admonishes to agreement and unity. Agreement must be based on the Holy Scriptures,

according to the will of God. For this agreement we should strive.

As the members of His Body, we must unite with the Head, Christ. In the Manna under the heading, "Help," we read that "If one member suffer, all suffer with it," and every member, in proportion as it is in harmony with the head and its spirit of love for the members, will be prompt to act. Sometimes in our human bodies the hand may stretch forth assistance to the injured member so quickly that it seems impossible to conceive that the message first went to the head, and that our hand was subsequently directed by the head to assist; and so it is with the members of the body of Christ; those who are in full touch and sympathy with the Head, the Lord, are to so large an extent of "one spirit" with him, so anxious to do his will, and so well informed in respect to what his will is, that they sometimes seem to act almost automatically, in respect to rendering help by word, or deed, or otherwise to those with whom they are in contact" (R2986).

In the Manna which we have just read, a beautiful thought is given: every member as far as he remains in harmony with the Head and the spirit of love for his fellow members will be ready to act. Yes, this is the truth. Without the head, a member remains dead, and the Head of the Church is Christ.

In our earthly bodies we are imperfect, we often fall in our thoughts and actions. The Apostle John says in 1 John 2:1, 2, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

We must remain in communion with our Saviour and through Him with our Father. This communion is through our prayers. In Matthew 7:1-11 Jesus says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

## **Fellowship with the Brethren**

We should have fellowship with our Brethren. The Apostle John writes in 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Can we without fellowship be cleansed from every sin?

In fellowship, through gathering, through dis-courses, we learn what our character should be like. Without fellowship we would know nothing about our evil actions, and not knowing about them

we would not be able to ask forgiveness, to repent and to get forgiveness. In brotherly fellowship we see our shortcomings, we repent, we ask for forgiveness, and then the blood of Christ cleans us from sins. Without repentance and asking for forgiveness, there is no forgiveness of sin.

Beloved, we have been talking about the unity with the Father and with Christ, which we strive to attain on this side of the veil. However, we are expecting to attain the entire unity only when we are changed and together with the Father and our Saviour.

In the Manna for August 24 we read: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11). "As we come to consider this beautiful expression of the Lord's sentiments with reference to the church, we catch a glimpse of the glory of the blessed oneness of the divine family. It is a oneness of purpose, a oneness of confidence, a oneness of sympathy, a oneness of love, a oneness of honor, and a oneness of mutual possession. This oneness our Lord described as already existing between Himself and the Father, but so far as His disciples are concerned it was and still is prospective; and its full accomplishment is the ideal goal toward which we are taught to aspire."

## **The Goals of God and Christ**

At the beginning we mentioned a commentary to a verse about unity, it has stated that this is "unity in love and goals." We now ask: what are the goals of our Father and His Son? They are the fulfillment of the Plan which He has outlined before the foundation of the world. Which is redemption for the whole world of mankind, raising them up from death and degradation, the atonement of everyone with God. Shall we participate in this work? The Holy Scriptures say that we will, because we are the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations are to be blessed.

Galatians 3:19, "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

Let us consider the Law which was a shadow of the things to come. In the Law, God appointed the High Priest and priests. They were chosen by God to give sacrifice for people's sins. They were teachers of the nation of Israel. This is a picture pointing towards Christ and the Church. In Revelation 1:5, 6 we read "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The Apostle Paul in Hebrews 3:1 states, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

In Hebrews 4:15 the following words are mentioned: "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works ... For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Just as our Lord, the High Priest, went through various experiences to be able to have compassion for our weaknesses, so also the priests should go through experiences to be able to feel with people whom they will help to attain perfection.

Our Lord talks about unity, which is to take place after the Church is taken. In the Gospel of John

10:16 He says, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” In the Commentary to the Scriptures it is written that this applies to the class of sheep in the Millennium.

About the unity which is to be between the Lord God and all His creation, the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 1:9, 10, “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” A commentary says “together in one harmonious family.”

This was pictured in the pyramid, in which all lines converge in one main cornerstone. At that time the words of the angels’ hymn sung at Jesus’ birth will be fulfilled (Luke 2:14), “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” At that time the prayer “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done” will be heard.

Looking at this wonderful Plan of God revealed to us, through which there will be no more death, no more wars, no more anarchy and in which eternal life will begin, we are to be grateful to the Lord God, grateful to Him for calling us in Christ, for giving us atonement in Christ, for revealing us the mysteries of His will, for pointing the way to us, for giving us promises of becoming partakers of the divine nature.

We repeat the psalmist’s words in Psalm 116:12-14, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.” Amen.

## Presentation Twenty-Four

# Contend for the Faith

Brother Walter Blicharz (USA)

*What* would the “Christian Life” be without faith? It would be impossible. They cannot be separated.

Even those who lived with Jesus — those who witnessed the miracles and heard him speak; of whom it was said, “all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22) — it would be necessary for all of them to have faith in Jesus as the Messiah and later as their Redeemer.

On four occasions, Jesus said, “O ye of little faith” — because what they heard and saw, their faith should have been greater (Matthew 6:30, 14:31, 16:8, Luke 12:28).

However, there were many who had faith and the Gospels record these experiences. Matthew 9:22: a woman with a disease concluded, “if I could but touch his garment, I will be whole.” Jesus said, “Thy faith had made thee whole.”

Luke 18:42: a blind man begged for his sight. Jesus said, “Receive thy sight, thy faith hath saved thee.” These are only two of the many miracles Jesus performed.

Paul in Hebrews 11:1 gives a definition for faith, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” However, I like the NIV: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” The action of this faith is shown by Paul in the second verse: “This is what the Ancient [Worthies] were commended for.” It was their faith and it is important to know it was a “working faith,” because in the remainder of the chapter Paul outlines what they did by faith.

Faith gives confidence in God’s plans and purpose. The basis of faith requires a degree of information and understanding.

“According to your faith, be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29). The desire to increase faith must be in our hearts. Such a desire is a manifestation of our hunger and thirst for righteousness.

## **Faith and Works**

James 2:26 shows the important balance between faith and works, and James concludes his reasoning by saying “Faith without works is dead.” Faith manifests itself by works. Faith must exist before works.

In Hebrews 11:6 Paul clearly makes a very important conclusion: (NIV) “Without faith it is

impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him, must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”

After this beautiful and stirring account, Paul writes in Hebrews 12:1 (NIV): “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Verse 2, “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.”

What was the “Joy set before him”? Was it his position on the right hand of the throne of God? Although that will be a great joy, I don’t think that was the joy referred to. It was restoring the fallen human race back to perfection and to a relationship with the Heavenly Father, which will be accomplished through his ransom sacrifice and the mediatorial reign. All of this glorifies the Heavenly Father.

It appears, from the context of Ephesians 4, that Paul is encouraging the Brethren to keep the unity of the spirit by spelling out the importance of: one body — one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one God, one baptism and one faith. It seems Paul is referring to “one faith” as truth, which is our religious conviction based on the teachings of the scriptures, and in verses 11 and 12 he shows this was accomplished by apostles, prophets and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service. (NIV)

The Rotherham translation of Ephesians 4 is very good. He shows in previous verses the “prescribed arrangement” is for the “upbuilding of the body of Christ,” and in verse 13 we read, we should “all advance into the oneness of the faith, and the personal knowledge of the Son of God, into a man of full-growth, into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Our advancement into the oneness of faith is referring to spiritual knowledge and understanding of the doctrines — it is more than merely trust and loyalty. In verse 14 (NIV), Paul writes, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”

Verse 15: (Rotherham), instead, “pursuing truth ... in love, grow into him in all things, who is the head, Christ.” Speaking “the Truth” is absolutely essential in the life of a Christian; it is following our Lord who said in John 18:37, “For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”

Those who have the truth are not to be ashamed of it, neither fearful, but to trust in the promises and providence of the Lord for words and wisdom, as Jesus promised, “For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict” (Luke 21:15, NIV). Also Matthew 10:19.

## Contending for “The Faith”

Quite often the Scriptures differentiate the aspect of faith under consideration with the prefix “the” — “the faith.”

For example, in Jude 3 (reading from the NIV), “Dear Friends, although I was very eager to write you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

A close look at the Greek word for “contend” (according to Strong’s Concordance) shows it has the meaning “to struggle for,” and the English derivative of the Greek is *ep-agoniz-omai*. Webster’s New World Dictionary indicates the word “agonize” has the meaning, “to contend for a prize, a struggle.” Jude is urging the brethren to contend and uphold their faith, their “first love” (Revelation 2:4).

The use of the words, “agonizing and struggling” suggests Jude is reminding the brethren this is an inward conflict with self, not an external conflict with others, thinking we are “defending the truth.” It’s easy to get carried away with this kind of attitude and reasoning. However, he urges in Ephesians 4:32 with these words, “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.”

In Luke 13:24 Jesus said, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate, many will seek to enter and shall not be able.” “Strive” is from the Greek word *agonizomai* — it is a personal agonizing and struggling.

In 1 Timothy 6:12 Paul says “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” The word “fight” comes from the Greek word *agonizomai*, again a personal effort — agonizing and struggling “within,” not against others.

“The” faith in Jude 3 could also be a reference to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “For I am determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified” — their belief and understanding of the Truth.

Jude is warning the brethren in the 4th verse of ungodly men who “crept in unawares ... denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is the reason Jude urges them to “contend” or struggle within to uphold their “faith” — their first love.

The “faith combinations” are: the faith in Jude 3, common faith in Titus 1:4, precious faith in 2 Peter 1:1, one faith in Ephesians 4:5. Paul highlights “the, one, precious faith” in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, NIV. He writes:

“For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.”

“After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.”

“Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” Now, all 12 apostles were “witnesses” of our Lord’s resurrection.

What a chronology of events! This is the — one — precious faith, in a nutshell — so beautifully done by the Apostle Paul. Paul declares the resurrection to be the very essence of the Gospel and who would disagree? He saw the “Risen Lord” and as a credible witness gives that beautiful, thought provoking document on the doctrine of Resurrection. It is a definite and a positive presentation (1 Corinthians 15:20), “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Because Paul saw the Risen Lord, he did not need faith to believe, but we do and this is why the Holy Spirit directed Paul’s Ministry in a special way.

Contending for the faith means we have a reason for faith in the Redeemer’s Sacrifice — faith in our Justification — faith in the glorious promises of God’s Word. Jude continues the encouragement in verse 20 (Rotherham) “Beloved, building your-selves up in your most holy faith.”

The chief mission of the Church has been, and is, her development, i.e., preparing one another as Members in the Body. 1 Thessalonians 5:11, “edifying one another,” Hebrews 10:24, “Let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works.”

## **The Faith, The Truth**

Another instance where the word “the” pre-cedes faith is in Act 16:5, which reads, “And so were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in numbers daily.” It is important to recognize “the faith” referred to is the truth, the belief, this new way of life, which is the Gospel of Christ.

Another example of the faith is recorded in 2 Timothy 4:7 (Rotherham). Paul, speaking, said: “The noble contest have I contested, the race have I finished, the faith have I kept.” Without a doubt Paul is referring to the faith as the truth he received by inspiration of God’s Word and gave it to all the brethren.

Paul kept it obediently and faithfully — he did not deny it for any consideration or earthly advantage; instead, he courageously endured self-denial, sacrifice, hardship and persecution.

The faith had kept him, and he shows us that it’s not only in keeping the faith in us, but in a sense declaring it, that is important. Because if one does not declare the good tidings to others, he will soon lose the faith himself.

Paul was aware of the many conflicts that compass the brethren and his epistles are filled with warnings and encouragements. To the Church at Colosse (and to us), he said, “Continue in the faith; grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard” (Colossians 1:23).

In Colossians 2:7 Paul writes: “Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Generally the word “faith” has the meaning of “confidence,” “trust” and “loyalty,” but with the addition of the word “the” the

meaning has greater significance as the context approves. Therefore “the” faith, as we have endeavored to show, has meaning of “the truth” — “the gospel of Christ” — the doctrines.

## **Cause and Remedy for Lack of Faith**

The cause is a lack of trust in God. Hebrews 11:6, “... must believe that He is ...”

A lack of faith is a constant hindrance to overcoming. 1 John 5:4, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.” If this lack is realized, pray earnestly as the apostles asked, “Lord increase our faith.” Always remember, Satan never sleeps — don’t even count on a snooze.

We are also warned about the dangers of losing “the faith”! Paul, writing to Timothy, said “But the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some in the church will turn away from Christ and become eager followers of teachers with devil inspired ideas” (1 Timothy 4:1, The Living Bible).

Paul is talking to Timothy as his son: “My true son in the faith ... Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge” (1 Timothy 1:2, 6:20, NIV).

Verse 21 — “Which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.” The lesson is, be on the alert brethren — it is happening.

Tradition indicates Timothy was about 16 years old when he and his Mother were converted to the Gospel. When 21 years old, he and Silas accompanied Paul through Asia Minor and for 16 years he was with Paul in the service of the Truth.

The first Epistle was written to Timothy when he was rather young and was encouraged by Paul to recognize his responsibility in the ministry. It seems because of his youth he preferred older elders be given the opportunity of service, but Paul urged him to recognize this privilege from the Lord. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul tells Timothy “Don’t let anyone think little of you because you are young. Be their ideal; let them follow the way you teach and live; be a pattern for them in your love, your faith, and your clean thoughts” (The Living Bible).

The second epistle was written from Rome, just before Paul’s execution. Paul was about 63 years old and Timothy about 40 years old at this time.

Paul had great confidence that Timothy’s ministry would counsel and take care of the Churches. This is why Paul writes in both epistles about “special warnings” and makes recommendations and gives prophecies regarding the Church’s future.

## **Sound Doctrine**

Another aspect of the faith and one faith is the reference to sound doctrine. The Greek meaning of the word “doctrine” is instruction or teaching, and we begin to see how these words are related and used.

Besides Timothy, Paul also speaks of Titus as his son in the faith, and in the three chapters of Titus he details the instructions and qualifications not only for elders, but also for the brethren. In Titus 1:9 (NIV), Paul tells Titus to instruct elders with these words. “He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by ‘sound doctrine’ and refute those who oppose it.”

The way to “hold firmly” to the “trustworthy message” is by searching the Scriptures critically and dismissing anything in conflict with the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:7, Paul, writing to Timothy, says there are some who are “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Such are not rooted and grounded in the faith, but as Paul states in Ephesians 4:14, they are “carried about with every wind of doctrine.” Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word ... ye shall know the Truth” (John 8:31, 32).

Paul gives a reason for reliance on the written word, with these words from 2 Timothy 3:16 (Diaglott): “All scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for Teaching [doctrine], for Conviction, for Correction, for that discipline which is in Righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work.”

The teaching of Jesus, the apostles and the prophets are the only inspired authorities (R5406, 7) because they reveal and teach the one faith, which we refer to as the Harvest Message.

Paul penned the epistle to Titus during his second imprisonment in Rome, and this time he was in the Mamertine Prison, which was a dreadful dungeon. Knowing his end was near, he wanted again to encourage and warn the elders and the brethren about coming experiences. Just like our Lord who during his crucial experiences was more concerned about his apostles, the brethren and his mother than about Himself, how closely Paul emulated the Lord in his last days.

It is interesting that in Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus the warning and instruction was relative to false teachers and the need for sound doctrine and steadfastness. History shows how the “spirit of iniquity” (2 Thessalonians 2:7) began to dilute the truth and error crept in.

We would like to read Titus 2:2 from the Diaglott (supplemented with the word for word rendering). “That aged [senior] men be vigilant, serious, prudent, sound in the faith, in the love, in the patience.” I think the reason Paul emphasized it this way is because there are various “faiths,” various “loves,” and various kinds of “patience.”

Notice that Paul placed “sound in the faith” before “sound in the love.” Since love is one of the fruits of the “spirit of truth” which can only be attained by “the truth,” so the “spirit of the love” can only be possible by having “the faith.” The same reasoning applies for placing “love” before “patience,” because patience can be motivated for selfish reasons, whereas true patience which will endure and become part of character must result from a change of heart.

As one reads and studies the epistles to Timothy and Titus, one begins to understand “the faith,” “the hope,” “the love” and “the patience” of the sacrificing and humble Apostle Paul. Yes, he could say, “Follow me, even as I follow the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Brethren, the one faith, in its fullest understanding, is revealed by the Apostle Paul with these words from Titus 2:13, 14 (Diaglott). “Waiting for the blessed hope, even the appearing of the

glory of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ ... that he might ... cleanse for himself a peculiar People, devoted to good works.’’

May we cherish and continue to appreciate the privilege of “Contending for The Faith” — it will be a challenge that requires making it a goal.

It is said, there are just four steps to any goal — to wish, to want, to will, and then do what it takes to achieve it. Contend for the faith.