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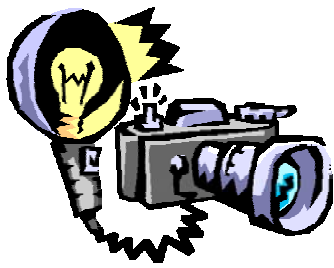


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“I Will Lift up Mine Eyes unto the Mountains”

Franciszek Olejarz
Poland

Dear brethren, as we were driving to this convention we admired the beautiful scenery. Nowy Sacz is surrounded by mountains; there is so much beauty in them, and so much awe. Mountains can enchant us at any time during the year. We can find rest in the mountains, but they can also be hazardous.

When we lift up our eyes toward the mountain tops, we recall the words of Psalm 121:1, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come.” *

This is the theme text of our convention. Dear brethren in our Lord, as well as dear friends of God’s Truth, I would like to invite you to take a short walk into the mountains. Let us, just for a brief moment, ascend some of the mountains which are spoken of in God’s Word. Let us see if these mountains have any messages for us today through historical events associated with them.

So please let me invite you to visit our first mountain.

Mount Moriah

Abraham’s unique trials are associated with this mountain (Genesis 22:1-14). Another name for Mt. Moriah is The Lord Shall Provide: “And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh. As it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided” (Genesis 22:14).

God requested Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, whom Abraham loved very much. God required that which was most precious in Abraham’s heart.

I think each of us would take a long time considering such a request. Abraham decides quickly, recognizing that this is what God expects of him. Faithful, righteous “Abraham

stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.” But the angels of God watched over Isaac’s life. “Abraham, Abraham ... Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram, that was prepared earlier by God, which he then offered up for a burnt-offering instead of his son Isaac.

Just as Isaac was a type, so was the ram, which typifies Christ the Lord, of whom John the Baptist said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Christ Jesus satisfied God’s righteousness by providing an equivalent price for the redemption of Adam, and in Adam the entire human race.

A mountain symbolizes authority, distinction, and influence. Jerusalem, the eternal capitol, was built on two tall hills, Zion and Moriah. Mt. Zion became the seat of the civil government of the kings of Israel, and the temple, which became the dwelling place for God, was built by Solomon on Mt. Moriah, the same place where the blood of the ram was sacrificed instead of Isaac.

Mt. Moriah means “The Land Watched by Jehovah, or The Mountain Where Jehovah Sees.” This means the eyes of God are directed onto our land. God sent his Son to the environs of Jerusalem to become a burnt offering and an atonement offering.

Let us ascend another mountain.

* All Scripture texts are from the 1901 *American Standard Version*.

Mount Sinai (also called Mt. Horeb)

It was on Mt. Sinai that God, in a wonderful way, spoke to Moses from the midst of a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-12) and called him to lead the nation of Israel. God not only makes a promise to lead the nation out, but assures Moses that once again he will come to this mountain, not alone, but with the whole nation freed from Egyptian bondage.

And so it happened, as we read in Exodus chapter 19. The Israelites set up camp around this mountain on their way to the promised land. Moses met with God on top of Mt. Sinai, and it was here the nation received God's Law, which they said they would uphold. They also received the plans for the Tabernacle, which is mentioned by the apostle Paul in Hebrews 8:5, "Who serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned of God when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount." And so this was a copy and a shadow of the heavenly temple.

Let us now ascend the mountains spoken of in the New Testament.

Mount of Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

Here we have the second message directed to those who accepted the first one which was "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). The Lord Jesus did not address the divided gathering of believers and sinners; rather he addressed his faithful disciples. This mountain was a place of a memorable sermon; it became a very special pulpit or place of preaching. The Lord gives a particular message to his disciples, and to us also. "Blessed" signifies a blessing which can be received as a result of attaining harmony of our character with God's character.

Let us travel to another mountain.

Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-37)

Here on this mountain the Heavenly Father revealed the full glory of his son. The Lord Jesus wishes to make his disciples aware that his death will not mean the destruction of the promises of his kingdom and glory. The Lord

takes only three of his disciples onto this mountain—Peter, James and John—to comfort and strengthen them.

They were so enchanted with what they had seen, they wanted to remain there: "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." And the Lord God himself spoke to them there, saying, "This is my Son, my chosen: hear ye him."

Now let us ascend to...

Golgotha (Matthew 27:33)

This is a place of the most disgraceful death, and at the same time the greatest and the most worthy altar. For on this mountain the sacrifice was made which was sufficient for every man. It was a sacrifice according to God's liking, hence Christ could call out from the cross, "It is finished." Because of this great accomplishment, mankind receives a guarantee of being raised from the grave and an opportunity to receive life. Let us also look at the ...

Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3)

Here the Lord spoke of the signs of the end of the world. After the Last Supper the Lord Jesus takes his disciples to the Mount of Olives. Here he informed them of his departure and of the difficulties which were to follow. It is from this mountain that our resurrected Lord was taken up "and a cloud received him out of their sight."

Brethren, we live at the time of the end of the Gospel age. The Lord Jesus and the apostles spoke of this time as a difficult time, a time which we have to endure. The Lord compares this time to the days of Noah which were characterized by demoralization and corruption. Evil and sin multiply around us, and biblical standards are not respected. This concerns both the spiritual life as well as morality. The lifestyle promoted in the world around us brings danger, brings evil, which can enter our fellowship and our family life. How can we fight this evil?

David, through the words of a psalm, tells us: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains." I look up and see the mighty activity of

the Lord God; I see his great works and I think that I won't be able to overcome difficulties on my own, so "...from whence shall my help come?" The deliverance will come from the Lord if we seek and ask for it.

I have presented a short list of events, God's works on the mountains, where God's Plan of Salvation is hidden. Each one of us wants to know God's plan and to attain salvation. To do that each of us should ascend the mountains and receive what is essential for salvation.

Dear brethren, have you ascended Mount Sinai to meet with the Lord God, an encounter which can start a new life? The Lord will map out the way for you to walk. Mount Sinai will give you the opportunity to get to know God's Law; absolute obedience to it will be expected.

The Mount of Beatitudes speaks of great love and the reward, which will be poured out onto the one who changes his attitude toward God and man. One does not enter this mountain just to receive. Christ the Lord teaches, "Blessed are the ...", and then adds "poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who thirst for righteousness, those who keep their hearts pure, peacemakers."

So, dear brethren, have you made the gospel the leading passion in your life? Have you noticed that blessings are closely related to the gifts of the holy spirit which are essential to attain the graces which the Father wishes to give you through Christ Jesus? Are you on the Mount of Beatitudes?

Perhaps you have ascended the Mount of Transfiguration where with the eyes of faith you can see the full glory of Christ and hear the voice of God say, "Hear ye him." Can you hear? Have you become his sheep? "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Have you learned to place total confidence in his word?

But you can not pass Mt. Golgotha, a place where the bands of death were broken, where the death of the one who gives life to so many occurred.

Perhaps the Lord would like you to ascend Mt. Moriah. You say you have sacrificed everything to the Lord God. Are you truly ready to lay down that which is most precious on the sacrificial altar as Abraham did? Is your faith and trust as strong as his?

The Mount of Olives ends our journey. From this place, just as with the Lord, we can be taken up in the first resurrection.

We can count on help from our Lord during the difficulties on our journey, just as David expressed it: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come? My help cometh from Jehovah." The help will come if we make an effort to ascend the mountain following the psalmist who wrote, "Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hill" (Psalm 43:3).

In Psalm 24:3-6 the psalmist asks, "Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? And who shall stand in his holy place?" This signifies that the mountain of Christ's Kingdom will become the grandest of all the mountains, bringing happiness, peace, and security for all mankind.

But before this takes place, before the blessings are poured out upon all mankind, we can benefit from the works of salvation today if we approach the Lord's mountain: "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, ... to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:22,23).

Dear brethren, may this convention occurring within the mountains, set our mind on spiritual things. May our thoughts flow from this place towards the mountains. Let us consider the Creator, his great plan of salvation. Let us consider our Lord Jesus and his sacrifice completed on Calvary.

May we notice the beauty of the biblical mountains; may we look at the events related to them and decipher what the Lord says to us. May a pleasant scent raise up from this place during our spiritual feast here, an incense in the form of our prayers. May our prayers flow up from the depths of our heart

and ascend above our heads, going upward to be received and accepted by our Creator.

Let us seek help and blessing from above, from our Heavenly Father. The Lord God is gathering a spiritual parliament on his mountain, a parliament consisting of 144,000 members, where Jesus Christ will be the Prime Minister and his apostles will be the minis-

ters. The whole world will come under the influence of this government.

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come? My help cometh from Jehovah.”



Hezekiah's Two Prayers

Todd Alexander
USA

There are many wonderful lessons we can learn from the experiences of King Hezekiah as found in Isaiah 36-38, 2 Chronicles 32, and 2 Kings 18-20. We will review them briefly and draw several spiritual lessons.

King Hezekiah was one of the most faithful kings of ancient Israel. He was the king of Judah when only his two-tribe Kingdom of Judah survived in the land. Hezekiah had just completed an extensive godly reformation by doing these things:

1. Commanding the destruction of idol worship;
2. Reappointing the priests and Levites to their role in the worship of Jehovah;
3. Commanding that the tithe to the priests and the Levites begin again according to the law; and, most importantly,
4. Turning the hearts of the Jews back to Almighty God.

God, in turn, blessed Hezekiah and the people of Judah with a bountiful harvest.

Even though everything was going well for Judah, the goodness of King Hezekiah could not overcome the sins of the past. God would eventually allow Babylon to capture and destroy the kingdom, but not now. Now it was time for Hezekiah and the people of Judah to be severely tested.

The Facts

Sennacherib, the king of Assyria and the most powerful king in the world, was preparing to capture Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Sennacherib had already conquered Judah's outlying fenced cities. When Hezekiah heard this, he quickly fortified the walls of Jerusalem by rebuilding the parts that had broken down. Hezekiah gave the responsibility to each citizen to rebuild the wall in front of his

own house. Additionally, Hezekiah diverted the springs of Gihon by building an underground tunnel delivering much needed fresh sweet water to the people of Jerusalem during the crisis.

Immediately after this, Sennacherib sent a message to Hezekiah declaring war. Before delivering the message to Hezekiah, Sennacherib sent one of his spokesmen to speak in front of the Jewish people. Sennacherib used this method to try to humble Hezekiah, but it did not work.

Hezekiah then made a mistake: he tried to appease Sennacherib by sending a huge amount of tribute money that wasn't his to give. Hezekiah gave all the riches he had in the temple and in his own house to pay tribute to Sennacherib. But that didn't stop Sennacherib.

Sennacherib's spokesman stood in front of the people and told lies using their own Jewish language. He tried to discourage them by:

- » Falsely claiming that Hezekiah was relying on Egypt for strength.
- » Devaluing God's providential watch care over Judah.
- » Demoralizing the people by speaking in their language and warning them about the huge military force just miles away.
- » Offering Hezekiah 2,000 horses to make it a fair fight.
- » Falsely claiming that God authorized his attack.

- » Claiming that Hezekiah would not be able to deliver his people.
- » Bragging about conquering other nations, their lands, gods, and kings.
- » Claiming that God would not be able to deliver his people.
- » Requiring unconditional surrender and threatening Judah's exile.
- » Warning the people not to trust in their God.
- » Comparing the Living God with the gods of the other nations.

Sennacherib hoped the people of Judah would wilt under the overwhelming military threat. But Hezekiah wisely told his people not to listen to Sennacherib's messenger, and they obeyed. Sennacherib underestimated the power of God's people when they trust in their almighty God.

When Hezekiah was a young man, Isaiah was his mentor. So during this time of national crisis, it was understandable for Hezekiah to ask for Isaiah's help to make intercession to God for the kingdom of Judah.

Isaiah delivered a favorable answer from the Lord. God told Hezekiah not to be afraid of the blaspheming words of Sennacherib. The Lord promised a mysterious blast, then a rumor, and lastly the promise Sennacherib would return to his own land and die.

Sennacherib delivered his second message in writing. Hezekiah took the letter, spread it before the Lord, and prayed: "LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have de-

stroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only." (Isaiah 37:16-20)

Hezekiah's famous prayer starts out with praise. He then asks for God's attention and recounts the blasphemy of Sennacherib. Hezekiah admits that Sennacherib is a mighty enemy but recognizes that the gods of the other nations are no comparison to Jehovah. Hezekiah's prayer reveals a deep sense and trust in God's presence, an attitude of reverence, a complete confidence in God's power, confidence in God's love and faithfulness to Israel. Hezekiah ends his prayer by asking for salvation for God's name's sake.

God starts His answer by saying, "Because you have prayed to me about Sennacherib King of Assyria..." This implies that God would not have answered if Hezekiah had not prayed!

God goes on and speaks affectionately of Judah and calls her the "virgin daughter of Zion," a name that indicates God's appreciation for Hezekiah's spiritual reformation. God then recounts the threats of Sennacherib and demonstrates His knowledge of his ways. God reassures Hezekiah that He will put a "hook" into Sennacherib's nose and a "bridle" into his mouth to turn him away from threatening Judah. God promises that Judah will see the upcoming Jubilee year of resting for the land and God promises that the people of Judah will soon conduct business as usual, peacefully.

God further promises Hezekiah that Sennacherib will not invade the city walls or even penetrate the walls with any implements of war. God promises that He will save the city for His name's sake and for King David's name's sake.

That night, the Angel of the Lord killed 185,000 men. This number included the entire leadership of the Assyrian army and every mighty warrior. Sennacherib was defeated and killed by his two sons immediately after his return home.

Hezekiah's First Prayer

Hezekiah was keenly aware of Sennacherib's capture of the ten-tribe northern kingdom of Israel. This realization probably spurred him to greater passion in the spiritual reformation of the kingdom of Judah. When you see your neighbor's house on fire, you take steps to make sure your house doesn't burn too. Hezekiah did the right thing. In the face of intense pressure from the evil Sennacherib, Hezekiah shows humility and trust in God. By contrast, Hezekiah's father Ahaz was wicked. How did Hezekiah turn out to be righteous when he had such an evil father? Brother Russell wrote, "The secret of the difference between the (evil) father and the (righteous) son is a godly mother" (*Reprints*, p. 3462).

Even though Hezekiah was a righteous king, God allowed troubles in his life to test his confidence in Him. Likewise God gives us personal experiences with His care. Sometimes even when we are doing well, God sends trouble in our life to make us better, to help us press forward to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Hezekiah recognized that he could not defend his country by his own strength. His dependence on God was greatly helped and facilitated by his mentor, the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah represents the holy spirit which is with us at the beginning of our spiritual life just as Isaiah was with Hezekiah from the time he was young.

There are other spiritual lessons associated with faithful Hezekiah's experiences. Assyria and Sennacherib represent the world which is led by the Prince of this world Satan. Hezekiah represents you and me as spiritual Israelites. Each of us are leaders in our lives and families. The people of Judah who rebuilt the walls of the City of David and kept themselves inside the fortified walls of Jerusalem represent the faithful church members who not only remain under God's protection but work to fortify their defenses against the enemy. The outlying cities of Judah that were captured by Sennacherib represent the Great

Company that is too easily distracted and captured by Satan because they live carelessly.

Like Hezekiah's spiritual reformation of Judah, we should conduct a spiritual reformation in our life and destroy all influences that are against God. Just as Hezekiah immediately began to rebuild and fortify the walls of Jerusalem and appointed military leaders, we should reinforce our defenses against the adversary and make sure we have the appropriate armor of God for our defense against our enemies.

Hezekiah identified the sovereignty of God as a standard for his people. We should have the same effect on our families. Through what we say and what we do, enemies are lost and friends are gained. God uses our words and our actions to refresh our circle of fellowship. When we say and when we do the right thing, God's will in our life advances. When we follow the desires of others, we cut short the saving power of God.

Just as Hezekiah diverted the springs of Gihon to supply Jerusalem with fresh sweet water during Sennacherib's siege, we should make the thirst for God's truth a primary objective of survival for ourselves and for our family. We should immediately rededicate ourselves and our families to the study of the Bible and the Harvest Message.

Hezekiah not only prayed but he immediately **put his prayer-words into action**. Stepping out on faith, he put himself and his people in a position to receive the blessings of God.

Just as Sennacherib sent verbal and written threats to Hezekiah, Satan, like a roaring lion, tries to demoralize us and make us afraid.

Just as Sennacherib's messenger spoke loudly to the people of Judah in the Jewish language, Satan tries to tempt us with things that are very personal and familiar to us, namely, our weaknesses.

Hezekiah's first response to Sennacherib was to try to appease him by sending gold from his house and from the temple. This

gold represents the truth that God gives us which is of great value. We should never give away the truth for the sake of worldly peace.

“Spiritual Israelites may be disposed to do as Hezekiah, purchase peace with things consecrated to the Lord—to compromise the truth, to subtract from the time, influence, means, etc., consecrated to the Lord. If the Lord’s consecrated people do this, he will permit to come upon them the very difficulties they dread and seek to avert by unholy compromise.” — *Reprints*, p. 2381.

The 2,000 horses that Sennacherib offered Hezekiah represent the doctrines of Satan. Satan wants us to fight him with his own philosophies. We must trust only in the word of God. Our duty is to orient our hearts and confidence toward Jehovah and not place it in our flesh nor in Satan’s devices.

“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:13-15).

Just as God sent Sennacherib home by putting a hook into his nose and a bridle in his mouth, God uses His power to bring trials in our lives for both our development and for the destruction of our enemies. As experience teaches us, evil-ends pursue sinners. When sinners escape one problem, they are often surprised by another.

Since Hezekiah did that which was right according to the covenant that God made with his father King David, he was able to benefit from God’s protection promised to the house of David. Let us remember to always be faithful to our covenant that we made with the Lord. Let us never forget to make our consecration to sacrifice life’s primary objective. All other things are meaningless. All other confidences deter us.

Hezekiah's Second Prayer

Amazingly, during Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem, Hezekiah contracted an incurable disease that manifested itself on his body as a boil. Isaiah approached Hezekiah and told him to get his house in order because he was going to die soon. Hezekiah prayed a second prayer to God: “O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore” (Isaiah 38:3).

In this second prayer, Hezekiah recalled his faithful record of walking in the truth and his correspondingly “perfect” heart. Hezekiah’s tears were an indication of his sincerity. His faithfulness gave him the confidence to call on God.

“The LORD is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Proverbs 15:29).

We must work hard to control our mind and heart so we too can claim this fidelity of mind and of heart. If we do, we will always have a supreme confidence to call on God during times of crisis.

God’s response to King Hezekiah’s second prayer was that He would add fifteen years to Hezekiah’s life with only one condition: Hezekiah must apply a fig ointment to the boil. Hezekiah did follow God’s direction, and he was healed. Brethren, our faith in God does not take much effort, but it does take faith and we need to be committed to do it!

Figs are a sign of spiritual fruitage. God respected Judah’s spiritual fruitage that developed during its recent reformation. God rewarded the faithfulness of both the people and the king by saving Judah from the invading armies of Sennacherib and by saving Hezekiah from imminent death!

The incurable disease that Hezekiah contracted may have been the same disease that killed the 185,000 Assyrian warriors. Both the world and the faithful church are diseased with an incurable disease, the curse of Adamic death. Just as Hezekiah was the only

one who knew of God's prescription for deliverance by a personal application of the fig ointment, so too, we are delivered by our application of the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ's ransom sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus was indeed the only lasting fruitage that came from the nation of Israel.

"And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (Isaiah 37:30,31).

God reassures Hezekiah that Judah would enjoy the Jubilee year immediately after the defeat of Sennacherib. This is a strong and reassuring message of security and stability. God goes on to say that Judah "shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." The threat of attack on Judah and the threat of death on Hezekiah created an unstable national environment. When these threats were removed, God saw to it that Judah would quickly be productive in their agriculture and way of life.

Similarly, the apostle Paul prayed for the stability of the church in Ephesus, that they might be "rooted and grounded in love." Brethren, our faith grows stronger and we are able to put down deeper spiritual roots and develop more mature spiritual fruits when our faith is tested and when our life depends on our reliance on the Lord.

Putting roots downward and bearing fruit upward in our families and ecclesias is a true blessing and refers to the development of the fruits and graces of the holy spirit. Only when we properly align our minds and hearts toward God with true honesty of purpose will we be blessed with rooted families and ecclesias that demonstrate mature natural and spiritual fruitage. An unstable environment that is not true to God's purpose will destroy our families and our ecclesias.

Finally, a Personal Application

My consecrated father was given six months to live in 1966 after contracting cancer. At the time, he and my mother had six children who were all under the age of twelve. My father prayed King Hezekiah's prayer and asked for fifteen years to be added onto his life, enough time for the youngest child to finish school.

To show his commitment, my father submitted to risky medical experiments at a nearby research hospital. For three days, he was deathly sick with his reaction to the treatment. My father and mother did not tell their children of this sickness until the fifteen years were over. He actually lived for twenty-one years after he prayed Hezekiah's prayer.

I received the reward of growing up in a house with a father who knew he was dying. He faced death every day. He lived every day as if it were his last, and he suffered under the weight of the possibility that he might die at any time and leave his family financially destitute. Today, I think back on my life and see how many things my father did in our daily lives to provide a spiritual vision in a confused and ungodly world. Part of my father's passion for his life in Christ was most certainly generated by facing death every day.

From this experience I see the story of King Hezekiah's prayers from the unique viewpoint of the people of Judah. These godly people saw the mighty power of God to protect, to reward, to inspire and to save both Judah and their king. God protected them behind the walls of Jerusalem because they sanctified themselves there. God prospered them in all things because of their demonstrated faithfulness to him in their words and actions.

May we always maintain a perfect heart and mind toward God. May this always lead us to say and do things that God would approve and bless. May God bless and prosper you, your families, and ecclesias as you strive to follow him in fidelity of truth and heart.

Amen.

“A Fast, a Day Acceptable to the Lord”

Andriy Lajbida
Ukraine

Dearely beloved brethren from all over the World. The International Convention is a unique opportunity to see you all together in one place, without the need to travel thousands of miles to all corners of the globe which, as we believe, will become a glorious home for the restored human race. We rejoice to see so many followers of the Savior of the World, those who the Most High God has called to be partakers in honor, glory, and immortality with his Son. Your self-denial in doing his will leads not only to the anticipated fruit of righteousness in your hearts which, as we know, the Father will appreciate, but will also make you acceptable servants of the New Covenant, of which you may become administrators.

We are privileged to experience precious moments together; this is a priceless treasure which needs to be appreciated and for which we are to be eternally thankful. Each such meeting of God’s children is a reason for deep gratitude; we are not to be ashamed to show it outwardly.

The subject of my discourse was not chosen at random. We will not be discussing literal fasting today, for you all know the words of the Manna for January 26th:

“Fasting is specially commendable to the Lord’s people at times when they find themselves lacking in spirituality and exposed to severe temptations from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Fasting can assist those of hot temper to greater self control by reducing the amount of their physical energy and vitality. We are certain that it would be very helpful for most Christians to keep fasting from time to time, that is that they keep dieting in part or completely for periods of time. We believe that a majority of Christians would be helped by occasional fasting – a very plain diet for a season, if not total abstinence. But fastings, to be seen and known of men or to be conjured up in our own minds as marks of piety on our

part, would be injurious indeed, and lead to spiritual pride and hypocrisy, which would far outweigh their advantages to us in the way of self-restraint.” (*Reprints*, p. 2260)

Fasting, in a wider context, means self denial, giving up things which stir up our fleshly desires and become an obstacle to our spiritual growth. It is a mistake to consider that we should only abstain from evil, sinful things, such as smoking, alcohol, deceit, theft, rude manners. All this we have left behind when we became followers of our Lord.

We find many things on our journey today, just as the apostle Paul wrote: “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be dominated by anything” (1 Corinthians 6:12^{*}). We can attain a new nature at the resurrection only if we first sacrifice our old nature. Putting away things which in themselves are not sinful will allow us to see and appreciate the privilege of sacrificing; allowing comforts for our flesh will lead us into thinking that sacrificing is not that essential. And, to keep our conscience clear, we try to convince ourselves that good deeds are sufficient; we spend what is left over from our

* Biblical quotations in English are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

time, resources, and strength on things that may be pleasing in the Lord's eyes, but in reality are only an outward expression of our good character, not a true sacrifice.

So fasting, in its nature (in other words: self denial, putting aside what is unnecessary) helps us to see the state of our spirit more clearly: it opens our eyes, exposes our mistakes, points out which of our fleshly things, feelings, temptations are the most difficult to overcome. It is when we make a strong commitment to hold fast to our covenant of sacrifice, to show self denial, to be pleasing to God and not to ourselves, that we experience moments of greatest progress, and we feel great satisfaction. Continuing in prayer, we promise to do God's will. Usually the Lord will immediately direct our thoughts to the privileges of service; then the spirit of sacrifice readily and with determination assists us with doing things which we have previously been slow to do because we find excuses to justify our inactivity. Difficulties and persecutions become reasons to rejoice because we feel the Father's hand and support each and every step of the way.

When we think of the medieval ages when persecutions were especially severe, where faithfulness to God and Truth almost always ended in terrible death, we notice that self denial and intense, sincere prayer are considered by our Lord as fasting. Let us recall his words: "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast? Jesus said to them, The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day." (Mark 2:18-20)

The Lord's disciples, feasting abundantly at table, never considered the possibility that soon the time would come when, to live by the truth they accepted, it would cost them sacrifice, self denial, and centuries of brutal

persecution. This is how our Lord Jesus described this typical fasting: "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:17,18). The anointing of the head pictures accepting the spirit of humility, self denial, and holiness so that with a head lifted up, with understanding of the reason and purpose of our trials, we may joyfully accept everything which our Lord allows to come upon us in the narrow way. But such fasting is not to be seen by men, for this world can not accept what is from God's spirit.

From the prophet Isaiah: "Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard." (Isaiah 58:5-8)

Isaiah prophesied approximately 170 years before the Babylonian exile, so his words can be applied to numerous events in the history of the Jewish nation under the Law Covenant. Let's recall some of them. During one of the invasions by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem (Jeremiah 34:8-22), the Israelites were compelled to free all their slaves, as was done every seven years. But then they put them back into the yoke of slavery soon after. This kind of behavior of not really keeping the Sabbaths and jubilees result in the nation of Israel being captured and taken away to Babylon.

The nation of Israel followed this same life style after they returned from exile, just as

before. So the Lord sent the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to convey words of rebuke to them. Finally the time came to speak words of rebuke to Israel through John the Baptist, and through Jesus Christ himself. Our Lord accused the nation's leaders and the teachers that they applied fasting literally, without paying attention to the spirit dwelling in their heart. Our Lord made it clear that instead of disciplining their flesh, it would be better if they brought forth fruits of repentance, to do the things which the Lord expected them to do. Think of the parable of the Good Samaritan, of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16), and others.

The prophet Malachi spoke of them: "A son honors his father, and servants their master. If then I am a father, where is the honor due me? And if I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. You say, How have we despised your name?" (Malachi 1:6) "But you have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 2:8).

Our Lord, full of the holy spirit, brought to light what true fasting is; the aim of true fasting is much deeper. True fasting is self denial with the goal of doing God's will. The effect of self denial should be an earnest endeavor to fulfill that will through self sacrifice. The life of our Lord was one of great fasting, as recorded by the prophet David in Psalm 69: "I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons; for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me. When I weep and fast, I must endure scorn; when I put on sackcloth, people make sport of me." (Psalm 69:8-11)

The words of the prophet Isaiah were also wonderfully fulfilled by our Lord in his works here on earth. Our Lord initiated "an acceptable day of the Lord," the Gospel age, which was to bring freedom, first to those who were in bondage to the Law covenant. How many of those, oppressed by sin, bound by all kinds of customs, became free? He

gave bread and the living water of truth to so many. This work continues during the Gospel age by his followers who show the slaves of sin the way to God's house, who untie the bonds of ungodliness and the yoke of oppression so that they may see and appreciate the greatness of the truth and the privilege of becoming children of God. Here is how Isaiah describes their reward: "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard" (Isaiah 58:8). "To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end ...I will also give the morning star" (Revelation 2:26,28)

We can also consider the apostle Paul as someone who exercised great self denial and diligent service. He says this of himself: "But I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27). The apostle also practiced literal fasting, as he said when explaining his conditions in his second letter to the brethren at Corinth: "In toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked" (2 Corinthians 11:27). When he explains this kind of fasting, he writes: "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 Corinthians 4:10). And he writes: "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Romans 6:4,5). We could mention many examples not only from the writings of the apostle Paul, but also from other apostles. We find many breathtaking examples of great self denial, holy faith, and holy love by the Lord's disciples.

But the work of the Gospel age involves only a small number of people. This is what is written of those who faithfully execute the

task entrusted to them, who keep a true fasting and act in accordance with God's will: "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection" ... "Yes, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them." (Revelation 20:6; 14:13) Truly, after their transformation at the resurrection, they will carry their work beyond the veil, picturing their birth on the spirit plane. The work involving all nations of the world starts at the time of our Lord's second presence and the resurrection of the Church. It is the work of the antitypical year of Jubilee.

Let us hear these wonderful words again: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house" (Isaiah 58:5,6). Such work is given as a reward for faithfulness and will endure until the end of the Millennium. The Lord has decided to end the present evil and unjust order of things on this earth. Oh, if only people were capable of comprehending the greatness and meaning of the present events in the world, if they truly realized the reasons for the suffering of the nations. The Lord teaches them righteousness and prepares them for the conditions of the New Covenant!

Even Israel does not fully comprehend the meaning of the events taking place on her soil, but has fear rather than joy in a return to her own land. Her present fasting reflects much sorrow and fear. Watched by the whole world, Israel attempts to understand the reasons why the Lord sends so many troubles and misfortunes upon her. But the greatest difficulties await her during Jacob's trouble, according to the words of the prophet Joel: "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the

Lord, weep. Let them say, Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, Where is their God? Then the Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people." (Joel 2:15-18)

This prophecy appears to say that the Lord will raise the prophets at the critical moment and that at that time a part of Israel will be ready in their hearts, like little children, to accept the antitypical bride and groom. There will be great mourning and repentance in this nation.

When Israel recognizes their Savior, their Messiah, when they turn to God with their hearts, the words of the prophet Zechariah will be fulfilled: "Thus says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful festivals for the house of Judah: therefore love truth and peace. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going. Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zechariah 8:19-23)

Fasting on the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months reminded the Hebrews of the events related to their Babylonian captivity. We read:

1. "And ... in the **tenth** month ... King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it; they built siege works against it all around" (2 Kings 25:1).
2. "So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. On

the ninth day of the **fourth** month the famine became so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. Then a breach was made in the city wall." (Jeremiah 52:5-7)

3. "In the **fifth** month, on the seventh day of the month ... a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He burned the house of the Lord, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. All the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem." (2 Kings 25:8-10)
4. "But in the **seventh** month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men; they struck down Gedaliah so that he died, along with the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah. Then all the people, high and low, and the captains of the forces set out and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans." (2 Kings 25:25,26) Most of them died in Egypt, according to the word of the Lord (Jeremiah 41 to 44).

These events testify to the correctness of the chronology presented in the second volume of *Studies in the Scriptures* concerning the beginning and the length of time of the Babylonian exile (note the seventy years of fasting described in Zechariah 7:3-6). These events pictorially indicate that the return of Israel from captivity by the mystical Babylon of Christendom (after the return of our Lord as the rightful liberator), the rebuilding of the walls signifying true faith and trust in God, the rebuilding of God's temple and the new Jerusalem, and also removing the influence of Babylonian spiritual heaven, and their final destruction with the fire of God's wrath, will allow fleshly Israel to return to the Lord and receive joy, on the condition that they "love truth and peace." Their sorrow will turn to joy. Soon all the nations of the earth will go to Jerusalem to seek the Lord of Hosts.

As we re-examine the prophecy of Isaiah, we see these words: "Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58:6,7)

These words were probably used by our Lord when he gave the parable of the Sheep and the Goats: "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:31-46)

The spirit of self denial and a readiness to do God's will which presently dwells within the little flock, the Lord's brethren, should also dwell among those who will endeavor to attain the Lord's approval under the New Covenant, so they may also become his brethren.

Let us read these words from Isaiah concerning spiritual and also fleshly Israel: "The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many

generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in. If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath [the typical Sabbath] a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken; then you shall take delight in the Lord." (Isaiah 58:11-14)

When we turn our attention to the present, we want to say that the fasting of the true Church is sincere, holy, and never-ending; it will end only when the construction of the Lord's temple is completed. As we observed earlier, Israel, having returned from Babylonian captivity, once again turned to their old ways. Idleness led to their return to old way of life. This teaches us why leaving nominal Christendom is often only superficial. Not everyone who enters the road to New Jerusalem is ready to lead a new life. Life in Babylon had its good sides: peace, stability, reasonable material wealth, established opinions. Not all were equally eager to return home, not all were equally brave to go without assistance, not all removed "Babylon" from their hearts, and not all wanted to suddenly change their

way of life. Idleness was to be replaced with hard work when they returned to the Promised Land.

When we consider these things, we understand why some, having left antitypical Babylon, return in their thoughts to their former home, how the memories of the former evil world can be transformed into blissful reminiscence and unfulfilled dreams. This sort of uncertainty (not knowing what is the real purpose of this life) causes constant conflict, draining much energy and halting one's progress in the right direction. Because those kind of Christians think they only changed their address, they attempt to arrange their life more or less as it once was in Babylon. And only those who made the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple their own goal, are ready to start a new life. Only they will have the great joy of seeing an approaching completion of the construction work which increases their zeal and appreciation for the Lord's direction.

May this glorious sight of the completed plan of God concerning the Church and the whole world fill us with faith, so that while continuing in our present fasting, we may in the future hear the words: "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (Matthew 25:21).

Gratitude

Daniel Cap
Romania

Dear brethren, it is a joy and privilege to participate in this International Convention. I bring you the love and greetings from the brethren in Cluj-Napoca and Gadalin.

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Colossians 3:15).

In the time we have, we will, with the help of the Lord, consider the subject of gratitude.

In Genesis 40 we read about Joseph, in prison, explaining the meaning of dreams. He asks the cup bearer: “Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. ... Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” – Genesis 40:14, 23

In Luke 17:11-19 we read about the cleansing of ten lepers: “As he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?”

We can imagine how hard it would be to be a leper, to be excluded and isolated for the rest of your life, away from your family, living unhappily in death’s shadow, lacking any hope and any joy of life.

Weren’t the other lepers glad to be healed? Or did it not matter to them whether they were lepers or not? Of course it mattered, for we read they implored Jesus to heal them.

“And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.” How strange human beings are: when asking to be healed, they “lifted up their voice,” and after having being healed, they became mute.

“Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? ” In other words why didn’t they all return to show their gratitude? Could it be they did not rejoice to have escaped their unhappy life? Of course they rejoiced.

Perhaps some may think the nine were thankful but they simply didn’t show it. But Jesus didn’t ask, “But are the other nine grateful in their hearts at least?” No, he showed what it means to be grateful: “Where are the nine?” That is, why did they not return to give thanks? We too, when reading about this event, ask ourselves why they didn’t return to give thanks.

To be joyful in one’s heart does not necessarily mean one is grateful. Feeling joy and failing to express it to one’s benefactor is instead a sign of indifference. A wise man once said, “To feel gratitude yet not express it is like wrapping a gift but never giving it.”

Gratitude that is not expressed nor exhibited has no value; it is of use to no one. Actually, it is not even gratitude.

Seeing such instances of gratefulness, we ask, “When does gratitude occur and under what circumstances?”

Conditions in which Gratitude is Shown.

Under perfect conditions, for gratitude to be exhibited, a good deed done for someone will produce gratitude instantaneously and spontaneously. However, things are not the same

with fallen men, burdened with various mental and moral imperfections.

In present circumstances, three conditions are needed for gratitude to be shown.

First: A good deed must take place. Still just a good deed does not guarantee there will be any manifestation of gratitude. Something more is required.

Second: There must be a sound mind in the one receiving the benefit so he may realize that a good thing was done for him.

The people of Israel, liberated from the land of Egypt after a long and burdensome slavery, crossed the Red Sea, miraculously escaped the hosts of Pharaoh and a possible return under the Egyptian yoke; they had the Angel of the Lord day and night with them as a shield, they received daily manna, and they were heading toward the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Were they filled with joy and gratitude? Quite the contrary. We find them murmuring and complaining: "And when the people complained ... Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Numbers 11:1-6).

The Lord was doing Israel a favor by leading them to the wonderful land he promised them. But did their natural, earthly mind recognize it? Did they see it? They had forgotten their shouts of pain under the Egyptian yoke; now they were claiming it was better in Egypt. "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes."

That blessing — the manna, a divine miracle which kept them alive — they saw as something unpleasant and undesirable. Did they realize the favor and care the Lord was showing them? This is hard to believe. How could they have shown gratitude for a favor they did not discern? Therefore, in addition to a favor being done, it is necessary that the receiver have a correct perception which

would help him see the favor he is granted. Yet even when someone realizes a good deed has been done for them, gratitude does not necessarily occur. Didn't all the lepers know they had been healed? Didn't they all see it? Without a doubt! So what happened?

It's not enough that the mind realizes a favor has been done; it's necessary that a **third** condition should be fulfilled: The one receiving the favor must have a warm and sensitive heart, a heart that can feel and appreciate his joy and appreciation for the good deed received.

Favors will not have a positive effect in a heart not in the right condition. Favor shown to Pharaoh did not warm his heart; it made it harder.

We have all witnessed moments when gratitude has been shown toward us, and perhaps even more when gratitude was not shown. Perhaps even we did not show it when we should have.

The great statesman and inventor Benjamin Franklin saw the predisposition of men towards this and said, "Most people take favors — little, medium, and great — with indifference."

The perfect man had in his heart the sentiment of gratitude toward his Creator and Benefactor, but because of sin, the race has progressively lost more and more of this feeling of gratitude. The apostle Paul speaks about this condition: "They knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Romans 1:21). Imperfect man has reached that condition of mental and moral degradation which makes him rather UN-grateful than grateful.

So we ask ...

What Are the Causes for a Lack of Gratitude?

The main cause for a lack of gratitude is fallen man's imperfection. But what are the specific causes that lead to a lack of gratitude? Do these causes depend to some degree on what we do (or do not do), or by how we think of and see things?

There are many things which can independently or commonly affect us and lead to a lack of gratitude.

Inadequate education is a contributing factor. Gratitude must be taught. How many times do parents ask their child, "What do you say to this?" And the child timidly says, "Thank you." Someone who was not taught as a child to appreciate and express thankfulness for every favor shown, no matter how small, will not be grateful for greater favors either.

Pride is another cause for ungratefulness. King Hezekiah was miraculously cured of a disease that was killing him, yet when an Assyrian messenger came to him, he didn't glorify the Lord for the miraculous healing he had received. Why? "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up" (2 Chronicles 32:25).

Another cause of ungratefulness is the tendency of imperfect man to forget. An old saying tells us to "Write your injuries in dust, your benefits in marble."

When a favor is done to us, we realize it and show our gratitude to the one who is responsible for it. Then, as time passes, we forget it. But why do we forget a favor? The answer is in Genesis 40:23. "Yet did not the chief butler think of Joseph, but forgot him." He forgot about him simply because he didn't think about him.

The Bible urges us to resist the tendency to forget received favors: "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits" (Psalm 103:2). The psalmist reminds us not to forget any of the benefits the Lord has shown to us.

Forgetting is a brain process that is independent of our will. To stop this from happening, we need more than just a desire to always remember.

What can we do to remember better? We must eliminate the cause that induces forgetfulness: "Yet did not the chief butler think of Joseph, but forgot him."

Would the cup bearer have forgotten Joseph if he had given it an occasional thought? No. This is what we must do so we won't forget the benefits we have received; we must think about them. But we have to think of them chiefly with our heart, not just our mind. A wise man has said, "Gratitude is born in hearts that take time to count up past mercies."

Another cause for ungratefulness is because we don't always see the favors the Lord has done for us. We often take for granted those things that most deserve our attention.

Some Reasons for Gratitude

Let us consider for a few moments our existence and all that affects our existence here on earth.

Scientists have discovered by examining the earth, its atmosphere, our solar system, and the laws of the universe, that in order that life may exist on our planet, 150 parameters must be met inside the solar system and another 38 more outside our solar system.

Every single parameter must be so exactly correct that it simply couldn't come into existence by itself. If, for example, the ratio between the gravitational constant and the constant of electromagnetic force would differ by one unit out of 10^{40} , life on earth would not be possible. To appreciate what this means, imagine the surface of North America covered by a pile of bricks that reached the moon. Then imagine a million of such piles; just a single brick more or less would make a difference in changing the ratio and would make life possible or impossible on earth.

And this is just one of the so finely-tuned parameters which are absolutely essential for life on our planet. Some scientists who are also Christians believe that before creating earth, God worked for millions of years to fine-tune the universe so life on earth would be possible.

How precious is man in the sight of God! How wonderful is the entire creation, vegetable and animal life, the mountains, forests, rivers, seas, and oceans. Seeing all this, the

psalmist said: "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches" (Psalm 104:24). Let us think that God could have made only one kind of food that could contain all the nutrients necessary for life. And in spite of that, we see the immense variety of fruits and vegetables, plants and flowers, which are not only nutritious but also good-tasting and have a pleasing aroma.

Contemplating the wonders of creation, David expressed his feelings: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalm 139:14).

This should be our proper attitude toward the Creator. When we admire the "painting," we should see the "Painter" who created all things so beautifully for us.

Is David's attitude also our attitude? "Marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well"? How well do we know this? What do we feel when we see such beautiful things? Perhaps we don't feel anything special because we are used to them, and we take them as something commonplace, as if we simply deserved them.

Albert Einstein once said, "There are only two ways to live our life: one is like nothing is a miracle, the other is as though everything is a miracle."

The apostle Paul wrote something interesting: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

He is saying that if we look from the right perspective, look carefully, we will see beyond things and objects, and observe the wisdom, power, and love of God who has created these things.

When we see a delicate flower, a beautiful sunset, a picturesque scene, we remember that a Creator made them for you and for me, so that we may rejoice for that and so that our appreciation, gratitude, and love toward our Creator may grow.

Seeing God's love towards us as shown by the sacrifice of our Lord, his care and providence in our life, guiding "all things working together" for our good, his exceeding great and precious promises, his wonderful plan of salvation for all mankind, the harmony existing in the entire universe, we feel overwhelmed by our Father's care just like David: "Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" (2 Samuel 7:18).

We see around us the so-called Christian world stumbling in the dark with Bible in hand, and we realize that we would be with them had our Lord not given us "meat in due season" through his wise and faithful servant—and we are grateful to the Lord for it.

If we take a good look at all the reasons we should be grateful, it will be, as someone once said, "If we would thank the Lord for all his goodness, there won't be any time left for complaints."

When we realize how much God has done for us compared to the healing of those lepers, we ask ourselves if we have always been much more grateful than the nine.

What Does it Mean to be Grateful?

Gratitude is a feeling that first manifests itself as a temporary reaction when something favorable happens to us. But over time this gratitude must become a constant and continuous attitude in us.

What God has done for us will always remain, and his love toward us is also eternal; that is why gratitude must become a permanent condition of our hearts.

This attitude will make us receptive to all the blessings (perhaps otherwise unnoticed) all around us. It is interesting that the more grateful we are, the more reasons we will find to be grateful. When gratitude is a constant condition in our heart, we will not depend on our surroundings to experience it.

To be grateful is, after all, a conscious choice which is entirely up to us. It does not depend on what we have—our car, our house, or position in society—but our heart: "All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he

that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast" (Proverbs 15:15).

"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:8). Not only are we to be content with it, we should be grateful especially when we think how many are those suffering hunger.

Perhaps some of us think we are poor when we compare ourselves to those with more affluence. Perhaps we consider it commonplace when we eat to the fill each day. But consider: one-sixth of the world's population suffers from lack of food, one-quarter does not have access to safe drinking water, and nine million people (of which five million are children) starve to death every year. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee" (Deuteronomy 8:10). Are we blessing the Lord for this?

The Lord's providence and guidance until now, and our confidence that all things in our life are always managed by God's hand for our greatest spiritual benefit, will make us grateful and thankful in all of life's affairs whether good or bad. Real gratitude and joy depend upon what's inside us, and not at all on what is outside.

The joy of the apostles did not decrease when they were beaten. Quite the contrary: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Paul and Silas were beaten "with many stripes," locked in jail, had their feet made fast in the stocks, yet prayed and sang songs not of affliction but of praise for God.

Their gratitude did not depend on the (unfavorable) circumstances in which they found themselves; even more, those unfavorable circumstances made them praise the Lord. What a noble example they provide for us!

A wise man once said: "In our daily lives, we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but the gratefulness that makes us happy."

To be grateful means we have reached that point where we recognize and appreciate the

perfection of the heavenly Father's character, and the superiority of his ways compared to ours. Gratitude means in the end that our heart is in harmony with the guidance, wisdom and our heavenly Father's intention for us, and in everything he is doing. This makes us obedient from our heart to his law, which we will recognize as the highest and most wonderful law that could ever exist. "Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them" (Psalm 119:129).

Seeing the goodness of God toward us, we ask ourselves what we can do not only to be grateful (i.e., showing gratitude in our thoughts and words), but we also wonder if there is something we could do in order to repay God's mercy for us. Can we give God something in exchange? David felt this desire when he said, "Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:13, 14).

John F. Kennedy once said, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them." As David said in one of his psalms, all we can do to show our gratitude for what the Lord has done for us is to consecrate ourselves with all our heart to the Lord, until our death: "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people" (Psalm 116:12,14).

Anything we do for the Lord and his cause, we are the first who benefit from that as new creatures. We could never be too grateful to the Lord God for all that we have received and continue to receive from him.

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

May the name of God and our Lord be glorified, praised, and blessed forever more!

Amen.

God Loved Us

Ray Charlton
Australia

I bring warm Christian love and greetings from all the brethren in Australia to all who are at this International Convention. My discourse is titled: "God Loved Us."

In 1 John 4:9,10 we read: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

The apostle John is bringing out the lesson of the depth of love that our heavenly Father has with the statement, "This is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us."

When we look at the wonders of God's creation, the wonderful variations of animal life, the exquisite beauty of plant life, and the wonders of the heavens, how could we not be in awe of our heavenly Father. However, to know the love of our heavenly Father requires both our heart and mind as we try to come to understand the thought that God's love for us was so great that while we were in a lost and undone condition and in no way deserving God's love, he loved us.

When our first parents were forced out of the Garden of Eden because of their sin and there was no reason to pity fallen man, God's love had already been activated. We read in Revelation 13:8 about "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Even before creating them, his love was so great that he already had a plan of salvation. When there was no other arm to reach out and save the human race from utter ruin, he sent his only-beloved son to deliver us from this state of condemnation: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ... God commendeth

his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6,8).

What, then, is the measure of the love that we should give to our heavenly Father? His love for us is a perfect love, fully revealed in all phases of our salvation, and reinforced through the example of our Lord. The measure of our love should then try to imitate this example.

Our Lord showed the importance of this love for our heavenly Father when the scribes and Pharisees confronted him about the law. We read in Matthew 22:36-38, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

The word "all" in this verse speaks of our total submission and dedication; it excludes all half-heartedness. We cannot say to ourselves, "Won't a little less than that do?" or "I have weaknesses of the flesh and cannot do the things that I should." Full love for the Lord requires all our heart, all our soul, and our entire mind, as we try to come to the perfect mark set by our Master. The heart is the seat of our emotions, especially love. "With all our soul" has the thought of all our being, a willingness to give up our life to him and to devote our all to his service; to live for him in accordance with his commands.

As we examine this commandment with the affections of our heart we cannot fail to see the marvelous and beautiful way love flows between our heavenly Father and ourselves. What a revelation of God this is! His

love is seeking our love and he is only satisfied when we completely love him. He has bestowed upon us the necessary faculties wherewith we may love him with all our heart, all our soul, and our entire mind. He has given us eyes to see and enjoy the beauties of his creation, ears to hear the wonderful sounds of nature and music. He gave us an inquiring mind so that we can learn of his love, and a heart so that we can love him. 1 John 4:16,17 states, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect."

We are told, "Set your affection on the things above, not on the things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). Without study and a sound mind we cannot learn about God's plan and the need to return the love that we have receive from him. Paul instructs Timothy, "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).

We are encumbered with imperfect minds, limited knowledge, and imperfect service; often we feel our efforts are unprofitable. We are encouraged by the words, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). When we see that we are capable of loving God in a manner acceptable to him, we can come and rest in the confidence that this love binds us together.

If our only knowledge of our heavenly Father were about his holiness and righteousness, we would seek to hide ourselves from his presence. The psalmist tells us, "O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139:1-4).

If our only knowledge of him was his awesome power, would we not say, as Israel of old, "Let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19). After receiving the ten commandments they realized the impossibility of keeping the Law to his standard. In the next verse Moses gave them the following advice: "Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not" (Exodus 20:20).

We require knowledge of his holiness, righteousness, and awesome power so that we can give our heavenly Father the proper reverence and respect. However, it is when we view these attributes in the light of his great love, that we gain a true understanding of God.

We can draw near to him assured that such great love means that all our experiences are for our greatest good. Our Lord told us, "If ye [earthly fathers] 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?" (Matthew 7:11). Many people feel they are not good enough for God to love them. The parable of the prodigal son gives us the answer. We see the father of the prodigal son looking down the road with pity and sadness, waiting in readiness for the return of his son. With outstretched arms he joyfully and with love welcomes back the son who was lost and presumed dead. Surely our Lord had in mind his own Father and the desire he has for us to come on bended knee in repentance so he can fully forgive us. How often have we felt God's forgiving love as the hymn states, "He drew me with the cords of love, and thus he bound me to him."

When we come into the love of our heavenly Father, we understand that his holiness is an assurance of the purity of his love and a pledge of his faithfulness. In a closer relationship with him we learn his power, which we otherwise might fear; his everlasting arms stretch around us supporting our weaknesses. His wisdom has been exercised with tender care for our every need. When we are

properly informed of his love for us, we come proclaiming, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1). Our devotion and mutual love gives us the heart-warming evidence that God first loved us.

God's Forgiving Love

If our heart is humble and contrite, we are conscious of our inherent frailties, and are ready to acknowledge, "If Thou didst keep strict tally of sins, O Lord, who could live on? But Thou hast pardon, that Thou mayest be worshiped" (Psalms 130:3,4, *Moffat*). If God dealt with us in strict justice, we could not live. If he counted our iniquities, he would find them so many and great that he would shut us out from all hope of his favor. We could not escape or stand under his avenging hand. It is our unspeakable comfort, that when we approach our heavenly Father, there is forgiveness with him. Nehemiah testifies of him: "A God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Nehemiah 9:17). When we look at the context, we are reminded of our failings, our arrogance, our stubbornness, not listening for God's instructions; how easily we forget the many wondrous deeds done for us. How glad we are of God's compassion and love for us, his promise to forgive the sins when we repent. Never will a sinner on bended knee find him without mercy.

Our heavenly Father is ever ready to pardon! A reservoir of forgiveness is waiting to flow as a cleansing stream, when we truly repent: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). It is necessary to remember that though God stands ever ready to forgive, there can be none of the joy and comfort of forgiveness if there is not genuine repentance. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile" (Psalm 32:1,2). We realize that it is his love

that quickened our love, and that his love is ever ready to meet our deepest need.

The apostle John states, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (1 John 3:5). This appearing of Jesus in the flesh and his great sacrifice was necessary so that he might take away our sins, planned by our loving heavenly Father before creation. Because of this previously-provided basis for our forgiveness, we have the blessings from our heavenly Father who no longer imputes iniquity to us. We rejoice in the assurance that however great our past sins may have been, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

God's Love in Our Hearts

"Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy spirit which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5).

Love, that most desirable Godlike quality, is shed abroad in our hearts by the invisible power of his holy spirit, freely given to us. We cannot add one inch to our spiritual stature by worry or anxiety. Love, on the other hand, produces fruitage and is manifested by an abundance of good works (Galatians. 5:22, 23). The bestowment of the holy spirit in our hearts is the basis of character development (2 Corinthians 3:18), and is also God's pledge of the inheritance we hope to receive. It is the assurance that through God's love we have been taken into his family, his service; and if we faithfully discharge our present duties, our promised final reward will be sure. Hebrews 11:6 states, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Our Christian life and experience is called into being and sustained by the opening of God's hand and the bountifully bestowing of his gracious gifts. But it does not end there,

for he will give us the complete victory over death and the grave. We are told, "this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). We can rejoice with Paul and give praise saying, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Our Communion with the Father

We can only know in part many things relating to our place in God's plan and affections. "Our fellowship," we are told, "is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). This desire of fellowship with mankind started with the creation of our first parents in the Garden of Eden when they heard "the voice of the Lord God" (Genesis 3:8). Our heavenly Father ultimately intends man to have the most intimate friendship with him. This requires mankind's salvation from sin since it was sin in the first place that ended this communion. It is our faith and hope that this purpose will soon be fulfilled, and the earth and mankind will be restored, and that the royal law of love will embrace all of heaven and earth.

One of the many wonders of God's love is the fact that he chose us to be the special objects of his greatest of favors. We remember the word of Jesus: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). And, "Henceforth I call you not servants ... but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Truly we are chosen for a high and wonderfully intimate degree of communion with the Father and the son! What an effect this favor should have on our powers of mutual love; it should cause us to rejoice exceedingly in the fact that the circle of divine love was drawn large enough to take us in.

We should exercise our heart, cultivating the spirit of communion with God, and with our beloved Lord, to whom we are espoused in the tender cords of love. We can only re-

turn this affection as our friendship with him grows to mean more than just service to him. We have to become intimately close with our heavenly Father if we desire to share in the blessings our Lord received from the "Father of Light."

That we should love God is no marvel when we realize the great gift of his beloved son sacrificed for us. Surely it is one of the greatest mysteries that God should so love us. The apostle John said, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1 John 4:10). As we come to understand the wideness of God's mercy, we realize why it is that the god of this world has darkened the minds of men "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:4). Every part of God's character and purpose is the total opposite of Satan. We realize that Satan's power is only temporary because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The time will come when the knowledge of his love will no longer be kept from man by the blinding influences of Satan. The perfect love of God is designed to call forth perfect love toward him in all hearts. We marvel that he so loved the entire race that he gave his son to suffer the humiliation of a lowly birth, the anguish of Gethsemane, the cruel mocking, the shame and agony of Calvary. Yet these are but the beginning of the manifestations of his love.

Christ's Love for His Church

Many New Testament passages convey the strong, warm, and ardent love in our Savior's heart toward his heavenly Father and us. This love for us yearns for our full responding love. The love of our Lord is such that to those who come to know him intimately can hear from his lips the words, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31). This invitation to draw close to him, to put the cares of this world aside, and to have a closer communion with him is essential if we are to experi-

ence the full measure of joy and confident hope the Lord desires us to have now.

So let us reflect:

- » Do we take time for a closer walk with our Heavenly Father and his son?
- » Do we try for a more intimate fellowship of our spirit with his spirit?
- » Do we take enough time to study his wonderful love?
- » Are we becoming more sensitive to the leadings of his love through our daily lives?
- » Are we more established in a humble yet confident spirit?

» Can we make the statement, "I am his and he is mine ... forever"?

Our heavenly Father loved us first, even before we knew him. He continues to love us unchangingly. Of this love we sing, "O love that will not let me go!" Let our love respond in the fullest possible measure of heart, soul, and mind, until beyond the veil we find the completion of our happiness in a perfect ability to give him back the love we owe. Then, when we walk with him, we shall know as we cannot know now. Herein was love's greatest manifestation, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Amen.

“The Harvest is the End of the Age”

O. B. Elbert [moderator], Len Griehs, David Rice
USA

Brother Elbert

Greetings in Christ, dear brethren. I am Brother O.B. Elbert. My wife, Sr. Janet, and I are rejoicing to be here in convention with you. I bring you Christian love from the brethren in my home ecclesia, the Bible Students Congregation of New Brunswick, in New Jersey.

Joining me in this discussion are Brother David Rice from San Diego, California, and Brother Len Griehs from Delaware Valley, Pennsylvania. Our discussion today will examine events which we believe are associated with the close of the Gospel age harvest. Our Lord Jesus taught us that the Gospel age would end in a harvest saying, “The harvest is the **end** of the age” (Matthew 13:36-43). The beginning of the harvest is clearly marked by chronology and prophetic events. It is generally not a controversy among the brethren.

The ending of the harvest is less clear and has been a subject of controversy among the brethren. The word translated *end* in our English Bible is the Greek word *sunteleo*. It means “a consummation” and in Matthew it implies that the harvest is not only a gathering of all the wheat but also the burning of the tares. The true Vine (Christ’s Church) and the Vine of the Earth (the nominal Christian Church) must be completely judged and rewarded by the end of the harvest: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father” (Matthew 13:43).

Our adversary, the devil, would love to convince us to stop our efforts in the harvest work. Is it time to cease our efforts and wait until the kingdom is set up? Some say, “So few accept the truth today”; others that “The churches are dead.”

We are convinced that the harvest continues. We should not end our harvest efforts until we are forced to do so. The Gospel age must be brought to its consummation before the glorious manifestation of Kingdom power, authority, and blessings to mankind can be experienced. The last member of the Body of The Christ must be found, encouraged, developed to full maturity and proven faithful. Matthew 13:40-42 teaches that the tares must all be burned and Revelation 14:18,19 shows that the “vine of the earth,” the great nominal systems of Christianity, must be destroyed as part of the harvest – the consummation of the Gospel age. Though the nominal churches appear to be dead in Europe, they are very much alive and growing in the United States and South America. Brother Rice, Brother Griehs, and I desire to encourage the Lord’s people to press on in the harvest and kingdom work.

It is a noble and worthy work, as laborers together with the Lord, to establish his kingdom!

Brother Rice

Greetings, dear brethren, and love from the friends in San Diego, California. The Harvest is a time of blessing the saints, restoring Israel, and judging Christendom.

1. Regarding the saints, we now appreciate the Divine Plan of the Ages which is the spiritual food promised (Luke 12:37; Revelation 3:20). The saints who fell asleep before the Lord's return were raised (1 Thessalonians 4:16). These are like Enoch who was taken quietly, secretly. They "walked with God," and "were not," for God took them. The saints who remain to the end of the harvest are like Elijah, taken amid great expectation, and great activity. Elijah is like Enoch's successor, Methuselah, who lived until the very year of the flood, which represents the *apokalupsis* at the end of the harvest (Matthew 24:39).

2. The regathering of Israel was predicted in Acts 3:21 to follow the return of Christ. There the "Times of Restoration" chiefly mean the restoration of Israelites whom St. Peter was addressing. In 1874 Disraeli, Jewish by birth, was elected prime minister in England. In 1878 he negotiated equal rights for all residents of Palestine, allowing Jews to resettle the land. In 1896 Theodor Herzl published "The Jewish State," and in 1897 opened the first Zionist Congress. In 1910 Bro. Russell urged Jews to return to their land with faith in the prophets. In 1914 the Ottoman Empire sided against England in the Great War, in 1917 England controlled Palestine and issued the Balfour Declaration, in 1939 the Holocaust began, and in 1948 Israel regained their nation. Thus God showed the world a sign of the coming kingdom, "in the top of the mountains" or kingdoms of the world (Genesis 8:5; Micah 4:1; Ezekiel 40:2). When the four winds

are loosed, they will breathe life (faith) into Israel again (Ezekiel 37:9).

3. The Judgment of Christendom is shown in the Seven Plagues of Revelation 16. The seventh plague there is the tenth plague in Exodus. That was the death of the firstborn, showing that this world will not be inherited by others; instead it will be replaced by the Kingdom of God. The firstborn of Israel were "passed over" showing the saints passing into glory. Thus the high calling continues until then.

The Seventh Plague is in three parts: a battle, an earthquake, and massive hailstones in that order (Revelation 16:17-21). The battle occurs in Israel (Joel 3; Ezekiel 38). Micah 5:5 says seven shepherds (the Church in glory) and eight princes (the resurrected Ancient Worthies) will deliver Israel. Then the earthquake picturing a revolution of people, when the nations are weakened after the defeat at Israel. In this revolution, the three parts of Christendom which unite in plague six are broken apart again. The anarchy represented by massive hailstones follows.

Revelation 17:12,16,17, speak of this time as "one hour" when Papacy is eaten by dogs and burned. Already Europe is coming together. There is a common currency, and movement toward a common foreign policy and a common constitution. The Pope wants influence in this. But in the end, Papacy will be consumed by this very coalition. The governments will give way to the headless "beast" (the people who rise up in anarchy).

This follows the battle at Israel. Before that, the 144,000 pass into glory. Meanwhile the Great Company pass through their last trials.

Brother Griehs

Greetings dear brethren. I bring love from your brethren in the Philadelphia area of the United States. We are happy to be here with you today.

Today, I will comment on two questions: 1) Can a specific period of time in the harvest be determined with respect to the four winds of Revelation 7; and 2) how does the current resurgence of Islam fit into the harvest picture?

The end of the harvest is an exciting time for the Lord's people. We expect to soon see the loosing of the four winds of Revelation 7:1-3. The four angels holding back these winds are destined to destroy both the stable elements of society, represented in the earth, and the unstable elements, represented in the sea. This takes place following the sealing of the saints. This sealing has six elements: 1) it takes place on earth; 2) it is conspicuous and observable; 3) it is of a divine origin; 4) it is done at the hand of an angel; 5) it is both intellectual, and 6) holistic.

The four winds of Revelation represent the forces of spiritual control that operate within the four elements of earth's organizations: religious, social, political, and financial. All four elements have prospered since the end of World War II. Both Daniel 7 and Jeremiah 49 state that these four winds released against Babylon will also impact the nation of Israel. Matthew 24:31 tells us that both earthly Israel and spiritual Israel will be impacted by this assault from the spiritual powers controlling these elements.

In today's world, Western Europe has become a place of anti-Semitic rhetoric and tragically murderous action against Jews. Seventy years ago, every Jew was a target for annihilation. The enemy was Nazi Germany. Today the enemy is political Islam. Its call for jihad aimed at annihilating the Jews and dominating the world is answered by millions of people throughout the world. Both the Iranian President and the Hamas leader have expressed sympathy with this philosophy. Undoubtedly, this may lead to a much larger influx of Jews returning to Israel.

(Extemporaneous discussion among the panelists will follow.)

Who Is My Brother

Timo Nordman
Finland

Dear brethren, it is good to be here with you. These international gatherings are a special blessing to my wife and me since we are so lonely with our faith in our home country. There are so few brethren and scattered that we mostly feel like we stand alone for the truth. Many times we wonder about the blessings which brethren in other countries have because most have other brethren around to support and encourage them.

How much do you appreciate the blessing that our heavenly Father has given you in providing brethren in Christ with whom to walk this narrow way? How many times do you give thanks to God for the brethren around you? Do you really value the great privilege of having brethren? Or do you have difficulties in getting along with them?

Even though the brethren are God's gift to us, we may have difficulties among us because of our imperfections. But is it all a consequence of our incomplete nature? Do we have special reasons to fend off some brethren? Have we made some requirements for others to fulfill before we accept them as our brethren? Or do we recognize all who have taken the same narrow way and love them as our brethren?

Criterion For Brotherhood

How do we recognize someone as a brother? What conditions do we make so we may approve them as brethren? Let's first look at criterion Brother Russell suggested. In "Doctrines More Or Less Important" (*Reprints*, p. 5284) he writes:

"There are certain features of the doctrine of Christ which are fundamental and indispensable, and without which none would be recognized of the Lord as one of His followers. There are other features which would seem to be useful, helpful, blessed, but not fundamental—not essential to membership in the Body of Christ."

Here Pastor Russell points out an important aspect of biblical truths, or doctrines. They can be divided into two parts. One part consists of so-called basic doctrines without which no one can be a member of the body of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:10). These necessary fundamental truths have been the same since apostolic times—and they will remain the same until the church is complete. These truths are clearly presented in the Scriptures.

In the same article Pastor Russell defines these basic doctrines as:

- (1) All men—all of Adam's children—are sinners.
- (2) None can be reconciled to God without a Redeemer's sacrifice.
- (3) Jesus came into the world to be that Sacrifice—and later to apply that Ransom-price for the sins of the world.
- (4) On the basis of faith in the Redeemer's work, the believer may consecrate himself to the Divine service, in acceptance of the Divine invitation, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice.'
- (5) So doing, the believer may—up to the time of the completion of the Elect number—exercise full assurance of faith that his sacrifice will be accepted of the Father; and that he will receive a share of

the anointing of the Holy Spirit – the begetting.

(6) Such as meet these conditions are to be accepted as brethren in the highest sense of the term.

This much would seem to have been always necessary, and more than this we believe is not necessary today. Our advice to the Lord's dear people everywhere is that they put no yoke upon each other, beyond the fundamentals specified above – that otherwise they stand free, and leave each other free, and fellowship and agree as much as they can with each other."

I believe that we all agree that the standard Brother Russell sets was a correct doctrine of Jesus Christ and his sacrificial work. It is sin that separates us from God, and we can approach God only by faith in Christ's redemption work. There is no other way. It does not matter how much we know; Jesus Christ is the only way, just as he said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

To recognize as brethren all who accept the basic biblical truths does not mean we are weakening the truth. We can easily understand the thinking of Pastor Russell. We all know he was not weak nor did he compromise the truth. Nevertheless he was the one who wrote those words concerning brotherhood. Do we have the same standard? If not, we clearly disagree with him on this central issue concerning our consecrated life.

Although this standard of brotherhood is based on the fundamental teachings, so-called advanced doctrines are not useless. The ones we have today – called "meat in due season" – are to strengthen us so we may grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). But they are not necessary for being members of the body of Christ. During the past two hundred years we have been more and more privileged to have better ways to study the Scriptures and gain more information about God's plan. At the beginning of the Gospel age

brethren did not have so much either in means nor knowledge – yet they are still our brethren.

So we must conclude that the "strong meat" we have is not meant to be a test for brotherhood or used to smite the brethren. It is meant as an extra blessing for us who live in these special times.

Different Degrees Of Love

To accept all the consecrated ones as our brethren and love them all does not mean we must honor them all equally. Knowledge must be respected in the church, and growth in knowledge usually demonstrates growth in spiritual matters. If we want to grow in the Lord and in his grace, we must also grow in knowledge. We highly esteem, and rightly so, brethren whose love toward the Lord and the truth is demonstrated in their enthusiasm for studying his word. And as an indication of the heavenly Father's blessing they are led into deeper truths.

The elders must be honored because of their efforts for the church, as apostle Paul says: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

But as we in our earthly families love each member, and especially the children who are immature, so do we love our brethren in our spiritual family who are still immature in their Christian walk. We do our best to help and support them so they may grow stronger in the Lord and in His word: "Comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Here the apostle says that the weaker brethren must be encouraged no matter what kind of weaknesses they have. Whether it is some personal imperfection or a lack of deeper understanding of more complicated doctrines, we must love and support them.

For the purity of the church there is sometimes a need to make a distinction between brethren. The apostle Paul tells brethren to make a distinction between those who walk

in the pure spirit and those who walk impurely, after the flesh. The latter are not to be respected so that we do not encourage them in their wicked way. The apostle advises us saying, "We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly" (1 Thes. 5:14). They must be rebuked with love and patience, but not treated with the love they would have if they walked faithfully in Jesus' footsteps.

Separating Ourselves from a Brother

In doctrinal matters, the only reason for non-acceptance of a brother is the denial of basic truths. The apostle John puts it this way: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11).

If a brother disagrees with me in doctrinal matters that are not basic, I have no biblical reason to reject him. Here is what Brother Russell wrote about that:

"Yet we may be sure that he [the apostle John] does not mean that we are to disfellowship a brother merely because of some differences of view on non-essential questions. We may be sure that he does mean his words to apply strictly and only to the fundamentals of the doctrine of Christ: for instance, faith in God; faith in Jesus as our Redeemer; faith in the promises of the divine Word. These will be marks of a 'brother,' if supported by Christian conduct, walking after the spirit of the truth—even though the brother might have other views which would differ from ours in respect to certain features of the plan of God not so clearly and specifically set forth in the Scriptures." (*Reprints*, p. 3034).

If we have an idea and we present it to the brethren but they do not agree with it, our mission is not to impose it upon them. We all have different ways of reasoning by nature so we may see some things differently. Brother Russell says:

"We have no right to make our own views tests. The things that are tests are the things given us in the Scripture." (*Reprints*, p. 4995)

"We are not to disfellowship anyone on account of differences of viewpoint." (*Convention Report Sermons*, p. 168)

Even though we accept as our brethren and fellowship with those who disagree with us on some doctrinal matter, it does not mean we would not speak up for the truth, or what we believe to be the truth. Yet everything we say to the brethren must be said in the spirit of love. We should not hide the truth in the name of love and peace; this would also be wrong.

The other reason for separating from a brother is his sinful way of life. The apostle Paul advises the Corinthian brethren by saying: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you ... And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you" (1 Corinthians 5:1,2).

So let us ask ourselves, what makes me disfellowship certain brethren? If it is because of doctrine, are we following the biblical standard or have we made standards conforming to our own reasoning?

Not Many Wise or Mighty

The well-known words of 1 Corinthians 1:26 declare that God has chosen only a few noble and wise men from the world to be joint-heirs with Christ. One reason is that most of the so-called good people have the feeling that they do not need any redeemer. So God looks for those who have a humble heart, who can confess his sinfulness and his need for a savior, a redeemer. God looks for a humble heart that can accept the fact that an approach to God due is only possible because of the sacrificial work of someone else. So we know there will always be those among us who do not shine in intelligence or great wisdom, brethren whose understanding of complicated doctrinal explanations may not be as high as we possess. But we must accept these dear ones just as we do the others.

He who puts his trust in the Lord and not in his own deeds and own wisdom is a real disciple. Jesus spoke a parable to those who trusted in themselves and despised others. A Pharisee prayed God saying, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are ... or even as this publican." But the publican said only, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And Jesus said that this publican was justified rather than the Pharisee. And so it is with us: "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

One Body

The special truth we have been given is called "a great mystery" in the Scriptures. It has remained a mystery to the world and to nominal Christians, the "tare" class. The apostle Paul says about this special truth: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church ... For we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:32,30).

Jesus Christ has not only redeemed us but he has also prepared a way to a great glory for us. We have access to that glory only as members of his body. Our hope is based on the fact that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and our goal is to be his joint-heirs in the future kingdom. So our one and only mission in this present Gospel age is to build this great body of Christ "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25).

We cannot be faithful servants of God if we are building the body in one place and demolishing it in another. As the apostle says, "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" (1 Corinthians 12:21). The lesson is clear and simple: the faithful servants are doing the building work in the way God has ordained. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto

a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

A good servant of the church is always doing unification work among the brethren, never dispersing them. If a servant tries to separate the brethren, and especially if he tries to make some follow him and his teachings, he is not loyal to his Master, the head of the body.

Honoring the Servants of the Lord

The apostle Paul writes: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17). This is what we certainly must do: respect faithful elders. Yet Brother Russell reminds us concerning our attitude toward the Lord's servants:

"I think it is the Lord's will that we should recognize every agency God uses, but we are not to recognize any agency of God as being in any competition whatever with the Lord or with his divine arrangement. He is the fountain of blessing, he only is most to be praised. I think that is the right sentiment. I believe you all agree with that. And yet I think there is a danger of some dear friends preaching Brother Russell. Brother Russell would like for you not to do so. He thinks it would not be to the glory of God." (*Convention Report Sermons*, p. 125)

Why is he saying this? Is it perhaps because some spoke falsely in his name? He certainly wanted brethren to use his writings for the blessing of the brethren and glorifying God's name. Yet some brethren have used his or the writings of others to smite others by placing certain doctrines as a touchstone for the brotherhood (see Matthew 24:45-51). This obviously was not Brother Russell's purpose.

Exactly the same situation had occurred in the days of the apostle Paul. He writes: "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:3,4). Some in the early church declared themselves allied with a servant of the Lord, not the Lord himself.

They used the name of a servant to divide the church, not to bless it.

This was, and still is, absolutely wrong. That's why the apostle emphatically opposes it. He points out that such are still immature in spiritual things: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:1,2).

Who Is My Brother?

Some may wonder why I wanted to speak about these things. Only my wife and I are here from Finland. In my home country we have never enjoyed such blessed fellowship with brethren as we do here.

When I consecrated, the nearest brother lived 500 kilometers away. In the few times I met brethren they showed no appreciation of the blessings we all receive from each other. In the case of some doctrinal matters, a single wrong word was enough for some to withdraw from another brother. So my spiritual

growth occurs next to my wife, whom I met soon after I consecrated. Happily she received the truth and consecrated soon after.

Because of my experiences, it is easy for me to speak about accepting others since I have no reason to place any special standards upon the brotherhood. That should not be our business. We can but follow the standards our heavenly Father has placed in his holy word. The Scriptures point out two standards: believing the clearly-stated, basic truths, and endeavor to walk the way of consecration purely.

Surely we all have a brother or a sister whom we do not find especially amiable, or someone who disagrees with us about some subject. This provides the moment when we should think about what is really important in our Christian walk. Let us enjoy the great blessing the Lord has given us! You need them, and they need you because you are following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. It is a difficult task to do this under the best of circumstances. To try to do it without a spiritual family is much, much harder.

Amen.

I Am the Man

Tom Machacek
USA

Sr. Nancy and I bring the love and greetings from our class, the Northwest Indiana Bible Students, and from the extension class in South Bend, Indiana.

A hymn proclaims *Once I Was Blind, but Now I Can See*. These are truly wonderful words, praising our heavenly Father and his son. The world was lost in the darkness of sin but Jesus brought light to this world. Those who wish to walk in his light must wash their eyes at his bidding.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, these praises were announced by a blind man. I would like to spend this time to consider the events surrounding this man who was born blind and was healed by our Lord. Let's turn to John the ninth chapter and read the first four verses:

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." (John 9:1-4)

When did this event occur? To understand the timing, we note in John 7:1,2 that the feast of Tabernacles was at hand in the third year of his ministry. Jesus sent his disciples on to Jerusalem. He remained behind in Galilee, telling them that the Jews sought to kill him. Yet we see in John 7:14 that Jesus did go to the temple in the middle of the week of the feast.

Continuing with John 7:37,38: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Why did our Lord quote the Scripture about "living water"? During the feast of Tabernacles, the priest would go to the pool of Siloam to fill a golden pitcher with water. Then he would return to the temple and pour the water out around the base of the altar. Jesus used this aspect of the feast to illustrate that the priest's action was comparable to himself having been sent by God to give living waters of truth and life to all who would partake.

John 8:12 took place a short while later at the temple: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

As Israel was forbidden to enter the land for forty years, but was led by the power of God, so the light shining from candelabra in the temple court reminded the people of the nation's wilderness experience. Now Jesus taught that he was the guiding light of God. These words so angered the people that they "took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (John 8:59).

Now just imagine Jesus and his disciples walking away from the temple mount. The streets would have been filled with celebrants. The rich would have been motivated to share their blessings with the poor. This generosity would attract those who were sick, lame, deaf and blind also. And no doubt these caught the attention of the disciples. Jesus' teaching of the need of a savior was manifest.

Disregarding the hostility that he just left at the temple, Jesus stopped in the midst of the crowd to heal a beggar. Who was this man? He was a blind man but not just any blind man. This man had no sight since birth, but he could hear. God, who was able to read this man's heart, directed our Lord to establish another witness of His marvelous works.

Let's consider three lessons from this event. The first was for Jesus' disciples, the second was for the blind man, the third lesson was for the others.

The disciples asked if this man's blindness was due to his own sin or to that of his parents. This question might have been generated by their knowledge of the Law that a father's punishment would affect even his third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5).

We know that once Adam sinned and judgment was placed upon him, all his children bore the judgment of the Adamic death sentence. The Law was given to be a guide to righteousness as well as demonstrate the consequences of sinning. What loving father would want his children's children to suffer because of his own sins?

Our Lord knew of the birth defect. Jesus answered that it was not important as to who sinned. Romans 3:10 tells us none of us are righteous. The purpose was provided to demonstrate the power of God

The lesson for his disciples was to show that Jesus' ministry was to bring sight to the blind by the true light source and to see discipleship.

Next is the lesson for this beggar who had overheard this conversation about sin and God's works. As we shall see, this man was going to receive several lessons of faith. Let's read on in John 9.

"When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." (John 9:6)

Our Lord, the great physician, knew how to heal his patient and how the removal of the blindness would be a witness to the world. So Jesus made an earthly paste from his spit and

the dirt of the ground and applied it to the man's eyes. The wet dirt did not have healing power, but it was faith in the power of the one who applied the clay.

"And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came back seeing." (John 9:7)

The spit pictured grace and truth to be given to mankind. The clay represented those earthly men who would form the elect church, to bless the poor and blind of the world. That Jesus told the man to wash in the pool of Siloam shows that action is necessary.

"The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he." (John 9:8,9)

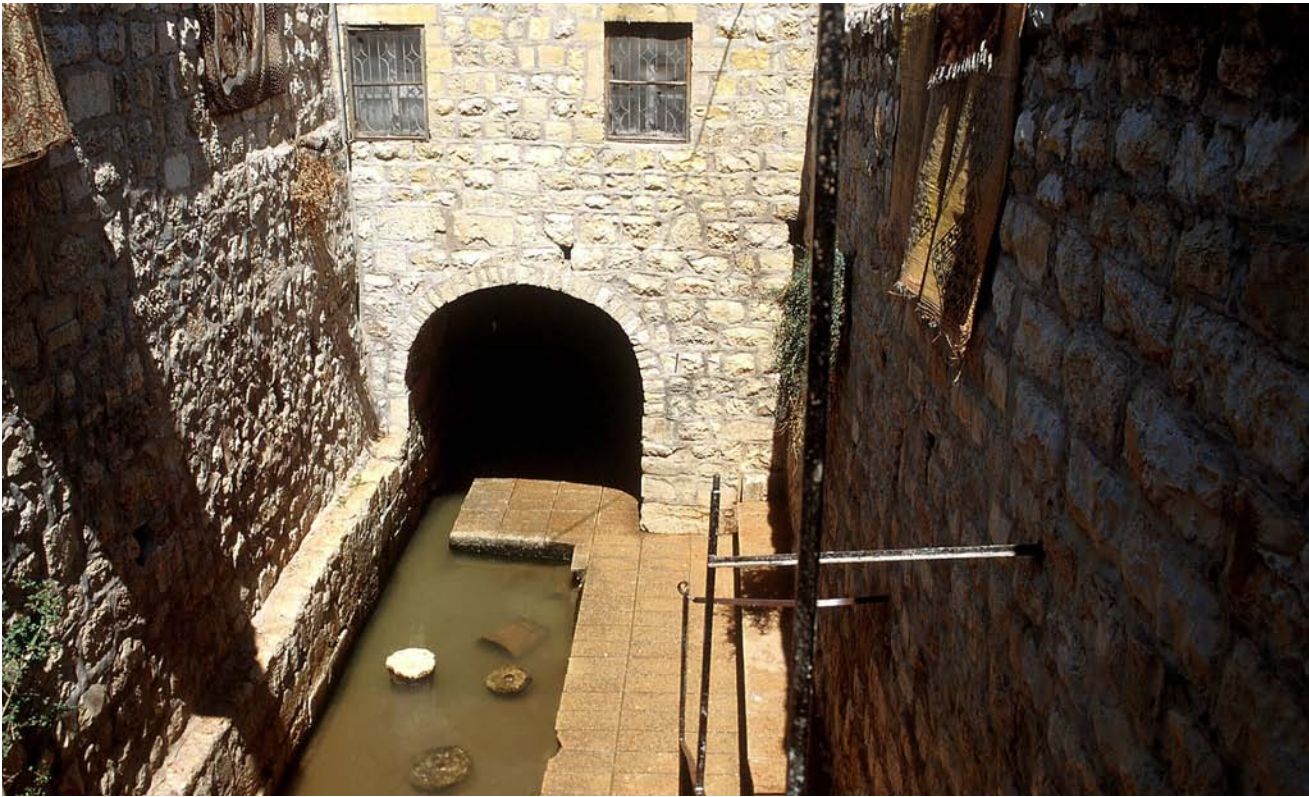
I Am The Man

"I am he" are the words with which he responded. From our reading we notice that the man did not ask to be healed. Having been healed by Jesus, he was willing and ready to acknowledge this marvelous work. Thus he said, "I am he." There was no hesitation in his voice.

The blind man acted on his faith by going to the pool to wash himself. And we know that through faith in Jesus' ransoming sacrifice the church must also go to the laver to wash.

Notice another important aspect of the beggar's walk to the pool. Probably he used both hands to hold the wet clay to his eyes. So he could not use his hands to help guide him around the crowd. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). Others must have helped him. This is a good picture of how each one called into his marvelous light helps others also walk this consecrated way.

As the first lesson was of faith, the second was for a witness. The people who saw the event asked: "Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I



Pool of Siloam from above

went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not." (John 9:10-12)

The beggar did not personally see his savior, but his faith in the worker of the miracle permitted the man to see again. We also do not see Jesus with our literal eyes, yet our faith in him has opened our eyes of understanding to begin to see and to differentiate between the ways of the world and God's righteous ways. And as our eyes are opened, we have an opportunity to let light shine for others. Similar to the beggar's testimony, we give credit to Jesus for our understanding of truth.

The beggar's lessons and demonstration of faith does not stop with witnessing to his fellow men, the world. His experience goes even to those who hate the light. He was taken to the Pharisees.

"Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received

his sight. And he said to them, He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath. But others said, How can a man who is a sinner do such signs? There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes? He said, He is a prophet." (John 9:14-17)

Notice how the beggar was now a double witness. The first witness was his ability to see, supported by the reports of others that he was once blind. The second witness was what he told the Pharisees of Jesus' work and the fact that he called Jesus a prophet. The light of truth acts as a knife cutting through false beliefs. Thus the Pharisees were divided concerning keeping the Sabbath and the works of a righteous man.

To cast doubt about Jesus being a prophet of God, the Pharisees sought to disprove that the beggar was blind since birth. Therefore they called for his parents.

Those living in darkness due to fear or pride become slaves to the darkness. When the Pharisees questioned his parents they answered simply, Yes! He was their son who was born blind. How he was cured and who did it they could not, or at least would not, admit. Why? They feared the Pharisees who had already agreed to put out of the synagogue anyone confessing Christ. This fear prevented the man's parents from helping the Pharisees achieve their goal.

Does this sound like the excommunication or disfellowshipping of some present-day organizations? The parents' avoided answering the questions by stating that their son was of a responsible age. How do we show our maturity and responsibility of knowing His truth?

The Pharisees began the next round of questioning to disprove Jesus. They tried another tactic. They "called the man who had been blind, and said to him, Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." (John 9:24)

True, all men are to give praise to God. He is the Creator of all things. Lacking proof, they judged Jesus to be a sinner. Did the blind man succumb to the pressure?

"He answered, Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see. They said to him, What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" (John 9:25-27)

Notice that the man did not support or disprove the Pharisees' comment of Jesus' character. He believed in Jesus because he received his sight. In addition, having grown tired of being cross-examined, he asked them if they did not understand or if they wanted to become one of his disciples.

Pride can close one's mind and meekness can open it. Thus was revealed the character of the false (closed-minded Jews) and of the true (teachable sheep) of Israel.

Being rebuked by the man, the prideful Pharisees scolded him: "And they reviled

him, saying, You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." (John 9:28,29)

The Pharisees tried to shift the burden of defense from themselves back to the man by using the name of Moses as their leader and guide unto the laws, and for their privileged relationship with God. By indicating that the Scriptures said that the messiah would come from Bethlehem, not Nazareth, the Pharisees revealed themselves. They refused to consider that Jesus was God's messiah.

Yet, how simple and logical was the response of the man when he said, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." (John 9:30-33)

The man's line of reasoning was that knowing or proving where Jesus came from was not critical. He continued using the Pharisees' logic, which was that a sinner has no relationship with God. Therefore, a sinner's prayers could not be heard since the power of life and death comes from God. The simple truth is that Israel's history did not record that any man born blind had ever been healed to see again. Yet, his parents—two witnesses—stated that he was born without sight. Now this man had vision as the result of a man, Jesus. And if God gave the power of life to a man to use, then that man must be righteous.

How did the Pharisees treat the formerly blind man? "... 'You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?' And they cast him out." John 9:34

They Cast Him Out!

Did the formerly blind man share his parents' fear of the Pharisees' judgment? No! Standing up for the simple truth cost him something. It cost him the ability to go to the synagogue.

Imagine if all of your life you had heard of the beauties of the temple, but because of blindness could not see them. Then, once healed, you were forced to take a position of standing up for a righteous principle that would alienate you from these privileges. If you did not side with the world (in this case the Pharisees), you would be forbidden from these things. What would you do? This man made a choice not by his flesh nor his mind, but through a grateful heart. Thus the Pharisees cast out him of the synagogue.

Was this event a witness to the Jews gathered at this hearing? Yes. Word must have quickly spread throughout the temple area. And as this man walked through Jerusalem, the people, knowing of his rejection by the Pharisees, might have moved away from him for fear of being associated as a disciple of Christ. Also imagine this man's dilemma. He did not know what Jesus or any of his disciples looked like. How would he find the man who gave him sight?

The purpose of this miracle is summed up in our Lord's statement. Jesus came in the time of the Jewish Harvest to judge men's hearts. Those who believed into him were given sight or understanding. Those who professed to have sight or understanding were permitted to remain blind by their own pride, their self-will.

Jesus learned that they had cast him out. He found the man but did not identify himself and asked: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" What did the man answer? "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

When Jesus revealed himself, the man replied, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him.

Consider our own answer to the questions during our baptism. We acknowledge that we are sinners and we believe in the Son of Man. Thus as we confess his name before men, our Lord confesses our name before God. Thereby, God reveals himself and his son through the gift of the holy Spirit. What a blessing! (John 9:35-38)

The Pharisees followed the man to see if Jesus or his disciples would come to his aid. When hearing the discussion between Jesus and the man, they asked if they were blind also. His response allowed them to judge for themselves: "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (John 9:41).

They claimed to have insight to teach God's word in the synagogues and to judge others, but they misused that light. The consequence was that now they had a greater guilt or sin.

Thus we see the importance of self-examination. How are we walking? How are we talking? How does our light shine?

Brethren, what do you see? Has this miracle happened to you? If you can say Yes, then give praise to God. And give thanks to the one who opened your eyes. Say to the world "I Am the Man" so that they see the light in your eyes! And don't, DON'T, let that light go out!

May the Lord add his blessing.

This Gospel of the Kingdom Shall be Preached

Walenty Bywalec
Poland

I greet you dear brethren together with all the participants of this gathering with the words of the apostle Paul: “Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our thoughts will be mainly based on the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and Savior of the world, the Savior of both the good and the bad, believers and unbelievers. These words are written in the gospel of Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

The gospel was spread beginning at Galilee through Samaria and Judea; it was first proclaimed by the originator of the redemption, Jesus Christ, as the good and joyful news regarding the salvation of all people. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). Salvation is freedom from the hopeless state of sin, suffering, and death. Jesus also gave a commission to preach to his apostles and disciples. “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 10:7). The disciples fulfilled this commission by going and preaching the good news to all who desired to listen to it. They preached that the Messiah had come, as foretold by the prophets and awaited by the Israelites, and who was to repair what was ruined by sin. By such preaching, the good news and great hope for all mankind was spread.

The time of suffering and dying will not last forever as God has prepared a ransom and a reconciliation by the death of his Son. The apostle Paul wrote: “Who will have all

men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time” (1 Timothy 2:4-6). The words of the apostle tell us that the message regarding the approaching kingdom of God was also to be directed to all nations, giving hope of eternal life, a life without sufferings, without sickness and life’s many tragedies, a hope of happiness, joy and peace for all mankind.

Just before his ascension to heaven our Lord Jesus said to his disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them ... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19,20). From these words of our Lord Jesus and his apostles we discover that the joyful news of the approaching Kingdom of God was to reach all nations.

The words of the gospel were to be passed on in a straightforward manner and understandable way. It is directed to people who do not possess exaggerated ambitions, but to those who are humble and of a lowly spirit. The gospel was not to be mixed with human teachings and philosophies, but to be preached with faith and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

That is what the apostle Paul did: “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. ... And my

speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:; That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

What is the Purpose of Preaching the Gospel?

The primary purpose for preaching the gospel is to make people disciples of Jesus and to call out the Church from all nations. Second, it is a witness, to preach and inform all that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

When this kingdom is established in power and glory, it will no longer be necessary to tell of its coming, as it will already be an accomplished fact. The joyful news of the coming freedom, the freeing from the prison house of sin and death, was to reach all corners of the earth to awaken faith in people, to give them hope, that God had not left man alone in a hopeless state. The words of the gospel cause all kinds of responses in the listeners: for some they become a strength in turning away from sin, for others they have no influence on their lives.

When someone hears the message of the gospel of Jesus and believes, it will change their life completely: "For it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). This faith becomes so strong that it can overcome the greatest of obstacles that are in the way of following Christ.

Faith inspires them to follow in the footsteps of Jesus as a faithful disciple. A disciple of Jesus is a person who listens attentively to what his teacher is saying and tries to put his words into practice. The Master said in Matthew 16:24, "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

By self denial one shows that he resigns from earthly aspirations in favor of obedience and endurance in carrying out the teachings of Christ. Our zeal, the courage to serve the Lord, is as the apostle Paul wrote about him-

self: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

The cross is a symbol of consecration and a symbol of suffering. Our cross is our consecration to serve God, to do only his will, as our Teacher did the will of his Father: "Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7).

By accepting the teachings of Christ and his invitation, to be his disciples, we consciously undertake the decision to follow the Lord. We show this decision by our baptism in water according to the words of our Lord: "Make them disciples and baptize them."

The worldly life is focused on the satisfying of earthly needs: "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" (1 John 2:16,17). The way of the Lord is totally different. It is the giving up of worldly and earthly things that are not in accordance with what our Lord and the apostles taught. Such an attitude can bring upon the believer contempt, suffering, and persecution, which is all part of carrying our cross.

The master said, that not everyone who follows him is his disciple: "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). One can follow Jesus, bear his name, be recognized as a Christian, do many good and noble things in his name, that may be acknowledged and recognized by the world.

But this is still not enough. To be recognized as his disciples we must daily carry our cross, in other words our consecration to serve God, as shown by baptism. It must be followed by a change in our lives by turning away from sin and toward the new direction of keeping God's law.

"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 7:21-23). Only the doing of his will can bring us to a share in the promised heavenly kingdom.

The fundamental purpose in preaching the gospel is to call out willing people who will attain to the kingdom, those who by faith overcome the world, carrying their cross. God calls to this kingdom through the words of the gospel and he awaits a response to this heavenly calling to the spiritual state that our Lord Jesus possesses. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling ..." (Hebrews 3:1). There is only one call, one hope, that today is offered by the gospel. This calling is to the Church of Christ: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4,5).

The Gospel of Jesus apart from finding disciples, gives a witness to the coming kingdom of God on earth, giving a hope of salvation.

The Gospel as a Witness

Our Lord Jesus said to his disciples that the information pertaining to the approaching kingdom will be a witness for those who do not believe. The message was proclaimed, but the people did not accept it, nor did they turn away from sinful acts, so as to serve the true God.

The Lord criticizes the lack of faith in those who hear the gospel but are deaf to the salvation that is offered to mankind. The gospel while announcing a better future was to turn nations away from sin, declaring the great love of God toward mankind. It was to keep them better, to hold back the degradation of the fallen man into further corruption and wrong doing.

Jesus taught in Galilee and confirmed his words by great acts and miracles, giving witness that he is the Messiah sent from God. But the people did not accept his teachings and did not believe his words. He said: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would

have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. ... 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" (Matthew 11:21-24).

The Lord did not condemn them totally. He only gave a strong reprimand, explaining, that the land of Sodom also has the hope of being in the kingdom of God. It will be easier for Sodom to be found there, than those in the towns of Galilee and Judea, who heard the words of Jesus urging them to repentance and a change of life, but who did nothing to effect any change.

Since neither the Lord nor the apostles condemned those who did not believe in the gospel, we too cannot condemn such, nor can we take away the hope of a resurrection and salvation. "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47,48).

A knowledge of Jesus' teachings has a great influence in the formation of one's conscience, which provides the ability to discern good from evil. This conscience should indicate the correct choice in a give situation. Everyone possesses a conscience. "For when 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: Which show 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; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." (Romans 2:14-16).

Everyone has instilled within their hearts something of God's law. If it were not for sin

degrading people's minds and conscience, the law would be obeyed. The conscience and thoughts can condemn or acquit a man.

After the resurrection people will be judged according to the gospel which they hear today and learn of it, but which does not change their lives for the better. Then their thoughts and consciences will accuse them. This gospel will be a witness of their lack of faith and lack of interest, together with the lost opportunity of salvation today. That is why Jesus said that it will be far more difficult for them than for the land of Sodom.

The gospel, the Word of God, is a great spiritual value given to mankind. It very precisely describes the moral fundamentals for man, the relationship of God and man, and it can judge all human affairs: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12,13).

The gospel is a light unto the world and it is given to restrain society from tumbling in the direction of sin, demoralization and all kinds of human disfunction. If only people had obeyed the words of the gospel from its inception, they would have avoided many sad and tragic situations.

The words of the gospel were intended to guard imperfect man from moral degradation. Salt is a preserver, preventing and slowing down the process of spoiling. Our Lord Jesus called his disciples "the salt of the earth": "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13). This salt will only be useful when it does not lose its preserving characteristics, which means so long as the

disciples do not lose their zeal and energy in passing on the words of the gospel to others.

The teachings of Jesus direct us to good works: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Let us do good to all, whenever we have opportunity; let us be of a friendly disposition, polite, and understanding toward all mankind. Let us make the most of every opportunity in giving good and loving words, displaying kindness and a smile. Let us be polite toward all with whom we come in contact each day and to those we meet by chance. They will immediately recognize that we are different people, that we are of a friendly disposition. They will of their own accord desire to get to know us more closely and to determine the motives for our actions. Such attitudes are rare in today's society. It is difficult to do good deeds today. One needs to have a strong motivation.

It may be for us a good opportunity to tell others what motivates us to such positive behavior. It is an opportunity to present the Gospel from the teachings of our Lord and the Apostles. Sometimes we do not realize how much good can come from such small good actions, which do not cost us very much. Such behavior will also bring glory to God: "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

Good deeds manifested as the fruits of the spirit will prepare us to be partakers in the kingdom. They are also a good example for others and they inspire them to doing good. The disciples of Jesus by faith and good deeds generate this spiritual wealth, but it does not benefit many today. This wealth that we achieve and accomplish today with difficulty, will be very necessary for mankind in the future, when Christ together with the Church will be restoring the whole world.

Why Are Not Many People Interested in the Gospel?

Let us consider some reasons for the lack of interest and indifference to the gospel. From the time of preaching by our Lord Jesus Christ, little has changed here. When our Lord taught in Palestine, not many had ears to hear; the majority were filled with their own ideas and way of life.

The earth, by disobedience to God's law and the influence of Satan, became a rebellious province within God's universe. That is why not many are willing to listen to what God has to say to mankind; even fewer are willing to do his will.

The deviation from God and sin caused mankind to become insensitive to matters that come from the Almighty. Man has a tendency to do wrong and to do his own will: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:2,3).

The ruler of this evil and corrupted world works to prevent the gospel of Christ from reaching the minds of the people. He suggests those distractions and activities that demand less effort. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3,4).

This was the case during the whole Gospel age up until today. People are so busy with everyday life: obtaining their education, their trade, building homes, or making a career. They serve to their human ideals, considering those to be the most important, giving happiness, a satisfaction from life perhaps for only a few years, filling in such a way the spiritual vacuum.

Many believe in the words of the gospel that talk about the high calling and the selection of the church of Christ. Perhaps they would like to be participants, but they are frightened to confess their faith before others for fear they may lose their friends, popularity, and experience scorn and rejection. For them this personal cross is too heavy to bear.

This is why it is important and necessary for salvation to accept the symbol of baptism in water: it is a public declaration of confessing faith in Jesus before other people, declaring that we are following exactly in the footsteps of Christ. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42,43).

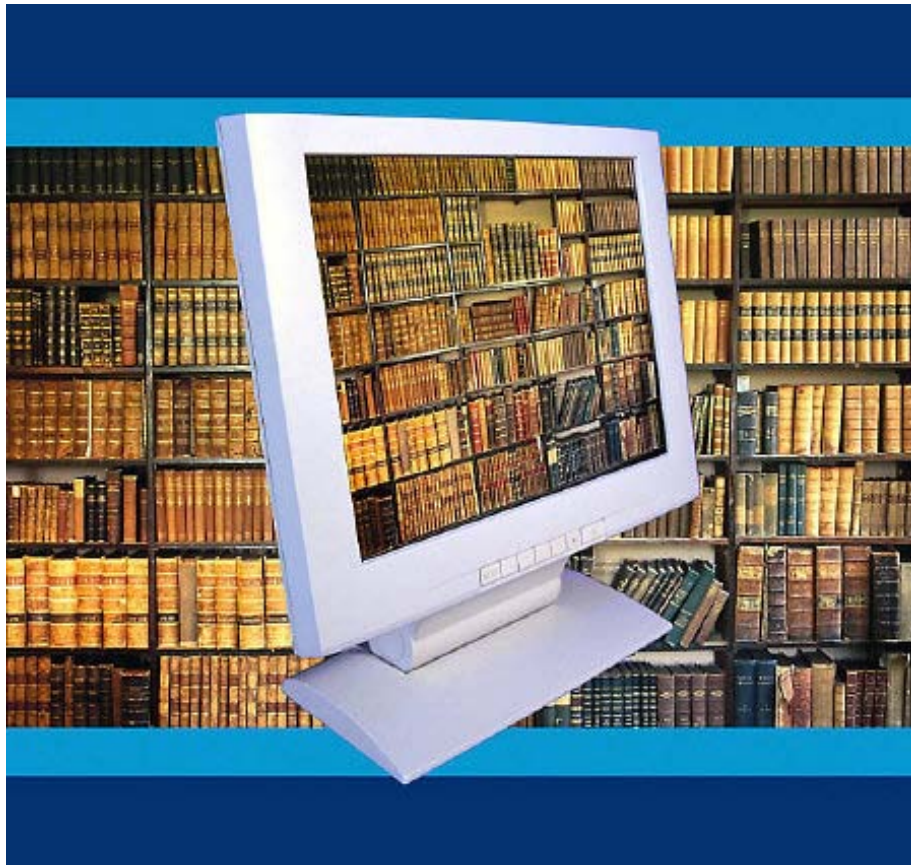
Today mankind seeks material gain and providing for temporal things. All their time is devoted to this. If any time remains, they try to make the most of entertainment and pleasures of this short life. This way they lose time on things that do not at all benefit eternal life and salvation.

There are many good and noble people who have a disposition in their hearts to do good to others, but they are not interested in what God wants to tell them. They do not think of the future. They place all their hopes to the present life.

Our Lord instructed his disciples to go to all the nations, teaching and baptizing them. His intention was not to convert all the nations, only to proclaim the call to the Church of Christ, to go out to all the nations of the world, people, and tongues. They were to give a witness about him and of his kingdom:

"And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:18).

The conversion of all the nations together with bringing them into contact with God is a work of the heavenly kingdom. When this kingdom has been fully selected from among people and set up in power and glory, it will bless all the nations, giving them joy, happi-



ness, and peace, based on the laws of God and his justice.

Preaching the kingdom as a witness to all nations does not mean converting the world. This verse says nothing about this or how this witness will be received by the nations. Rather it is given for information and is signs of the approaching kingdom foretold by Jesus.

Today, we can say that we live in a time of great growth in knowledge and learning. We can also say that the gospel reaches the furthest and outermost corners of the earth. The reports of Bible societies testify that the gospel has been published in all the languages on earth. However, not all of the millions living on earth have accepted or believed it.

The gospel is an announcement that the promised kingdom of God will come. Speaking about it is making the hearts of the people ready to receive it. When it comes, the proclamation of its coming will cease.

While waiting for this kingdom, let us declare it to all the people, those who have an ear to hear; let us talk about its glorious conditions, that all the problems of the world will disappear, that the nations shall live in prosperity, joy, and peace.

Dear brethren, let us always be ready to tell others about what it is that overflows in our hearts, what is the joy and reason for our life. Let us tell of this good news to all the people.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ” (1 Peter 3:15,16).

Dear brothers and sisters I wish you the Lord’s blessing in your service of the gospel.
Amen.

Jehovah's Dwelling Places

Samuel Premraj
India

Beloved brothers, sisters, and friends in the Lord! Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord. I bring to you the Christian love and greetings of all the brethren in India.

It is a great joy and privilege for Sister Emily Flora and me to be with you for the first time. We bring with us the love of your brethren from the Ooty ecclesia in the state of Tamilnadu.

First of all I want to thank the Lord who has provided me the chance to deliver his message. I am speaking in a foreign language in front of such a large audience, but with Lord's help and a large measure of love and understanding on your part, I would like to carry out my duty and the privilege of this service in the best way possible.

Today I would like to share a few biblical thoughts entitled "Jehovah's Dwelling Places and The Millennial Temple."

"For you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you. The temple of God is holy, which temple you are. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's" (1 Corinthians 3:16,17 and 6:20).

During this lesson we will step through a picture time-line of "temples" ("houses" or "abiding places") where the Lord has manifested his glory.

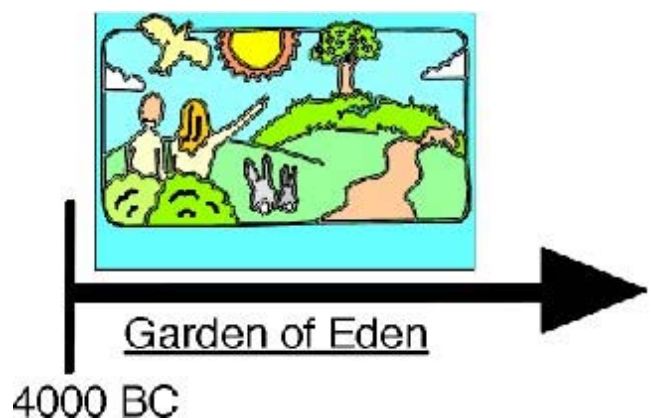
Two different Greek words are translated "temple" in English: *naos* and *hieron*. From Acts through Revelation *naos* refers to people as the "temple not made with hands." But when referring to the physical temple building, the Greek word *hieron* is used. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 speaks of the man of sin seated in the *naos* of God, "which temple [*naos*] YE ARE" (1 Corinthians 3:17).

The seven abiding places of the Almighty are:

1. Garden of Eden.
2. Tabernacle of Moses.
3. Temple designed by David and built by Solomon.
4. Temple built by Ezra, Nehemiah, and Herod.
5. Person of Jesus the Messiah.
6. Millennial Temple.
7. Messiah's Bride.

The dates shown in the timeline you will see are intentionally **not exact**. They show only a general time period for each dwelling place of Jehovah following the Scriptural outline of God's 7,000-year plan for mankind.

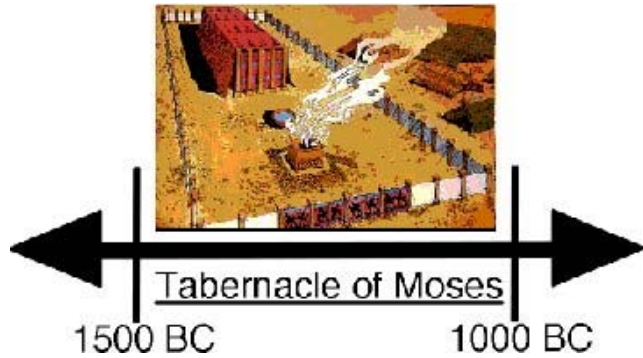
First "Dwelling Place" of God



The first "abiding place" of God with mankind was in the paradise he created for them in the beginning: "The LORD God walked in

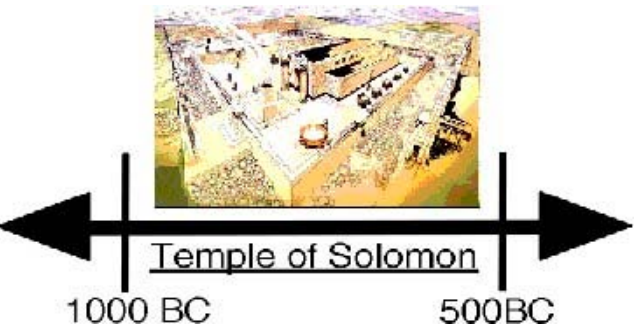
the garden in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8).

Second “Dwelling Place” Of God



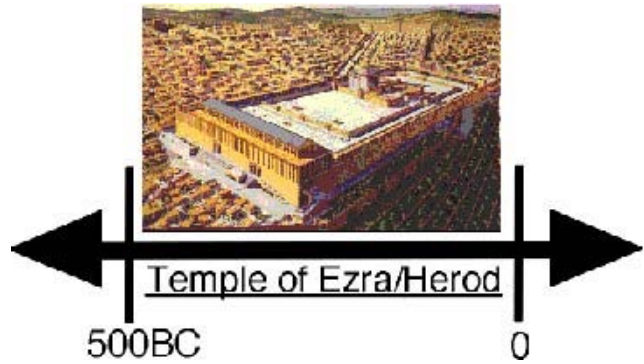
The second place where God manifested his glory to man was the tabernacle that he designed, and Moses and the children of Israel made: “The cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34).

Third “Dwelling Place” of God (First Temple)



The tabernacle of David was the beginning of this dwelling place. Although David was given the plans of this temple, because he was a warrior and had shed much blood, it was his son Solomon (a name meaning “rest” or “peaceful”) who actually built it. “The cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:10, 11).

Fourth “Dwelling Place” of God (Second Temple)



This temple was built by Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerrubabel, Cyrus, Darius, and expanded by Herod. “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given to me. And He has commanded me to build Him a temple at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel.” (Ezra 1:2-4).

The first of the temples for Jehovah located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem was built by Solomon. It was destroyed in the siege of Nebuchadnezzar.



King Nebuchadnezzar raided and captured Jerusalem after a brief siege, taking with him young king Jehoichin and “all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths” (2 Kings 24:14).

Daniel and his three friends of the tribe of Judah plus others from Jerusalem had previously been taken to Babylon in a raid by the soon-to-be-king Nebuchadnezzar after the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. That famous battle ended the rule of Egypt in the ancient world.

Approximately seventy years later Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem to build an altar, the "second" Jewish temple, and finally the walls of the city. The second temple was later greatly enlarged and expanded by Herod the great.



The Jews who returned from exile were not able to put as much gold and silver into the rebuilt temple as Solomon had put into the original temple.

Another way God fulfilled his promise was by raising up Herod the Great, who took wealth plundered from the nations by Rome, and poured it into Zerubbabel's temple. He undertook the task of rebuilding it on a grander scale. Although the reconstruction was practically equivalent to an entire rebuilding, Herod himself said that it was only intended to be regarded as an

enlarging and further beautifying of the temple of Zerubbabel.

This was the temple in which Jesus was dedicated, and where he taught and cast out the money changers on two occasions. The Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus, found Jewish believers assembled for prayer in the temple courts (see Acts chapter 2). There the holy spirit came from heaven to begin the calling out of a new group of believers (both Jews and Gentiles), a body now known as the church of Jesus Christ. Preaching by the apostles and the public miracles recorded in the book of Acts took place in the courts just outside this second temple.

But this magnificent second temple was destroyed by General Titus and his besieging Roman armies on the ninth of Av in 70 A.D. This destruction had been predicted by Jesus earlier (see Matthew 24 and Luke 21). Since 70 A.D. no Jewish temple has been built on the Temple Mount and so no blood sacrifices for sin have been possible for religious Jews up until today. Now this site is currently under the control of the Muslims. (See photo below.)

There are similarities shared by Solomon's and Ezra's (Herod's) temples.



Fifth “Dwelling Place” of God

The fifth “dwelling” of God, historically speaking, is the unique Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory ... And John bore witness, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.” –John 1:1,14, 32

Sixth “Dwelling Place” of God

However, Peter is clear that we should “be not ignorant of this one thing” that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years” (2 Peter 3:8). This simple truth opens up the Scriptures for great understanding of the times in which we live.

There are several Scriptures which point to “the third day” (2,000 years after Messiah) as the final 1,000-year millennial reign of Christ. (Psalm 90:4 ; Mark 9:2; Matthew 17:1,2; Hosea 5:15 to 6:3; Exodus 19:10,11; Luke 13:32; John 2:1,2; Joshua 3:4)

The High Priest of the Millennial Temple apparently is the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:14,15; 5:6 to 8:6 – see also Hebrews 4:3,4; for further confirmation).



The sixth temple will be the temple described in detail to the prophet Ezekiel which will serve God’s purpose in disciplining the nations for a thousand years during the promised reign of peace on the earth: “And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple” (Ezekiel 43:4,5).

Ezekiel ranks among the **great prophets**. He represented the Son of Man, the Great Teacher, the Redeemer. He also represented the members of the bride of Christ used as his mouthpieces. Ezekiel’s prophecy is full of symbolism and can correctly be called the “Revelation of the Old Testament.” His prophecies extend to our day for their fulfillment.

The prophet Ezekiel, like Jesus, was a thirty-year-old priest beginning his divinely-ordained ministry when he had a vision near the Kebar canal just off the famed Euphrates River. His nation had previously been taken captive four years earlier by the Babylonians. Ezekiel was carried away captive in 597 B.C. and had been in exile twenty five years; it had been fourteen years since Jerusalem and its temple had been destroyed because of Israel’s ongoing disobedience to God.

Ezekiel 40:2 establishes more of the context. It begins, “In the visions of God.” Chapters 40 to 48 are one or more visions. This is important for understanding these chapters because visions are rarely, if ever, straight-forward representations of reality.

Even so Herod used some of the measurements given in Ezekiel’s vision when he remodeled Zerubbabel’s temple. This was done in partial fulfillment of both Haggai’s and Ezekiel’s prophecies. Ezekiel 40 to 48 is deliberately imitative of Moses’ instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and its rituals.

Seventh “Dwelling Place” of God



This temple has not yet been constructed

Eternity in the Future—No Temple



“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22, *NIV*). The most exciting thing about this temple is that the glory of the Lord will be there, which is why the city is called *Yahweh Shamah* (The Lord is There). The knowledge of his glory in this temple will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea, and he shall reign over all the earth headquartered in this temple!

The seventh and final temple is the ultimate purpose of God in creating mankind: it

is for US to be his temple. This temple is the spiritually-mature Bride of Christ or the New Jerusalem, where God’s Spirit is able to FULLY dwell in man similar to the way he dwelt in our protégé Jesus: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with man, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God ... But I saw no temple in it [the New Jerusalem, bride of Christ] for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:3,22). “To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with ALL the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

Thus says the LORD, “Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. Where is the house that you will build me? And where is the place of my rest? For all those things my hand has made, And all those things exist, Says the LORD. But on this one will I look: on him who is humble and of a contrite spirit and who trembles at my word.” (Isaiah 66:1,2)

This is our position today. We have enjoyed a wonderful vision, the outworking of the divine purpose in our day and age. We need to see it clearer and clearer as the days go by, as events come and go. We have to realize, as expressed in the proverbs: “The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18).

That’s our mission today. We’ve seen wonderful things in the past—wonderful revelations of divine truth—and we look for even greater things in the future

May God bless our walk!

The Two Likenesses

R. Selvaraj
India

There are two likenesses spoken of in the Bible: the likeness of men and the likeness of God. From several Scriptures it is evident these cannot be the same, though they are sometimes confounded in the minds of the people. David says: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15), as much as to say, "I am not satisfied now, because I am not in thy likeness." We know the psalmist had the form and likeness of man; hence man is not in the likeness of God.

If it be claimed that this was a prophecy of Christ, the conclusion is not weakened, but rather strengthened, because of these positive statements: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not [by] robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6,7).

Here we have a clear statement of the graciousness of Christ in leaving his own exalted condition – "The glory he had with the Father before the world was" – and coming down to the condition of man. He had the nature and form of God, and took not the nature of angels but of the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16), the nature and form of man. If man were in the nature and form of God, then the graciousness of Christ exists only in name. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). This passage gives us the object of his graciousness: it is to enrich us. But the value of this offering of Christ depends upon the depth of our poverty, or the contrast between what he was and what he became, or the difference between what we are and what we may become through him. He came down to our level that we might go up to his level. He took our nature and form that we might become partakers of the divine nature, and in due time be

made like him when we shall see him as he is. Wondrous love and abasement on his part, glorious exaltation on our part! But all these Scriptures mean nothing if human nature and divine nature are one and the same – or if man is in the likeness of God.

We make a distinction between the terms nature and form as applied to human beings, the former being the foundation of the latter. Nature is in the seed, but properly speaking, form is not. The apple nature in a seed will produce an apple tree, and that tree has form. Human nature produces human forms, the divine nature produces divine forms. Those who in this age become partakers of the divine nature have the assurance that "when he shall appear we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2). "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21).

In respect to people the terms form, likeness, and image are used interchangeably; the words apply primarily to what we term the body though it may be proper to use them also in reference to mental conditions, as when the heart is used to represent the mind: "My son give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26). "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezekiel 36:26).

The term flesh as used in the New Testament, evidently refers to humanity as a whole and not to what covers our bones which in

common parlance we call flesh: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

This passage is not meant to teach whether man is unitary, a duality, or tripartite (one, two or three), but simply that which is produced by human beings is human, and that which is produced by the divine spirit is divine. "The Word was made flesh" means simply that "He was made in the likeness of men" – became a human being. As a human being – born of the flesh – he was a Jew. But Jesus has been born again, not of the flesh, but of the spirit, "The firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:18) and as such is declared to be "the Son of God" (Hebrews 4:14).

That human beings as represented by "the first man Adam" are "of the earth, earthy" is clearly taught by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:47). Man made of the dust, is sustained from the ground, and returns thither again. "Naked came I from the Earth, and naked shall I return thither again" (Job 1:21). All who are born of the flesh "bear the image of the earthy" (1 Corinthians 15:48,49). Christ himself in becoming our brother on the plane of the flesh, bore the same image. But now, born of the spirit, he has "returned to the glory he had with the Father before the world was." "He is the brightness of his [Father's] glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). That is, he was in the likeness of man, but he is now in the likeness of God. Here we have the two likenesses fully developed in the same person: first the natural, afterward the spiritual.

That the foundation for that spiritual body was laid during his earthly life, in the spirit given him without measure, we fully believe. But he was not, as a man, a fully developed spiritual being until his resurrection which was his second birth when he became the "First-born from the dead" (Colossians 1:18). He had the promise of the divine nature before he was put to death, but he was in human form. (We here ignore his preexistence for in that he is an exception and not our forerunner.)

In his life, death, and resurrection – in the process of development from the lower to the higher, from the natural to the spiritual – he is the forerunner of his saints, the "Head," that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. He opens the way and is himself our leader. All who ever enter heavenly life and bear the divine image, as sons of God, must go the same way he went.

While in the flesh, which is the first or lowest stage of development, the saints, by the imparted spirit of God, become partakers of the divine nature. They are thus begotten to a lively hope, which hope is consummated when they, like their head, are born from the dead. Those thus begotten by virtue of the spirit given them, call God, Father, claiming divine sonship. By faith they grasp the glorious realities of that blessed hope, and so count themselves, as God also counts them in Christ, as on the risen side, to die no more. This is indeed a glorious privilege and we can exclaim with John: "Now are we the sons of God, but," we add, which tends both to humility and encouragement, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

This order of development must be observed by us as it is by the Lord: "First, the natural," and so on. Some overlooking this order and quoting from Paul, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body," conclude that both bodies exist together and that at death the spiritual body leaves or is withdrawn from the natural body, and that this is the resurrection. By this view they are forced to ignore the apostolic teaching concerning the resurrection and the coming of Christ.

Nothing is simpler than that death and resurrection do not occur at the same time: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order. Christ, the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:22, 23). Even Christ was not raised until the third day after his death. But they that are Christ's, no matter when they died, are raised at his

coming, "At the last trump," says Paul. All must admit the seventh or last trumpet did not sound all the way through, as men have been dying.

The stress laid by some on the present tense of the verb [be] in the passage, "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body," is of no value as an argument. It proves nothing. "Unto us a child is born," was spoken by Isaiah hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, and it is understood by all. In common language we say, "As the twig is bent, the tree is inclined." All understand it is first the twig and afterward the tree. "As is the child, so is the man."

Describing the order of seasons in a year we may say, "There is spring, it is followed by summer, and so on." Paul was using the same principle when referring to the order of human development, from the lower to the higher, and of its stages. He says: "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44).

The first half of the same verse shows they do not exist together: "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." As if he were anticipating the caviling which would come, and determined to give a clear offset to it, he says: "Howbeit that was not first which was spiritual, but that which is natural [is first] and AFTERWARD that which is spiritual" (v. 46). The whole passage is luminous with the glorious hope of eternal life and glory at the coming of Christ, the Life Giver at the last trump. "As we have born [in this life] the image of the earthly, we shall also [in the future life] bear the image of the heavenly" (v. 49). What a glorious promise and hope! Here again is the positive evidence that in the flesh, men have not attained the likeness or image of God, but it is something to be attained when that which is perfect is come.

The general impression, and not without apparent good reason, is that man was at first created, and is, in the image of God: "Let us make man in our own likeness" (Genesis 1:26). But the harmony will be seen by those, and those only, who will look at God's revealed plan as a whole and remember that all that is done on the plane of the flesh is preparatory, and that the natural life is only the first step in the plan of development.

It may be said that the first is typical of the second, or higher, to which the lower points. The whole plan is built on the two phases, "First the natural, afterward the spiritual." There are two creations, two Adams, two Eves, two marriages, two births, and two lives; consequently there are two likenesses.

Christ, as already seen, was Adam-like, the first to enter the second, or higher life. By his life—drawn from his side so to speak—the church, Eve-like, derives her life, and being called out during the Gospel age, enters fully on her higher life at his coming to claim his bride when the marriage takes place.

Then the plan reaches the world. As on the plane of the flesh, none entered life excepting Adam and his wife until after their marriage, so none enter the higher, the Eternal Life, excepting Christ and his wife, the Church, until after the marriage of the Lamb takes place. Then follows the regeneration.

The life to come is the perfect life, and until that is reached, we must ever speak of God's plan as in process and not complete.

The New Testament is the complement of the Old, and it clearly reveals when and how we are to attain the maturity—the glory, the perfect day. The prophetic eye of the psalmist looked forward, and seeing the perfection of character and person combined, he exclaimed: "I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

The Wilderness: A Place of Trial and Judgment

Mariusz Kwarciak
France

Dearest beloved brethren, young people, and dear friends of this marvelous truth. May the peace of God be with you!

It is a great joy for me and my family to participate with you in this great spiritual feast. I would like to bring you the Christian love and greetings and words of encouragement from our Bollwiller ecclesia in the east of France.

Now I would like to consider with you the symbolism of "wilderness" in the holy Scriptures. Our discourse is entitled, "The wilderness: a place of trial and judgment."

On planet Earth the wilderness areas represent around 30% of the continents or more than nineteen million square miles. A desert is a place where precipitation is less than ten inches per year and insufficient to compensate for water evaporation caused by air temperature and wind. When we think of a desert, we immediately envision a sea of sand like the Sahara. Deserts are not only like that; they can also be gravel-like, dried out, or a salty area. In certain deserts one might find some vegetation and even flowers in springtime, but later, at the beginning of April-May, the same area changes to cracks and dust.

As a quick description of a wilderness we might say it has these characteristics:

- » Hot by day and cold at night,
- » Lacks water,
- » Dusty or sandy,
- » Very little vegetation,
- » Very little shade,
- » Has wild animals.

Those are very difficult conditions! It is not hospitable for man. Yet, though somewhat

strange at first glance, the Bible often mentions people in a wilderness, people chosen by God. Their experiences provide a number of lessons for us.

Why the Wilderness?

A wilderness is a special place. We already mentioned the characteristics which make it a difficult and dangerous place for mankind. Yet the question remains: Why the wilderness? Why such an inhospitable place, filled with difficulties and even dangerous? Certainly the answer to this question will be found in the characteristics of a wilderness.

Wilderness: A place where immensity and insignificance meet.

Outside conditions always affect a man's state. More than physical thirst caused by heat, there is also symbolic thirst. So in these immense spaces, man finds himself so small he looks naturally to God for help. Human abilities are not so great and so man soon realizes his only help must come from God.

The psalmist David spoke of this thirst for God in these words: [A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.] O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; ... Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." (Psalm 63:1,7).

Wilderness: A place of learning

When exposed to troubles in his environment, man soon displays his weaknesses and



Sinai Wilderness

true character. But it is also a place where he can rapidly and effectively work on those weaknesses. So it is in the wilderness that one can better know oneself and more easily enter a relationship with God. Generally when one comes out of the wilderness, one is stronger spiritually and much more attentive to the word of God.

Wilderness: A symbolic place

As with fleshly Israel, the people of God are also coming out of “Egypt” – the world – and want to be led into the promised land, celestial Canaan. Each of us, in his own way, travels in a symbolic desert. Under the effects of the heat of experiences which adds to his exhaustion, a Christian becomes discouraged and loses his vigor. He must preserve a minimum of his clarity and strength to ask God’s help. Each of us faces different dangers which

are meant to provide spiritual enrichment from our experiences.

Like there, God chooses the leader of his people, the way they are to go, and the best time to enter the wilderness.

God Chooses the Leader

When one must cross a wilderness, it is best to have an experienced guide. For the Jewish people God chose and raised up Moses as their leader. This choice did not occur by luck. In three stages of forty years that we can see in the life of Moses, the first two—his first eighty years—prepared Moses for his work.

In the first forty-year period, he learned of his Jewish heritage from his mother and human wisdom in the court of the Pharaoh.

The second stage of his life taught him about life and danger of the wilderness. During those forty years he lived in the wilder-

ness as a shepherd of the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law.

In the third and most important stage he put into practice all the wisdom God had given him in leading the people of Israel to the promised Land. Exodus 3:9,10 "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

To lead the spiritual people to heavenly Canaan, God provided the Lord Jesus as leader, someone who also spent a long time preparing for his work. At the beginning Jesus was in the royal court as Logos close to his heavenly Father; then he experienced the wilderness of the world. He learned its dangers and its traps so he could guide his church during the Gospel age to the promised land; later he would guide all humanity in his kingdom. The perfect man Jesus during his sojourn on earth learned all about human life. He could sympathize with human weaknesses (Hebrews 4:14-16).

By accepting Jesus as our leader, we commit ourselves to trust him and listen to everything he says. He is the one who did the miracles before "Pharaoh" (the prince of this world) and he alone can lead us to the heavenly reward.

God Chooses the Way

In the case of fleshly Israel, we read in Exodus 13:17-18 "When Pharaoh had let the people go, God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea."

Our heavenly Father knew very well that his people were not well organized nor prepared militarily to confront the "Philistines." So he chose a longer way, via the wilderness, which would allow him to unite his people,

infusing in them a spirit of solidarity which would permit them to learn obedience.

When we leave "Egypt," God rarely takes us by the shortest, most direct route. He knows our weaknesses and protects us against our enemies. He takes us via the wilderness to try us, to teach us how to fight, and how to resist.

Often we don't understand his ways. We have the impression that he selected a complicated and dangerous way for us; only later, perhaps years later, we can say in astonishment that the way we followed and the experiences we endured were the most beneficial.

It was God who guided Israel in her journey and he chose where they pitched camp. His presence in the cloud was a precious sign seen by everyone: "And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was alway: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents." (Numbers 9:15-17)

We also in our journey toward the promised land must follow the leadings of God and our Lord. In every important event of our life, and in prayer, we must look for indications showing the way to go. Speaking generally, we must always remain near the "camp," near our brethren, and the presence of God in our congregation. Let us always see the evidences of his providence so we understand and then execute the orders he gives us.

God Decides the Time of Entry into and the Exit from the Wilderness

The duration of the time the Israelites were to live in Egypt had been prophetically told to Abraham (Genesis 15:13). The fifteenth of Nisan, the date of their leaving, had been inscribed on the divine calendar. God, who knows the end from the beginning, knew when the iniquity of the Amorites would

reach its full. Exodus 12:40-42 "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, **even the selfsame day** it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations."

Prior to leaving Egypt God manifested his power to the people in ten plagues; these made an unforgettable impression on both the Egyptians and the Israelites.

Each individual Christian leaves the world (Babylon) with more or less turmoil. Even the children of consecrated parents face a struggle with Satan, and each time it takes a miracle to overcome it. A child of Adam frees himself from the power of sin and death and becomes free in the Lord. Responding to the call of the Father, the child of God leaves Egypt for a new, heavenly country.

From an individual point of view, the end of our pilgrimage corresponds to our death. From a global point of view, the journey of the church ends with the death of its last member and the inauguration of the kingdom of God over the earth.

At the annual Memorial celebration, may we remember our Passover Lamb and celebrate also our liberation worthily.

It took Israel after the flesh a long time to reach the land flowing with milk and honey. Their forty-year wilderness wandering corresponded to the forty days spent by twelve who spied out the promised land. We read: "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise" (Numbers 14:34).

Spiritual people during the Gospel age, and especially during the harvest of this age, must also process disinformation concerning the promised land. The twelve spies agreed that the land was rich and beautiful, but ten

spies diminished the courage of the people by saying they were too weak to conquer their enemies. Likewise today we face the same type of discouragement. How does such discouragement manifest itself? By suggestions that we are too weak, that our sins are too great, to obtain a spiritual reward. If God has called us, it means he sees something good in us which he can improve by his help, enabling us to reach our goal. We must take as role models Joshua and Caleb for our mutual encouragement—to encourage our brethren to persevere in their efforts.

The less we doubt our ability to reach heavenly Canaan, the less time we need to spy out this land; that means proportionally less time spent in the wilderness. The greater our desire to enter this promised land, the more we will obey the instructions of our leader, and the more rapidly will God bring us into our reward.

This is not to say that God will call us immediately beyond the "second veil," but he will permit us to enter his promised rest by faith.

The decision as to when we leave the wilderness is up to God. To illustrate this point consider an experience of the prophet Elijah. After his great victory over the prophets of Baal, and after goading Israel to return to God, Elijah became sad and discouraged. He fled from the persecutions of Jezebel into the wilderness where he wished for his own death: "And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a container of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the

angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God." (1 Kings 19:3-8)

As in this experience of Elijah, God also gives us food and comfort in times of discouragement. He does it through his servants, our brethren. By such experiences God shakes us out of our state, he gives us spiritual food, and encourages us to continue in the right way.

But beware! Once again it is not for us to determine when our walk ends, nor when the church will be complete.

Once when he came to Mount Horeb, Elijah thought it would be there that his work would end. All the natural events of wind, earthquake, and fire seemed to confirm this thought to him.

But to his great astonishment, he heard God's words directing him back into the wilderness, or rather to cross the wilderness one more time. God seemed to be telling him his work was not yet over, that he had some important things yet to do: "And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room" (1 Kings 19:15,16).

God clearly indicates that he needs to continue his work, particularly to carry out three anointings.

It is particularly important to note that Elijah himself did only the third anointing when he called Elisha and put his mantle upon him (1 Kings 19:19-21). But it was Elisha and not Elijah who told Hazael that God had chosen him to be king of Syria (2 Kings 8:13).

It was one of the sons of the prophets who anointed Jehu to be king of Israel (2 Kings 9:6).

Probably we have a profound lesson here. It was Elisha and one of the sons of the prophets who continued and completed the work given to Elijah. If Elijah represents the church on this side of the veil, and if Mount Horeb represents the kingdom of God, upon reaching Horeb the work of Elijah was not over yet.

Even if brethren here and there have calculated and continue to calculate the date for the end of the Gospel age, God tells us to continue our work.

We see that the work of the harvest has not yet ended. Let us have confidence that God alone will determine when our work ends and when it will end for the entire church. If he asks us to continue our work in the wilderness, let us do so with determination.

God Provides the Food and Security

The lack of water and food are the most difficult problems to solve in the wilderness. Israel after the flesh left on their journey with some provisions, but soon they lacked water and food for themselves and their animals. They could only go to Moses and divine providence. The lack of water and bread soon became a source of discontent and murmuring among all the people.

Several times Moses confronted their murmuring and lack of confidence in God. Each time God supplied what his people needed.

In addition to the miraculous manna and the quails, he took care of their clothes and shoes. In Moses summarized the time spent in the wilderness: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt

also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." (Deuteronomy 8:2-5).

We are not going to get into all the details of the experiences of the Israelites in the wilderness. The verses we just read do that quite well. God led them! He fed them! He gave them water! He protected them from wild beasts! These verses reminded Israel to remember all their wilderness experiences. Having unlimited confidence in God and obeying him were the two most important lessons that Israel was expected to learn in the wilderness. God's relationship with them was like a father to his child. He watched over them, protected them, and chastised them when necessary.

The apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, tells us the lessons Israel experienced in the wilderness are also for Christians today: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness." (1 Corinthians 10:1-5)

This is a great lesson of humility for us all. We can be baptized, partake of spiritual food, and drink from the rock that is Christ, but none of this guarantees we will enter into heavenly Canaan.

We must constantly examine our behavior and our longings. If we want things that are forbidden, if we murmur about the conditions of our sojourn, we could be punished with death in the wilderness.

The apostle added: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples ["warnings" in another translation]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the

ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

For us who have come to the end of the age, we need to take seriously the warnings which are based on Israel's experiences in the wilderness.

Lesson Summary for Us

Dearly beloved brethren, my dear companions in this wilderness! The wilderness is not a goal in itself; it is not the goal of our sojourn. It is not a place to live but a channel by which we are forced to **learn**: to better learn about ourselves, about our brethren, about compassion and mutual aid one to another. We must learn to know our own weaknesses, character flaws, and especially to learn obedience and trust God. With the help of God we can correct the weak points in our character. As with Israel in the wilderness, we must be a united people, strengthening the bonds between brethren and God, so we might better understand his will and hear his voice more easily.

The time spent on our wilderness sojourn depends only upon our capacity and willingness to learn the various lessons God wants us to give us. The sooner we learn the sooner God will take us out of the wilderness. He sees when we are ready and worthy to receive his great reward.

Let us note that it was precisely in the wilderness and not when they entered into the promised land, that God made his covenant with the people. Let us always remember that God remains faithful to his promises and commitments.

Let us examine the numerous lessons of the wilderness that God's chosen people such as Abraham, David, John the Baptist, the prophets, and our Lord Jesus gave us. Their witness is also very instructive.

Let us not think of our sojourn in the wilderness as a punishment, but rather as a necessity, an opportunity to improve our character. Let us take full advantage of the time given to us to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

Amen.

Part 1

Contending for the Faith [Jude 3]

Miklos Ferenczi
Romania

Peace, mercy, love and godly wisdom unto you beloved brethren and friends. I bring you the love of the Arduzel ecclesia and surrounding area.

Looking in the Scriptures I found the advice of the apostle Jude in his epistle, verse three, particularly important for our days. He writes: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly **contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints."

The apostle brings to our attention that not every faith brings salvation, only the one delivered unto the saints. Here on earth only one was found to be just and holy: Jesus who fulfilled the will and the plan of God by paying the price to redeem mankind.

He still works on this plan by preparing the Church of God which, when it is complete, will resurrect, restore, and bring mankind back to be in God's image as originally created, and give everlasting life on an earth which will become an Eden.

Jesus prayed to his Father for the members of his Church: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). In Exodus 30:22-33 we are told that God commanded Moses to prepare an oil for anointing from certain spices of the best quality, and from olive oil.

Obeying is a Pleasant Incense.

The oil represents the Spirit or influence of God. Zechariah 4 talks about the Word of God (the Bible)—the Old and New Testaments—as being like two olive trees standing on the left and right of the candlestick, pouring the oil, which is the spirit of God, to fill the seven branches of the candlestick. The seven

candlesticks represent the true and entire Church in the seven periods of her development, the only one which shows forth the whole truth.

The apostle Paul writes: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

This is why the apostle Jude said in verse 3 to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." This is the faith of which the apostle John writes: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. ... Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning." (1 John 1:1-3; 2:7)

In Hebrews we read: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Some are looking for it thinking that with it they can gain honor or material gains. But let us consider what Peter said to Simon: "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:18-20).

The admonition of the apostle Jude was truth and remains so unto today. In verse 4 he

shows the motives to fight the good fight: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

Beginning with verse 8 the apostle shows motives and preoccupations of those who gave themselves to those sinful and dangerous things saying: "These filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

So "dreaming" will lead to degrading the body and mind which continues to aggravate by "despising authority" by trespassing God's divine Law and Appointments and when dignitaries "appointed" by him to defend his truth and people "exert their duty" these people "despise" them! This can be seen from the following verses, which shows the danger of slipping if not corrected:

v. 11: "Have gone in the way of Cain" [see 1 John 3:15, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer] and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Core.

v. 12: These are spots in your feasts of charity (crushing the boats from underneath and sinking them) when they feast with you, ... clouds they are without water, carried about of winds twice dead ...

v. 13: wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

v. 16: These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage."

How terrible is this condition that leads to "dreaming," "despising authority," and mocking of dignities shown by the apostle in verse 8! The apostle Jude shows the essence of faith and its foundation pillars which are attacked, and for which we are called to fight and defend; we can show them in three clear points:

1. Keeping the laws of God. "Be thou holy as I am holy," he says (see the first epistle of John).
2. Recognizing and respecting Authorities which is God's authority to establish:
 - » The destiny of his creation
 - » Moral Laws
 - » Laws concerning the organization of his people (See Jude 8; 2 Peter 2:1,10; Ephesians 4:11.)
3. Recognizing and respecting – not more or less – of "dignities" and implicitly of "dignitaries" appointed by God for edifying the Church from the beginning to the end – Ephesians 4:11; Revelation 1:16,20; 3:14; Luke 12:37,42-44.

These fundamental values of the faith mentioned by the apostle Jude were attacked and systematically usurped by the old Serpent through some of the most loved children of God which he deceived temporarily or permanently.

The damage produced through violation of these Godly principles, which are the basis for the health and development of the Church, are great and should not be allowed, says the apostle Jude, but must be fought and defeated!

But to fight for the faith once delivered to the saints "by the rules" means also to do what the apostle Jude says at the end:

v. 22: "And of some have compassion, making a difference" because we can't read the hearts of the deceived;

v. 23: "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

The apostle shows the result of those who do not come out of the Devil's snare: "I will therefore put you in remembrance ... how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." v. 5

The Lord says: "Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any

graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Deuteronomy 5:7-9). This is why the apostle draws our attention to the faith once delivered. Today many are fighting for faith. Christendom today understands faith as an issue which makes one denomination to be another’s enemy. “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called.” (1 Timothy 6:10-12).

But the apostle Paul also talks about fighting lawfully: “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully” (2 Timothy 2:5).

I would like to bring an example in connection with the fight where we can distinguish three classes:

1. Those with a fearful heart;
2. Those who drink from the water of truth fearlessly;
3. Those who weigh the truth and the faith.

“And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many ... proclaim in the ears of the people, saying Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart. ... And there returned of the people twenty-two thousand; and there remained ten thousand ... And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I

say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men.” (Judges 7:2-7)

Thus we see how small is the number of those who search vigilantly, drinking the water of truth. The number of those who carelessly drank without fear that the adversary could strike at any moment with a false interpretation of the Scripture, those who don’t consider that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy spirit” (2 Peter 1:20, 21), were 9,700. They would consider the truth but ... they are fearful!

The class that weighs the truth, searches for the old paths, and has the faith once delivered unto the saints—faith hidden in shadows, parables, and symbols—needs to study the things written by the seventh messenger to help them understand correctly and have a full appreciation (Revelation 3:14-18).

The Lord has named a servant, a wise and faithful manager, whom he appointed over the household (Matthew 24:45) through whom he served at the table meat in due season—present truth prepared by him and delivered through his servant (Luke 12:37, 42).

Making the wise and faithful servant into a class is a heresy by which Satan seeks to deceive the Lord’s people at this Laodicean time, making them doubt the message delivered by God through the seventh messenger; it makes them follow “wandering stars” mentioned by the apostle Jude in verse 13.

But the gold tried in fire—the truth purified and delivered; white raiment—the truth about justification and raiment of needlework (Ps 45:14); and the eyesalve—clearly seeing the prophetic fulfillment past, present, and future promised by the Lord in Revela-

tion 3:18; these came **only** through the writings of **one** person who occupied the position of wise and faithful servant and seventh messenger, Pastor Russell.

In 1 John 5 :21 the apostle writes: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" referring to those who tried to replace the apostles as is revealed in all of his three epistles. Someone who tries to replace "the faithful servant" – the seventh messenger – in order to place himself in that place becomes an idol, a usurper who tries to replace the one appointed by God.

We are in danger if the truth delivered through the faithful servant is replaced by our wisdom. "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:7).

God does not want us to be afraid of searching for the truth. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4). Let us pay attention to the three hundred from Gideon's band which symbolize those who appreciate the promises once delivered unto the saints.

It is written, "Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" (Genesis 18:18). Abraham believed and fought for this fulfillment. And God promised fulfillment "because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:18). Yes, all the nations will be blessed in due time if they will be faithful to the Word of God just as Abraham was obedient to the Lord and it was counted as righteousness.

The apostle Jude makes a distinction between the faithful believer and the unbeliever, mentioning the fallen angels: "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6).

How did they leave their habitation? They left heaven and came to earth which was not their natural habitat; they desired to infuse humans with a spiritual seed for the spiritual realm was not under condemnation; this is how they desired to help fallen man. But they found themselves in trouble (danger) because they didn't follow God's wise and loving plan – the Master of the human race!

It is not good to search for other meanings, for even Moses pondered when God told him, "Look that thou make them after the pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount" (Exodus 25:40).

Moses had seen that he is not capable to finish this work and the Lord told him: "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. ... And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab ... that they may make all that I have commanded thee" (Exodus 31:1-3,6).

We see that God has chosen Bezaleel to build this work, symbolizing Jesus Christ who leads in the Gospel age. He gives wisdom and enlightenment to the seven stars or angels of the Church (Revelation 1:16,20; chapters 2 and 3) of which the first was the apostle John and last was Bro. Russell. They are symbolized in the seven candlesticks as lights for each period helped in their endeavor by the "fellow servants" shown in Ephesians 4:11 and by the every true member of the church (Matthew 5:14; 1 Peter 2:9).

The candlestick was made of one piece of gold and all the workmanship on it shows that the Father, Son, and servants have the same understanding. The seven candlesticks show the perfect unveiling of the whole plan of God; the fact that they were placed in the front (Exodus 25:37) shows that the Divine light will shine in the future.

The nocturnal trimming and placing the candles in their sockets was Aaron's duty. The Lord, symbolized by Aaron during the Gospel age when error overshadowed the

truth, has also cleaned and placed the candles to shine forth light.

A question may arise: Did Brother Russell make mistakes or not; was he represented in a candlestick? He who took care of the candles was the Lord and I am sure he didn't err. Even though there may be some uncertainties, they are permitted as a test for the Church. I wish the wisdom of God for us all.

In conclusion, beloved brethren and friends, I salute you with Jude 17-21,24,25. "But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who

should walk after their own ungodly lusts, These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the holy spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

Amen.

Part 2

Contending for the Faith [Jude 3]

Toader Tantas
Romania

Dear brethren, dear friends of the truth, dear young people willing to learn about present truth – grace and peace be multiplied unto you. I thank the Lord for this privilege to be gathered together here. I wish to convey the love of the brethren from the Satu-Mare ecclesia with whom I meet.

Dear brethren, even though the apostle Jude wrote only one epistle to the church, he felt the urge by divine inspiration to tell the believers from his time until this present age to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

By saying these words the apostle Jude has emphasized that even in his time there were false apostles whom he calls "wandering stars" (verse 13) which were fighting for supremacy and domination among the saints, and who were presenting all kinds of doctrinal heresies as Scriptural.

So in his epistle the apostle brings to our attention that these kind of false teachers can always creep inside God's people if they are not on watch.

The mystery of iniquity was already at work during the time of the apostles, but it could not reach ascendancy because the apostles and the Lord's teachings were opposed to it. But after the apostles fell asleep, this so-called "Christian" system began to develop; it sat in the Temple of God pretending it was God just as the apostle Paul predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:4,7.

We read in Matthew 13:25, "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." From this we can clearly see that after the apostles fell asleep, the enemy sowed all kind of false teachings in the field. This is how the liturgical service was added to the our Lord's sacrifice. The immortality of the soul and eternal torment are false teachings contrary to the holy Scriptures which clearly show that the penalty for sin is death (Romans 5:12; 6:23).

The apostle Paul also brings to our attention in Ephesians 6:11-13 that we are to fight these false teachers. He gives us a beautiful lesson by telling us that we not only must fight against flesh and blood, but also against the spirits of darkness; to come out as conquerors from this battle we must put on all the armor which God has placed at our disposal to be able to resist all the attacks from the adversary.

This is why the apostle Paul stresses the importance of knowing all the truth to be able to counteract the attacks of the adversary with the Word of God and "It is written." The first lesson we can learn about this from the Lord was when he was tempted by the devil who was trying to deceive him in wilderness. The Lord used the inspired word of God: "It is written" (Matthew 4:7).

The apostle also compares the fight for the faith once delivered unto saints with the fight of a volunteer soldier who has enlisted in the army and must know all his obligations and duties which he must perform to serve well for the cause he is fighting for and for which he has enlisted (see 2 Timothy 2:3,4).

Similarly, we as saints consecrated to God have enlisted as volunteers to defend the character and Plan of God, which is Wisdom, Justice and Love, manifested unto us by the fact that he gave his son as the ransom price for all mankind (1 John 2:2).

To defend this cause we must fight to the finish in defending the truth and its principles, bearing all kinds of insults, injustices, and lying arrows targeting these sound principles of faith. Yes, the people of God must

fight under the banner of truth until death, taking the yoke of the Lord which is easy and his cross which is light because he is with us and will give us God's blessing as soldiers fighting the good cause delivered unto the saints for all eternity.

Dearly beloved, we see in the confession our Lord made to Pilate, that the only reason he came into our world was to witness about the one who sent him, his kingdom, his character, his truth, of which even Pilate was moved to ask the Lord: "What is truth?"

Dearly beloved, these questions about truth and the faith once delivered unto the saints may within some of believers who though part of the household of faith may doubt the grand revelations of present truth of which God has made a special provision in the latter days in which we live. According to Daniel 12:10 many shall be purified and made white if they sincerely desire this; those who speculate and doubt will not enter into these blessings which were promised in the Word of God, will not be purified by the truth.

The apostle Paul tells us in Colossians 1:26 that the mystery hidden from ages and generations has been manifested unto the saints then. But in 2 Thessalonians 2:4-9 he tells us that the "Man of sin" which will rise to power will overshadow it until the coming of our Lord, when this system will be progressively destroyed by the Lord's brightness.

But Satan will parallel the "Lord's coming" by all of his deceits and unjust schemes putting them in practice because he knows he has only a "little time." Now in these last days in which we live, when these deceits are multiplying and diversifying, we must see and feel the special care and the great blessings which God manifests toward us by unveiling great present truths.

In 2 Peter 1:19-21 we are told that we have a more sure word of prophecy which was revealed to us, but which we must appreciate for its proper value because it was given as a light in a time when lies and false theories are growing among God's people.

He has provided special care for the household of God of this time through the “wise and faithful servant” which he appointed over the “household of faith” to give them “meat in due season” in this important but also dangerous time in which we live (Matthew 24:45).

Just as the Master promised in Luke 12:37, he served this “meat” to all his people from all over the world. It is on our table through the servant he appointed over ALL his goods (or truths) — Pastor Russell.

Dearly beloved, we have the opportunity to partake of this spiritual food and, as underservants together with the one appointed over us by the Lord, to give it to all who are hungry and thirsty, without any leaven, just as it was delivered by the servant. In this way we will feel the blessings of God through which we will grow in grace and knowledge.

Those who have doubts about this food, let them pray for guidance and God will help them distinguish truth from error and thus be strengthened. We have all observed that during the ages the adversary has used his power to deceive, to **twist** the truth; God’s children are not strangers to his methods.

Therefore, to be able to face the adversary’s attacks today, we need all the armor God has provided; this armor is bountifully provided through this servant.

Just as the apostle Jude shows in verse 8, Satan will try to provide “new visions” through those he can deceive, to “despise dominion and speak evil of dignities” so that he can bring in other teachings. The apostles John, Peter, and Paul write about encountering so-called apostles!

Was this the case with this servant, or seventh angel, as it was with the previous six? It would be strange if it was not!

Indeed a new teaching has been proposed that “the wise and faithful servant” is not a person but a class, that the light is continuously growing. Those who accept this lure have departed from us and from the truth; they have taken the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

But is Satan content with what he has captured? No, because from time to time he uses this “lure” and “hooks” to occasionally entrap one of the Lord’s fish.

How about the idea that the “servant” is “a class” and not a person?

How can we verify whether this is true? **Compare** the results foretold by the Lord that the “wise and faithful servant” will bring to light for his people with the statements of the servant as shown in Matthew 24:45-47; Luke 12:37,38,42-44, Revelation 3:14-20 and 10:7. We can compare the results this way:

1. Meat in due season — the truth — “updated” about the present as well as the past and future **in all aspects of truth** belonging to God (Revelation 3:18; 10:7).
2. The moral and prophetic teachings must be complete and in harmony with themselves as well as with the whole Word of God (Revelation 3:18).
3. The meat must be in written form as a “letter,” or be writings on clear subjects so anyone can read it (Revelation 3:14 and Habakkuk 2:2).
4. The writings must be translated into all languages where the Lord’s people are found.
5. This food must have been served on the “table” of all believers who keep watch in all countries (Luke 12:37).
6. It must be recognized and appreciated as “meat in due season” by all of the “servants of the Lord” which call themselves “brothers” all during the period of “Laodicea” (Matthew 24:45).
7. The servant must begin his “service” during the time of the Master’s return and continue uninterrupted until all the food is prepared, or the “letter” from the Lord is delivered (Matthew 24:46; Revelation 3:14).

I think we recognize that **all** of these have been fulfilled by one person which we call "that servant," namely Pastor Russell. As it is written in Ezekiel 9:11, "I have done as thou hast commanded me."

Without any difficulty we also notice that no "class" or "group of persons" claiming to be that servant have fulfilled those. Not only have they not fulfilled all of them, they did not even complete the Scriptures already discussed!

Not only do their views differ from ours, even among those pretending to be from the "servant class," their views differ on very important aspects of the truth! Where there indeed was a "class" of prophets or apostles, their views were uniform and harmonious without any disagreement from first to last!

Dearly beloved, we are surrounded by an immense cloud of martyrs who have fought the good fight of faith, who have faithfully finished their course! This helps us in this end of the Gospel age to get involved more and

more in the work of spreading the truth which "glorifies the name of the Father in heaven" in the minds of all who are interested. We must witness about the true faith for which we all must fight to fulfill our consecration vow.

In this way we affirm the beautiful testimony of the apostle Paul who testified when he was about to finish his earthly course: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

May the Lord help us in this fight, all who desire to remain faithful and without spot for this beautiful cause of defending the character and the plan of God or, in a word, the **truth** or "faith once delivered to the saints."

Amen.

Love

Vasile Baci
Moldova

Dear brethren in Christ Jesus. We thank our heavenly Father for the beautiful opportunity to meet in such brotherly unity, to glorify and honor the name of God and our redeemer, and to learn from his word in these perilous times in which we live. Dearly beloved, we know that as new creatures we are on probation for life or death and our ultimate test is love among the brethren and for the brethren; our heart attitude is very important as we read in the *Manna* of March 16.

The greatest thing in the world is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

God is love. Love is a quality which is beyond the power of human description; all we can do is describe how it is manifested. Those who possess this quality can appreciate it as coming from God, as a likeness with God from the heart, thoughts, mind, and language, penetrating all human attributes and seeking to control them. Those words are not addressed to natural man but only to the New Creation in Christ Jesus which have received the holy spirit and have the precious promises to become members of the Redeemer's body.

The apostle Paul said: "Be ye therefore followers of God" (Ephesians 5:1) and this idea is continued with the assurance that God has predestined those who become like his son in character to be co-inheritors in the promised kingdom (Romans 8:29).

When we entered the school of Christ, we didn't know that so much would be required from us; we didn't understand everything when we consecrated even unto death to serve righteousness. Yet no one took advantage of us because what was presented and what we sacrificed is all within our power, and no more than that, until we die. Therefore whatever experiences lie ahead of us, it is not outside the covenant we are expected to fulfill.

The various elements comprising love in today's lesson are emphasized by the apostle especially about being in the likeness of God. He further shows what it means to have such a character and how God has predetermined it, so that we can be worthy of eternal life and immortality brought to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Continuing the lesson, the apostle shows us that we don't live for the present, but for the future, and regardless which place we obtain in the future, obtaining a place should be the most important thing for us. He desires that we understand that the most important thing for a Christian is love toward God, love toward our Lord Jesus Christ, love toward his truth, love toward the brethren, love toward the world, and a heart full of love with no traces of selfishness in its intentions, but with a desire to do good to everyone, to see others blessed as oneself, a heart longing to serve God with all its power. This love prompted our beloved Lord to say in John 13:34, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

Just as our Lord has loved us so much that he gave his life for us, likewise we must give our life for the brethren. How can we give our life for the brethren? By consecrating our time for them, hour by hour, day by day, year by year, and ministering to their spiritual and temporal welfare, even the earthly necessities

when they are in need and experiencing hard times.

Let us continue to examine our subject about the components of love. For those of the Lord's people who never studied the components and elements that are part of it, the suggestions of the apostle will appear as a revelation. He enumerates nine elements:

1. **Patience:** "love suffereth long"
2. **Kindness:** "love is kind"
3. **Generosity:** "love envieth not"
4. **Humility:** "love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"
5. **Polite:** "doth not behave itself unseemly"
6. **Altruism:** "seeketh not her own"
7. **Calm:** "is not easily provoked"
8. **Transparent:** "thinketh no evil"
9. **Honesty:** "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth"

What a wonderful world this would be if despite all the pain and physical sufferings, everyone were perfect in these qualities. At the same time it is not good to desire something we don't have. We should not chastise our neighbors or friends because they, like us, are not perfect in love. Actually the more we learn the lessons of the Bible, the more we grow in our compassion for the creatures who "groan and travail in pain." We have compassion by understanding what is happening as we compare these situations in a loving attitude.

Continuing his thought the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 13:7-11, "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." These elements—patience and kindness—are love in the sense that they will endure when tested.

"Believeth all things"—it does not waver; in a situation of "doubt" it will not question the motives and sincerity of the friends;

"Endureth all things"—in the sense that it will long for blessings upon all those with whom it comes in contact, and come in harmony with this desire to do good;

"Beareth all things"—in the sense that whenever there is an opportunity to manifest, it cannot be suppressed.

From a different perspective these qualities can be interpreted as follows:

"Beareth"—absorbing pressure from all angles without being crushed.

"Believeth all things"—being filled with faith in the divine arrangements and promises, thus having no doubt.

"Endureth all things"—in the sense that perfect love toward God will let the heart be filled with trust in the Almighty and will rest in his love.

"Beareth all things"—meaning that the one who is united with God through love, cannot be defeated because this is the Divine will and arrangement.

God will not permit any of his little ones to be tempted more than they can bear, and with any temptation God also provides a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). The apostle wants us to see how endless love is compared to anything else we enjoy. Love is not a gift but a result, a fruit which must be grown in the garden of our soul, and which we should grow carefully to achieve the right results. The apostle tells us that love will never perish because it is the preeminent of God's words, it is the "fulfillment of the Law" (Matthew 22:35-40).

As we see and learn from God's Plan of Salvation, the kind of love God and also his son have is the kind of love which will sacrifice itself; therefore all who are called to be members of Christ's body must develop the same type of love in their hearts. And it is not just love toward God and his commandments—which all men must develop (Ecclesiastes 12:13)—but it is much more than that. It is such a great love that bought us, our life, with the precious blood of Jesus and his sacrifice. We must be ready to sacrifice it on the Lord's altar as a sacrifice for his cause. We must do just as our Lord Jesus Christ has done. The sacrifice of our life must be dedicated to the Lord and to the brethren. Although it is imperfect, yet it is acceptable by God through

the merit of our Redeemer Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1,2).

As the apostle John says in his epistle (1 John 3:16), "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." And all we do must be for no other reason, but out of love because IT is the fulfillment of the law (Matthew 22:35-40). Therefore love is not just a good virtue, it is the "target" at which all God's people must aim (1 Timothy 1:5).

One cannot imagine a higher ideal (but also more difficult to obtain) than love, love being the basis. This means that without it, one cannot obtain everlasting life (John 17:3). If we all could understand the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ's love, we would begin to desire to have it, even though we know we won't be able to increase it at the rate God would like. Yet we have the assurance that God will accept us by the merit of Jesus reckoned as possessed by us.

If we have reached perfection of heart, or the fourth quarter mark of love (loving our enemies), we should expect that as we approach the end of our race, the tests will become more intense, more difficult and more challenging. Often we will experience usual challenges towards our anger, envy, strife, and hatred. How "on guard" we should be! How carefully we should examine ourselves! How many serious prayers asking for the Lord's help must this stimulate! How careful we should be to resist evil speaking, backbiting, hatred, or envy! For these are a symptom of a lack of love; these all spring from a heart lacking the love of God.

Therefore our heart must be so loyal to Jesus Christ and so in harmony with the holy spirit of God that no bitter water flows out of it. The apostle Paul says that this spirit of love, of loyalty, of consideration for others, must reside so deep in each member of the church that not only must they refrain from evil speaking, but it should hurt us when we hear a derogatory comment about a brother or sister who is our yoke fellow in the narrow way, a way with many obstacles that need to

be overcome. If this were to be achieved by every member of Christ's body, how tightly we would be yoked together in Christian love with our Lord!

So as New Creatures in Christ Jesus we who have left behind the world and its spirit must always feel that the highest duty we have is to bring the human nature with its evil tendencies into complete subjection to the new nature, to bring our old mind under the control of the mind of God, of the holy spirit, of the holy will, crucifying the flesh with its desires and enslaving every thought to obedience to Christ.

The apostle Paul contrasts these fruits of the truth and of the fallen flesh and shows that the spirit of God is a heavenly spirit. The one is an earthly spirit, an evil spirit. The fruits of the heavenly spirit are: Faith, goodness, temperance, kindness, patience, peace, self-control. These are the fruits of the heavenly spirit and are the opposite of the spirit of the adversary. We, dear brethren, must fight continually with the weaknesses of our body.

We are waging a great war, an immense battle, but we must win the victory, else we will not enter the kingdom; there will be no crown. If we are defeated by these trials, we will lose the prize of the heavenly calling. In all cases the goal is "perfect love," the only measure for those desiring everlasting life on any level. The one who loses love will degrade into the darkness of sin and death (second death).

We have seen in God's word the character of the heavenly Father: 1. Power; 2. Wisdom; 3. Justice; 4. Love. These four basic attributes of God act in perfect harmony throughout the universe. The attribute of love shows us the personality of God, the source and cause for all his actions. Dear brethren, let us mold ourselves to such a character so our entire being remains in harmony with what our teacher Jesus Christ has asked of us.

This quality of divine character grows slowly in a consecrated believer who is full of faith and hope through the holy spirit; it is advancing toward the highest reward of

everlasting life and immortality, on the highest realm, and into the presence of the heavenly Father and our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

The apostle informs us further by saying that he would like the Church to understand that faith, hope, and love, which are three fruits of the holy spirit, are superior to all other gifts of the holy spirit.

These fruits must be cultivated throughout our earthly pilgrimage until we finish our earthly course. Without them we will not see God because love is the divine quality without which we will be judged unsatisfactory by God, even though we might have all other qualities. Love is the quality that will endure throughout eternity.

If we want to remain in the divine favor, we must always have love because faith and hope will disappear when we will see the beautiful glories and realities of fellowship being with the Lord and the Father. Love will always stay with us because it is supreme and eternal. Yes! Among all the gifts of the spirit LOVE is paramount and infinite—“Love one another as I loved you”—is the foremost teaching of our teacher (John 15:12).

This love must energize us to lay our life for the brethren as the apostle tells us in 1 John 3:16. He who loves him who begot, will love also the one who is begotten of him (1 John 5:1). Actually, those who belong to the church of Christ have the spirit of love when they are begotten of the spirit. If a believer progresses in his preparedness for the kingdom, this spirit of love will grow until it will be perfected in the resurrection. Then we will have new bodies which will provide the opportunity for our loving hearts to manifest itself fully.

Be careful about earthly love which is deceiving; it will be a restraint on heavenly love. These two should not be mixed and confused with one another. Unselfish natural love which is an element of the perfect human nature will not interfere with our spiritual interests if kept in obedience to heavenly love. One will not destroy the other. There must be natural love toward spouse, chil-

dren, and parents. God wants this to continue, but he also wants this love to be subject to the heavenly one. God must be first. God is love and whoever receives his holy spirit, will also receive his spirit of love.

Dearly beloved, in closing I would like to add that apostle Paul in his statements in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 is actually saying:

“You can Earth in your hands hold,
you can die and live old,
You can master yourself.
You can plant and you can grow,
you can heavenly language know,
Yet you’re nothing without love.

You can know how evil flees, and the stars to count
You can all the knowledge have
Without love like a broken bell will sound
Like a tower coming crushing to the ground.

If all wisdom you can have
to change people only with a smile,
Without love you’re like a thorn, like a dying fire
Like a painful medicine with no healing power.

Even if your treasure sell for those with less fortune
If your body you will give and your bones be broken,
You’re not even like a hero,
you are nothing without love
You’re a zero, zero, zero—nullified and broken.

The apostle John says, “We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). This is a fundamental principle and it would be good to permanently keep this in our hearts and minds. For us the best sign is that we love all God’s children because he called them and they are his as our Lord has declared in John 17:6-10,

“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”

We are members of the divine family, God’s children, and brothers of Jesus Christ. May the Lord bless us all. Amen.

Our Unity in Christ

Jerome Gruhn
France

Dearily beloved in the Lord. My wife and I are happy to be with you here in convention.

In Psalm 133, verses 1 to 3, we read: "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."

These words proclaim the unity of the family of the children of God. The psalmist gives two illustrations of the blessings produced by this unity:

1. It is like the precious oil used in the consecration of the high priest which produced his sanctification. The profusion of the anointing oil suggests the magnificence with which the Lord blesses and sanctifies his people through their fellowship together.
2. This psalm compares this unity to the refreshing dew which fell in abundance upon Mt. Hermon, and upon Zion.

Mount Hermon, in the north of Palestine, is covered with snow. This moisture descending on its slopes produces fertilizing dew that waters the north portion of the country and if there is a favorable wind, often reaches Judea as well. In biblical times one greatly appreciated its importance which contributed in great measure to the growth of the fruits and vegetation during the dry summer. Dew is soft and refreshing. These properties picture divine refreshment through which the Lord provides life and spiritual fertility as well as blessings.

It shows that God provides these marvelous gifts to his people when they are in commu-

nion with one another. The descent of the dew from Hermon to Zion is as miraculous as brotherly fellowship is a miracle of divine grace. Such fellowship is something God loves to bless. "In the light of the king's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter [spring] rain" (Proverbs 16:15).

The prophet David illustrates this marvelous unity of the spirit which existed among brethren of different nations, by the precious oil which was poured on the head of Aaron and went down to the skirts of his garments. In verse 2 of Psalm 133 he alludes to the anointing which inaugurated Aaron into the office of high priest. This pictured the anointing of Jesus by the holy spirit at his baptism at Jordan, according to Matthew 3:16,17.

This oil of consecration, which went down to the skirts of Aaron's garments, shows that the members of the Body of Christ are also included in the anointing of Jesus, which is to say they receive the holy spirit's anointing, becoming members of his mystical body by the baptism of the spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 we are told, "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." And this is true even if we are of different nationalities, and in spite of our differences in the flesh; we are all members of one nation, one people. The baptism of the holy spirit has two functions:

1. Creating the Body of Christ, by bonding the consecrated believers to the resurrected and glorified Master.
2. Assuring the unity between these believers.

A description of the spiritual body is given in verse 12. All analogies relating to the spiritual and human body come from verse 14 and following in 1 Corinthians 12. They touch our hearts and our lives; they make us capable of overcoming our racial prejudices to become sincere brethren. Listen to what the psalmist says: "How good, how sweet, it is for brethren to live in close harmony," to live in unity of heart, and certainly for all to pursue the objective to know and participate with Christ in his kingdom.

The result of being anointed by the holy spirit produces more than the feeling of joy or peace. The spirit of God is communicated to us by his written word. The influence of this word and the knowledge of the Divine Plan contained therein leads us to this unity of the spirit making it synonymous for Truth. Thus we have been illuminated by the Word of Truth. We discern the will of God on our behalf and appreciate his plan for blessing all the families of the earth. Thus to the degree that the holy spirit grows within us, we no longer live for ourselves, but for God.

Our unity of the spirit is not only a unity of comprehension of the fundamental doctrines of the plan of God on behalf of the church and the world, it is also a unity of service and cooperation as ministers of reconciliation. Being anointed by the spirit establishes this unity; being begotten by the spirit starts a new life within us, that of a new creature. This anointing confers upon us an authority by God and by his word: we have become ambassadors of Christ, in cooperation with him, in the execution of the Plan of the Ages. Because of our union with him, a work is now being done, and it will continue until we are glorified with Christ.

The prophet Isaiah (in 61:1-3) speaks of the anointing of the spirit, and the object of this anointing. Our Lord quoted this prophecy and applied it to himself. His faithful followers, those who are begotten by the spirit, become members of this body as far as they are concerned. This prophecy clearly indicates that we are anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and deliver-

ance to the prisoners (announcing to those in captivity to sin, a resurrection from death to everlasting life), and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. We need to know that the Gospel age message offers us the privilege of sacrificing with Jesus and pressing toward the mark of the high calling (Philippians 3:14).

Isaiah 61:2 also speaks of the day of vengeance of our God. God's grace is manifested toward his own; one example is through judgments against those who oppress them. Note that there is a **day** of vengeance and an acceptable **year** of grace. The chastisement is quick, sudden even; his grace is strong and everlasting. This is what it says in Psalm 30:5.

All who study the Bible, who know Present Truth, do not ignore that this prophecy includes the proclamation of all the present truths of the divine plan. It includes also "the day of vengeance of our God." So we must proclaim the gospel according to this precise sequence.

We read in 2 Peter 1:18-21: "This voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. 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: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy spirit."

The word of the Old Testament prophets appeared "more sure" to those who witnessed all that was accomplished in the life and works of Jesus Christ. This was specially true with the apostles who saw his glory and heard the voice from heaven proclaim that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, thus confirming the prophecies concerning Messiah as mentioned by the apostle Peter.

The revelation of God, authenticated by the apostles who witnessed it, and compared to the prophetic word which was fulfilled and approved, continues as divine light upon the church at all times, knowing that this spiritual meat has been the object of the Lord's particular care and grace, and which has been given to

us in its purity, according to Matthew 24:45: “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?”

The church is thus clearly and accurately informed about what to look for and it is not left in darkness to recognize the second presence of the Lord. So it is necessary that we live very close to the source of truth, fearing that the spirit of God be not extinguished in us only to be replaced by the spirit of the world. This means that the truth, the basis of our unity, must not be distorted or compromised. It is impossible that two can hold different conceptions of fundamental present truths and be united in spirit.

The truth of the divine plan remains founded with certainty and strength upon the Word of God. Each day brings us nearer to the end, to the time of trouble and the glorification of the last members of the body of Christ who yet remain on this side of the veil. Present truth is a marvelous revelation for the Lord’s people at the end of this age.

The great fundamental doctrines of the Bible have been revealed by the Lord through that “faithful and wise servant” so we can know them. Our privilege is to understand the Scriptures and to rejoice together while remaining humble; that will prevent us from straying.

In order to maintain a good spiritual balance, it is necessary to keep the unity of the spirit. One must not neglect the study of the word of God to improve his understanding, to achieve a better insight and always a clearer comprehension of the truth. Consequently we need to grow in grace and knowledge. It is a great blessing to scrutinize the prophecies of the Bible so we can understand their meanings. The prophecies that are being fulfilled now become clearer and have the effect of keeping us in the unity of the spirit through mutual understanding and cooperation in the truth.

But the apostle John warns us that we must try the spirits to know if they are of God, which is to say if God sent them, if the spirit of God speaks through them. Their teachings give evidence of the presence or absence of the spirit of God. Some even spread their errors and sup-

port their ideas using the words of that faithful and wise servant (1 John 4:1). So it is necessary to be able to try the spirits to see if they are of God, and thus we must know present truth, and not permit ourselves to be persuaded by false ideas.

Generally the evidence that we possess the spirit is shown by the fruit of faith without which there can be no other fruits of the spirit. Confessing the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer, is a distinctive sign of the spirit as the apostle indicated, a sign that the truth abides in us always, because the work of the spirit is to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

The expression “your being—body, soul, and spirit” as found in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, is explained in Volume 5, page 353:

“The terms body, soul and spirit are figuratively used of the Church collectively. For instance, the Apostle says: ‘I pray God [that] your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ This prayer must be understood to apply to the Church as a whole—the elect Church whose names are written in heaven. The true **spirit** has been preserved in the little flock. Its body is discernible today, also, notwithstanding the multitude of tares that would hide as well as choke it. And its **soul**, its activity, its intelligence, its sentient being, is in evidence everywhere, lifting up the standard for the people—the cross, the ransom.

“In no other way could we apply the Apostle’s words; for, however much people may differ respecting the preservation of the individual spirits and souls of the people addressed, all will agree that their **bodies have not been preserved**, but have returned to dust, like those of others. Besides, the words body, soul and spirit are in the singular, not in the plural.”

In Philippians 3:1-5 it is written: “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love,

being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things [interests], but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Stability and unity for the battle is the work the apostle Paul pointed out in these verses to the saints at Philippi. Without Christian unity, without sincere humility, without self-denial, without love and affection, no one will ever be an overcomer. If the exhortation of the apostle creates true compassion in us for the tribulations of others so we encourage them in love and a spirit of unity, we will all be united, thinking in the same way, of one thing, which is the unity of mind and goal.

The apostle Paul also enumerates some negative elements we must fight against including: 1) an argumentative spirit, 2) vain glory, 3) rivalry, 4) superiority, 5) class consciousness, 6) selfishness. It thus follows that if a heart is overtaken by prejudice and hatred, even the best remedies and treatments are useless. Such a heart remains like stone.

Such are the implacable enemies of brotherly communion and obstacles to unity. The apostle thus tells us to put on the fruits of the spirit and do those things that are good so we enter into brotherly communion with one another. The spirit of God encourages us to remain bound to one another, with the same attitude, the same sentiment that was in Jesus Christ.

We read in 1 Peter 3:8-12: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

The apostle Peter lists here the qualities we Christians must exhibit in both our actions and our reactions, even toward those who want to harm us, or who actually do harm us. Evil suspicions coming into hearts not fully consecrated can ascribe selfish motives to any good work. What encourages us to act according to the preceding is the assurance of a divine blessing (called "dew"). To love as Christ loves us is the secret to achieve profound and intimate relationships, which are grand and holy, regardless of distresses which we experience at the same time.

Here are the words of 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The point of the apostle Paul concerning divine truth was that all who explain and teach must speak and teach the same things, having the same mind. We know Christ is not divided, and that the gospel, far from being contradictory, is an incomparable message and a harmonious divine revelation. The apostle vividly advises us of three things in this verse:

1. For all to speak the same "language," profess the same truths, and preach the same message of grace.
2. To have no divisions. There is no attitude more irresponsible than disputes among believers.
3. To be perfectly united in the same spirit. Such unity is not only based upon harmony of thoughts concerning doctrines, but also upon unity in faith, in love, and in our obedience to Christ and present truth.

From *Reprints*, p. 4446:

"We believe that all who have a proper conception of 'Present Truth' realize it to be indeed the Divine Plan of the Ages, and realize, too, that it is so far above and beyond the natural man's ability that it would be a miracle for him to construct such a theory – the most stupendous miracle of which we have any

knowledge. If its discernment now is not of man, nor by man, but by the holy Spirit, then the holy Spirit should be looked upon as the Teacher and not the human instrumentality through which the presentation has been made to the Church. ...

The only explanation that at all fits or explains present conditions, and the present bright-shining of the Divine Word, is that given us by the Master himself. He assured us that at his second coming he would make himself known to those who would be at that time his true, loyal, faithful servants. He assured us that he would gird himself, become their servant, and cause them to sit down to meat, and bring forth to them from the treasuries of Divine Truth things new and old. (Luke 12:37.) This is the only explanation of the wonderful light on the Divine Plan now shining; the only explanation of the bounties of nourishment provided for the Lord's faithful ones. Meat to eat indeed have they of which the world knoweth not."

Only those who consider how important the word of the Lord is, who are nourished by his spirit, who recognize the Master, his leadings, as well as his providential overrulings, will be ready to think alike. They will be able to bring forth fruits abundantly and will gain the kingdom.

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:16). This implies that there is a same goal to attain and the brethren as a whole community should progress toward it.

The diversity of gifts among us, far from disturbing our unity, is on the contrary an indispensable condition for the formation and perfecting of the spiritual body. All the gifts of the spirit, in spite of their diversity, have the same source and the same objective. This diversity then proves that what crowns all these gifts, what makes their true value, what has to fill us and has a divine savor, is love. We need to

acknowledge that these gifts, freely given, are exclusively a work of grace. They sanctify us, elevate us, consecrate us in God's service. Thus it is necessary for each of us to be humble so no one claims any merit or glory for himself.

We have had the great privilege to come out from darkness and learn the Plan of God through which we can understand the Scriptures. All these things have been given to us so that we will honor the Lord and can witness to this marvelous light. As we do that, our appreciation of the Truth grows within us, and its sanctifying influence transforms us more and more into the image of Christ, which is the desire of each one of us who are consecrated to the Lord.

Each of us must make his calling and election sure because the time is limited, the remaining time is short to finish the race. Let us remain attentive, using every opportunity in the service of the Lord and the brethren. We know that the Lord will lead us if we are faithful; both our peace and our joy will abound. One source of joy for the Lord's people is found in our fellowship together, and in telling out the gospel of the kingdom to others.

May each of us use every occasion which presents itself to testify to the Truth, which provides us great joy and gives evidence of a true spiritual life. Activity in the Lord's service has always been one of the great sources of development for the New Creature.

Let us read again the words of Psalm 133:3: "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." Yes, life, glory, honor, and immortality are the blessings the Lord will finally grant to those who are humble of both heart and spirit, who submit themselves to the influence of the holy spirit, and who will finally find themselves united with all the saints. May the anointing of the spirit always manifest itself more in our daily lives, especially in our interactions with brethren in the service of the Lord and the truth.

So let us always be faithful in everything we do.

All Writings Inspired by God

Daniel Wozniak
France

We live in a time where people are more and more lax and indifferent to anything religious. This is a characteristic of my country, France, where people are becoming more and more atheistic, unmindful, having no interest in God. Not only do they reject any teaching about God, they often mock him, ignore him, and even ridicule him to the point of blasphemy. Respect for religion is disappearing, faith is disappearing, but is this not a sign of the times in which we are living? Did not the Lord predict that in the last times, at his return, he would not find any faith on the earth?

In spite of this we have the privilege to possess an invaluable treasure, a treasure which tells us how to live, where we are coming from, where we are going, and who we are. This treasure answers every question intelligent beings ask in their walk of life, in a way no other “knowledge” can match with the harmony found in the holy Scriptures.

But what proofs do we have that what is written is true, that these are not just stories as too many have a tendency to say?

Surprisingly those with whom we speak agree that Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus really lived on earth because for that there is historic proof. But nevertheless they consider what is written in the Bible as only legend. On the one hand people accept what’s written, and on the other, they refuse to accept it.

What can we say about Adam and Eve? Christendom says they are our first parents, but at the same time many deny this by embracing a contrary theory called “evolution.”

Yet how can we prove that the entire Bible is true? Are we really persuaded that it is?

The apostle Paul tells us that “All writing is inspired by God [French Bible reading] is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly fur-

nished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

We are going to consider this expression: “All writings inspired by God.”

If one accepts that all writing is inspired by God, automatically all writing must come from God, be the word of God. And if it is the word of God, one cannot question, doubt, or ignore it.

What Writing?

Writings have been with us forever. Since the beginning of time mankind has attempted to record its history by signs, writings, and even in caves whose walls have drawings. These tell us today how people lived.

Other writings or stories were engraved on stone like that by the Egyptians.

These characters were difficult to decipher, but thanks to what was found on something called “The Rosetta Stone,” we know today the meaning of what has been recorded. Later, parchment was used for writing; some still exist today – the Dead Sea scrolls are an example – and bring us the words of the prophets and apostles.

In our day libraries contain millions of books. But are these the “writings” of which the apostle Paul speaks? We answer unequivocally: No.

What is then included in the apostle Paul’s expression “All Writings”?

Without question we can say that the Writings are both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and comprise sixty-six books.

Even though the apostle's expression was penned before the New Testament had been written and compiled, we affirm that all the books of the New Testament are part of this "Scripture" spoken by the apostle Paul and of which even his epistle itself is included.

What uniqueness is possessed by these books or writings?

One expression characterizes or differentiates this "writing" from all other writings. It is: "All writing is inspired by God." It is not any writing, but The Writing which is inspired by God.

What is the idea behind the adjective "inspired"? Here's a thought from a Bible commentary:

"Each word of holy Scripture is inspired or 'breathed by God' [Greek: *theopneustos*]. In spite of the intelligence, individuality, literary style, or the personal thoughts of the sacred writers, God miraculously directed the compilation of the Scriptures so that they convey to mankind his infallible divine revelation with perfect exactitude and in a comprehensible manner. If God himself had written it, his Word would not have been more exact or contain more authority than it does now."

Brother Russell made several comments on this verse. He writes:

"Those men were, in some way, inspired by, or brought under the influence of God; so as to be used by him in speaking or writing such words as he wished to have expressed." (*Reprints*, p. 1148)

"The teachings of Jesus, the apostles and the prophets — the only inspired authorities." (*Reprints*, p. 5406)

"We still have the apostle's instructions as fully as the early Church." (*Reprints*, p. 5067)

The inspired teachings which have been transmitted to us are sufficient and must be the foundation for our faith. I don't want to say that we must reject all other writings. Rather we must be careful, attentive and do as the noble Bereans who studied all new ideas to determine if they came from God or from men.

We have other writings which help us understand the message God has given us in the holy Scriptures.

It was through the holy spirit that Pastor Russell gave us so many explanations of texts that were obscure or hidden.

Pastor Russell's writings were not meant to provide something new; they were meant to explain that which had already been transmitted by the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles. He wrote:

"We need no further doctrinal utterances, no more apostles than the original twelve — Paul taking Judas' place." (*Sermon Book*, p. 673.)

But there have always been those who would call themselves an apostle, as the Lord predicted. In Revelation 2:2 we are told to be cautious:

"I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."

False teachers appearing throughout the entire Gospel age attracted followers, not to the Lord, but to their organization. Their sole objective is to enrich themselves and dominate others.

The Bible is generally accepted by Christians as divine authority, but few are able to clearly understand it.

Who Certifies the Writings?

We ask ourselves this question to know who certifies that a "writing" is inspired by God. Upon whom did the apostle Paul base his statement that all "writing" is inspired by God?



Without hesitation we can answer that the content and the writers themselves attest to it. Consider the Old Testament. Old Testament writers state it themselves. Here is what David wrote in 2 Samuel 23:2-4: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth."

David was the instrument by which the Lord conveyed his words. David did not speak on his own. His words came not from him, but from the Lord. Can we doubt David? Can we suppose that these words from David are false?

If there was the least suspicion about the character of David, do you think Jesus, a perfect man on earth, would have used David as

an authority? Consider the words in Matthew 12:3 where Jesus responded to an accusation of the Pharisees concerning the fact that his disciples gathered wheat on the Sabbath and ate it: "But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him?"

Do you think Jesus, a perfect man, would cite the words of someone who was a known liar? The writings are truthful and we can attest that David was inspired when he spoke.

Let us take another example, this one from Isaiah 59:21: "This is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever."

Here is the same thought, the Lord spoke through Isaiah: "My words which I have put in thy mouth."

As with David, we cannot doubt that Isaiah was truly considered to be a prophet in Jesus' times. Do we have proof? Yes we do because John the Baptist referred to the book of Isaiah which spoke of his birth and that of Jesus.

Jesus himself when he was in the synagogue of Nazareth at the start of his ministry stood up to read, and from which book did he read? It was Isaiah. We read of it in Luke 4:18,19.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

In your opinion did Isaiah invent his own words? Do you suppose he predicted things to come with great precision by himself? Without the slightest doubt we can attest that he was inspired to write his entire prophesy.

All the prophets of the Old Testament could never falsify their message or proclaim something other than the words which had been given to them.

You will recall the story of Balaam (Numbers 22) when he was asked to curse Israel. Blinded by the prospect of riches which Balak offered him, he really wanted God to allow him to go. Because of his insistence, the Lord did permit him, but under the condition that he say only the words which God would tell him.

Did he have good intentions? Certainly not, because on the way the angel of the Lord blocked the way. Blinded by the prospect of riches he could get, he did not see the angel, but his donkey did, and refused to go on. Because of this Balaam hit the donkey three times and then something incredible happened: the donkey spoke (Numbers 22:30).

Balaam's eyes were opened, he saw the angel and realized that he was in danger.

Balaam suggested that he return home, but the angel allowed him to continue his trip under the condition that he obey the rule that had already been required of him.

And what was the result? Instead of cursing Israel, he blessed them because he could only speak the words of the Lord.

This gives us the assurance that all these scriptures are true, that the Lord was responsible for what has been written and that he influenced all the prophets so that their utterances reflect the truth, his Word, the Writings.

We can demonstrate the same truth in each book of the Old Testament.

The inspiration of the Old Testament writings is equally attested by expressions frequently cited, such as "Thus saith the Lord" (Isaiah 65:8).

"And God spake all these words" (Exodus 20:1).

"And [God] said unto Moses" (Exodus 24:1)

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying" (Exodus 25:1).

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying" (Ezekiel 6:1).

The authors of the prophecies never attribute these message or oracles to themselves because they were only intermediaries by whom God gave his laws, his blessings, or even at times his cursings.

The inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures is also attested to by Jesus Christ. Consider his words in Matthew 5:18: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Can we doubt the truth of this, the authenticity of the law, even in the slightest point or iota? (The iota is the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet and corresponds to an "i" in French.)

Everything predicted in the Old Testament, in the law, must come to pass and that proves that all has been written under divine inspiration, that no imperfect man could

write such things perfectly, without the slightest error.

Here's another text in John 10:34-35. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and [if] **the scripture cannot be broken ...** "

And what was written? If the Scripture cannot be broken, this confirms what Jesus said in preceding passage, that all must come to pass, that nothing is wrong, that the Scripture is perfect and can only have been written under the inspiration of the one who is perfect, and that is God himself.

And finally, the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures are also attested to by the apostles.

Here are words found in Acts 1:16: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus."

Even the bad things were predicted with many details. It could not have been otherwise; the apostle is quite precise in saying that what was proclaimed by David came by the Holy Spirit under the inspiration of God.

A clear testimony of this comes from the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:20,21. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

This thought is particularly clear and provides more proof that the prophets were directed by a superior authority, and that they did not speak their own words, but those of the Lord.

Thus it was under divine inspiration that the writers of the Bible spoke with authority about the origin of the world, and that they made known the law, wrote the historical books and poetry of the Bible, and communicated its prophetic message.

Inspiration equally pervades all of Scripture even though only a small part was dictated directly by God.

What About the New Testament?

Can we accept all the teachings of the apostles as inspired by God? The teachings of Jesus given and reported to us by the gospel writers, are they not sufficient for us?

Jesus himself answered this for us in John 16:12-15: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

By these words Jesus affirms that the books of the New Testament are inspired, that they reflect the teachings prepared for the faithful ones. It is when his ministry reached its end that Jesus said this. He positively declared that there were many things yet to be revealed.

The time had not yet come for the disciples to receive all these teachings. Jesus made clear by his words that another part of his teaching would be communicated when he was no longer with them. That authority would be conferred upon select ones so that they would prophesy and announce things to come in the name of God.

Jesus spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit which would complete the revelation and bring them into the truth. He defined exactly in advance the great threads of this revelation in the New Testament, including:

- » The historical point of view: "He shall ... bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).
- » The doctrinal point of view: "He shall teach you all things ... he will guide you into all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13).

- » He chose certain ones to receive his revelations and convey them to others: "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:27).
- » He promised to confer upon the words that his witnesses pronounced under the spirit's authority which characterized his own words: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).
- » He said that this revelation would be transmitted; this is clearly shown in the words of Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."
- » He would also confer his divine authority to others than his first disciples who would write another part of this revelation (Mark and Luke). Effectively there were in the early church prophets who, like Paul, were chosen by the resurrected Lord, and who afterward received this new revelation and conveyed it in the Scriptures:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11).

The Apostles

We just showed that the New Testament is confirmed by Jesus Christ himself; now we are going to see that the apostles themselves confirm it. The apostle Paul wrote in first Corinthians 2:13:

"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

The teaching of the apostle did not come from his own intelligence, but both his letters were inspired and give us, as one example,

precise information about the resurrection in chapters 15 and 16 of the first letter to the Corinthians.

The apostles kept very close to the gospel preached by Jesus Christ. They refused all other "gospels." Paul wrote in Galatians 1:7,8: "Which is not another [gospel]; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

Even if the New Testament sometimes cited the Old Testament in a somewhat free way, by paraphrase, or by interpretation, never was the authority of it contested or the original text questioned.

The early church accepted as inspired by God the texts of the New Testament as they received them, even though the official recognition of the canon as a whole was made subsequently.

Because the Scriptures are inspired, they speak with authority; they are without error in the original text. They constitute an infallible revelation of God to mankind.

We could mention numerous passages where the writers considered themselves only servants and not the authors of the words they uttered. Let us also accept their words as provided by God, like the words of a Father to his children. Let us read again Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:14-17,

"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Amen.

“If the Lord Be With Us, Why Has This Befallen Us?”

Lucjan Pulikowski
Poland

I am certain that all of you brethren will agree with me that thanks to our heavenly Father, we have been blessed and privileged to meet for the thirteenth time for a joint spiritual banquet. I bring you the warm and sincere Christian greetings from the brethren that remain in Bialogard.

Today I would like to draw attention to the history of one of God’s men: Gideon. The subject of our deliberations is from a quotation recorded in the book of Judges: “If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us?” (Judges 6:13). These well-known words were uttered by Gideon after he had received a greeting from the angel of the Lord.

Who was Gideon? He was the youngest son of Joash. He came from the poorest clan in Manasseh and was the least in his father’s house. He was a humble man, saying, “Wherewith shall I save Israel?”

His predecessor, Moses, the great servant of God, uttered similar words when God sent him to Egypt to lead the nation out of bondage. Moses said, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

Moses was the meekest of all the people, and with God’s help and with his guidance, he achieved a great deliverance by leading the oppressed people of Israel from Egyptian slavery. During the journeying through the wilderness, they had many experiences, difficulties, diversions, and constant murmuring. The nation finally reached its longed for country, the land that had been promised to their fathers.

God through Moses taught this nation, giving it commandments, statutes, and laws. He also gave them instructions on how they were to live and serve him once they were settled

in the promised land, as recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 6:

“And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken. And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.” (Deuteronomy 6:18-25).

God also instructed the Jews that they were to remember what had occurred during their lives while journeying to Canaan:

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.” – Deuteronomy 8:2,3

Let us then recall why the Jewish nation was led out of bondage and how they earned their freedom. We know that the sons of Israel called out to God. His answer is found in Deuteronomy:

“Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.” – Deuteronomy 9:5,6

He adds:

“When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee ...thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may

serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.” – Deuteronomy 7:1-5

God also told Moses what was to occur to the nation of Israel following his death:

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day. Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.” – Deuteronomy 31:16-18

In the Promised Land the Israelites were to maintain separation from other nations. They were punished in various ways for not obeying God’s commandments, statutes, and laws. The nations Israel joined with became a snare and a reason for their failures. After they entered the promised land, a period of Judges lasted 430 years. These judges were sent by God to lead the nation. God was the king of Israel and the judges were his visible representatives. God protected Israel and blessed them when they were obedient, faithful, and observed his laws. Peace and prosperity prevailed and the people lived in safety. But when Israel abandoned God, the surrounding nations oppressed them. The incursions were made by the people of the east, the Midianites and Amalekites (Judges 6:1-6).

It was then that the sons of Israel called out to the Lord. As an answer to their prayers, God sent an angel to appoint Gideon as a Judge. When Gideon was threshing wheat, the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said:

“The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? ... and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” – Judges 6:12, 13

Gideon’s response clearly indicated the prevailing mood of the nation.

Why did Gideon not know the answer to his question? Was he not aware of why the Lord had left them? As mentioned earlier Gideon was a modest man. Even after the victory over the Midianites, when the Israelites proposed that he rule over them, he replied: “I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you” (Judges 8:23).

Gideon obeyed the angel’s instruction and threw down the altar of Baal; from that time he received the name Jerub-Baal. In Hebrews chapter 11 the apostle Paul lists the heroes of faith, those who by their behavior and works pleased God, so that they might obtain a better resurrection. He also mentions Gideon, that he obtained by his faith a good report.

Dear brethren, when we analyze the history of the Bible we get to know the individuals and the events associated with them. From these recorded events we can deduce some lessons. These events have hidden symbolism and meaning concerning the future.

The Midianites and the Amalekites gathered an army and camped in the valley of Jezreel. The Midianites were descendants of Midian, the son of Abraham and his third wife Keturah (Genesis 25:2). After his escape from Egypt, Moses lived in the land of Midian for forty years (Exodus 2:15;3:1).

When Israel journeyed through the land of Moab, the Midianites and Moabites offered fees for divination and approached Balaam, asking that he place a curse on Israel (Numbers 22:7).

The Amalekites are descendants of Esau (Genesis 36:12) and they fought Israel in Rephidim (Exodus 17:8-16). Although they were related they still had wars among themselves.

Such conditions existed long ago. From the dawn of mankind’s history unto now, we have wars, evil, and hatred often among related people, in families, even among nations with a similar religion and culture.

Gideon as Israel’s liberator from the Midianites is a type of our Lord Jesus who is the Savior of all of mankind from the reign of sin and death. In the picture, the Midianites and the Amalekites represent the enemies of mankind: the world, the flesh, and the great adversary Satan.

The occupation, or rather oppression, of Israel by the Midianites lasted seven years. The number seven in biblical symbolism represents completeness. In this occupation we have pictured the time since the fall of our first parents until the establishment of God’s kingdom on earth. The world’s influence, the flesh, and Satan lead mankind to total ruin morally, physically, and mentally. Since the start of sin, mankind suffers and cries; they are terrified and quite often unable to cope with everyday problems. This sorrowful state of mankind is recorded by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:19-22.

In Judges 6:34 we read that “the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.” Similarly the holy spirit descended on our Lord Jesus when he was baptized in Jordan, begetting him to a new spiritual nature. Our Lord began his mission in Nazareth and he read from Isaiah 61, adding that Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in their ears that very day. The evangelist Luke recorded the answer of our Lord in Luke 4:17-21.

Gideon did not start the battle to liberate Israel until he felt the influence of the holy

spirit. Then he blew his trumpet and called the descendants of Abiezer, in other words his brothers. He then sent messengers to Asher, Zebulon, and unto Naphtali.

The blowing of the trumpet by Gideon pictures the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God by our Lord Jesus. This foreshadowed that in the thousand-year reign of Christ, sin will be destroyed and peace, joy, justice, and happiness will prevail.

Just as Gideon turned to his closest friends for assistance, our Lord Jesus turned to his closest friends, his brethren. He did this by choosing apostles to undertake his work: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

In the type there was the gathering of the descendants of Abiezer. Abiezer was the son of Manasseh and the grandson of Joseph. Abiezer's name means "the father of help." The descendants of Abiezer represent the apostles and all the disciples our Lord Jesus had during his mission on earth.

Gideon's messengers were sent to the men of Manasseh who represent the Jewish nation. Our Lord was a Jew and his mission was confined exclusively to the Jewish nation, something confirmed by John: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

Our Lord commanded his apostles not to go to the other nations, and in Matthew we have a record of our Lord's words: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 10:5,6).

The next assignment for the messengers was to inform the other people of Israel of the approaching liberation from the ruling Midianites. The other people are the other nations to whom Jesus Christ sent his apostles following his resurrection.

Matthew recorded our Lord's words: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the

Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20). In this way the gospel was preached to all the nations as well as to us.

Before going to battle Gideon wanted to make sure he would have God's blessing and he asked God to do something special using a woolen fleece (Judges 6:36-38). Gideon did not do this test just once. He wanted to reassure himself one more time: "I pray thee, but this once with the fleece" (Judges 6:39). In the second test the woolen fleece was dry but the ground was covered with dew.

What lesson is shown in this fleece? The fleece was wet the first time, the second time it was dry. It represents the Jewish nation. The first time when the earth was dry and only the fleece wet, pictures the time in mankind's history when all the nations apart from Israel were without God and did not have communion with him (Amos 3:2). There was a time when God in a specific way blessed the nation of Israel and gave them his law—the law covenant. He made a covenant and pledged to bless the nation of Israel provided they were loyal to him (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). This was a period of great favor for that nation and it ended 3½ years after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The Jews however tried to hinder the spread of the gospel and they did not accept it. The apostle Paul said, "and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

In the meantime those of the Gentiles who accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior came under the Abrahamic Covenant and became inheritors of the Abrahamic promises. The nation of Israel proved themselves to be dry—without a spiritual life—just as in the morning Gideon's fleece was dry and the surrounding ground was covered with dew. This took place at night (see verse 40).

The night represents the Gospel age when darkness prevails. The nation which denied its Messiah by sending him to be crucified, remains dry until now.

Dear brethren, today we see signs of returning favor to the nation of Israel: in other words, the fleece is slowly becoming wet. According to the words in Ezekiel 37 the revitalizing breath is still lacking for the bones, a picture of the house of Israel.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

This state was illustrated by our Lord Jesus in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-21). The rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day, was the nation of Israel, being under God's providence. They were the ones who possessed the best and the most perfect law mankind could have. They were the ones who were in a state of grace, abounding in promises. At the same time there was a beggar named Lazarus who lay at the rich man's gate, full of sores and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; the dogs licked his sores.

When the woman from Canaan asked the Lord to heal her daughter, our Lord said to her: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:24-27).

The woman understood the comparison (the meaning of the symbol "beggar" was discernable in the times of our Lord Jesus) but she did not leave unaffected. That is why her faith was rewarded.

The beggar is representative of the surrounding pagan nations who saw the blessings in Israel and wanted to be partakers of them; yet they could not. Temporary relief was brought to them by dogs licking their wounds represented by philosophies and ideologies feeding the people. All the pagan nations found themselves in such a state (Ephesians 2:12).

The change took place after the beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died at the same time, and in the land of the dead was in torment. He noticed that a change of fate had

taken place for him and Lazarus (Luke 16:22, 23).

When favor was taken from the Jews and transferred to the Gentile nations, the Gentiles began to come to accept Jesus. The first of the Gentile converts was Cornelius. From that time the Christians that came from the Gentiles began to come into "Abraham's bosom," in other words to the promises given to Abraham that his seed was to be multiplied as the stars of heaven. The apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans explains that Israel has not obtained what it seeks, but the elect have obtained it (Romans 11:7).

The rich man in the land of the dead is representative of fleshly Israel among the nations of this world. Jesus Christ said, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Matthew 8:22). All those who do not accept Christ are in God's eyes dead, and the Jews became such. They lost God's grace with its associated privileges. Shortly thereafter they were dispersed among many nations. In this picture they were hidden in the land of the dead and for a period of two-thousand years they experienced the "double" as their penalty. They begged for mercy from the Christian nations as Lazarus did in the parable.

Let us then return to Gideon. In the test of the woolen fleece Gideon was convinced of victory over the Midianites. Our Lord Jesus Christ instructed his followers to watch the fig tree (Matthew 24:32,33).

When our Lord was going to Golgotha, he said to the women of Jerusalem: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children ... For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:28,31). The green and dry tree is the nation of Israel. In the green tree, a time of grace is shown, abounding in promises both spiritual and earthly. The dry tree illustrates a time of loss of God's grace; as a consequence the Jews were dispersed throughout the world. The apostle Paul says: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15).

When we analyze the history of the chosen nation with whom God made a covenant, we see the fulfillment of the apostle Paul's words in Romans:

“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not

the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” – Romans 11:17-22

To summarize our lesson: Many events on earth today assure us that we are standing on the threshold of great changes that will herald the establishment of God's kingdom.

May the Lord add his blessing to his work in our lives, so that we may be found in that kingdom.

Amen.



Convention Auditorium, Nowy Sacz

The Seven Eyes of Jehovah

Ebe Manoharan
India

Dearely beloved brethren in the one faith, one hope and one spirit. I want to express my thankfulness for this opportunity to be here, one of the most memorable days of my life. I bring the special love and greetings from your brethren in India and especially from my home ecclesia in Coimbatore.

Let us read from Zechariah: “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:9,10).

An angel just gave a vision to Zechariah who is interested in the various features of it. He sees two olive trees on either side of a golden candlestick which supply oil to the top bowl of the candlestick; from there the oil runs down into seven branches where it is burned to give light. He asks, “What do these two olive trees represent?” The angel does not answer immediately. He tells about Zerubbabel, a great mountain, a head stone, a plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel, and about seven eyes – everything, it would seem, except the answer to Zechariah’s question. Finally, in the last verse, the prophet gets the answer. Though the prophet did not fully understand the significance of this vision, it contained lessons which he conveyed to Israel in his time. Today I want to focus on “The Seven Eyes of Jehovah,” particularly as it applies to the building of the antitypical temple (or Church) and the lessons this has for us.

At the time of this prophecy, some Israelites had left Babylon under a decree of Cyrus,

returned to Palestine, and had begun to rebuild the temple of the Lord. And it was with earnestness and sincerity that they began that work under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who was the governor of the people at the time, and Joshua, who was the high priest. The people enthusiastically began building the foundation of this temple. When it was finished, they rejoiced to see the start of the rebuilding effort. Some among them could still remember the glory of the previous temple built by Solomon. Then their neighboring Gentile enemies, fearing perhaps a resurgence of their power to the level it had been under David and Solomon, began to hinder the work. They made all kinds of trouble and eventually their discouragement worked. All building effort stopped after the foundation was successfully laid. The people turned to building homes for themselves, to making themselves comfortable in the land even though that was not why they were there. The Lord raised up two prophets, Zephaniah and Haggai, whose words immediately precede Zechariah in your Bible. These two urged the people to continue their work for the Lord.

Haggai’s Prophecy

Here are Haggai’s introductory words: “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built” (Haggai 1:2). The people had come specifically to build this temple but because enemies tried to hinder the work, they decided it wasn’t the Lord’s

will for them to build the temple, at least not then. How quickly they forgot their mission. And that can happen to us. We start some service for the Lord enthusiastically and make progress. Then what happens? The adversary sends enemies who try to hinder our progress. So what do we think when this happens? We might say, "It is not the Lord's will for us to do this now. Let's wait until some other time when he indicates it is the right time."

Whenever the adversary sends his emissaries to stop the Lord's work, the flesh easily concludes that the time has not come for us to do this or that, just like the Israelites in Haggai's time. The prophet continues: "Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai 1:3,4). The Lord through the prophet was saying: "Look at yourselves! Your homes have roofs and ceilings and you are comfortable, but my house has just a foundation and neither roof nor walls."

"Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. [Think of what you have been doing.] You have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat; but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; you clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." (Haggai 1:5,6).

God tells the people that because they have overlooked their covenant with him, he was withholding the temporal blessings they wanted. He reminds them that they grow food, yet remain hungry. They drink but are always thirsty. They clothe themselves but are never really warm. They earn money but it disappears like coins put into a bag with holes. His blessing was not upon them "in basket and in store."

Like these ancient Israelites, we have the responsibility to sacrifice our life in the doing of God's will. After baptism we start our spiritual work enthusiastically, but what happens when "enemies" try to discourage us? Our modern world has modern enemies. Our

flesh, our thoughts, our deeds are always before us and act as barriers to our spiritual growth and hinder God's work in us. When this happens, let us not blame God, saying, "This work is not the proper time, it is not the will of God." Sometimes we hear brethren say they will work for God after they get settled in life, or after they retire. Anytime but now! Dear brethren, God does not approve of those who want to postpone their work for him. Let us never forget this as we walk before God following the counsel of his word.

Jehovah's Seven Eyes

Zechariah spoke of the temple rebuilding work as being watched by the "Seven Eyes of Jehovah." He carefully watches the plumb line (a better word than "plummet" used in the King James) in the hands of Zerubbabel. A plumb line is a cord with a heavy weight at the end. It is used by a builder to make the vertical alignment of stones perfect when making a wall. So we see that Jehovah is carefully watching the progress and the quality of his temple.

We read in Revelation: "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" (Revelation 1:4). The seven churches could be compared to seven time periods in which the spiritual temple, the Church, has developed since the days of the apostles until the end of this age.

The apostle Paul refers to this temple: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:19-21).

The building of this spiritual temple is supervised by the Almighty through his only-begotten son, Jesus Christ, the slain

lamb. John speaks about this lamb as having seven horns and seven eyes, and is the one worthy to open and read the sealed scroll: "One of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Revelation 5:5,6). Here we are told the seven eyes are the seven spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). Here we see seven spirits and seven stars. These stars are the seven angels of the seven churches: "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 candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches" (Revelation 1:20).

The seven eyes represent the complete wisdom of God as shown to us in his overall great Plan of the Ages in which has been revealed to us and to which he has invited us to have a part. Through these eyes our Heavenly Father watches, guides, and protects his children throughout this age.

Our "Zerubbabel" makes sure that we all come in contact with God's divine wisdom as expressed in his plan which assists us to do his will. The "plumb line," used to correct the short comings of the living stones built upon the foundation of the apostles, hangs in the hand of Christ, under the watchful eyes of seven different kinds of guidance and blessings of Almighty Jehovah.

We are grateful that the Lord has revealed this great plan of the ages to us so we can

understand his ways. Through this plan we see his character revealed which stimulates us to continue the work at hand which is the building of the spiritual temple of the Lord. Paul says we are co-workers together with him. Yes, we have been invited to have a part in this work of building the temple. Oh yes, the Lord does the actual building. It is his power and might that is responsible for the structure and its completion. But he has invited us to have a part in it, to cooperate with him in the great outworking of his plan as it affects the church during this Gospel age. And so we have the great blessing of being co-workers together with him.

We believe the seven messengers selected by God to help with the building of the Church during this Gospel age are the apostle Paul (Ephesus), the apostle John (Smyrna), Arius (Pergamus), Peter Waldo (Thyatira), John Wycliffe (Sardis), Martin Luther (Philadelphia), and Bro. Russell (Laodicea).

Our "Zerubbabel" (Christ) is measuring every stone in this antitypical temple. Every moment, every hour, every day the Lord watches the influences with which we are surrounded and how we react to them as we attempt to do his will. He has the plumb line, he is the director of this work. He makes sure the lines of the temple are built according to specification and that nothing is out of line in this temple built with living stones. If we are not in line with truth and righteousness and in line with his will, we will be rejected and set aside. He is measuring every one of us every day, every moment. Could we ever lift ourselves to his level of righteousness? Certainly not! Not by our power, nor by our might, but only by his endless mercy will this work be completed.

Let each of us apply these lessons as we walk in the narrow way that leads to life.

May God bless and guide you in his wonderful ways as you seek to bring glory to his name through Christ Jesus.

The Dragnet

Francis Paul
India

Dear brethren! It is a great privilege to be here. I am thankful to God for everything he has given us and to those who made it possible for us to be here. I bring you love and greetings from the ecclesia in Mettupalayam, South India, where I meet.

I also thank our heavenly father and our Lord Jesus Christ for keeping us in the truth, and to see the faces of other brethren, and to rejoice in the great and precious promises.

We read in Matthew 13:10,11: "And the disciples having come near, said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in allegories?' So answering, He said to them, 'To you it has been given to know the **secrets** [or: mysteries] of the kingdom of the heavens, but to those ones it has not been given.'" (*Analytical-Literal Translation of the New Testament*)

The parable of "The Dragnet" is one of the "secrets of the kingdom." It is found in verses 47-50:

"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like to a dragnet having been cast into the sea, and having gathered together fish of every kind, which, when it was filled, when they dragged it up again on the beach, and having sat down, they gathered the good fish into containers, but they threw out the rotten ones. In this manner it will be at the conclusion of the age. The angels will go out and will separate the evil ones out of the midst of the righteous ones and will throw them into the furnace of fire or, the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

(*Analytical-Literal Translation*)

From Isaiah 57:20 and Revelation 17:15 we learn that the sea represents the world. When Jesus began his ministry, he met disciples who were fishermen. He told them, "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). Luke describes one of the Master's miracles:

"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men." (Luke 5:1-10)

Though they followed Jesus for 3½ years after this, they did not completely understand why they were called by the Lord. Although they believed what Jesus said about his future sufferings and sacrifices, they did

not realize the depth of his plan. That is why after his crucifixion they went back to fishing.

“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.” —John 21:3-11.

Likewise in these end times, the Lord casts his net in the sea of people to get his church class. A net is an openwork mesh of cord. From Hosea 11:4 and Ephesians 4:15,16, we see that love and truth can be considered as “cords” in a net. This net, made of love and truth, is let down into the sea to catch his church class for the kingdom. As fish caught in a net die, upon consecration we die to the world and become partakers in his heavenly kingdom. We die to the world through trials and refining tribulations (Psalm 66:10-12).

Paul declares that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death (Romans 6:3). We who are dead to the world through consecration, caught in the net

of the world, are separated from them, as good fish are separated from the bad.

How do we differentiate between the good and the bad? Consider the Law concerning fish (Leviticus 11:9-12). When God separated the Israelites from the world, he instructed them about which fish could be eaten and which not. The good were fish with fins and scales. Such fish eat other living organisms. But fish without fins and scales eat both living and dead organisms. Even though many fish are caught in a net, the good must be separated from the bad. This Law reveals a great secret. We, the spiritual Israelites, the good fish, eat only living organisms, i.e., the living truth: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jeremiah 15:16).

But the many “fish” without scales and fins eat both the living truth and also what is dead by digesting worldly doctrines and deeds. The Lord will cast these out. Once we start eating the truth, even a little worldliness will cause the loss of God’s favor. If we want God’s approval, like good fish we should eat only the living truth.

The incident described in Luke 5 pictures the first advent of Christ. Many “fish” were caught and the net tore. Likewise in the early church even though many accepted the truth, the net of love and truth tore because of some like Ananias and Sapphira. That is why God warns those at Ephesus that they have forsaken their first love (Revelation 2:4).

The John 21 incident (Jesus’ by the sea of Tiberias) pictures the second advent of Christ (see Revelation 3:20). At this time they caught 153 fishes and the net was **not** torn. At the second advent the net of truth and love will not be broken.

Just as Jesus asked the disciples to bring some of the fish they caught, he asks the same of us. We should catch and give good fish to God. The Church is called the body of Christ (Romans 12:5). It takes a Peter to create another Peter, a Paul to create another Paul. Our goal should be to create Christ within ourselves (Galatians 4:19; Philippians 3:9).

During his first advent, Jesus fulfilled the will of his father; such was his "food." Every child of God should fulfill the will of his Father so he can form "Christ" in himself (1 John 2:6). Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did, fulfilling the will of God. We have so little time to form Christ in ourselves. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be" (Psalm 37:10). To determine if we are good fish we must compare ourselves with Christ. Jesus once told a Samaritan woman that God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

What does it mean to worship in spirit? As Paul told the Galatians, only someone who has the fruit of the spirit has the right to worship God because Jesus is made whole by the fruit of the spirit. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount he lists the characteristics of the Church:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

One should think of himself in all humility, that everyone else is better than he is.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

These are the ones who mourn at the distress of others. Jesus cried when Lazarus died.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

"But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:11).

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi said he liked the Sermon on the Mount the best. The non-violent message of Gandhi eventually brought independence to India. If such meekness can bring about so much change in this present evil world, think of how much more a spiritually meek person can do!

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

God considers righteousness to be obedience. If we are obedient, we have on the robe of righteousness. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden, they immediately realized they were naked. God's children must thirst for righteousness.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Anyone would show mercy to relatives and friends, but real mercy is something that comes from our heavenly Father whom Jesus described as being kind to the ungrateful and the wicked (Luke 6:35,36). Jesus asks us to be merciful in the same way.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Jesus Christ is the only one who has seen God. Only if we become like Christ can we expect to see God (see Hebrews 12:14).

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). (See also Romans 5:10 and Ephesians 2:14.) Jesus Christ was called the son of God because he himself is our peace, who has made of the two, one, and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall, of hostility. We shall also be called sons of God if we, led by the holy spirit, bring many to the peace of God through consecration.

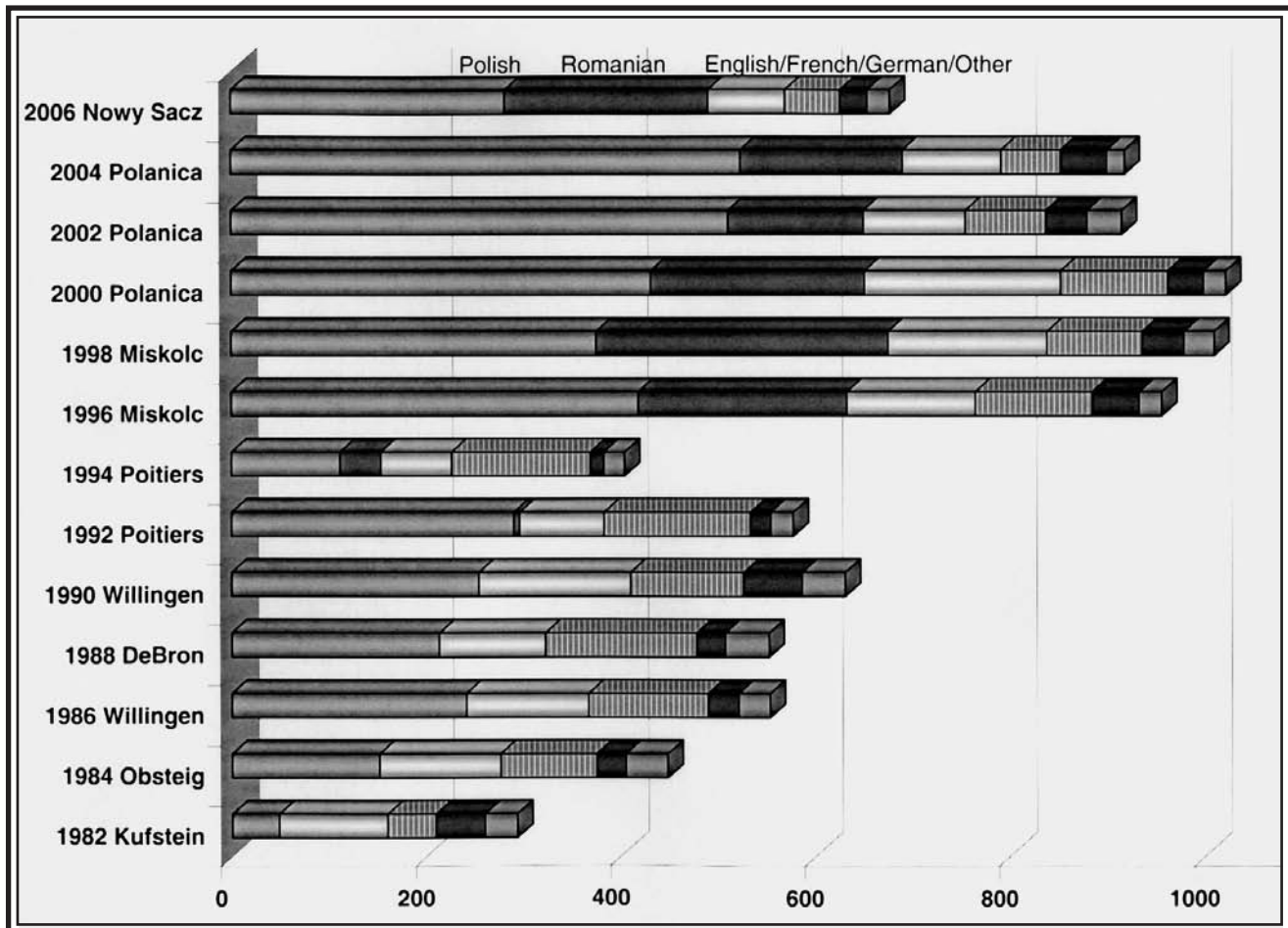
"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). As Jesus was persecuted because of righteousness, we in obedience to him should undergo our tribulations with joy (1 Peter 3:14).

"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the **grace** of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder" (1 Corinthians 3:9,10). "Grace" means the tribulations Paul suffered for Christ's sake. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (Hebrews 13:10). Paul is saying "Even an opportunity to suffer with Christ is not given to all; it is given only to those who are SELECTED." (See Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 2:12.)

The apostles rejoiced in this thought: “When they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name**” (Acts 5:40,41). Suffering for Christ is a blessing we all share.

Let us remember that the good fish are the righteous. It is for this righteousness that God has called us to be his chosen and faithful followers (Revelation 17:14). And so may God bless and guide us in his righteous paths, that we may be his faithful followers even unto the end.

Amen.



Registration by Language Group

The Sons of Jacob: Yesterday and Today

Mirek Suchanek
Poland

Dearely beloved Brethren in Christ! The subject we are going to consider connects the Old Testament with the New Testament, Genesis and Exodus with Revelation, and the blessings spoken long ago with the blessings which still apply today. We are going to consider the following verses:

1. An account of the birth of Jacob's sons (Gen. 29:32-30:24)
2. A list of Jacob's sons (Exod. 1:1-5)
3. Jacob's blessings of his sons (Gen. 49:1-28)
4. A list of those who were sealed (Rev. 7:5-8)

In Exodus 1:2-5 the twelve sons of Jacob are named: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph.

In Revelation 7:5 the following names are given: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph, Benjamin.

When you compare these two lists, you notice certain differences. Some names are repeated, some disappear and in their places some new ones appear.

This raises many questions. Let us, brethren, consider and try to answer four of them:

1. Why in Exodus is Reuben first on the list, while Judah appears first on the Revelation list?
2. Why does the Revelation list omit Dan?
3. Why does the Revelation list include Joseph as well as his son Manasseh? Wasn't his second son, Ephraim, also rejected? (Isa 7:5-8)
4. Since the Church of 144,000 is being chosen from the Gentiles, why does

Revelation 7:5 enumerate only tribes of Israel?

Let's answer the first question.

Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob (Gen. 35:23). The firstborn was sanctified; he was an heir: "For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel." — Numbers 8:17,18

The apostle Paul in Hebrews tells us something more. He mentions a change of priesthood: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." — Hebrews 7:12-14

And he adds:

"Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:7).

In Hebrews 1:2 he says: "Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

"HE" — the Lord Jesus, from the tribe of Judah — is the most important. He is first which is why a change from Reuben to Judah takes place.

It was not the firstborn, not Reuben, but Judah who became the heir. Many times in history, let us notice brethren, the Lord transferred the blessings from the firstborn to another son.

This happened when the blessing due the firstborn Ishmael was given to Isaac. Similarly, Jacob was blessed instead of Esau, and Manasseh instead of Ephraim.

This last example is mentioned in Genesis 48:14 when Jacob purposely reverses his hands so the blessing falls on the younger Ephraim: "And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hand wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn." In such a strange way the Lord God fulfills his plan. It is not the obvious things that become the reality but those which please the Lord.

Let us return to the words of the apostle Paul in Hebrews 7:12 and consider "a change of priesthood." The Lord Jesus is the first from the tribe of Judah. He opens the new, the only, way to salvation. Those who follow him are to be heirs, the chosen ones. It is because of Jesus that a new family of priests comes into existence.

Judah means "glorious, honorable, the glory of God." The words with which Jacob blessed Judah are perhaps the most beautiful of all the words spoken to his sons. Let's read Genesis 49:8-12.

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes."

What a beautiful blessing containing so many wonderful words connected with the future! They include a prophecy about our Lord Jesus — "until Shiloh come" — which we mention so often.

Reuben, on the other hand, was excluded. In Genesis 49:3,4, Jacob told him: "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch."

Did Reuben really do something in his life which had brought about his exclusion. Yes, he sinned against his father. Genesis 35:22 reads: "And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it."

His sin was to bring consequences for his own future and the future of the whole tribe. Though the tribe of Reuben inherited land, it was the land before Jordan.

Let us quote the last words of Joshua 13:15-23. "And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan ..."

Reuben was the firstborn. He was Jacob's pride and might, but he sinned by defiling his father's bed. And so the words of his father — "thou shall not excel in dignity or in power — were thus fulfilled.

What lessons can be drawn from Reuben's behavior? Perhaps sometimes it seems to us that we are ever to be the firstborn, that we will always be the heirs, and that our places in the 144,000-member Church are certain.

Let us remember, though, that every sin separates us from the Lord God. Let us be careful because we can lose our blessing of the firstborns. We might prove unworthy of entering the kingdom.

The words of warning of the apostle John must be remembered: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be" (1 John 3:2).

Let us consider the second question

Why does the Revelation list omit Dan? To answer this question we need to consider history. The tribe of Dan, with the other tribes, received an inheritance in the land (Joshua 19:40-48). The Danites were given the land at the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, north of the Philistines and Gaza, as far as Joppa. These territories were difficult and dangerous, but certainly they could be conquered.

However, the children of Dan were discouraged by the might of the Amorites, who forced them into the mountain and prohibited them from coming down to the valley (Judges 1:34). Then under the pressure of the Philistines, they gave up all together the possibility of conquering their inherited land and emigrated north (see Judges 18).

They started to look for a land where they could dwell. They sent out five men to spy out the land and to search it. They reached as far as the mount of Ephraim to the house of Micah. In the house of Micah they met a young Levite who was a priest in that house. The Danites asked the Levite to seek the counsel of God, whether the way in which they were going would prosper. The priest answered: "Go in peace: before the Lord is the way wherein ye go."

After such advice – the advice they wanted to hear – five men departed to Laish: "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing."

Encouraged by this convenient situation, they came back to the whole tribe and together with six hundred men went to battle. On the way, they went into Micah's house and fetched the carved image, the ephod and the teraphim and the molten image. The young Levite started to protest so they proposed that he should become a priest unto the whole tribe: "Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a

priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? And the priest's heart was glad."

They came to Laish. They smote the helpless people and destroyed their city. They rebuilt the city and called it DAN. They set up the graven image, and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan.

Where, brethren, was the House of the Lord at that time? The house of the Lord was in Shiloh (Judges 18:31).

So the Danites committed great idolatry. They had an idol, a graven image (that required breaking the second commandment). They murdered the innocent people of Laish and there built a city called Dan, their capitol. There they found Jonathan, who was not a nobody, but a son of Moses.

Jonathan was vain and possessed unsatisfied ambitions. The Levite Jonathan used to be a priest in the house of Micah. His heart was glad that he had become a priest unto the whole tribe. Blinded by his dignified position, he did not acknowledge that there was only one priesthood and that the House of God was in Shiloh.

The Danites took the graven image, the teraphim, and the ephod. And so a false, strange, idolatrous priesthood came into being. As a result, the tribe of Dan was rejected for at least three reasons: idolatry (the graven image), slothfulness (the Danites did not conquer the land they inherited but instead looked for easier prey), and pride (they established their own priesthood, disregarding the priesthood God had appointed).

What lessons can be drawn from this experience? The tribe of Dan may represent the Second Death class during the Gospel age. Just as this tribe was rejected and replaced with the tribe of Manasseh, likewise Judas was rejected from among the apostles and replaced by the apostle Paul.

Let us beware of the sins of the Danites. Let us remember that we have only one invisible Lord God. He is the one we are to praise; he is the one we are to worship.

In your spiritual life, you cannot take the line of least resistance. You are not to retreat when battles arise. (For the Danites, these were from the Amorites and Philistines.)

Let us remember that there is but one priesthood (just as there was but one "House of the Lord" in Shiloh). Let us submit ourselves to this priesthood and not make our own rules, principles, or hierarchies.

We need to fight for our Promised Land. We need to overcome our pride. We need to conquer our sick ambition and our desire for applause. Our fight continues until the end, until death. May our end be as wonderful as our beginning when we were delighted with the Lord God and the Gospel.

Let us return for a moment to our lesson in history. From the history of Dan, let us move forward to the history of Manasseh.

Why not Ephraim? Jacob treated both as his sons (Genesis 48:5): "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine."

Ephraim was omitted because he not only committed idolatry, he fought against his brothers. Isaiah prophesies about Ephraim: "Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us" (Isaiah 7:5-9).

"Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus ... And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son ... and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people..."

(verse 17) "The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria."

At this point, it is useful to quote some more history. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. Rehoboam was a son of Solo-

mon. He ruled over Judah and Benjamin and was a godly king (1 Kings 12:20,21).

Jeroboam, the Ephraimite, was a servant of Solomon: "Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son."

And so Jeroboam ruled over ten tribes of Israel. Let us quote the words of the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh, which were spoken to Jeroboam: "And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee" (1 Kings 11:31).

Jeroboam, the Ephraimite, introduced idolatry: two calves, and two places of worship (in Bethel and in Dan). He made priests not of the tribe of Levi, he ordained new feasts, he himself ministered at the altar, sacrificing calves unto idols, he cast off the priests from the tribe of Levi (1 Kings 12:25-33).

"For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD: And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made." (2 Chronicles 11:14,15)

His kingdom consisting of ten tribes of Israel is also called Ephraim from Jeroboam, the Ephraimite (Isaiah 7:8,9). The capitol of the kingdom of Israel was Samaria. It fell as the Lord's prophecy foretold in 721 B.C. Two years before that Damascus fell, in 723 B.C.

Ephraim, like Dan, committed many sins, including idolatry. That's why it could not take the place of the tribe of Dan. That's why their portion was given to the tribe of Manasseh and why Manasseh appears on the list of tribes in Revelation. Again, the younger one receives the blessing of the firstborn.

Let us now consider the third question.

Why in Revelation is Joseph mentioned? Was not the inheritance given to Manasseh and Ephraim? When we refer to the sons of Joseph, we mean Manasseh and Ephraim. Did Joseph have other sons? Yes he did. There are verses which prove this.

In Genesis 48:5,6 Jacob tells Joseph: "And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance."

In Joshua 17:14-17 it is written: "And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit. ... [vs. 17] And Joshua spake unto the house of Joseph, even to Ephraim and to Manasseh."

From these verses one can conclude that Joseph had other heirs, apart from Ephraim and Manasseh. That's why they may be mentioned in Revelation as the tribe of Joseph.

And the fourth question.

Why is the Church of 144,000 being chosen from the Gentiles if in Revelation only the tribes of Israel are mentioned? Jesus tells the apostles in Matthew 19:28, "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you ... when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The twelve thrones constitute a symbolic number in the same way as twelve spiritual tribes constituting the little flock is symbolic. (Each of twelve tribes consists of twelve thousand members.)

The royal priesthood may be divided into twelve different classes. However, just as tribes had different positions, so it is probable that there will be, as the prophesies show, distinctions and differences between saints (see the Polish magazine *Straz* 1955, p. 85).

To confirm this let us consider the meaning of the names of Jacob's sons, according to the words of their mothers and their father.

Juda: praiseworthy, venerable

Reuben: powerful, worthy with dignity and fortitude

Gad: conquered, but he will conquer too

Asher: rich meals, he is going to supply royal delicacies

Naphtali: as a doe at large, he speaks beautiful words

Manasseh: he brings forgetfulness, forgiveness

Simeon: hated by people

Levi: joined, an addition

Issachar: giving homage

Zebulun: the Lord has given me a wonderful gift, a present

Joseph: a branch which bears fruit. The Lord took away my shame.

Benjamin: son of my pain, beloved son

In Revelation 7:4 we read that these are the chosen from the twelve tribes, twelve thousand from each tribe. A full number was to be chosen from fleshly Israel. Our Lord Jesus directed his message first to the twelve tribes. It is written, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5,6).

Those Jews who heard and received the offer of the high calling were spirit begotten and became spiritual Israel. These were the first of the 144,000. However, the majority of Jews rejected Jesus. That's why the rest of the chosen had to be gathered from the Gentiles. In Matthew 23:37 Jesus said, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."

The apostle Paul says to the Hebrews: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). So the 144,000-member Church was to consist also of Gentiles.

We would like to express, here in this place, a great gratitude to God that it happened this way and that we were given such a great

privilege to aspire to attain a place among the sealed. May we have such a desire.

Brethren, in our hands we are holding the most wonderful book. Sometimes it seems that it is difficult to link together thoughts from the Old and the New Testaments. On the basis of our presentation, one can conclude that it is, indeed, possible.

Events of the Old Testament have a close connection with our times. In every place we see beauty, harmony, order, and consistent acts of God from beginning to end.

Sometimes it is difficult for our human minds to comprehend the wonderful wisdom of God. But we look into the future with hope.

Let us say this with the words of the apostle Paul from Philippians 3:10,11, "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."

Let us express our hope also in the words of our Lord from Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

May these words become ours.

Amen.



Hotel Orbis Beskid, Nowy Sacz

Becoming Kings and Priests

Iosif Iepure
Romania

And hast made us unto our God **kings and priests:** and we shall reign on the earth. — Revelation 5:10

Dear brethren, we pray that our good God will bestow in our hearts much faith together with a holy love so that together with all saints we glorify his name forever.

An important question we would like to address in our discourse is this: How is it possible for us being conceived in sin and iniquity (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:10) to become spiritual beings of the highest rank, immortal, partaking of the divine nature, kings and priests for God? (2 Peter 1:4; Revelation 5:10) The answer was revealed by the manifestation of our Redeemer Jesus Christ who has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

And this is what we find in Scripture and in the writings of the faithful servant Pastor Russell.

“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” — 1 Peter 3:10-12.

These are the ones who by reading or by hearing understand that in this Gospel age the Lord searches and chooses his disciples to become new creatures, displaying the inner qualities expected from those who choose to symbolize their consecration by water baptism (Matthew 28:18-20; 5:1-16).

They become wiser, considering the workmanship of the Creator—the water, the air,

the earth, and the firmament—aware that a supernatural being has set them in order and brought them into existence. (Job 12:7-10; Genesis 1:2-28)

He who sees all this through reading and hearing will have faith that God is a rewarder of those who seek him as stated in Hebrews 11:1,6. He must empty his earthly vessel of all fleshly impurities, from the brackish water of human traditions, and from adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (Galatians 5:19-21).

This person reaches an understanding that God the Father is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-just, and that he is perfect in his love. God’s attributes of justice and love act against any sin and injustice, and a sinful being cannot draw near to God without a mediator. God will guide him to Jesus, the door through which one may draw near to the Father. (Hebrews 7:27; Vol. 6, p. 122*; John 14:6)

The wise and faithful believer, cleansed from human weaknesses, reaches the understanding that religious teachings have no value unless they point to the holy Scriptures and especially that the price paid by our Redeemer is the only basis for drawing near to the Father, as the Lord, the holy apostles, and the holy prophets all declare. (Vol. 1, p. 13; Acts 4:12; Vol. 6, p. 63; 2 Timothy 3:15-17)

It is only when this cleansed person makes a complete consecration (Vol. 6, p. 126) that during all his life he will practice justice out of

* Page numbers in Bro. Russell’s writings refer to the Romanian volumes and books.

love, in his daily dealings great or small, that he will receive tentative justification until his consecration **will include sacrifice**. God has the right to ask his creatures to practice justice and hate iniquity; otherwise we are considered as strangers and enemies, as we read in Vol. 6, p. 152.

When this justified person makes a full consecration, he is considered right with God, being under divine influence; starting from that moment he begins to be conceived by the Truth. (See John 6:63; James 1:18; Vol. 1, p. 196; *Tabernacle Shadows* p. 19-22; Vol. 5, chap. 8, p. 107.)

If these begotten ones love God with all their heart, all their soul, all their strength, and all their mind, they will eventually receive eternal life. (Luke 10:27,28)

All Their Heart

In this case the heart means the will. What God really asks from us is that the human will is to be subject to him, to serve him, obey him and not others.

All Their Soul

Worldly science as well as the Bible confirms that the soul (or life) is in the blood (Deuteronomy 12:23) which the heart pumps through the arteries to all parts of the body. To be able to keep our spiritual life, it is evident we have to serve God with all our body – our **whole being**.

All Their Mind

The human mind comprises all the recorded knowledge in our brain. As we examine this knowledge, sentiments and thoughts are born which are then put into practice **by active people**. To the fallen man, all tendencies are against truth, which make some thoughts evil, ugly, and against the God of Love. This is why “love thy God with all thy mind” is a beautiful thing; all our thoughts should be directed toward glorifying God and toward respecting our neighbor.

All Their Strength

Each member of our body has some strength, and all the united powers of these members should work together toward loving God and

our neighbor. Those living such a life will be resurrected (John 5:29; 6:39).

To those justified believers, made right with God, and in the Court (Tabernacle Shadows, p. 22), an offer is made during this Gospel age that fulfilling certain conditions, they could have a change of nature from human to spiritual, to be together with our Lord and Redeemer. The conditions are the same as they were for the Jews who accepted Jesus and were accepted as sons of God and members of Christ’s body at Pentecost. (Vol. 1, p. 196; Vol. 6, pp. 153,154,345,346.)

Those who consecrate the rights gained through Jesus’ sacrifice put their future into Jehovah’s hands (*Tabernacle Shadows*, pp. 22-24); they do this by water baptism (burial) into Christ’s death. (Romans 6:3-6,19; Galatians 3:26-29) Jehovah begets these consecrated believers to a new nature, the Divine nature (1 Peter 1:3,4,23; James 1:18). This is now the second step, from the Court into the Holy.

Here are some facts that require attention (*Tabernacle Shadows*, p. 19). In the Tabernacle’s Court everything is made of copper, representing human perfection. Some are satisfied with this nature and remain in the Court (Vol. 1, p. 225). A few make a full consecration to sacrifice with Jesus and enter into the Holy where everything was made of gold (*Tabernacle Shadows*, p. 21).

These two classes are shown in the Scripture as distinct and yet alike in some respects (Luke 10:25-28; 18:18-24). There are those who have made a full consecration and begotten by the holy spirit to a new life; they will receive a new nature if their character has the attributes worthy to become a son of God: faith, self-denial, steadfastness, courage, justice. These are the ones with whom God has made an eternal covenant, the ones who will receive promises made to David (*Manna*, June 15).

The Lord will seal them as sons and make them sit in heavenly places, translated into the kingdom of **his beloved son** (2 Corinthians 1:21,22; *Manna*, June 27; Ephesians 2:6;

Colossians 1:13). Thus we are liberated from the power of darkness into the Holy, being in the light of **the golden candlestick**, eating from **the bread of the golden table**, and burning incense of sacrifice **on the coals of the golden altar** as we read in *Tabernacle Shadows* pp. 249, 250-253, 267. For these priests the holy spirit uncovers the beauties found in the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 21). In the Holy the members of this spiritual family enjoy their life and love; joy and happiness overflow to their neighbors, to relatives, etc. Perfect love leaves no room for fear, jealousy, murmuring, pride, and worldly ambition, which are burnt sacrificially (Vol. 5, chapter 8).

These consecrated ones no longer need fleshly weapons, for the battleground is in the mind and heart; the fight is with the spirit of love, justice, truth, the Spirit of Jehovah and his son our Redeemer, to ward off the evil spirit of Satan who wants to take away their peace. Here they can learn all the details of the Divine Plan.

The Lord has promised to reward only those who become Christ-like in love. They must reach unity in spirit and purpose with the heavenly Father (*Manna*, August 24).

Love is the character and nature of God (*Manna*, August 23). Love demands that we do justly in our dealings with neighbors, brothers, family, and ourselves; to cultivate the respect for rights and prerogatives of others (physical, moral, and intellectual), and because of this respect, we should never limit them or destroy them (*Manna*, January 15).

Now let us look at the rewards for those who have finished all the previously described steps, the rewards presented on seven steps of glory described in Revelation.

The **first step**, to Ephesus, concerns the tree of life, access to which was denied Adam. The reward is secured by keeping their first love toward the Teacher and his truth. All overcomers without exception will receive this great, eternal reward. (Revelation 2:1-7)

The **second step** is to Smirna. It announces the victory over the mockings and tribulations which will come upon the Church. The

Church witnesses and suffers in all circumstances. The promised reward is the crown of life and an eternal shield against death. This is the share for those who have proven themselves soldiers of the cross under trying conditions. (Revelation 2:8-11)

The **third step**, to Pergamos, is the gift of a white stone which contains the assurance of receiving the divine nature because of Christ's approval represented by the hidden manna, "God's Nature" which does not decay or die, as a recompense for faithfulness, for following Christ and for separation from the world, from the friendship and protection the world offers, refusing to participate in a rulership without the Lord. (Revelation 2:12-17)

The **fourth step**, to Thyatira, is authority and a share in judging the nations because the saints were the only ones to accept Christ's authority over the false Church and her tyrannical lover, the world, typified by Jezebel and Ahab. (Revelation 2:18-29)

The **fifth step**, to Sardis, reinforces the assurance that the names of the overcomers will not be erased from the book of Life; they will walk with him dressed in white as a reward for not staining Christ's robe of righteousness when they were surrounded with decadence and spiritual death. (Revelation 3:1-6)

The **sixth step**, to Philadelphia, grants a share in governing New Jerusalem, and a place as pillars for beauty and for support in God's great antitypical temple. They will not be taken out from that temple because they have shown the genuine spirit of brotherly love and kept his word of patience. (Revelation 3:7-13)

The **seventh step**, to Laodicea, describes the reward of being a part of the divine government (of the entire universe). No being can imagine a greater honor in all the universe than this. This high honor is given because the saints have separated themselves and kept away from the frightening state of things during the days of the Lord's presence.

These seven favors, blessings, and honors which the natural eye cannot see nor ear hear, has rightly been said to represent the most complete description of the exceedingly great and precious promises that God has prepared for his holy people, according to the progress made along these previously described seven steps.

Later we read about the power and attributes of the perfected New Creation. The apostle tells us there will be various degrees of glory even though all will share the same, glorious nature—immortality. All will be heavenly, Divine creatures. The Church as a whole will shine as the sun. (Vol. 6, p. 629-632)

It is wonderful how these Creatures are judged under the Law of freedom. (Vol. 6, p. 94; paragraph 1,2; p. 348 paragraph 1,2.)

The harmful winds are held back until the last member of Christ's Church is sealed. At the end of this sealing, the signal will be given from above: "It is finished" (Revelation 16:17). Then will occur the events described in Revelation 16:18-21 and in the great whirlwind where the Church, typified by Elijah, **Jehovah's strong one**, will be taken as we read in Vol. 2, chapter 8, p. 242: "Elijah went with Elisha [Little Flock and Great Company] there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:1-15).

Here we should carefully consider all these things as they are deeply symbolic. The Lord told Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his stead and Jehu as king of Israel (1 Kings 19:16). After Elisha crossed back over the Jordan, the deeds he performed represent the Ancient Worthies (the prophets and patriarchs) and their future activities typified by what he did. Elijah anointed Elisha (2 Kings 2:9,10,13-15) and Elisha sent a servant to anoint Jehu as king to destroy Ahab's house, Jezebel, and all Baal's priests; but because he also loved gold, he died (2 Kings chapters 9 and 10). After Elijah's ascension, Elisha (which

means liberator) for a time continued the works of Elijah in Israel:

1. He healed the waters of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22).
2. He punished the youths who blasphemed (2 Kings 2:23-25).
3. He blessed the people (2 Kings 3:14-27).
4. He multiplied the oil of a widow (2 Kings 4:1-7).
5. He blessed a Shunammite by resurrecting her dead son (2 Kings 4:32-36).
6. He neutralized poisonous herbs (2 Kings 4:38-41).
7. He blessed and multiplied bread (2 Kings 4:42-44).
8. He healed Naaman of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:10-16).
9. He punished his servant **with leprosy** for taking money for that healing (2 Kings 5:20-27).
10. He retrieved an axe for a son of the prophet (2 Kings 6:1-7).
11. He blinded the Philistines and opened the eyes of his servant (2 Kings 6:15-18).
12. He prophesied bounty of bread and it happened (2 Kings 7).
13. Elisha helped a Shunammite (2 Kings 8:1-6).
14. Elisha anointed Jehu as king through a servant (2 Kings 9:1-13).
15. A year from his death a dead Moabite was resurrected after his body touched Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20-21).

We have to be careful as we read that the embryonic New Creation will try to do only God's will, fighting with his body and will bring it under subjection under divine rule showing that this is the only way to follow the Lord (Vol. 5, chapter 8).

But sometimes a true Christian will suffer even spiritually for some mistakes. The New Creature lives in an earthen vessel, weak and

imperfect, and fighting with weaknesses and unfavorable conditions surrounding it. Many times mistakes are made which result in a great deal of pain. Sometimes the new creature may feel as if it is rejected by the Lord; but we have an Advocate in Jesus through whom we can come to the throne of grace for help in time of need. (1 John 2:1; Hebrews 4:14)

Therefore the New Creature must always watch with great care all words, thoughts, deeds, intentions, motives, and heart intentions. If an evil thought comes to his mind, the New Creature must realize it is from the adversary and dismiss it from his **mind** so it won't take root **in his heart** and overwhelm the good that lives in the **heart**. The New Creature must grow in Christ.

If there is no physical growth, there is grief. If a child after normal growth eventually stops developing, we as parents become very concerned.

What pain might the heavenly Father feel when he sees a lack of development in his children? The word "growth" is a common biblical expression and we should always keep it in mind. Let us imagine how a seed grows roots, then it comes out of the ground as a plant, then bears grain which is the wheat.

But it is possible that the New Creature as a result of its own negligence has upset the holy spirit, becoming smaller than earlier in life when it started because the character, instead of progressing, went backward in spiritual matters, just as one grain of wheat can be smaller than the one grain that was planted; but of course it will not change into a different seed. (Vol. 5, p. 156)

The New Creature can experience something like wheat, just as a plant can be affected by various diseases and, instead of white flour, there is black powder which, if not taken out by **harvest cleansings**, will

spoil all the flour.

So it is with the consecrated who, after being hit by pride and no longer listening to "it is written," will start feeling superior and will insult the brethren, which is a sin against the spirit as described in various Scriptures. (Proverbs 16:18; 6:12-19; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9; Jude 17-21; Vol. 6, pp. 265-267.)

Pure wheat can become dark and taint true wheat/flour (truth); if you put such defective wheat (tares) into the ground, it will never yield an increase. So it is with the consecrated who voluntarily renounce the rights received through the merit of Christ. If such a one goes astray and begins to smear and injure others, he will go into the ground and never come out again (will not be resurrected). He will die like an aborted creature such as we read about (Job 3:11,16; Psalm 58:8; Ecclesiastes 4:3; 6:3; 1 Corinthians 15:8; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29,31; Jude 10).

But for those New Creatures which from 1878 onward have reached a developed character like Jesus (Romans 8:28,29) the moment of burial is their moment of resurrection to be together with their Lord and Redeemer and with the heavenly Father throughout all eternity; they will be given immortality so that together with the Lord, they will become the Sun of righteousness with healing in its wings.

The Church's liberation from the chains of tyranny and oppression comes before mankind's liberation from its master, sin, with all its implications: pain, suffering, disease, and death. We all know that mankind is groaning **in birth pangs** waiting for the completion of Christ's body. (Romans 8:22,23; Revelation 14:13; 20:5,6; Romans 8:29; 2:6,7; Matthew 13:43)

And now, dearly beloved, I will leave you with these thoughts asking that the heavenly Father bless you all.

Amen.

“Giving no offense in any thing”

(2 Corinthians 6:3) — In the Family

Stanislaw Kuc
Poland

Dear Brethren! I bring you brotherly greetings of love from the ecclesia in Kozy, as well as from my family.

“We give no offense in anything, that our ministry may not be blamed,” wrote the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 6:3, *NKJV*).

It is a great responsibility and a great sin to become the reason someone stumbles. To those who cause the Lord’s people to stumble, Jesus gives a very clear warning: “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). These words invite reflection: How might we offend others?

In the previously quoted texts, the apostle says “give no offense in anything,” which means that in all our actions, whether they be spiritual or everyday tasks—at home, at work, among worldly people as well as among brethren—we should constantly remember not to offend anyone in any way. To offend, or to stumble, means to corrupt, to weaken, to make worse. In what way can we corrupt or weaken a brother or a sister? Without a doubt by misusing something that is considered precious and sacred by the other individual.

We protect things we believe to be real treasures, but if someone considers our treasure as something common, we rebel, weaken, and stumble. If one who has consecrated his life to serve the Lord and was able to surrender some of the flaws of his old nature, and if he then sees a brother or a sister doing exactly

what it took him great effort to give up, it can cause that person to become weak.

We should strive not to become a stumbling block in anyone’s walk because it is usually the weak-in-faith who will be offended by our actions, not the strong ones: “Beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak,” wrote the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 8:9).

What should our reaction be when we learn that our action or behavior causes a brother or sister to stumble? The apostle provides us with an answer in the next verses of the same letter: “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Corinthians 8:13).

Let us each individually consider if we are capable of surrendering our habits when we become aware they are causing our brother to become weak. Not often—in fact it is rather rare—can we correctly evaluate our behavior that might be a cause for stumbling others. Oftentimes we do not pay attention to certain matters, sometimes due to time constraints, and sometimes because we do not analyze our faults on a daily basis.

We should, however, focus on the fact that a true Christian must be highly polished and considerate towards others. We ought to remember that we no longer are in the darkness of the world and worldly matters. The apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 2:9, “But ye are

a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

We have to be thankful to the heavenly Father for the miraculous gift of the high calling, and we also need to prove through our lives that we are different from others. To prove it, we need to begin within our own household, our own family. Certainly it is not an easy task. Nevertheless in a Christian family we should see to it that our children and members of our household see a good example in us, one that is constructive and not stumbling.

Wouldn't it be stumbling for our children if on a Sunday morning, we wake them up for Sunday School yet we ourselves stay in bed, possibly because we stayed up late to watch a good movie? Could parents be doing something in their actions to not build up their children? Should we not be a good example to our children so from their early years they learn the right ways from which they can benefit throughout their entire life? Should we not choose good company for them, as much as possible, so they would not choose badly themselves?

No words, even the best ones, will have the same effect on others as being a good example. Of course being an example requires more effort than merely speaking words. Therefore our behavior at home should be virtuous. In a Christian household there should be no quarrels, the calling of names, swearing, nor any loud and improper scenes.

One should be very careful not to stumble anyone nor even give approval for such a thing, as did Ephraim. Ephraim put down his sons, therefore he stumbled them: “I saw Ephraim when he makes his children prey: Ephraim brings forth his children to the murderer” (Hosea 9:13, modern Polish Translation). It is useful to identify what this process of making one's own children into “prey” was all about. In verse 10 we read that Israel

(Ephraim) became disgusting when he was at Baalpeor.

What caused the “grapes” or “first-ripe in the fig tree” (the way God saw them in the beginning) become a disgusting sight (which is much worse than simply becoming unpleasant or less liked)? Numbers chapter 25 talks about this terrible fall of Israel. It started out “normally.” Israel settled in Shittim with the Moabites as close neighbors. Friendly neighborly invitations began: “Join us in our holiday!”

It was an interesting holiday: offering sacrifices to the Moabite gods (“It's almost the same as in our temple”), and an abundance of food and drink. Then came the dances and festivities. “This is so much more fun than our holidays! All the joy and laughter! And look at these Moabite women—such beautiful garments, such flirtatious moves and looks!” It was only a small step from this to fornication: “Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor” (Numbers 25:3). These were the actions of the fathers; the children observed and longed to do the same. The fathers never considered that they had become “prey” for Satan.

Let's now try to answer what it means to make your children into “prey.” “To make one into a prey” is to encourage in our children the ambitions and desires embraced by the surrounding world. It is to plant in our children, our youth, the values of this world.

Perhaps at this point one might say: “There is nothing to worry about. I never tell my children about these things. I don't encourage them to take their example from the world.” But words are not needed. Our life, our example, is enough:

- » If through an excessive amount of time and effort, parents desire to achieve (not necessarily excessive) wealth, that will also become a goal of the children; they will put God in second place if not totally abandon him.
- » If as they grow up the children see how much their parents display their good looks, we can be certain they will

look for “qualities” such as outward beauty in a future spouse.

- » If the parents desire greatness and recognition instead of meekness and gentleness, the children will become people who consider pride and stubbornness a normal thing.
- » If at every occasion when the parents are given an opportunity to entertain others and the children hear them complain, they will never be happy to fulfill this Christian responsibility.
- » If at home we criticize brethren and their service to the ecclesia, if we evil speak about others, it will make our children into an ideal prey for the hunter Satan.

Let us remember that as parents we have a great responsibility to God, and we only have two choices: 1) we either make our children “the sons of God’s kingdom” or 2) we make them into prey for the prince of this world. Though sometimes there will be misunderstandings between parents, they should be resolved as quickly as possible. Children should never witness loud quarrels between parents, and certainly we should never share our family problems with those outside our family such as neighbors or friends.

Every Christian couple should know that no one can understand and fix their family issues or misunderstandings better than they themselves. No one will be able to help them with such problems if they don’t attempt to help themselves. If such a rule is disregarded by both spouses, it will be difficult to maintain a good life. If a husband or wife shares their small problems with others close to them, or possibly with strangers, we know good things are not taking place in that marriage.

How unwise and inappropriate is doing such a thing. It would not be surprising if a couple who does this moves from bad to worse. Such interaction is probably mutual exhaustion and oftentimes leads to separa-

tion or divorce, which is becoming more common. Let us consider if such an evil is starting to infiltrate our group, our fellowship, the area of concern that not so long ago seemed not to affect us.

Can not such behavior stumble others? Does it not take away from the truth, from the brotherhood, from the fellowship? How much better are we in the statistics of marriages and divorces compared to other groups? It is a fundamental rule in a good marriage that the spouses honor each other and treat each other with respect. The husband should talk to his wife and children with due respect, gentleness, and honor. Only then can he expect due respect from his wife and children, a respect he deserves as a good head of the household, with harmony and respect of his family.

If the spouses do not treat each other with respect, it will be difficult to expect the children, who are raised in such a negative domestic environment, to treat their parents with due respect, submission, and good behavior. Neglecting certain issues within a family, even the small ones, will cause ill effects for years to come.

“Give no offence in anything.” Let these words from our theme text, as applied to family life, become a warning for us, to keep from offending, or stumbling, our children, our household members, and our neighbors. May the sounds of arguing, cursing, swearing, or using inappropriate words and conversations never be heard within our households. Let us consider that our children are continuously surrounded with the evil influence of the world, the use of foul language, bad conversations and company, and wickedness. Therefore let us at least maintain a calm, peaceful, and friendly atmosphere within our own homes. Let our families return to our homes as to oases of peace and tranquility. Let our homes become places that produce and release a balm, a balm of Gilead.

Dear brethren, it is our responsibility to make our homes pleasant for our family and those who visit us. And this applies not just to

our home; it should be done at work and in business as well. With all our interactions with people we should be careful that we not stumble anyone in anything we do. Our conversations and our behavior should be moderate and serious. We should fulfill our duties to the best of our abilities.

As employers we should treat our employees with the respect they deserve; as employees we ought to do our job to the best of our abilities, not only when we are being watched by supervisors, but all the time. "Give everybody what you owe him" (Romans 13:7). When purchasing or selling, we shouldn't cheat or extort anyone. Justice and love

should characterize all our interactions with others.

Let us not speak evil of anyone who is not present, even our enemies (if we have any). Let us not speak of them disparagingly, with contempt, or disrespect. Let us remember that such conversations and behavior might be offensive to others and might result in negative consequences for us in the future.

And let us also try to bring all that is best to our ecclesias and our fellowships. Let us bring peace, joy, and constructiveness. And to our meetings, conventions, and love feasts, let us bring calm and tranquility.

— In the Ecclesia

Henryk Glab
Poland

It is my privilege, dear brethren, to share with you some thoughts from the Word of God. We shall draw from that most wonderful book, the Bible. We shall draw a lesson from the words recorded throughout the pages of the holy Scriptures. With grace and help from the Lord, we shall consider the subject recorded by the apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 6:3, "Putting no stumbling block in anyone's path so that our ministry will not be discredited."

Whenever we come into contact with others, in situations such as family, how important it is to be watchful to not cause any offence. How important this is, also, whenever we come into contact with brethren. And how important it is to be aware why this is so.

From the experiences that come upon God's people, the most painful and harmful for spiritual well-being are all kinds of disagreements, disputes, and misunderstandings among the brethren. This is why the Lord himself, in his own words, warned against sowing any seeds of offense. These

are the words of our Lord: "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!" (Matthew 18:6,7, *NASB*)

The words of our Savior declare a serious penalty for those who stumble the faithful believers of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The influence on the faithful, of persecutions without, is not as negative. Rather, it may have the opposite effect. For these are like bitter herbs that enhance the appetite and foster a deepening study of the Word of God. They strengthen faith, zeal, and love towards the Truth.

However, trials within, which cause confusion amongst the household of faith, give rise to painful influences that may dishearten many. The Lord especially warns against stumbling little ones; particularly those who are at the beginning of their walk; those who require light food, who are just starting their pilgrimage, following the Lord along the narrow way. Perhaps, even those who recently became acquainted with the Lord.

A great responsibility falls on any who knowingly cause disagreements, or incite disputes, which may cause weaker ones to lose interest and falter. Jesus Christ, our Lord, makes it very clear that for those it would have been far better if their lives had ended before they had a chance to stumble others.

We could have assumed that since the Lord states that “stumbleings must come,” we should be overly concerned with them. However, this is only a warning of which we should be aware. Still, the Lord’s warning is two-fold:

1. The Lord’s people are not to be surprised when they encounter the stumbleings that “have to come.” Nor are we to allow ourselves to be drawn in by them, but to give a firm resistance.
2. A far stronger warning: we are not to be the cause of stumbling, nor even to give a wrong impression which could be the reason for stumbling.

The wise man Solomon warns in Proverbs against the sowing of discord among brethren; he says it is an abomination before the Lord: “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that

speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

These are wrong inclinations which result from man’s fall. These six things the Lord hates, but the seventh one is especially an abomination before him. This is why the Lord clearly states a greater responsibility for such behavior, and warns of a greater penalty facing those who sow discord.

How and in what way is it possible to offend a brother or a sister? We can do it by our words and conduct. That is why we should pay close attention when in contact with the brethren, whether in private, or in times of fellowship, or at meetings and conventions. We should ensure that at all times our contributions are edifying, and not the reverse; that our answers during studies, and our thoughts on the Scriptures, are both edifying and beneficial; and that we do not show off our knowledge and eloquent speech. If this happens, we should consider that perhaps we are beginning to lack humility and are wandering towards the direction of pride.

During the Bible studies, a spirit of jealousy or disruption should never be present. If others appear to have a better understanding, or more accurate answers, we ought to rejoice, and not the contrary. Such a situation should give rise to rejoicing and not jealousy. During Bible study when we present our thoughts on a given subject, and someone else answers differently, we should not become irritated, or angry, and give rise to fighting. Humility will always shield us from conflict in such situations. If we consider our thought to be the correct one, we may repeat it, by providing supportive Scriptures. This should not lead to disputes that would stumble brethren, friends, and especially the younger ones. Let us leave such discussions for those who participate in them in their private conversations.

Let us remember one of the warnings of the apostle Paul from his letter to Timothy: “Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarrelling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen” (2 Timothy 2:14, NIV).

Quite possibly we shall have a difference of opinion on some subject, but if given proper consideration, we may realize that it is actually just a matter of words. Under such circumstances, let us note the words of the apostle Paul: "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God" (1 Corinthians 11:16, *NASB*). These words teach that contentions over words do not bring any benefit. They only reveal contentiousness that in turn can lead to stumbling others.

If someone has a tendency to disagree and insists upon being right, it is far better to leave him alone, instead of disagreeing with him, provided it does not concern important matters, or fundamental principles. We should do what is in accordance with the teachings of the holy Scriptures and the will of the majority of the ecclesia. Every member of the ecclesia should strive to be forbearing towards the weaknesses of others.

We are to recognize our own weaknesses and ensure we keep them under control so as to not injure, or stumble others. Our personal preferences are to be renounced for the good of the ecclesia. If in a certain matter we are right, we can be assured that sooner or later the Lord will reveal this in the ecclesia. The way and circumstances will arise in which all who are guided by the will of God and common sense will take notice of what is right.

Let us conduct ourselves in the spirit and manner of the words in Romans: "Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Romans 14:13). "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Romans 15:2).

Is it at all possible to be liked by all of one's friends and brethren? It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to achieve this 100%. We do not mean here being liked simply as a matter of vain popularity, but for good, for edifying, and for avoiding any cause for stumbling.

Our title text is especially applicable when sharing the Truth, both publicly and pri-

vately. On such occasions it is necessary to conduct ourselves skillfully, when spreading the Truth, so as not to discourage or stumble others. One should not begin proclaiming the Truth with something that may humiliate another's faith, by criticizing, or showing errors and being unsupportive. Such an initial approach is doomed to failure and stumbling, and will bring about negative results in our attempt to convey the teachings of the Bible.

Even though someone else's beliefs may cause us to be filled with indignation because they appear unreasonable and lack support in the teachings that were passed on to us by our Lord, the apostles and the prophets, the time for revealing such errors will come later, when the other person becomes more interested in the Gospel, and when he starts to search deeper into the Truth. We can only assist by helping and keeping them interested.

An example of how we should act in such situations was given by the apostle Paul: "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). He was inwardly disturbed by the great idolatry in that city. He was greatly irritated. However, when he had the opportunity to make a speech to the people, he did not start his address with criticism, or an expression of his indignation toward the people and the city. Let us note what he said to them: "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." (Acts 17:22,23).

Since they acknowledged that there is the Lord God, whom they did not know, Paul found it proper to tell them about him. We, likewise, are not to argue or be critical of someone who says he has no knowledge about something. That may cause only

resentment and reluctance to listen to what we are trying to convey.

Even if someone is not able to accept the Gospel message, it should not lead us to maliciously humiliate him and what he believes. This would do him only great harm. This could cause a loss of faith someone initially had and he would be left only with emptiness. We are to remember that not everyone is able to accept the Truth. The Lord explained this: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

To be drawn by the Father, one must properly prepare the state of his heart. The apostle Paul did not want to offend the Athenians which is why he proceeded to present to them the good news of the Gospel in such a delicate and most understanding way.

Was the apostle Paul always so forbearing? The words written to the Galatians show a somewhat different apostle: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" (Galatians 3:1).

In the words that follow, he criticizes their attitude and raises concerns regarding their walk with the Lord: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Galatians 4:9-11).

Is this a different apostle? No, he is the same. He could not have treated the brethren in Galatia as he treated the Athenians who did not know the true God. By criticizing the Athenians' beliefs he could only have stumbled and caused reluctance on their part to get to know God, though inwardly he was most upset at such a state of affairs. But to the Galatians he is not concerned about masking his indignation, or worried about being a cause for offense. The stumbling was already there in those who knew the Lord God and

Jesus Christ and were beginning to disregard their knowledge. This is what the apostle Paul was opposing. Some things which offend, whether in the world or in the Church, may be justified.

Not always does the fault lie with those who are regarded as the cause of offense. Consider the example of our Lord. Many were offended by him; "he was a stone of stumbling" for nearly the entire Jewish nation. Was it our Lord's fault? Certainly not. Even some of His disciples were offended as a result of His hard sayings: "Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (John 6:60,66).

The responsibility for this offense is not the Lord's either. They departed and the Lord did not hold them by force. They heard the "hard sayings," but they did not seek an explanation from the Lord. Had they asked him how to understand his words, he would have explained them precisely. From their side, there was no attempt to seek an explanation. The Lord does not hold back those who take offense.

In another place, the Lord made it clear that those who are offended by him are only harming themselves and losing a great blessing. He states, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (Matthew 11:6). The Lord knew that whosoever is offended by him is not of the good soil on which good seed falls, as he explained in the parable of the sower: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20,21).

The Jews and brethren were also offended by the words of the apostle Paul. But he was not the cause of the offense. Those who were the true cause of the offense were the ones who said that the apostle Paul was not acting

appropriately. The apostle Paul did not try to unite them with flattering words. He knew that these were the ones who had harmed the well-being of the Church. About such he wrote in Galatians as well as to the brethren in Corinth: "But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:12,13).

Referring to false apostles, we have the record in Acts of "savage wolves and men speaking perverse things." These were the cause of offense, seeking to put the blame for their own sin upon others. We should remember that there are offenses for which the offender is to blame. There are, however, also offenses for which the offender is trying to blame someone who is innocent. True followers of Christ will not follow such a course.

As to how we are to behave when spreading the Truth, the apostle shows: "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of Truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Corinthians 6:4-10).

The best method to proclaim the Truth is not just by word, but also by good example. Those to whom we are witnessing the Word of God, should see that our lives and behavior are in accordance with what we preach. If it is not so, we shall also be the cause of stumbling our brethren as well as our neighbors and our friends. As a result, we shall discourage them from the Truth. Instead, we are to pass on the Gospel message, the good news of the coming salvation, that the kingdom is near for which so many pray, although some may have a problem understanding it.

The times we live in are defined by the Word of God as difficult times. Restless society seeking materialism takes upon itself a form of godliness, but denies its effects, as the apostle Paul writes to Timothy. They become a society without God.

The prophet Isaiah writes of this: "But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20). We see the troubled sea. Our mission is not to get caught up in these conditions. At this time we should be especially careful that our service is blameless. We should well remember the words of our Lord: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

By not stumbling others, we promote peace. Let us remember from this lesson that we do not give an occasion to stumble. Let us ensure that we avoid stirring up trouble. Let us adhere to the words recorded in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." By so doing we will be recognized by the Lord as good servants deserving a reward.

May we be found worthy. So grant us this our Lord. Amen.

A Priest Forever

Ernie Kuenzli
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God made an oath concerning our Lord Jesus: “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4, *NIV*). Why does our Lord need to be a priest, and who is this Melchizedek?

The apostle Paul mentioned the need for a priesthood: “Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, You are my Son; today I have become your Father. And he says in another place, You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” (Hebrews 5:1-6, *NIV*)

Before Adam sinned, man did not need a priesthood. Adam had a relationship with God as his earthly son. But man’s sin and the resulting punishment created the need for a priesthood. Because he is condemned and fallen, man cannot come to God directly. He needs a priesthood to represent him to God, to atone for his sins, and deal with his fallen condition. The real purpose of a priesthood is to make perfect, bringing him back into harmony with God (see Hebrews 7:19).

The Aaronic Priesthood

Under the Jewish Law an earthly priesthood was established with Aaron as the high priest and his sons as the under priests. There were two reasons for the Aaronic priesthood:

1. They ministered unto the Lord via the tabernacle where they offered gifts

and sacrifices according to the Law. In these gifts, there was an annual remembrance of the sins of Israel. Although the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin, they did cleanse Israel in a typical way so that they could maintain their relationship with God under the Law (see Hebrews 10:3,4).

2. The Aaronic priesthood pointed toward a greater, spiritual priesthood, based on better sacrifices that would actually take away sin. Just as the tabernacle was a copy and a shadow of heavenly things, so the Aaronic priesthood pointed toward the greater priesthood that would be able to reconcile Israel and the rest of mankind to God (see Hebrews 8:4-6).

Jesus was to be the high priest of this greater priesthood.

In Hebrews 5, Paul writes that every high priest is taken from men and selected to represent men unto God. No man can take this honor unto himself but he must be called by God. For this work of reconciliation, the high priest must be acceptable to God and chosen by God for this special role.

We see this in God’s calling of Aaron to the priesthood. God instructed Moses that Aaron and his sons were to minister in the priest’s office (see Exodus 31:10; 35:19). The selection was verified during the consecration of the priesthood when Aaron and his sons were

inaugurated into the priest's office (see Leviticus 8:1-3,33).

When Korah and others rebelled and the entire nation questioned God's selection of Aaron, Moses took a rod from each tribe of Israel and placed all twelve rods before the ark of the testimony. Aaron's name was written on the rod of Levi. God told Moses that the rod that budded would identify the person He selected to be high priest. What happened the next day is recorded in the book of Numbers: "The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds. Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They looked at them, and each man took his own staff. The LORD said to Moses, Put back Aaron's staff in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die." (Numbers 17:8-10, *NIV*)

God made it clear to the Israelites that He would choose who would serve in the priesthood.

Christ Called as a High Priest

Like Aaron, Christ did not glorify himself to be a high priest. He was called by God to be a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, and his appointment was confirmed by an oath. By these two witnesses (being called, and an oath of confirmation), the heavenly Father established beyond question that Christ was to be the greater spiritual priest pictured by Aaron.

What qualified our Lord for this special role? The apostle Paul answers this question: "But, Son though he was, he had to prove the meaning of obedience through all that he suffered; then, when he had been proved the perfect Son, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who should obey him, being designated by God himself as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 5:8-10, *Phillips*).

Jesus became the high priest after the order of Melchisedec because of his reverent submission and obedience to God's will. We see this submission in our Lord's Gethsemane experience. There a doubt about his faithfulness was planted by the Adversary to discourage our Lord from finishing his sacrifice successfully. If the Lord had not been faithful, he would not have been resurrected from the dead. Jesus sought re-assurance from the Father that this doubt was not true. Yet, he was willing to endure the final hours without this assurance if that was God's will.

To go through his betrayal, trial, and crucifixion without re-assurance from God would have been difficult. Yet, our Lord did not demand a sign from heaven. He asked for the cup to pass from him, but expressed a willingness to endure whatever the Father allowed. (see Matthew 26:37-45).

Our Lord qualified for the priesthood because he proved the meaning of obedience through what he suffered. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus learned what it meant to obey God's will: in the midst of trials, through suffering and temptations of the adversary, and by enduring the shame and ignominy of the crucifixion (see Hebrews 12:2). By his obedience, he was proved the perfect son and thereby, became the high priest after the order of Melchisedec, the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.

But why was there a need for another priesthood? The apostle Paul answers that question in Hebrews.

First: the sacrifices of the Aaronic priesthood could never take away sin. These sacrifices were not a ransom for Adam: "Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (Hebrews 10:11, *NIV*). A new priesthood was needed to offer better sacrifices that could actually take away sin and reconcile men to God.

Second: the Aaronic priesthood was weak in that it was composed of fallen men who

would die after a few years in office. “Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office” (Hebrews 7:23, *NIV*). A new priesthood was needed because Aaronic priests could not live long enough to finish the job of reconciling man back to God.

Third: the Aaronic priests were imperfect, needing to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could offer them for the sins of the people. The existing priesthood could not bring the people to perfection because of their own imperfection: “If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron?” (Hebrews 7:11, *NIV*).

This text also reveals something important about the relationships between covenants and priesthood. The covenant is based on the capabilities of its priesthood, not the reverse. The New Covenant required a greater priesthood to accomplish its work. The apostle Paul compares the differences between the Aaronic and Melchisedec priesthoods and the different covenants based on those priesthoods: “But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people and said: The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” (Hebrews 8:6-8, *NIV*)

Since the people could not keep the first covenant due to their weakness through sin, a better (New) covenant requiring a greater priesthood was needed.

But to be a high priest, our Lord needed something to offer in sacrifice. The apostle Paul tells us what he offered: “First he said, Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were

you pleased with them (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, Here I am, I have come to do your will. He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:8-10, *NIV*)

God desired not the sacrifices of bulls and goats but that of a perfect man, a ransom. That body was prepared for Jesus. It was the Father’s will that Jesus lay down that perfect human life in death, the death of the cross. Jesus delighted to do that will. Because he successfully carried out the Father’s will, Jesus received a more excellent ministry, becoming the mediator of a better covenant that was established on better sacrifices, the sacrifice of himself as a ransom for Adam (see Hebrews 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5,6). Christ’s better sacrifice, his faithfulness and obedience unto death, earned him the right to be a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Who Was Melchisedec?

Who was Melchisedec and how did he picture our Lord’s priesthood? The apostle Paul wrote: “For this man, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of Most High God—he who when Abraham was returning after defeating the kings met him and pronounced a blessing on him—to whom also Abraham presented a tenth part of all, being first, as his name signifies, King of righteousness, and secondly King of Salem, that is, King of peace: With no father or mother, and no record of ancestry: having neither beginning of days or end of life, but made a type of the Son of God—this man Melchisedec remains a priest forever.” (Hebrews 7:1-3, *Weymouth*)

Melchisedec was first a king of righteousness. Then he was a king of peace. Both roles beautifully picture our Lord’s role as king of righteousness and peace over mankind in Christ’s kingdom. Jesus had to be first a king of righteousness and release man from the condemnation of sin by the application of his merit. Then he can become a king of peace and bring man back into peace with God.

Melchisedec was both a priest and a king. He exercised both religious and civil power picturing the universal dominion that Christ will exercise in his kingdom. Christ will rule not only over man's religious affairs but his civil affairs as well. Zechariah prophesied about this: "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zechariah 6:12,13).

Christ as a priest upon his throne will have the power and the civil responsibility to execute God's laws and commandments, to enforce their compliance and bring all creation into their obedience.

Paul said Melchisedec was without father or mother, there was no record of his ancestry. This does not refer to Melchisedec's background as a human being but to his descendants and ancestors in the priesthood. Melchisedec suddenly appears in the days of Abraham, blesses Abraham, and then disappears from view. He did not inherit his priestly office from another, nor did he deliver it to a successor. In this way Melchisedec is "made a type of the Son of God" (Hebrews 7:3, *Weymouth*). Jesus did not inherit his spiritual priesthood, nor does he pass it on through inheritance to another. He is a priest forever, just like Melchisedec.

Biblical scholars debate who Melchisedec really was. Some think he was Shem. Others that he was a descendent of Ham. Whoever he was, he had a higher rank than Abraham and hence higher than the Aaronic priesthood in the loins of Abraham. The apostle Paul wrote: "Just think how great he [Melchisedec] was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their

brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater." (Hebrews 7:4-7, *NIV*)

We suggest that Melchisedec was a type of Christ in his relationship to Abraham. Abraham pictured the Abrahamic promise and especially the earthly seed of promise developed under that promise. Melchisedec blessed father Abraham after Abraham returned from defeating the kings. This pictures how Christ as a priest after the order of Melchisedec fulfills the Abrahamic promise. When the priesthood has been completed and the Gospel age ends, then The Christ as the Melchisedec priesthood will bless Abraham and develop the earthly seed of promise under the New Covenant.

Our Lord became a high priest after the order of Melchisedec following his resurrection. Beyond the veil our Lord is sitting on the Father's throne as a king. It follows that he is now a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Paul wrote: "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:19, 20, *NIV*). Bro. Russell confirms this thought:

"Our Lord entered upon his Melchisedec priesthood individually, personally, at the time of his resurrection, when, as the Apostle declares, God announced, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' In this individual sense he became the Melchisedec Priest, although only the 'Head' was yet formed. ... We agree, however, that we shall not exercise our full office as a Melchisedec Priest until the whole Church shall be with their Head in glory, members of his Body. A Melchisedec Priest is a blessing Priest, a Priest who has the power to bless. Melchisedec was able to bless Abraham. Far superior, therefore, to the Aaronic priesthood is the Melchisedec priesthood."

— *Question Book*, p. 550

While our Lord is a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, his relationship toward

the church during the Gospel age is pictured, not in Melchisedec, but in Aaron and Aaron's sacrificing of the Lord's goat during the Day of Atonement sacrifices. The work of the Melchisedec priesthood is future, toward Israel and the world of mankind. Bro. Russell explains:

"First, the Lord Jesus, in the three and one-half years of his ministry, proved himself worthy to be the Priest, and during the 1800 years since he is proving us worthy to be his members, and by the time he shall have completed his work of proving us all worthy, with himself, for this great and honorable position of Prophet, Mediator, King, Judge of the world, he will at the same time have to his credit certain merit which he can apply for the world and on account of which he can perform a priestly office for mankind. The priestly office, as before stated, is more that of the future than of the present. The present time is the sacrificing time, the time for making a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice." — *Question Book*, p. 552:

One of the chief differences between the Aaronic and our Lord's priesthood was the oath God made that our Lord would be a high priest. The apostle Paul mentioned this: "And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever. Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (Hebrews 7:20-22, *NIV*).

It is logical that God would confirm with an oath the high priest who would fulfill the same Abrahamic promise that God also confirmed with oath. The oath shows us God's unchangeable purpose in creating a priesthood that would lead man out of condemnation and sin and back to harmony with him. By issuing an oath God guaranteed that the priesthood would be developed and it would fulfill God's promise to Abraham.

The oath also showed the greater stature and capabilities of Christ's priesthood and the covenant which it secures: "For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, ap-

pointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever" (Hebrews 7:28, *NIV*).

The Melchisedec Priesthood Includes the Church

The Scriptures indicate that The Christ, as a priest after the order of Melchisedec, is not one member but many. As members of our Lord's body, we are candidates for this priesthood: "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a **holy priesthood**, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:5,9, *NIV*).

If we are faithful unto death, we as a part of the church will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with him a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). We have the opportunity to be part of the great Melchisedec priesthood. We qualify for this priesthood in the same way that our Lord did, by being faithful in our earthly sacrifice even unto death.

Summary

One of the beautiful provisions of God's plan of salvation is the promise of a royal priesthood after the order of Melchisedec. Christ and his church will constitute that priesthood and their work will be to bless all the families of the earth in Christ's kingdom. Their reign will be a reign of righteousness and peace. They will bring mankind back into harmony and sonship with God and they will bring all things back into submission to God. The results will be glorious. This is how the prophet Jeremiah describes this glorious reign: "The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5,6, *NIV*).

Amen.

“Abide with us, 'tis Eventide”

Daniel Kaleta
Germany

Dear brethren, the sun is setting over Nowy Sacz right now. Dusk approaches. Slowly, the shadows of night descend upon our beautiful Beskid mountains. This sixth day of convention, our last day, is almost over. How many times have we experienced this memorable moment of goodbye, singing “God Be With You,” waving handkerchiefs, wiping away tears, breaking bread? Some of us, perhaps just a small number, are saying goodbye at this convention for the thirteenth time. For others it may be the first. For some of us, this may be the last time we experience this convention goodbye. This moment is perhaps not sad, but it should cause us to reflect, to look back on our memories. What have we learned? What have we experienced? What will we remember about our fellowship here?

As I look upon your faces, they don't look sad. My face too has a smile. I hope at this moment we feel like a child weaned from its mother's breast. We are full, our feelings and desires have been satisfied. When I was writing these words six months ago, I could not have known whether you would be content with this fellowship, whether you would be happy at this very moment. Now I do know. Each of us knows this too. Tomorrow we will carry home what we have gathered here. Some will carry more, some perhaps less, but surely after some time of “counting the fruits” we have gathered during the last six days of spiritual riches, we will find that each one of us has one omer (Exodus 16:18), just the right amount required for our spiritual growth by God's strength, “to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

There is another way to look at this evening. If we counted our convention days using God's principles of beginning the day at sundown, at this moment we would be entering the seventh day. The evangelist Luke would have said about this time, “The Sabbath drew on” (Luke 23:54). According to their tradition, Jews have already lit two

candles in their homes; the name of one is “Remember” and the other is “Keep” – words which begin the fourth commandment as recorded in Exodus 20:8 and Deuteronomy 5:12. We know from history that on the sixth day the Israelites gathered two omers of heavenly manna keeping the second omer for the Sabbath. Did we gather two omers today? If we did, then let us light two candles in the windows of our home. Let us call the first one “Remember” (to remember all that we have learned), and let us call the second “Keep” (to act according to what we have learned here).



Almost two thousand years ago in a small village near Jerusalem, evening was drawing nigh just as it is now. Three travelers, tired from their day's journey, entered a village which for two of them was their intended destination. As the two proceeded toward their home, the third made as though he would continue on. The two urged him to stop and stay with them. They walked a whole day and now it was evening. This

occurred in Emmaus on the day Jesus was resurrected. Let's read this beautiful story from the gospel of Luke (24:13-36).

"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulcher; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulcher, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to

tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."



Perhaps these same emotions also fill our hearts today. At the end of six days of feasting at the Lord's table, we want this moment to last as long as possible. We would rather stay here and not return to the monotony of everyday life where we face hard work, troubles at home, problems that are difficult to solve. All that has been forgotten here; perhaps even the usual ailments that trouble our bodies have been more bearable here. Now we are faced with having to return to an ordinary, everyday life. Our hearts cry out to the Lord with Peter's words from the Mount of Transfiguration: "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings." Let us remain here on top of this mountain. Down below, in the valley of the shadow of death, only exhaustion and distress await us. Let us not go back. Then suddenly Moses and Elijah disappear from the mountain. Suddenly Jesus' place at the table in Emmaus becomes empty. Why, Lord? Why won't you stay longer with us? We have so many questions. We still have so much to share with you, and with your brethren! Lord, please stay with us!

When the stranger miraculously disappeared, the two travelers no longer had any doubts. This could only have been Jesus. Only he had this particular way of blessing and breaking bread. Only he could disappear in such a way in front of their eyes. But their recollection of their conversation with the stranger gave them complete proof: "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Only Jesus could explain the Scriptures so wonderfully; only he spoke as one "having authority" (Matthew 7:29). "By his preaching ... all were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth" (Luke 4:22).

"Were not our hearts burning within us?" But the Lord Jesus did not tell them only pleasant things. He began his teaching with a harsh rebuke: "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart." Are we eager to hear rebuke? If only Jesus himself rebuked us, surely we all would humbly bow our heads ashamed of an evil deed or thought. But if the rebuke came from our brother or sister ... or if a stranger told us that we were foolish and slow of heart, would we gladly invite him into our home? Most likely it would be the end of our conversation and fellowship. And the disciples on their way to Emmaus did not know it was Jesus who spoke with them. He appeared to be just another stranger. If they were offended by his harsh words at the beginning, most likely they would never have known it was the Lord himself who appeared to them on their way.

During these last six days we have heard many words to teach, encourage, and admonish us. Perhaps some words caused us pain, perhaps we could not agree with some points of view, but let us remember, the Lord spoke to us in this place. Let us remember these words. And it is easy to do when we have recordings, and words translated and printed. Sadly, the disciples at Emmaus left no record of the long sermon Jesus preached to them. What a pity! He explained all the prophecies which spoke of him, of his suffering and his

entrance into glory (Luke 24:27). How eager we would be to hear that entire sermon today! Let us do something more. Let us light the candle "Remember" to mark the words we've heard. And when we return to our homes, let us share our "goods" with other brethren who perhaps fought the "deaf and mute spirit" (Mark 9:25, NIV) of their day-to-day routine which did not allow them to be at this convention. Let us tell them how our hearts were burning within us while the Lord, through the lips of the speakers here in Nowy Sacz, explained the Scriptures to us.

Ray Charlton, *God Loved Us*

He has given us eyes to see and enjoy the beauties of his creation, ears to hear the wonderful sounds of nature and music. He gave us an inquiring mind so that we can learn of his love, and a heart so that we can love him.

Tom Machacek, *I Am the Man*

Brethren, what do you see? Has this miracle happened to you? If you can say Yes, then give praise to God. And give thanks to the one who opened your eyes. Say to the world "I Am the Man" so that they see the light in your eyes!

Daniel Wozniak, *All Writings Inspired by God*

In spite of the intelligence, individuality, literary style, or the personal thoughts of the sacred writers, God miraculously directed the compilation of the Scriptures so that they convey to mankind his infallible divine revelation with perfect exactitude and in a comprehensible manner.

R. Selvaraj, *The Two Likenesses*

What a glorious promise and hope! Here again is the positive evidence that in the flesh, men have not attained the likeness or image of God, but it is something to be attained when that which is perfect is come. ... But the harmony will be seen by those, and those only, who will look at God's revealed plan as a whole and remember that all that is done on the plane of the flesh is preparatory, and that the natural life is only the first step in the plan of development.

Mariusz Kwarciak, *The Wilderness*

When we leave "Egypt," God rarely takes us

by the shortest, most direct route. He knows our weaknesses and protects us against our enemies. He takes us via the wilderness to try us, to teach us how to fight, and how to resist. Often we don't understand his ways. We have the impression that he selected a complicated and dangerous way for us; only later, perhaps years later, can we say in astonishment that the way we followed and the experiences we endured were the most beneficial.

Iosif Iepure, *An Important Question*

If there is no physical growth, there is grief. If a child after normal growth eventually stops developing, we as parents become very concerned. What pain might the heavenly Father feel when he sees a lack of development in his children?

Todd Alexander, *Hezekiah's Two Prayers*

Even though Hezekiah was a righteous king, God allowed troubles in his life to test his confidence in him. Likewise God gives us personal experiences with his care. Sometimes even when we are doing well, God sends trouble in our life to make us better, to help us press forward to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Andriy Lajbida, *"A Fast, a Day Acceptable to the Lord"*

So fasting, in its nature (in other words: self denial, putting aside what is unnecessary), helps us to see the state of our spirit more clearly; it opens our eyes, exposes our mistakes, points out which of our fleshly things, feelings, temptations are the most difficult to overcome.



Timo Nordman, *Who Is My Brother*

How much do you appreciate the blessing that our heavenly Father has given you in providing brethren in Christ with whom to walk this narrow way? How many times do you give thanks to God for the brethren around you? Do you really value the great privilege of having brethren?

Vasile Baciu, *Love*

How can we give our life for the brethren? By consecrating our time for them, hour by hour, day by day, year by year, and ministering to their spiritual and temporal welfare, even the earthly necessities when they are in need and experiencing hard times.

Jerome Gruhn, *Our Union in Christ*

Our unity of the spirit is not only a unity of comprehension of the fundamental doctrines of the plan of God on behalf of the church and the world, it is also a unity of service and cooperation as ministers of reconciliation. Being anointed by the spirit establishes this unity.

Daniel Cap, *Gratitude*

To begin with, gratitude is a feeling that manifests itself as a temporary reaction when something favorable happens to us. But over time this gratitude must become a feeling that is constant and continuous in us. What God has done for us will always remain, and his love toward us is also infinite; that is why gratitude must become a permanent condition of our hearts.

Walenty Bywalec, *"And This Good News of the Kingdom Will Be Proclaimed"*

Let us do good to all, whenever we have opportunity; let us be of a friendly disposition, polite, and understanding toward all mankind. Let us make the most of every opportunity in giving good and loving words, displaying kindness and a smile. Let us be polite toward all with whom we come in contact each day and to those we meet by chance. They will immediately recognize that we are different people, that we are of a friendly disposition. They will of their own accord desire to get to know us more closely and to determine the motives for our actions.

Ebe Manoharan, *The Seven Eyes of Jehovah*

The seven eyes represent the complete wisdom of God as shown to us in his overall great Plan of the Ages in which has been revealed to us and to which he has invited us to have a part. Through these eyes our heavenly Father watches, guides, and protects his children throughout this age.

Lucjan Pulikowski, *"If the Lord be with us, why has this befallen us?"*

The fleece was wet the first time, the second time it was dry. It represents the Jewish nation. The first time when the earth was dry and only the fleece wet, pictures the time in mankind's history when all the nations apart from Israel were without God and did not have communion with him. There was a time when God in a specific way blessed the nation of Israel and gave them his law – the law covenant. He made a covenant and pledged to bless the nation of Israel provided they were loyal to him.

Mirek Suchanek, *The Sons of Jacob, Yesterday and Today*

Those Jews who heard and received the offer of the high calling were spirit begotten and became spiritual Israel. These were the first of the 144,000.

Ernie Kuenzli, *"A Priest Forever"*

Our Lord qualified for the priesthood because he proved the meaning of obedience through what he suffered. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus learned what it meant to obey God's will: in the midst of trials, through suffering and temptations of the adversary, and by enduring the shame and ignominy of the crucifixion.

Samuel Premraj, *Jehovah's Dwelling Places*

The most exciting thing about this temple is that the glory of the Lord will be there, which is why the city is called YHWH Shamah (The Lord is There). The knowledge of his glory in this temple will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea, and he shall reign over all the earth headquartered in this temple!

Franciszek Olejarz, *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes Unto The Mountains*

This signifies that the Mountain of Christ's Kingdom will become the grandest of all the mountains, bringing happiness, peace, and security for all mankind. But before this takes place, before the blessings are poured out upon all mankind, we can benefit from the works of salvation today if we approach the Lord's mountain.

"Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?"



Yes, it is good for us to be here! We remember Emmaus, we remember the Mount of Transfiguration. It is good for us to be here! But there were others waiting. There were eleven apostles, uncertain of their future, waiting in Jerusalem. As we know, there were only three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, elated, in awe, joy, and delight. Nine others remained below. They did not experience the same delight of fellowship with the Lord, with Moses, and with Elijah. They instead toiled with a mute and deaf spirit which tormented a boy, and whom they were unable to heal.

Our travelers from Emmaus decided to return to Jerusalem. It must have been late in the evening, and they had a long journey ahead of them, sixty furlongs or about seven miles. This would take at least two, perhaps three hours of brisk walking to cover such distance, especially since the road to Jerusalem went up hill. Without regard, they pressed on so they could inform their friends without delay who they met on the way, to communicate his words which were still burning in their hearts. They did not delay until the morning.

Certainly some of us, using sound judgment, might wait. The roads were not safe. There were robbers as we know from the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30). But had they decided to wait until the morning, they would not have met Jesus once more that evening in Jerusalem. Sometimes we say, "All is not lost that is simply delayed." This saying usually applies to the unpleasant circumstances of life, while many treasured moments escape us because of our spiritual tardiness.

The disciples from Emmaus were not indolent. They returned immediately. The night

was bright because it was the second day of the festival of unleavened bread and close to full moon. It was easy to make one's way down a well-known road, even without a added light. The gates would be open at night during the festival. Once behind city walls, it was simply a matter of negotiating a few streets and there they were: in front of a house well-known to them, a house they might have left only several hours earlier. They were certain to find the apostles in it. It was probably the same house where Jesus celebrated his last Passover and where he instituted the Memorial, the same house where fifty days later they were to receive the holy spirit.

The doors were locked. The apostle John writes: "And the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). The knocking probably frightened those inside. The guards of the tomb, bribed by the Jewish elders, began spreading the story that Jesus' body had been stolen by his disciples (Matthew 28:13). The apostles were justified in their fear that since Jesus was put to death, there might be an attempt to eliminate eyewitnesses to his resurrection. But once they learned that Cleopas and his companion from Emmaus stood at the door, they quickly let them in and locked the door behind them. We learn from Luke's account that it was the apostles who first told the travelers the news of Jesus' resurrection and his appearance to Simon. Afterwards Cleopas told of their encounter with Jesus, how as a traveling stranger he first explained the prophecies to them, and then, when invited to their home for supper, he made himself known to them in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35).

"In the breaking of the bread." We don't know exactly what this expression means. Other translations say, "As he was breaking the bread," or "When he broke the bread." Regardless of which it was, one thing is clear: their gesture of hospitality and a shared simple meal became an unforgettable experience. Would Jesus reveal himself to them had they not invited him to supper? We don't know.

Let us remember however, that a shared meal is a great privilege and a symbolic act of unity. The Hebrew word "to eat" (*akal*, Strongs #398) has a connection with another Hebrew word *kol* (Strongs #3605) meaning "the whole, total." In the Hebrew language when one says "I eat," the truth is expressed that I become one with what I consume; I become united with the surrounding nature; it becomes a part of me. If another person participates in this process, he also enters into the same union. Let us remember this symbolic application when we sit at table in undesirable company. But let us remember this principle especially when we are in the company of brethren. Invite one another to share meals. "Some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2). The more we know we are dealing with God's messengers, the more we should show our hospitality toward them; in breaking of bread he will let us recognize him.



The words of the disciples from Emmaus, telling of their encounter with the Lord at the breaking of bread, were still in the air when suddenly something awesome happened. There must have been quite a few people in the upper room on Zion's hill, not far from the tomb of David. They all noticed the appearance of a new person. Remember: the doors were locked! Those inside knew about the locked doors. How did this new guest get in? Even if the room was dark and they could not see his face, there was no hesitation: it had to be him!

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see

me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." — Luke 24:36-43

The Lord Jesus entered the locked room without knocking, without waiting for an invitation. Let us remember the situation a few hours before [in Emmaus]. Had the disciples not invited the stranger in, perhaps he would have continued on and they would have never known they had walked with Jesus. John the revelator gives us another picture. Jesus knocks at the door and waits for it to be opened: "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" (Revelation 3:20).

But there, in Jerusalem, in the evening of the first day after his resurrection, the Lord Jesus enters through a locked door. Here we see three methods by which our Lord Jesus comes. First, as in Emmaus, on explicit invitation. Second, in answer to knocking at the door. Third, without invitation: "If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (Revelation 2:5).

Let us not think that the Lord Jesus was angry with his disciples because they questioned the reality of his presence. He courteously strengthened their faith by allowing them to touch him, by eating fish and honey in their presence, convincing them that a spirit with no flesh and bones, can be neither touched nor fed, although his entrance without invitation shows some hallmarks of "intervention."

When we go back to our every day activities, let us remember these three ways our Lord Jesus can enter. Let us invite God's messengers into our homes. Do not waste the glorious opportunities to meet with the Lord. But should it happen that we become so en-

trenched with our own affairs to the point where the Lord Jesus must stand at our door and knock, do not delay opening the door: "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke 12:36). If, when hearing the knock, we take time to wake up and put on our garments, it may be that the Lord will leave our door and go to another where others are more ready to accept him.

"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister ... I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? ... I rose up to open to my beloved ... I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself" (Song of Solomon 5:2-6).

Let us be sensitive to Jesus who is knocking on the door of our heart through the teachings of the Bible, through the words from brethren, through life's circumstances, trials, and sufferings. Let us not create a situation where Jesus must enter our life by force, through a door locked with disinterest and barred by fear. Let us love and keep Jesus' Word. On each Sabbath, on each day, let us light the candle "Remember" and the candle "Keep" next to his Word. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). As we leave this blessed place, let us take with us the home where the Lord Jesus and the Lord God dwell. Let us take with us hearts filled with love of the Word.

Abide with us, Lord.

Please abide in our hearts.

'Tis eventide!



Registrants as of June 26, 2006

AUSTRALIA (7)

CHARLTON Raymond, Susan
CIECHANOWSKA-HANKUS Halina
COLLINS Andrew, Peter
HANKUS Alfred
MISTARZ Aleksander

AUSTRIA (5)

MIKSA Adam, Andrzej, Katarzyna,
Ruta, Sabina

CANADA (3)

CHOCYK Franciszka
SAWICKI Amie (17)
STOCKI Myles

ENGLAND (2)

LIGHTFOOT Sarah
WATT Daniell

FINLAND (3)

NORDMAN Timo, Sirpa, Saana (2)

FRANCE (60)

BLONSKI Philippe, Marie-Francoise,
Gabrielle
BOULIER Alain, Helene, Amandine
BOULIER Pascal, Rose, Elodie
BRYCHY Paul, Jedwige,
Jeremie, Julienne, Noemie
BYWALEC Dorothée, Jonathan
DABEK Czesława
DABEK Stanisława
DALMATA Zenon, Jozefa,
Eric, Robert, Emmanuel (15)
DEBSKI Adolphe
DEMINGEON Guillaume, Peggy
GRUHN Jerome, Genevieve
JANICZKI Marie-Madeleine
KOWALCZUK Henri, Kazia
KWARCIAK Marius, Yolande
LIBERDA Regis, Christine
MALYGA Jacques, Alina,
Angélique, Caroline
MLOTKIEWICZ Romain, Wladzia
SIWEK Jean, Francoise,
Jean-Francois
SKARBEEK David, Marie-Madeleine,
Claire (7), Julie (1)
SUTRYK Stanislas
SZCZEPANIK Adeline
SZUMOWSKI Joseph, Alice
TOMIAK Joseph, Germaine
WOZNIAK Daniel, Alina
WOZNIAK Sebastien, Eva
WOZNIAK Michel, Gabrielle

GERMANY (23)

CZELCYNSKA Lidia
DAUM Wiebke
GLANZ Peter
KALETA Daniel, Barbara, Jakub
(15), Nathan(10), Tamara(8)
KOEGL Wolfgang, Anne, Julia
KOTOULAS Johannes, Uschi,
Dorchen
LIPKA Hubert, Christina, Ruth
RANIK Hans, Ruth
SASKIA Thode
SZEGIDEWICZ Bohdan, Violetta
THIEME Stefan

INDIA (12)

MANO Bro. & Sr. Ebe
PAUL Francis
PRASAD Bro.
PREMRAJ Samuel, Flora
PUSHPARAJ David, Girija
SELVARAJ R., Esther
UDHAYAKUMAR J., Thelma

ITALY (1)

TAMBE Aliona

MOLDOVA (55)

AIDBACHIEV Veronica
BACIU Vasile, Valentina
BAIBUS Nadejda
BOACA Maria, Sergiu
BOACA-NEAGU Mariana
BODAREV Valeria, Vladimir
BREGUTA Silvia
CASAP Lilia
CAUS Pavel
CAUS Silvia, Tatiana (15),
Mariana (5)
CAUS Victor, Dina
CEBAN Elizaveta, Liuba,
Pavel, Veronica
CERNEI Mihail
CRECIUN Angela
CURTEAN Corina
DEDESCU Angela
GALETCHI Tatiana
GRONIC Constatin, Lidia
GUTU Igor, Lucia,
David (3), Emilia-Rut (1)
HAMZA Viorel
IACHIM Constantin, Ana,
Andrei (17)
IACHIM Petru, Elena, Gheorghe
IACHIM Nina
MUNTEAN Tamara, Victoria
NEAGU Grigore, Natalia, Lilia (14)
NEAGU Viorel, Viorica,
Dana, Alina (16)
NEAGU Ion, Maria

PREPELITA Violetta
RACOVET Victor
TURCAN Igor, Eugenia

NETHERLANDS (2)

KLINKERT Ad, Olga

POLAND (245)

ADLER Roman, Irena, Estera
BIELA Wladyslaw
BOSKO Aniela
BUCZKO Magdalena
BUSZKA Józef
BYWALEC Adam, Malgorzata
BYWALEV Dariusz
BYWALEC Helena
BYWALEC Józef, Zofia
BYWALEC Józefa
BYWALEC Walenty, Marzena
CHWAST Anna
CZUBA Daniela
DALMATA Krystyna
DROZDZIEL Zofia
DUBINIAK Krystyna
FIJALKOWSKI Lidia, Krzysztof
FIL Korneliusz
FILIPEK Malgorzata, Kamil (7)
FLORCZAK Slawomir, Martyna,
Lukasz
GARBACZ Barbara (17)
GLAB Henryk, Helena, Emilia (15)
GOLIASZ Genowefa
GORYL Janina
HEJDUK Adam
HOJNCA Alicja (11)
HONKISZ Józef, Urszula
IDAS Michalina
JABLONSKI Tadeusz
JAKOSZ Helena
JAKUBOWSKI Marek
JAKUBOWSKI Mieczyslaw, Helena
JURASZEK Czesława
JURUS Zdzislaw, Anna
KAMINSKI Henryk, Maria
KAMINSKI Marek, Anna
KARWOWSKA Albina
KASPRZYK Wladyslawa
KAWALA Stefania
KLIMCZAK Zofia
KLUSAK Józef, Helena
KNITTER Marek, Elzbieta,
Mateusz, Estera
KOCOT Florian, Wanda
KOCOT Halina
KOLACZ Zdzislaw, Stefania
KOLAK Anna
KOMANOWSKA Zofia, Michal,
Estera (14)
KONAT Maria
KOSECKA Alfreda, Bozena

KOSINSKA Matylida
KOTARBA Stanisława
KOTERBA Janina
KOTOWICZ Jadwiga
KRAJECER Piotr, Beata,
Estera, Marta (16)
KRAJECER Pawel, Elzbieta
KRAWCZYK Daniel, Stanisława,
Pawel, Grzegorz (15)
KRZEMINSKA Eugenia
KUBIC Adam, Dorota
KUBIC Halina
KUBIC Piotr, Ioana, Sara (1)
KUC Helena
KUC Stanislaw, Krystyna
KULCZYCKA Zofia
KUPSKI Lukasz
KUZNIK Józef
KWIECINSKI Ireneusz, Katarzyna,
Bartłomiej
LECKO Boleslaw
LENORT Bozena, Renata
LESNIKOWSKA Helena
LIPKA Maria, Ewa (10)
LITKOWICZ Piotr, Barbara,
Anna (11), Natalia (9)
LUKASIEWICZ Teodora, Wladyslaw
MAGIERA Bogdan, Elzbieta,
Malgorzata
MAGIERA Krzysztof, Esther
MAJDAK Bronislaw
MALINOWSKI Bogumil, Kazimiera,
Piotr
MALKOWSKI Pawel, Danuta,
Mateusz, Tymoteusz (7)
MALYSZ Jan, Anna
MARUTA Elzbieta
MATYSEK Mariusz
MIKSA Maria
MRUK Wodzislaw
MUSIAL Urszula
NOWAK Janina
OLEJARZ Franciszek, Wanda,
Jaroslaw, Dorota
PALCZAK Floriana
PARNAK Katarzyna
PAWLIK Boleslaw
PELIKAN Jan
PIERZ Czeslaw, Otylia
PIETRZYK Danuta
PILCH Piotr, Beata
PODYMA Marta, Wanda
POTEMPA Józef, Maria
POTOCKA Honorata
PUDO Bogusława
PUDO Ruta
PUDO Zofia
PULIKOWSKI Lucjan, Teresa,
Michal, Tomasz, Marcin (7)
PURWIN Józefa

RACZYNSKA Regina
 RATKOWSKA Krystyna
 ROGUS Adam
 ROMANÓW Maria
 RYBKA Halina
 RYPIEN Helena
 RZYCZNIK Miroslawa
 SABLİK Leokadia
 SADOWY Edward, Elzbieta,
 Mateusz
 SADOWY Piotr, Alicja
 SCHAB Olga
 SEKALA Anna
 SIEMIENIEC Mateusz, Ewelina
 SIEWNIAK Radoslaw
 SIKORA Marek, Ewa, Katarzyna
 (16), Aleksandra (12),
 Magdalena (8)
 SKOCZYLAS Marian
 SKOWRON Anna, Ewa (17)
 SLAWINSKI Stanislaw, Malgorzata,
 Julia (7), Noemi (6)
 SOBCZYK Zofia, Liwiusz
 SOLOWIEJ Anna, Dorota
 SORDYL Michal, Alfreda
 STARTEK Gabriela
 SUCHANEK Urszula
 SZAFRANIEC Celina
 SZARKOWICZ Daniel, Monika,
 Miriam (2)
 SZARKOWICZ Edward, Klaudia,
 Mateusz, Lukasz (15)
 SZARKOWICZ Eugeniusz, Helena
 SZARKOWICZ Genowefa
 SZARKOWICZ Henryk, Kazimiera,
 Dorota, Noemi (12)
 SZARKOWICZ Leszek, Dorota,
 Kamil (16), Agnieszka (12)
 SZARKOWICZ Tomasz, Ewelina
 SZCZECINA Halina
 SZCZEPANIK-MRUK Wieslawa
 SZEWCZYK Feliks, Emilia
 SZOPA Stefania
 SZYMANSKI Waldemar, Lidia,
 Michal
 TUDRYN Stanislaw, Danuta,
 Natanel
 TYC Lidia
 WACIOR Czeslaw, Jakub
 WALAWANDER Maria
 WILKOSZ Aneta
 ZABÓJ Agnieszka
 ZAJACZKOWSKI Romuald
 ZDUNIAK Irena
 ZELENT Stanislaw, Grazyna,
 Wojciech (16)

ROMANIA (154)

BALANEAN Angela
 BALANEAN Elisabeta, Gabriela,
 Diana (16), Natalia (15)
 BARBOS D. Valeria
 BENTA Maxim, Catalina,
 Catalina (14)

BENTA Ioan, Ileana
 BINDIU Paulina
 BIRTAS Lidia
 BODEA Penina
 BORDEA Iosif
 BRIA Nastasia
 BUJOR Augustin, Maria
 BUTA Lidia, Pelagia
 CADIS Nicolae, Bogdan-Alex. (16)
 CAP Aurel, Florica
 CAP Daniel, Diana
 CAP Ruben, Geanina
 CHIOREAN Beniamin, Ana,
 Mihaela, Laura (17)
 CHIOREAN Liviu, Maria
 CHIOREAN Maria
 CHIRA Ana, Bianca (14)
 COLDEA Viorel
 CRISAN Vasile
 CUCIUREAN Gavriela, Maria,
 Mihai (14)
 CURTA Anisoara-Ver
 CZINCZAS Toader
 DETESAN Maria
 DOBAI Ana
 DRAGOS Gheorghe, Lisa,
 Sarah (11)
 FERENCZI Miclos
 FILIP Vasile, Luminita
 FLOREA Radu, Penina, Stefania
 GARBIA Vasile, Diana
 GRAUR Aurelia
 GRIENCHALD Melinda
 GRIGOR Camelia
 GRIGOR Ioan
 GRIGOR Mihai, Maria
 GYORGY Andrea
 HARSAN Ioan
 HOSU Ioan, Magdalena, Rudolf
 HUZAU Ioan
 IACHIM Slavic, Emilia, Timotei (4)
 IAJO Ioana-Ram.
 IELCIU Mariana
 IEPURE Iosif
 IONITA Florica
 IONUS Florin, Paraschiva
 IVANCIUC Mihai
 JURJI Letitia
 KADAR Ana-Maria
 KARMACSI Eniko
 LACATUS Alin, Ludovica, Maria
 MAGYARI Erzsebeth, Gyongyver
 MALNOS Adela
 MARIAN Florica
 MARODI Silvia
 MARTA Alin, Adina, Eliazar
 MATHE Rodica
 MIC Aristina
 MIHAI Anuta
 MURESAN Cornel, Ecaterina
 NAE Letitia
 NANESTEAN Persida
 NEMES Marina
 NENESTYAN Calina

ONOFREI Sergiu, Tamara
 PASCA Dan, Ionita-Cristina
 PAUL Vasile
 PESCAR Aurelia
 PESZKAR Maria-Nic, Florin (12)
 PETRE Marta
 PETRITA Cristina (17)
 POP Ana
 POP Angela
 POP Semida-Adina,
 Corina-Petra (13)
 POP Maria
 POP Viorel, Doina,
 Denisa (15), Sergiu (9)
 POPA Floarea
 PRUNEA Veronica
 RACHIS Dina
 ROSCA Viorica
 RUSU Natalia
 SADEANU Elena
 SASARAN Stefan
 SERB Ana
 SERBAN Maria
 SISESTEAN Daniela
 SITAR Ana
 SOVRE Nicolae, Camelia,
 Ioana, Alexandra
 STAN Stefan
 STAN Todora
 STAN Vasile, Paulina
 STEFAN Maria, Marius-Dan
 TALVAN Gheorghe
 TEANC Emilia
 TRESTIAN Sorin-Mihai (17)
 TRIF Alexandru, Aurelian
 TURENSCHI Vlad (17)
 UTIU Marioara, Paul, Daniel
 VIDA Angela
 VOINEA Lucia-Crist
 VRAJA Vasile, Ioana
 ZUGRAV Maria

RUSSIA (3)

KOBOZEVA Valentina
 UDOD Adam
 USACHENKO Tamara

UKRAINE (36)

BOROVETS Vasyl
 BOROVIK Halyna, Nadiya (11)
 CHUKHYLEVICH Ihor
 DMYTRYK Mykola, Halyna,
 Solomiya (10), Zoryana (7)
 DMYTRYK Nataliya
 DOVHAN Yevheniya
 KACHUR Ernest
 LAYBIDA Andriy, Mariya (12)
 LENDYEL Mykhaylo, Svitlana
 LENDYL Viktoriya
 LENDYL Yosyp
 LENDYL Yuliya
 LOPATKA Andriy (16)
 MANZULA Bohdan
 MARCHUK Vasyl, Olha

NAZARUK Oleksandr, Nelia
 NAZARUK Irena
 POLIYOVSKA Lyudmyla
 POYDIN Mykhaylo
 ROHACH Maryna
 SHKILNA Mariya
 SYMCHUK Andriy
 SYMCHUK Vladyslav
 SYMCHUK Yuriy
 TURASZ Krystyna
 VASKO Mykhaylo
 VOVK Bohdan
 VOVK Nazariy

USA (69)

ALEXANDER Todd, Marilyn,
 Kyle, Ellen (15)
 ALEXANDER Katie
 AUSTIN Wade, Lois
 BAKER Lorain
 CREPINSEK Cony
 DAVIS Mark, Alicja,
 James (10), Timothy (9)
 DAVIS Larry, Mariana
 EARL Jeff, Margaret,
 Jonathan (14), Emily (6)
 EARL Karen
 ELBERT O.B., Janet
 FARRELL Jeannine
 FORSYTHE CarrieAnne
 GORECKI Robert, Deanna
 GRAY Jordan, Bethany
 GRIEHS Len, Gretchen, Rachel
 HAGENSICK Cher-EI
 HERON Wylene
 HUMPHREYS Christy, Daniyel
 KARAVETS Stefan, Lia
 KINDIG Shelley
 KLEPPE Nancy
 KUENZLI Ernie, Janice
 LAGNO Paul, Joyce
 LARSON Rhoda
 MACHACEK Tom, Nancy
 MANZUK Lee
 MARKIEWICZ Walter, Theresa
 MIKSA Daniel
 MIKSA Elizabeth, Maria, Martha
 MIKSA Luke, Anna, Timothy (8)
 NEILSEN Becca
 NEKORA Michael
 RICE David
 RUGGIRELLO Leah
 SCHAB Daniel, Justyna
 SCHAB Emek, Jodie
 SIWAK Karen
 SOCHACKI Tim
 TRZECIAK Christina
 WAGONER Renata, Arielle (7)

TOTAL: 680

Saturday, August 5

8:10 p.m. Convention Choir

Sunday, August 6

Chairman: Jozef SYGNOWSKI, Poland

9:15 a.m. **Morning Devotions**

9:30 a.m. **Theme Discourse:** "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills"—Psalm 121:1
Franciszek OLEJARZ, Poland

10:20 a.m. Intermission

11:00 a.m. **Discourse:** "Hezekiah's Two Prayers" Todd ALEXANDER, USA

11:50 a.m. **Announcements**

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Chairman: Mikolaj DMYTRYK, Ukraine

1:45 p.m. Song Service

2:00 p.m. **Bible Student Activities in India**
[audio-visual]

3:00 p.m. Intermission

3:30 p.m. **Testimony Meeting**
Piotr KRAJCER, Poland

4:30 p.m. Intermission

5:10 p.m. **Discourse:** "A Day Acceptable to the Lord" Andriy LAJBIDA, Ukraine

6:00 p.m. Supper

8:10 p.m. **Vesper Service**
Waldemar SZYMANSKI, Poland

9:00 p.m. End of Day

Monday, August 7

Chairman: Viorel HAMZA, Moldova

9:15 a.m. **Morning Devotions**

9:30 a.m. **Discourse:** "Gratitude"
Daniel CAP, Romania

10:20 a.m. Intermission

11:00 a.m. **Discourse:** "God Loved Us"
Ray CHARLTON, Australia

11:50 p.m. **Announcements**

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Chairman: Robert GORECKI, USA

1:45 p.m. Song Service

2:00 p.m. **Panel Discussion:**
"The Harvest is the End of the Age"
Moderator: O. B. ELBERT
Len GRIEHS, David RICE, USA

3:00 p.m. Intermission

3:30 p.m. **Testimony Meeting**
Adolphe DEBSKI, France

4:30 p.m. Intermission

5:10 p.m. **Discourse:** "Who Is My Brother"
Timo NORDMAN, Finland

6:00 p.m. Supper

8:10 p.m. **Vesper Service**
Régis LIBERDA, France

9:00 p.m. End of Day

Tuesday, August 8

Chairman: Slawek FLORCZAK, Poland

9:15 a.m. **Morning Devotions**

9:30 a.m. **Discourse:** "I Am the Man"
Tom MACHACEK, USA

10:20 a.m. Intermission

11:00 a.m. **Discourse:** "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached"—Matt. 24:14
Walenty BYWALEC, Poland

11:50 p.m. **Announcements**

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Chairman: Ioan HOSU, Romania

1:45 p.m. **Discourse:** "Jehovah's Dwelling Places" Samuel PREMRAJ, India

2:15 p.m. **Discourse:** "The Two Likenesses"
R. SELVARAJ, India

2:45 p.m. Intermission

3:30 p.m. **Testimony Meeting**
Augustine BUJOR, Romania

4:30 p.m. Intermission

5:10 p.m. **Discourse:** "The Wilderness: A Place of Trial and Judgment"
Marius KWACIAK, France

6:00 p.m. Supper

8:10 p.m. **Symposium:** "Contending for the Faith"—Jude 3 Miklos FERENCZI, Toader TANTAS, Romania

9:10 p.m. End of Day

Wednesday, August 9

Chairman: Jordan GRAY, USA

9:15 a.m. **Morning Devotions**

9:30 a.m. **Discourse:** "Love"
Vasile BACIU, Moldova

10:20 a.m. Intermission

11:00 a.m. **Discourse:** "Our Unity in Christ"
Jérôme GRUHN, France

11:50 p.m. **Announcements**

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon reserved for fellowship.

6:00 p.m. Supper

8:00 p.m. **No. American Business Meeting**
[at the Orbis Beskid Hotel]

Thursday, August 10

Chairman: Edward SADOWY, Poland

9:15 a.m. **Morning Devotions**

9:30 a.m. **Discourse:** "All Writings Inspired by God" Daniel WOZNIAK, France

10:20 a.m. Intermission

11:00 a.m. **Discourse:** "If the Lord be with us, why has this befallen us?"—Judges 6:13
Lucjan PULIKOWSKI, Poland

11:50 p.m. **Announcements**

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Chairman: J. Udhaya KUMAR, India

1:45 p.m. **Special Music**
Tomasz SZARKOWICZ, Poland

2:45 p.m. Intermission

3:15 p.m. **Interview Testimony Meeting**
Michael NEKORA, USA

4:15 p.m. Intermission

5:00 p.m. **Discourse:** "The Seven Eyes of Jehovah"—Ebe MANOHARAN, India

5:30 p.m. **Discourse:** "The Dagnet"
Francis PAUL, India

6:00 p.m. Supper

8:10 p.m. **Vesper Service** Paul LAGNO, USA

9:00 p.m. End of Day

Friday, August 11

Chairman: Romain MLOTKIEWICZ, France

9:15 a.m. **Morning Devotions**

9:30 a.m. **Discourse:** "The Sons of Jacob: Yesterday and Today"
Mirek SUCHANEK, Poland

10:20 a.m. Intermission

11:00 a.m. **Discourse:** "Becoming Kings and Priests"
Iosif IEPURE, Romania

11:50 p.m. **Announcements**

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Chairman: Wade AUSTIN, USA

1:45 p.m. Song Service

2:00 p.m. **Symposium:** "Giving no offense in any thing"—2 Cor. 6:3
"In the family"—Stanislaw KUC
"In the ecclesia"—Henryk GLAB, Poland

3:00 p.m. Intermission

3:30 p.m. **Discourse:** "A Priest Forever"
Ernie KUENZLI, USA

4:20 p.m. Intermission

5:00 p.m. **Testimony Meeting**
Hans RANIK, Germany

6:00 p.m. Supper

8:10 p.m. **Discourse:** "Abide with us, 'tis Ever-tide"
Daniel KALETA, Germany

9:30 p.m. End of convention

75-minute Special Study for Young Adults [ages 15 and older]

Sunday, 4:45 p.m.: Len GRIEHS Monday, 4:45 p.m.: J. Udhaya KUMAR Tuesday, 4:45 p.m.: David RICE

Wednesday, 9:15 a.m.: Daniel KALETA Thursday, 9:15 a.m.: Staszek SLAWINSKI Friday, 9:15 a.m.: Michael NEKORA

(Lessons will be in English or Polish with translation into English/Polish/Romanian.)