
"They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Wherefore God is not

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ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city." (Heb 11:13-16)

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Adapted from a message given by the late Pastor T.U. Thomas

Jesus answered, "There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side. In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was traveling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he told the inn-

keeper, 'and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him'" (Lk 10:30-35 GNB).

This parable of the Good Samaritan has been known and loved by Christians throughout the centuries. This poignant tale was Jesus' reply to the question, "Who is my neighbor, whom I must love as myself?" In the crowd Jesus had been addressing, there was a teacher of the law who wanted to know how to obtain eternal life, and the Lord had him answer his own question by relating the two greatest commandments: loving God with everything, and loving his neighbor as himself. Perhaps the questioner realized that there might be some in the crowd who could easily find him guilty on the second requirement. So, more to

justify himself than to clear the air, he asked for the “technical” definition of a neighbor.

While the moral of the story is easily understood by even a small child, there are also other jewels to be mined from this parable. Of the cast of characters created by Jesus for this illustration, each has his own message to preach to us, not by dialogue, but by actions. We’ll consider them as they appear in the story, and ask yourself another question as we do: “Which one is a picture of me?”

The Thieves: Agents of Pain

In the very first sentence of the parable, the thieves come on the scene with action: to immediately attack and wound the victim. Perhaps you may think that this character would bear the least resemblance to yourself, as you have never stolen anything from anyone. These thieves however are hardly seen stealing, but in their short interaction with the man on the road, they left long-lasting wounds. How many people have you wounded in the past? How many have been hurt because of your words, your attitudes, the way you do things? Are you not then like these thieves, stealing peace and joy?

The thieves could have had an excuse, though. “This man deserved it, didn’t he, because he was going back from Jerusalem to Jericho? We have actually stopped him.” When we are wounding others, we normally have good reasons. Dear children of God, in the sight of God there is no excuse. How many times have our tongues been worse than the knives that these thieves would have been carrying? Today itself, have you hurt anyone? Will you humbly admit before God that you are a thief? God has been patient with us, has continued to love us, and we have continued to come to God’s house: but that doesn’t change the fact that we have been thieves. We

have our excuses for hurting others, while God was calling us to be like the Samaritan, to help those whom others have wounded.

Someone shared with me this vision he had: all of us as God’s people were in church singing, “Hail to the King, glory to the King!” Then Jesus came, but not with a crown of gold, or a royal robe. He was wounded all over, wearing the crown of thorns, and He gently asked, “My children, do you really mean that? Look at Me. Your behavior has done this.” Roman soldiers mockingly said, “Hail the King!” as they beat him and bowed before Him. Haven’t we also been Roman soldiers, piercing and grieving God’s heart? Let us ask the Lord to forgive and change us, that we might be those who bind up wounds, not those who cause them.

The Victim: Stages of Death

“He found me bleeding and dying on the Jericho road”—we can all identify with the man on the road in this way. Once we were lost in sin, and Jesus found us. The greatest miracle that Jesus can do on earth is to save a sinner. That is a greater miracle than calling Lazarus out of the tomb. Many years ago Jesus forgave all my sins and saved me; and ever since, heaven is in my heart! Now, all the way to heaven *is* heaven because of Jesus.

The Bible speaks of different types of spiritually dead people. There are those who are dead in trespasses and sins: sinners (Eph 2:1). The victim in this story, however, shows another state of spiritual death: he was left half-dead. Who is a half-dead man? He is halfway between Jerusalem and Jericho: half-spiritual and half-unspiritual; half-godly and half-worldly. Such people end up nowhere, unable to do anything. How do you know if you are half-dead? Like this man, you will be often wounded. Every little thing hurts you, offends you, wounds you. Like a

spiritual diabetic, your wounds take very long to heal. Often little children, with only a minor cut, will say, “I need a *big* bandage!” Some children of God also have that habit. When a very little hurt comes, they make mountains out of molehills, and “show and tell.”

This man was stripped of what he had when he was wounded. If you are often hurt, you are vulnerable to the enemy. Of course, what is being hurt is our pride, nothing else. The more pride we have, the more we feel the offense. Some are spiritual “touch-me-not” plants: at the lightest stroke, their faces droop. Do you find yourself here in this character, half-dead and often wounded? Thank God for a Good Samaritan Who is willing to heal us!

Jude tells of another group of dead: the twice-dead (Jude 12). These were once saved from the state of being dead in trespasses and sins; but then these went back again to their old life. In other words, twice-dead are backsliders. There are backsliders who leave the church, but the worst type of backsliders are those who have backsliding in their heart, and with that demon they come to church. Their bodies are in church, but their hearts are far from God.

Returning to our half-dead man, he fell among thieves because of leaving Jerusalem—the presence of God, and going to Jericho—the world. If you go towards the world, this is what the devil will do: he will drain out the prime of your life, and then leave you half-dead. Those who serve the devil will definitely live to regret it, or die with eternal regret. Give your life to serve Jesus. Especially when you are young do what you can for Jesus. I am glad that as a teenager I was able to give my life to Jesus to serve Him. If the vanities of the world carry you away from the presence of God, and you are lost in gaining and getting money, working part-time, overtime, and any other available time, you will have

no time for God. In time to come, you will definitely regret it. Once the devil has sucked your health and wealth out of you, he will discard you as an orange squeezed of its juice. Just as this victim on the Jericho road, the devil will strip you, wound you—and then leave you half-dead.

The Priest and the Levite: Impotent Bystanders

While this helpless victim lay naked in the pool of his own blood, there were others traveling on that same highway. They slowed down enough to see the accident there, but not enough to be of any help. First came the priest, who is a symbol here of the failure of religion to help fallen man. Religion is all about God, but it is not God. God alone can be the Savior of man. After the priest came the Levite, who in this story stands for moral decisions. Fallen man may make so many decisions and dedications on his own to make his life right, but that cannot save him.

Regarding both of these passers-by, the Bible shows their coming was mere happenstance. “By chance” a priest came, “likewise” a Levite came. They saw a man in obvious need, but did nothing to help him. It just so happened that they came—and went, just as they came. Thank God in heaven that there was Another on that road!

The Good Samaritan: Compassion in Action

“A certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him...” This Samaritan didn’t just come “by chance,” as the others, but “by choice.” It was not the wounded man that saw the Samaritan, or asked for help, or went to him; the Samaritan went to the wounded man, saw him, and helped him without being asked. What a marvelous story of love we find in Jesus!

The Samaritan came to the bleeding man, and “*had compassion on*

him....” The difference between the compassion of Jesus and our compassion is that He moves with compassion. Sometimes we have compassion, but it doesn’t move us to do anything for God. Dear child of God, there are so many wounded people all over the world. There are so many half-dead and dying people; AIDS and so many other things have made people hopeless and helpless. The Lord is asking, “What are you doing in this world that I have given you?” There are so many “neighbors” waiting for our help.

The Samaritan then went to him, *“bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”* Many of God’s children feel that God does not care for them. Before the Samaritan could care for this man, he had to first tend to his wounds. Do you allow the Lord to deal with your hurts? If the good Samaritan cannot touch your old offenses, if you want to cling to pains from the past, then you must remain on the Jericho road. If you say, “No, don’t touch that area!” how can He lift you and take you from there?

Is there anyone of whom you say, “I do not want to see that person’s face”? Do you know what happens if you die in that state? You will not see the face of Jesus. Learn to see Him in others; allow Him to pour in oil and wine, and bind up your broken heart.

He Carries, and He Cares

After dealing with these sensitive wounds, the Samaritan then carried the man. Jesus knows when, in our weakness, we are unable to walk. Allow Him to treat your pains with the oil and wine of the Father’s love and grace, and you will be privileged to be carried by Him. Finally we will be carried in the air. Dear child of God, this Christian life is a beautiful life.

Give your weakness and failures into His hands, He will do something

beautiful with it. A former chief pastor, Pastor Freddy, used to often say, “God can make a message out of your mess.” That is wonderfully true. In my case, I was terribly dull in my studies, failing two years of schooling. I knew I was not going to make it—but Jesus made it! When Jesus came into my life, almost at the end of my high school days, I felt He gave me a brand new mind. In your academics, in your spiritual life, at your workplace—wherever you find failure, give it to Jesus and He will do everything for you.

This good Samaritan poured in oil and wine, and bound up the wounds—all without being asked. He obviously came down from the beast on which he was traveling in order to put the wounded man there. Our Jesus came down from the glory of heaven so that we might be lifted up there. What a wonderful story of love!

Have you noticed the Samaritan’s care for this man? The 35th verse begins, “On the morrow,” meaning that this care continued throughout the night. For every little detail of your life, Jesus wants to take care of you. Once it happened that on a fasting day, I had to wash the faith home car. The weather was cold, and I would have to bring water in buckets from the faith home to rinse. I had just finished applying the soap, and went to the faith home to begin to bring water. While I was inside, a heavy downpour suddenly fell for about ten minutes. God washed the car for me!

After taking care of that wounded man throughout the night, what did this Samaritan do? *“And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, ‘Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.’”* Not only did the Samaritan bring him to the inn, there he also took care of him. That inn is the

house of God. We were bleeding and dying on the Jericho road, but the Lord Jesus bound the wounds and carried us to His house.

“I’ll Be Back—Meet Me Here”

The only dialogue in the story gives us an important warning. When the Samaritan was ready to go, he spoke of his return. He was not coming again to the road where he found the man, but to the place where he brought him to be cared for. Remain faithful to the fellowship to which the Lord has brought you. Some people go from church to church, like spiritual gypsies. If the good Samaritan returned to the inn, and did not find the man there, his purpose and plan in bringing him there would have been defeated. Do you have that vision about the church where you are worshipping? Is your reason for worshipping there because God brought you there?

Even after receiving the Holy Spirit I did not want to come and join this Pentecostal church; I wanted to remain in my nominal church. Yet the Lord clearly told me, “If you want to live a holy life, this is the fellowship that I want you to stay in.” Many times I walked fourteen miles to go to the faith home, on a dusty road in the heat, though my old church was just around the corner. In 1959, the Lord guided me, the Good Samaritan brought me, to this inn. According to His faithful words, I have found a fellowship which encourages a life of purity. If you want to live a holy life, there are doctrines available for you. There may be at least some living a pure life, loving holiness.

The Innkeeper: Continuing Health Care

The Samaritan gave two pence to the innkeeper. The inn being the house of God, the innkeeper then speaks of the servants of God. Two pence are given to them to continue the care that the good Samaritan had begun. They may not have much education or great degrees,

but these “two pence” are absolute essentials. Jesus brought fullness of grace and truth. These are the two things needed to look after the church, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Without truth, grace will be in vain; without grace, we cannot live the truth.

The good Samaritan told the innkeeper, “When I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.” What must a servant of God add to the grace and truth given, to give full care? Paul, a true servant of God and of the church, said, “[I] now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the church” (Col 1:24). For the sake of the truth and grace, we have been called to suffer. During a time when Protestants were persecuted in England, Christians would be kept in a cell at the Tower Bridge in London, and from there be taken one by one to the gallows. As one Christian would be summoned for execution, wanting to encourage the next one on death row, he would write in his own blood on the wall of the cell, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” Christians of this caliber are needed today, willing to lay down their lives for the truth, for holiness and righteousness.

Our Good Samaritan has gone with a promise that He will come back again. When He came the first time, He came to the Jericho road to save sinners. The second time, however, He will come to the inn, to the church—and that time is soon approaching. The Lord needs many innkeepers; there are so many wounded people to tend to. Will you lay down your life for Jesus to carry on His work? Seeing how He has cared for us, when we were bleeding and dying, how can we remain in this world indifferently without loving and serving Him? It is glorious to serve Jesus! □



“The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God...” (Psa 87:2-3).

Zion is a glorious place which can be studied from the holy scriptures in three contexts. Firstly, historic Zion was an actual location in the promised land, conquered by King David. He established both his residence and the seat of Israel’s government there (2Sam 5:6-10). There David also built the city of Jerusalem, the city chosen by God in which to establish His name and His presence among His chosen people, the Israelites (2Chr 6:5-6). Secondly, Zion is seen in our New Testament age, as a spiritual experience: God’s throne of grace, whereunto we may continuously resort. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the **throne of grace** that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:16). The church of the New Testament has already come unto Zion (Heb 12:22-24), and continues to do so in preparation for eternity. Thirdly, we may study the magnificent beauties of the eternal Zion. This is the eternal dwelling place of God Himself, where His throne resides. *“The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it”* (Psa 132:13-14). One may perhaps say that Zion is to the eternal heavens what the White House is now to the USA, only much, much more!

Point of Controversy

From the beginning, Zion has been surrounded by controversy and contention. Even before the creation of man, it was sought after by Lucifer

himself (Isa 14:12-14). Since King David conquered the physical Zion, and then established Zion and Jerusalem, perhaps no other city in the world has suffered so much controversy, bloodshed, and warfare. Even today the ownership of current day earthly Jerusalem is being argued over by the nations and peoples of the world. This was clearly foretold in the words of the prophet Zechariah: *“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about.... And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it”* (Zech 12:2-3). It is a contention and a controversy that will **only** be resolved by the battle, called in scripture, Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16). It cannot be resolved through a “roadmap to peace,” or other efforts of man. In fact, most of the current political efforts for peace in the promised land are in clear opposition to the revealed will of God. Therefore, they are indeed doomed for failure! Because of the continual controversies regarding Zion, we should not be surprised if debate and controversy surround the discussion of eternal Zion as well. One will say one thing, and another will say another thing about Mount Zion, and who will dwell there. But what does the Bible say? Let us study and see!

“Who Goes There?”

There is an age-old question in the word of God inquiring about those who would dwell with God in Zion. *“Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall*

dwelt in Thy **holy hill**?...Who shall ascend into the **hill of the Lord**? Or who shall stand in His holy place?" (Psa 15:1; 24:3) We shall begin to consider a specific answer to that question. We must remind ourselves, that in the end, **it is God alone** Who will decide those who are to dwell eternally with Him, on Mount Zion. For example, some may believe that those in Zion will exclusively be of a certain denomination of churches, even our own. But such beliefs do not match with the Word of God! We should rather believe that it will be those who fulfill the qualifications set forth in the Word of God who will be on Zion. Such a calling, spiritual birth, and grace can occur anywhere across the face of this earth, amongst all nations, tribes and tongues. There will be many surprises on the day of judgment (Mat 7:21-23). Jesus tells us so when He says "*many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first*" (Mat 19:27-30). "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*" (1Cor 13:13).

Saints of the Highest Order

From the entirety of the Word of God, we can see that those in Zion are an elite group of servants of God, of the highest spiritual qualities. (You may have different thoughts about those on Zion. As always, you are welcome to write to us, care of this magazine, and express those thoughts.) As set forth in the last study, those on Mount Zion will be resurrected together as members of the perfected church of the New Testament Age. Those in Zion are themselves members of the Church of the New Testament dispensation. The Bible reveals to us the greatness of our calling in this New Testament dispensation, compared to that of the past dispensations (*for further study on this topic please see, Pilgrims Journal #26, an article entitled "We Do Not Know Where"*). John the Baptist was the greatest saint of olden times, but he could never enjoy all the manifold blessings of

the New Testament dispensation (Mat 11:11). John himself said, "*He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom (Jesus), but the friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled*" (Jn 3:29). We find that he did not complain about his own inferior place to the bride, but rejoiced just to be near to Jesus. Hallelujah! You are called with a far greater eternal purpose. Rejoice in it!

It is important to note as well, that the spiritual qualities of those in Zion are **expected to be seen**, in varying degrees, in all of those in the New Jerusalem and in the other eternal dwelling places in heaven. So their beautiful characteristics are **not exclusive** to those in Zion, but rather, Zion is "*the perfection of beauty*" (Psa 50:2). The Christlike beauties found in those who dwell in eternal Zion are unsurpassed by all others redeemed in eternity. Let us begin to study some of those beautiful qualities by considering one of the principal verses about those in eternal Zion.

Christ, the Beauty of Zion

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads" (Rev 14:1).

This verse wonderfully fulfills the Old Testament prophecies which foretold the Messiah would be eternally established in Zion. "*Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion*" (Psa 2:6). "*Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner Stone, elect, precious...*" (1Pet 2:6; Isa 28:16). From Revelation 1:4 we see that in eternity **the Lamb** is the center of attention. This Lamb on Mount Zion is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Jn 1:36). From this verse, we see that **Jesus Himself** should be our goal in this life, more than Zion! The late Pastor Don Spiers said, that if Jesus did not reign from Zion, but from the New Earth instead, then he would prefer to

be on the New Earth with Christ. God Himself is the blessing of being in Zion. Without Him, it would never be fulfilling. Paul said that he forsook all in order to **win Christ** (Phil 3:7-14), not to win Zion. The Psalmist said, *“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee”* (Psa 73:25).

Even in the Old Testament dispensation, on his journey toward the promised land, Moses told the Lord, *“If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Exo 33:15). Moses knew that only the immediate presence of God could satisfy and sustain him. Similarly, in the eternal realms we see the twenty-four elders falling down before Him and casting their golden crowns before Him (Rev 4:9-11). May we also make Christ our goal in this life and the next, more than any reward that He may bestow upon us in eternity. All rewards, positions, and authority are nothing compared to Christ. He is the One Who enables us to be crowned with such a rich eternal inheritance. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and ending. *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”* (Rev 5:12). *“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (Rom 11:36).

By Invitation Only

From Psalm 2:6, we saw that it was God the Father Who **set** Jesus on Zion. Similarly, the 144,000 who attain that Mount Zion are placed there by God Himself. There is a very revealing passage of scripture that illustrates this: *“And He said unto her, ‘What wilt thou?’ She saith unto Him, ‘Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom.’ But Jesus answered and said, ‘Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ They say unto Him, ‘We*

*are able.’ And He saith unto them, ‘Ye shall drink indeed of My cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on My right hand and on My left, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is **prepared of My Father**”* (Mat 20:21-24). Here we learn some important truths. In order to be on His right or left hand, the disciples had to pass through the experiences that Christ had, including His sufferings. Clearly there is a price to be paid! Note, that Jesus did not rebuke her for asking such a thing. God delights for us to desire to be near to Him eternally! To obtain this, Jesus encouraged the disciples to walk in His footsteps in order to end up where He would be. Even then, it was not solely a matter of the capabilities of the disciples, but rather the **calling of God**. Jesus did **not** promise them the reward they requested, but deferred to the Father’s predetermined plan. So, the rewards given are firstly ‘prepared’ or predestinated by God the Father. However, it is crucial that each one yield to that calling and purpose, and pay the price in order to attain those rewards. Even in many social functions such as weddings or parties, one must **first be called** in order to attend. Otherwise, you would be considered a “gatecrasher.” Such were “the angels which kept not their first estate,” and sought to forcibly take Zion (Jude 6).

O to Be with Christ on Zion!

Secondly we see that this group is standing **with Christ** on Mount Zion. Although all of the redeemed will be **with the Lord** in eternity, there are some who will be closer to Him than others. Apparently those in eternal Zion experience the most intimate closeness to Christ. It should be considered that in Jesus’ earthly life, there were some who forsook everything in order to be **with Jesus** and to fulfill His calling upon their lives. Clearly, these were the servants of God who were chosen by God to do so. *“And He goeth up into a mountain, and*

calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should **be with Him...**" (Mk 3:13-14). At the last supper Jesus commended the apostles by saying, "Ye are they which have continued **with Me**, in My temptations" (Lk 22:28). The apostles were also promised a place **with Jesus** in eternity. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and **where I am**, there shall also My servant be..." (Jn 12:26).

Called to Salvation

The Bible leads us to understand that all of the true spiritual experiences that one may have in this life are actually initiated by God Himself. Another Biblical term for this could be 'calling.' This applies to our very salvation itself, as Jesus said, "No man can **come to Me**, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him..." (Jn 6:44; Acts 2:47; 13:48). When one understands that calling, and believes it, then he is **born again** into a living spiritual experience (Jn 3:3-5). In our dispensation of the New Testament, God calls all of mankind unto salvation (2Pet 3:9; 1Tim 2:4; Jn 3:16). Sadly, relatively few respond to the call to be saved (Mat 7:13-14; 1Cor 1:26-31). Speaking in the earthly sense, it is impossible for anyone to bring themselves to birth! Also, one cannot call himself. Someone else must do it. In the spiritual births, it is God Himself Who does it! "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but of God**" (Jn 1:13). This apparently also applies to those in eternal Zion. "And of Zion it shall be said, "This and that man was **born in her...**" (Psa 87:4-5).

Deep Calleth unto Deep

After responding to the call to be saved, there are other callings to respond to. "Who hath saved us, **and called us with an holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Tim 1:9). Those

already saved during our present dispensation, are also called to be the "soon-to-be-raptured" bride of Christ. "Ye [the whole church] are called in **one hope of your calling**" (Eph 4:1,4). Again, it is unfortunate that many who are saved do not fulfill this calling to be in the rapture (Rev 12:1-6). Some within the church are also called to the full-time ministry. "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is **called of God**, as was Aaron" (Heb 5:4). A great sadness may be with regards to those who, though called of God to give themselves wholly to serve Him, never obey that calling (Mat 19:16-26). Still more regrettable are those who do obey the calling, enter the ministry, but are not faithful (i.e. Judas). May God give each one of us, in this eleventh hour, the vision and desire to make our calling and election sure (2Pet 1:9). May He enable us, by His grace, to pay the price needful to fulfill His personal calling in each of our lives. "And they that are **with Him** are 1.) called, and 2.) chosen, and 3.) faithful" (Rev 17:14). Instead of looking at someone like Judas who fell away from Christ and His calling, let us rather behold the group who are standing **with Him** there. We must fall down on our faces, and praise God, that He would save and transform sinners from this fallen world, to dwell in that high and holy place. We see in wonder how faithful God is to build up Zion. Remember and be confident, that "the Highest Himself shall establish her" (Psa 87:5). When we see this group standing with Jesus, we must say, "The work shall be done." Dear reader, believe that God is able to finish "the good work that He has started." He will establish Zion forever as the joy of the whole earth. Those on Mount Zion, and those in the New Jerusalem as well, will eternally stand as a testimony of the power of Christ's redemptive work. Believe in the power of the work of Calvary's cross, and that of the risen Christ! □



Real Questions, Real Answers

Part 6 – Where Is the Lamb?

Something was missing. This was the third day of their journey and they could now see their destination. Isaac was loaded down with the firewood; his father, Abraham, had the fire and the knife. “But—” interjected a puzzled Isaac, “**where is the lamb** for the burnt offering?” (Gen 22:7) His father responded, “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen 22:8). Yes, God has provided that missing something; He has provided a Lamb.

Isaac’s life was forever changed that day. There he was, bound and lying on top of the firewood which was on top of the altar. His father’s hand held a knife. Now he knew: *he* was to be the burnt offering. But suddenly, the ordeal came to a halt. God accepted Abraham’s wholehearted offering of his son whom he loved. A ram was provided to be offered in Isaac’s place.

God has demonstrated His great love for us through giving us His Son. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). Christ showed us that love by His willingness to lay down His life for us. “And walk in love, as Christ *also* hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor” (Eph 5:2).

Isaac’s query for that missing something is a reflection of the need that every person has. There is an emptiness in our lives that needs to be filled, a need to be reconciled to God. Innate in man is a longing for fellowship with God. The

psalmist says, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psa 42:1-2)

After Adam and Eve sinned, they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. They were apart from God now—alone—for the first time in their lives. But He came and searched for them, and found them, supplying skins to cover their nakedness. Those skins would have required the death of some animals which God had created. God was reaching out, willing to give the life of animals for the sake of fallen Adam and Eve.

But, even from the foundation of the world, God had prepared a far greater Sacrifice for man. **God had provided a Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who satisfies all of man’s needs.** He is *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev 13:8). His entire life upon earth was a living sacrifice. He understood the purpose for which He came, as we can see from Hebrews 10:5-7: “Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, ‘Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.’”

This Lamb was seen as a type and shadow in the Passover lamb which was required to be without blemish. So, we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of *a lamb without blemish and without spot* (1Pet 1:19).

This Lamb was humiliated by men. “*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, so He opened not his mouth*” (Acts 8:32). “He was despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa 53:3). He suffered many things at the hands of sinful men, and was esteemed as nothing. His visage was marred, and He had no beauty that we should desire Him. Those that watched Him as He hung upon the cross laughed at Him and mocked Him. They looked and stared upon Him. They cast lots for His garments. Meanwhile, He was drying up with thirst, and all His bones were coming out of joint. To us the physical sufferings He endured while dying on that cross are unimaginable, and could only be understood by one who has endured crucifixion.

Yet, much worse than the physical sufferings was the experience of being made a curse for us as He bore the sin of the world that day. There was Jesus, the Lamb without guile, bearing the shame of the world. As John the Baptist exclaimed, “Behold, *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!*” (Jn 1:29)

The apostle John, who recorded the quote above in his gospel, was given the opportunity to behold the Lamb in his revelation of heaven and of things to come. Here we’ll consider these revelations of the Lamb.

First, in heaven, John saw *a Lamb standing in the midst of the throne*, looking as if it had been slain (Rev 5:6). This Lamb was called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is a great and mighty King, having overcome sin and death, alive forevermore. This Lamb alone was worthy to open the book that would reveal God’s judgments upon earth.

In that vision of heaven, John also heard the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom,

and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” He also heard every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea saying, “Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:11-13). *The Lamb is worthy of all worship and praise throughout eternity.*

The Lamb opened the seals that brought God’s judgment to the earth, and John saw “the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man,” hiding themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. He heard them saying to the rocks and the mountains, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from *the wrath of the Lamb*. For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Rev 6:15-17) *This Lamb Who meekly endured affliction and shame will one day be seen as the Judge of all men*. He will be known as the One Who executes God’s righteous judgments.

During that time of tribulation, all that dwell upon the earth shall worship the antichrist, except those whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8). Many Spirit-baptized Christians left behind at the coming of the Lord will find grace to die as martyrs during the great tribulation. These are the ones whose names are referred to here as being written in the Lamb’s book of life. They will be seen singing the song of the Lamb in heaven. “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord

God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints” (Rev 15:2-3). The sea of glass mingled with fire speaks of the intensity of the tribulation and suffering these martyrs of the great tribulation will endure at the hands of the antichrist. John saw these martyrs as a great multitude before the Lamb in heaven. They will cry with a loud voice, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev 7:9-10). These will have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14). The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne will feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters (Rev 7:17).

There is an emptiness in our lives that needs to be filled, a need to be reconciled to God

John also saw the victorious church, caught up at the coming of Christ, when the accuser of the brethren is cast down. The testimony of this body of Spirit-baptized believers is that they overcame the dragon by *the blood of the Lamb* (Rev 12:11). Unlike the tribulation martyrs, they make full use of His blood now, in the time of grace. The shedding of His precious blood has given us life, and it has wonder-working power,

- to cleanse us from sin: “...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jn 1:7).
- to purge our consciences that we might serve God: “How much more shall the blood of Christ...purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:14).
- to justify us: “...being now justified by His blood...” (Rom 5:9).
- to sanctify us: “...the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified...” (Heb 10:29).
- to give us access to the most holy place in God’s presence: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way...” (Heb 10:19-20).

The apostle saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him was a special group. “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Rev 14:1,4). *Those seen here with the Lamb have*

a great high calling and serve Him faithfully. With Christ as the chief Cornerstone, they make up the foundation of

the New Jerusalem. “And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Rev 21:14).

The Lamb will come to earth as Lord of lords and King of kings. The antichrist and the armies of the earth will gather against Him, but the Lamb will be victorious. “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Rev 17:14). He will be seen on a white horse, His eyes as a flame of fire, and His head crowned with many crowns. The armies of heaven will follow Him into the battle. He will judge the nations at Armageddon. The antichrist and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 19:11-12,14-15,19-20). *There are a group of people with the Lamb who are called, and chosen, and faithful.* Many are called, but few are chosen. Let His chosen ones be faithful.

Those faithful ones will soon be wed to the Lamb, and all heaven will rejoice. “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, ‘Alleluia: for the Lord

God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for *the marriage of the Lamb* is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev 19:6-8). Who is worthy to be the bride of the Lamb? He loved the church and gave Himself for it so that He might present it to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle (Eph 5:25-27).

Those who love the Lord will purify themselves to be ready to meet Him at His coming. They will labor for Him in

first love until He comes for them. They will not be of this world. They will live and walk in the Spirit. They will not tell lies or commit sin (Zeph 3:13).

John saw this glorious church as the New Jerusalem. “And there came unto me one...saying, ‘Come hither, *I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.*’ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (Rev 21:9-11). Those who are joined to the Lord and live as His wife now, prepare themselves to be His bride forever. Their eternal habitation is being prepared for them in heaven, and great will be their reward at the coming of Christ.

In that glorious city there will be no visible temple, “for *the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple* of it” (Rev 21:22). Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we become the habitation of the triune God. We dwell in Him and He dwells in us. This glorious experience begins now and continues throughout eternity, getting ever deeper.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and *the Lamb is the light thereof*” (Rev 21:23). The prophet Isaiah calls out to God’s people, “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord” (Isa 2:5). Again we read in Revelation 22:5, “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

*God had provided a Lamb,
the Lord Jesus Christ,
Who satisfies all of man’s needs*

In that city there will be “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the

Lamb” (Rev 22:1). “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him” (Rev 22:3).

Preparation for that City, where the Lamb is the light, begins here and now. *As Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, suffered and died for us, so too His bride is called to a life of sacrifice for the Master.* He is coming for those who share in His sufferings. “Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice” (Psa 50:5). *This life of sacrifice begins with a broken and contrite heart.* “For Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:16-17). The humble and contrite have a living hope to dwell in that eternal city of the Lamb, as the prophet Isaiah says, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15). This is where the Lamb is, and where you and I can be with Him as well. □



Naturally Speaking

PART 6 — FOOL'S WISDOM

God answered Job's questioning with questions. The Designer of all does not inquire of men in order to gain information. Instead, He is leading us to acknowledge how much we do not know. With the following questions, the Lord begins to teach Job and us also, through animals that appear useless and foolish to the uninstructed. Many things that we will have to go through in this life will seem a waste of time and space. We will continually encounter those who do not please us or perform according to our purposes and plans. If creation had been left to us, some animals (and even some people) would never have been invented. Yet when we judge someone as worthless or call them a fool, we are putting ourselves in danger of eternal judgment because what we are really doing is judging God's wisdom in putting them on this planet (Mat 5:22; Acts 10:28). We must learn as Job did, that everything does in fact fulfill the Lord's will and has a purpose and value to Him. "Good-for-nothings" are good for something to God. The Lord has uses for the useless, a fact that should give all of us hope.

Donkey Saints

Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? whose house I have made the wilderness and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing. Job 39:5-8

Things are not as God originally made them (Rom 8:20). Ever since man's first sin, nature has become unnatural. In the beginning God gave man rule over everything that moved (Gen 1:26). Later, when the first man rejected God's government, instead of getting liberty, he fell into the bondage of sin and lost his own dominion over the rest of creation. Therefore the animals' freedom was occasioned by the loss of our own. This is why the wild donkey is unbound and all of nature is not as useful to mankind as it could have been. Yet the donkey's freedom can be seen as a cause to glorify God who causes all things to work for good (Rom 8:28).

Men see the wild burro as a mistake, a beast of burden that does not bear burdens. To them, something with such potential is wasted in the wasteland. This is also the way that natural-minded men think about believers who follow the Lord wherever He goes. Let us try to view these donkeys as their Creator does. When we study their freedom we can see illustrations of the way God works in the lives of the saints. We were all in bondage to sin and Satan at one time (Eph 2:1-3); and God Himself came down from heaven and liberated us through His death and resurrection. It is shocking to realize, however, where the donkeys, and we, have been set free: it is in the wilderness. We are free indeed, but not in the way we expected. When the children of Israel were delivered,

it was into a desert (Exo 13:18; 15:22). “Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness” (Eze 20:10). We also have the example of Jesus. Just after His baptism and receiving testimony of being the beloved Son of God, Jesus was driven into the desert (Mk 1:12). Even today many testify that their trials did not end but rather seemed to begin after baptism. Like the children of Israel we fail to realize that being set free does not automatically give us an easy life. It is in the desert that we learn to depend solely on God. We can be alone anywhere as long as Jesus is with us. We begin to have eyes only for our Heavenly Bridegroom. This is first love. “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness” (Jer 2:2). How many husbands would take their bride for a honeymoon in the desert? God does! “Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her” (Hos 2:14-16). Therefore let us not be discouraged during the dry, desert times of our spiritual journey. The desert is part of God’s plan to make us freer and stronger.

Deserted Donkeys

We also hear the wild donkey scorns the noisy multitude and the crying of the driver. Once we too were enslaved to the fashions of this world and were driven by the prince of the power of the air. Even today, many must have the noise of music or media constantly blaring in their ears. They must stay hooked up to the TV, Internet and DVD’s or chase the latest technology. The wild donkey would laugh at this worldly way of life. Like the free donkey, let us learn to scorn all the compelling voices of this age. Our old societies will lose all their at-

tractiveness. Our past life in the world will become a barren wasteland to us when compared to the beauty of being with Jesus. God is taking us away from the things that take us away from Him. The donkey does not starve in the desert. “Behold, as wild asses in the desert...the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children” (Job 24:5; 39:8). There is not only food in the wilderness but water also. “He sendeth the springs into the valleys...the wild asses quench their thirst” (Psa 104:10-11). When we are hungry, God has food in the desert for us (Exo 19:4; Jn 6:31-33). When we go through hard and dry times, He sends the refreshing water of life (Exo 17:6; 1Cor 10:3-4; Jn 7:37).

Even if you feel your life is foolishly wasted as you are left to die in the desert, it is part of God’s plan (1Cor 1:25). In the fifteenth chapter of Judges we read an account of the world’s strongest man making donkeys out of his enemies using just the jawbone of a freshly dead ass. After punishing the Philistines, Samson puns that he made heaps of them with an ass’ jawbone which he tosses away (the Hebrew word for “ass” and “heap” are the same). After being abandoned for the second time the jawbone becomes a spring (En-hakkore) in the desert that is still there reviving souls to this day (Rom 10:13). You may consider yourself abandoned or as useless as that dead donkey in the desert. As with that donkey, you may not even get a decent funeral (Jer 22:19). Yet God can still use you for His glory, to deliver and give life to others.

Peacock and Bull Story

Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? Or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? Or wilt thou leave thy labour to

him? *Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?* Job 39:9-12

Unless it missed getting into the ark or became extinct since the time of Job, the word “unicorn” is a mistranslation of the name of the strong and long-horned wild ox. Only to such a powerful animal can be applied the characteristics mentioned in God’s questions (Num 23:22; Psa 92:10). Here is another creature of great strength and ability that is of no use to mankind. On the contrary, if weak and fragile men ever tried to bind this bull they would get hurt instead of helped. There will be times when a child of God will be required to live and work with others who are like dumb oxen or bulls in a china shop. The more we seek their support, the more we will suffer. At these times we may question God’s wisdom in giving such health and strength to those too dumb to make good use of it or ask why He puts us together with them. Thus we begin to devalue and despise others. When we do this, it only proves that we are like foolish and ignorant beasts before God (Psa 73:22). Let us learn that all things exist by Him and for Him and not for ourselves (Psa 50:9-12; Col 1:16). Those we think less necessary are put with us so that we can give them the most love and honor. Thus we can learn more of the character of Christ (1Cor 12:18-27).

Foul Fowl

Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich? which leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour is in vain without fear; because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted to her understanding. What time she lifteth

up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider. Job 39:13-18

In a great house, and in each congregation, there are all kinds of vessels, some to honor and some to dishonor (2Tim 2:20). As it was in Noah’s Ark, so we too have to learn to live with the unclean as well as the clean. It is not only the wild donkeys and bulls we must share space with, but also the ignorant and vain, like the “bird brains” cited above. The ostrich’s eyes are probably bigger than its brain. It lays the largest eggs on earth and still loses them. Contrary to what one would presume, this bird does not look after its young and even its wings will not work. However, an even greater surprise arrives when she begins to run. God made her with a slow mind but He endowed her legs with speed. This flightless bird ran faster than anything in Job’s day. Often those we regard as hopeless have hidden talents beyond our own that will be shown in ways and times we least expect.

Horse Senseless

Hast thou given the horse strength? Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha: and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. Job 39:21-25

The final foolish animal we consider here is the warhorse. It was given swiftness and strength to flee any danger but instead it charges right into it. This is like a driver who speeds up as

we plead for him to slow down. Such a horse acts against its own safety and survival. Instead of shying away from the tumult of battle it rushes right into it like a fool. In life's journey, times will come when we too will be saddled with such out-of-control traveling companions. Yet often it is this kind of reckless courage that gets the victory. The common characteristic of all the creatures that we have examined is that they behave contrary to our desires and expectations. We have been shown beasts of burden that will bear no burdens, flightless birds that can outrun horses and horses that run the wrong way. Yet through their liberty and diversity, each of God's creations brings Him glory in its own unique way.

Fooled You

Anyone would be willing to be taught by the intelligent, but it takes the wisdom hidden in God's humility to be instructed by the ignorant. The gentle and loving are easy to listen to, but a bullheaded teacher with an asinine voice is harder to hear. Be they proud as a peacock or ignorant as an ostrich, we must be willing to learn from anyone God sends our way. The longer we live, the more fools we will meet and may someday find one in the mirror (1Cor 3:18). Even the smallest sparrow or littlest child can teach us great lessons. Dumb beasts can show us how not to be so dumb. God gladly gives us fools to suffer with so we can learn fool's wisdom. □

BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES *...continued from page 19*

The call of God for true worshipers came forth on Saturday evening (Jn 4:23). We were saved, baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit that we might worship God in spirit and in truth. To follow after this world and its fashions is to worship the devil; thus to worship God, a life of separation is necessary. Giving the first of our increase—our firstborn—is an act of worship. Only if there is a life of prayer can there be one of worship. Where there is worship, there will be healing also. If in life we are worshipers of God, so we will be in death and even throughout eternity.

On Sunday morning, the final meditation from God's Word came from Genesis 19:17: "...look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain..." The people of God were exhorted not to remember the past, as God had done a new work in all their lives, but rather to press on to the high calling of God. They were warned about the danger of staying in the plain or living a lukewarm life. Lastly, they were urged towards living on the mountain—a life of sacrifice and of sufferings; for it is also

on the mountain that one has closer fellowship with God and a revelation of His glory. There lives are built up as Zion and New Jerusalem; and it is on the mountaintop that the transformation of the body and character takes place.

We thank God for the sacrificial labor of many believers and workers who labored tirelessly before, during and after the Convention. Through their God-enabled efforts, the many facets of registration, accommodation, hospitality, shuttle service, security, ushering, and countless other ministries flowed relatively smoothly. Truly there is a blessedness where brethren dwell and labor in unity.

The theme of our Convention this year was taken from Isaiah 40:31: "...they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles..." Accordingly, God did surely grant His people times of refreshing and renewal as they waited upon Him throughout the days of the Convention, and renewed our hope to mount up with eagles' wings when He comes. All praise to our awesome God! □



bringing in the sheaves

good news
from far & near

USA Convention

The annual USA Convention (held this year at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, July 4-8) was uniquely and wonderfully blessed by our gracious God. Brethren from various countries—Australia, Canada, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Germany, Guadeloupe, India, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Mexico, the Middle East, Switzerland, Trinidad, Malaysia, United Kingdom—were able to join us in fellowship as well as in receiving God's choicest blessings. Our hearts rejoiced and were especially strengthened by the presence and ministry of our elder pastors. As God had promised, so He did command His blessings as His children gathered together with the united purpose of seeking Him.

The Lord marvelously opened doors for a significantly larger number of the brethren to attend the convention from the very first day, as it was a national holiday. So from the first meeting on Wednesday evening, there was an outpouring of God's glory upon His expectant people.

As the congregation worshiped the Lord, their hearts were prepared to hear His life-giving Word. The opening message was about the light and life that we receive from the Word of God (Pro 16:15). After man's fall, he walked in darkness; God's Word came forth as light, and that light brought life. This was no ordinary life, but the excellence of His power—the very life of God. As we continue to walk in the light of God's word, His life will also flow through us, preparing us for the day of resurrection.

From that very first night, prayers were held every night after the evening meeting. During these night seasons, the people of God tarried to receive even more of God's

fullness and God abundantly poured out of His latter rain. Many received the baptism of the Holy Spirit—some who had been waiting for years! The Lord truly gave more than we could ask or think.

Thursday morning's message was a reminder of the new testament or covenant into which we have entered. God no longer writes on tablets of stone, but upon our very hearts and minds. As our hearts are open to do God's will, we will love His law. In the Old Testament shadow of Abraham's sacrifice in Genesis 15, we see a beautiful picture of the covenant God Himself makes with us. As the animals were cut in pieces, Christ was torn apart to join us to Himself. God walked through those pieces—He bound Himself to this covenant. So also, the Lord has purposed that we should love Him, which is the fulfillment of the Law. This is the oath that He has made.

In the evening, we were exhorted from the Word of God to spend time weeping in the presence of God—the very success of our Christian life depends on this (Jer 9:1). Our greatest Example, Jesus Christ, sought the Father with strong crying and tears; how can we do less? There are many experiences for which we should weep: forgiveness of sin, healing, the presence of the Comforter or greater anointing in our lives, restoration of our children, strength in times of trial, and finally, for our heavenly inheritance—Zion and New Jerusalem.

On Friday, the Lord again fed us with the finest of His wheat. That morning, He spoke from Proverbs 29:18—without a vision the people perish. How do we get a vision? Abraham surrendered, consecrated home and family, and God rewarded him with a vision of the heavenly city. Through

salvation, we gain the privilege of seeing this city, the kingdom of God. Jesus ascended two mountains; in one, He was shown the glory of the world, and in the other, the glory of God. Which do we desire? If we obtain an understanding that Jesus is the Son of God, we will be able to overcome the world. Through a life of prayer and separation, we can have a vision of this glorified Christ. As we surrender our body to the Holy Spirit, we will be transformed to that same glory; through that glory, the Church will be made one.

In the evening, we heard the call of God to launch out into the deep (Lk 5:3-6). Those who stay in the shallow water are yet babes in Christ. The deep blue waters speak of the love of God which constrains us and the wisdom of God. We enjoy four blessings within the deep waters: a hope that anchors our soul and a faith that enables us to live heavenly lives; the assurance of God's provision for every need; the ability to be in this world and yet not be of it; a life in the Spirit. Peter cast his net on the right side and had a great catch of fish; so also as we live in the will of God, by the power of God and in fellowship with Him, we can experience the four-fold perfection, the transformation of our body and the sanctification of our body, soul and spirit.

There was not only a feast of God's Word during the main meetings on these two days, but also a banquet of seminars from which to choose: Before & After Marriage, Divine Healing, the Mission Field/Sharing Your Faith, Heaven, and the Full-time Consecrated Ministry. There was a special session for the young adults informing of a newly developing missions program for them. The youth were also ministered to on those days about missions and renewing their vision.

The children who attended our Convention were by no means left out of the abundance of God's blessings. On Thursday and Friday afternoon, children's meetings were held. The little ones also had the opportunity to learn new songs of praise and to hear, even at their young age, of the

glories reserved for them in heaven. With the use of visual aids, they were able to get a vivid understanding of God's throne!

Saturday morning, hearts were challenged as the message came forth on "the hidden sin"—racism. The solution? JESUS! Racism is a thought pattern that is learned over time, and as such, it may not go immediately. Jesus loved all men regardless of their culture or nationality. He was willing to be mistreated by men; therefore, as we put on the nature of Christ, we also can suffer reproach meekly. Within the body of Christ, there should be no division. We are called from many nations to be one holy nation. We are called to forsake our land that we might all be the citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

This message was brought home in a unique way as it was followed by the ordination of new ministers (the focal point of the convention). We saw two brothers and four sisters who literally were forsaking land and kindred to follow the Lamb of God. After their testimonies, a short message was given to show the greatness not only of this calling, but also of the reward—to see the Father's face throughout eternity. Then, as the congregation cried out to the Lord, hands were laid upon the candidates and the anointing from Zion came upon each one. May God grant that many others will hear and obey His call in these last days.

That same afternoon, twenty-five brethren (14 sisters and 11 brothers) followed the Lord in the waters of baptism. As each one came out of the waters to walk in newness of life, there was great rejoicing. Simultaneously, there was a fasting and prayer session held for the entire congregation wherein many hearts were also blessed.

Throughout the entire Convention, there were morning, afternoon and evening sessions of fasting and prayer where God's people were able to pour out their hearts before Him in intercession. Truly, the cries of these in "secret" brought the blessing of the Father down on the entire congregation.

(continued on page 17...)



Youth corner

Titus Coan was converted at a Charles Finney revival in western New York State. After graduating from seminary in 1834, he went as a missionary to Hilo, Hawaii, then known as the Sandwich Islands. Having a burning desire to bring revival to Hawaii, he applied himself vigorously to learning the native languages of Kau and Puna and by 1836 was fluent enough to preach in both.

Coan's official responsibility was to train teachers and oversee about two dozen schools. But Titus Coan's vision went far beyond teacher training. His prayer was that Hawaiians would come to Christ, and he determined to take the gospel directly to the people himself. In November 1836 he gave his students a long Christmas vacation and went on a walking tour of the island, ostensibly to visit the schools for which he was responsible. Each time he came to a village, he preached. As he had hoped, crowds of people gathered to hear him, and he was able to preach in three to five villages a day.

When Coan reached the Puna region, large crowds gathered to hear him. In the largest city he preached ten times in two days. Many wept as they came to understand that Christ had paid the penalty for their sins on the cross. Each time Coan finished his message, the crowds, instead of leaving, would follow him to the house where he was staying. They would crowd in, hanging on his every word, until the house could hold no more. At eleven at night he would insist that everyone go home, but they would be back as soon as the cock crowed the next morning.

A particularly stunning conversion in Puna was that of the high priest of the volcano. In addition to the idolatry and drunkenness associated with his priesthood, he also was a murderer. Yet upon his

conversion, he became a man filled with zeal for God. His sister, the high priestess of the volcano, though initially hostile to the gospel, put her faith in Christ after seeing the change in her brother.

When Coan returned home to Hilo after a month, he found a heightened interest in the way of salvation. People who had heard him preach in their villages in Kau and Puna now came to Hilo to hear more. In some cases, whole villages would come. The population of Hilo grew to ten thousand as people moved there just to hear Coan preach. On Sundays, the two hundred by eighty-five foot building would be packed, with hundreds more listening outside. The Hawaiians decided on their own that they needed a bigger church and in three weeks built a building large enough to hold two thousand.

On one occasion a young man came intending to disrupt the service by making people laugh during the prayers. Instead, he suddenly fell down unconscious and had to be carried out. Several hours later when he came to, he confessed his sin. Before long he became a member of the church he had planned to disrupt.

Coan was very diligent in his follow-up techniques. He would record the date of each person's apparent conversion and later would follow-up to ascertain if the conversion was real. Every soul was precious to him. He poured out his life and became a good Samaritan to thousands in Hawaii. That great revival where thousands were saved is attributed to the goodness and mercies of God, and to one man who obeyed the call of God. By 1853, fifty-six thousand of the seventy-one thousand native Hawaiians were professing Christians! Are you willing to answer the call of God and be a good Samaritan to the lost and perishing souls? □