

The Bible Standard

“Send out your light and truth! Let them lead me;...”

Psalm 43:3

“LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR THE PEOPLE”

Isaiah 62:10

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

THANKS-GIVING

“O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever” — Psa. 107:1

Thanksgiving Day appeals to all of us, and we are glad that the Pilgrim Fathers many years ago started the custom. They placed it at the end of the harvest to celebrate a successful growing season and harvest of their crops, and probably the Indians' generosity. The keeping of such a day appeals to all civilized mankind to a considerable degree. This day that has been set aside causes families to travel many miles to celebrate the season and create new memories. The man or woman, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, bond or free, who has not this quality of veneration developed in considerable measure cannot be appreciative and deferential toward his Creator, and would not enjoy Thanksgiving Day.

We are glad to suppose that a large segment of the U.S. and also other countries look up to God with grateful hearts and renders Him thanks for blessings manifested. Nevertheless, yearly the numbers increase of those who are losing their reverence for the God of the Bible. These turn toward a vague god of nature, of whom they profess to know comparatively little. These irreverent and unthankful fellow creatures are not generally the most ignorant of our race, nor the least favored in temporal mercies and blessings. Among them are many learned, wealthy, influential people. This condition is well represented by the many that get caught up in the worldly cares and traditions of men that in frustration they say, “I have lost my God, this makes me unhappy.” Some are able to find Him again and we praise God's longsuffering, for those that do find Him and are able to thank Him sincerely for the trials given to bring them into His presence again.

Jesus Christ the great Teacher prayed for His followers, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). To be forearmed with the Truth is to be

safeguarded against the error taught by the wicked ones. To be willingly ignorant of the Truth is to fall a prey to the error—especially in this evil day. We must “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). The difficulty with us is that many have supposed that the conversion of the world and its sanctification can be better accomplished by misrepresenting Divine character and justice. Unconsciously we have learned to twist and interpret our Bibles to fit the erroneous creeds which were handed to us by our well-meaning forefathers. The majority of professing Christians are careless, indifferent to what the Lord has caused to be written for their admonition and encouragement and assistance in this evil day.

In Isaiah's day and shortly thereafter the great nominal religious leaders were expecting that nominal fleshly Israel would be protected and preserved by God and not destroyed by the Chaldeans. Any who taught that because of the great evils therein it would be destroyed; were outcasts, in disfavor, and were persecuted by these leaders (e.g., Jer. 20). Likewise here in the Expanded Gospel Age Harvest the great religious leaders of Christendom, though spiritually blind, especially the hierarchy supported by the rest of the clergy, are still vainly hoping and claiming that by engaging in social action, politics, they can patch up and heal the present order (Jer. 51:8, 9), and those who teach its destruction by the Lord in the present great Time of Trouble are in disfavor with the church systems and more or less persecuted (comp. E 14, pp. 372, 373).

Accordingly, Christendom's bad religious leaders, or watchmen, are spiritually blind. Like the blind Pharisees in their day, they cannot discern the signs of the times “they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead



the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:14; 1 Thes. 5:1-5). “They willingly are ignorant of”; “the present truth” (2 Pet. 3:3-5; 1:12); they are like watchdogs that cannot bark a warning. The Day of Judgment is upon these false creeds. “To the Law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). “Come now, let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isa. 1:18)!

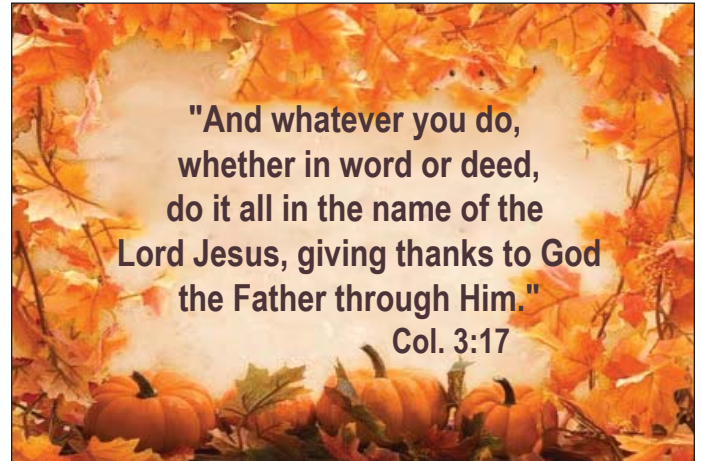
THANKS-GIVING NOT NOURISHED BY ERRORS

We must ask, how can there be thanks-giving to a God that, as the creeds of Christendom teach, has a plan to send multitudes into everlasting torment? Can we “worship in spirit and in Truth” a Creator who would make such an atrocious plan? And could we respect His honesty, if He labeled it “good tidings of great joy to all people?” Can we honestly thank God for any of these conditions, if we believe them to be true? These teachings have come down to us from the Dark Ages with no Biblical foundation. The majority of mankind has been miss-taught that the wages of Adam’s sin was to be eternal misery to many in his loins. God’s Word supports no such unreasonable and unloving plan “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The false teachings are the “doctrines of devils,” as St. Paul designates them (1 Tim. 4:1). We brought to your attention some of these “doctrines of devils” that we may not only *demolish them*, but give you instead the true, satisfactory portion, the Truth, the Bread that came down from heaven to give life eternal—not merely to the saintly few of the Church, but to mankind in general. One of our favorite Bible Hero’s is Job who asked, “If a man die shall he live again” (Job 14:14)? To a thoughtful mind there is no more interesting question conceivable than this! For the correct answer we turn to the Bible, “God’s Word.” Jesus declares in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

Those who get the proper view of our Creator and of His glorious Plan for human salvation [the ransom] will be forever protected from such fears and doubts respecting Divine goodness. Getting the proper view of the heavenly Father’s character, through discerning His Plan of the ages for spiritual Israel, natural Israel and the world in general, they will hereafter be able to celebrate every Thanksgiving Day much more abundantly, much more intelligently, much more happily than in the past. More than this, to these every day will be a Thanksgiving Day if (rightly exercised by the goodness of God) they shall give Him their hearts. “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine

eyes observe my ways” (Pro. 23:26). We trust in the hub doctrine of the Bible in which 1 Tim. 2:6 says, “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Jehovah has made this need so clear in 1 Cor. 15:21, 22, “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” This privilege is the result of the sacrifice of Jesus who gave Himself a *ransom for all*. In fulfilling the desire to have a very clear understanding of God’s grace we consider from His Word, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts. 3:21).



Jehovah continues to prepare His earth for the habitation of perfected man; those called from the grave, “Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28, 29 ASV); to live forever under the promised conditions of Rev. 21:4, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

In the Psalm from which our text is taken, the prophet David repeats five times this sentiment of thanksgiving to God because of the ever continuance of His mercy. Our English translation does not give us the exact thought however. Properly translated it would read, “O give thanks . . . for His mercy endureth forever.” As long as there is any use for mercy, God’s mercy will continue to be exercised. When the great Divine program shall have been accomplished, when every creature in heaven and in earth shall be heard 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. 5:13); then there will no longer be need for mercy; mercy will have accomplished its work and need not be exercised. However, as a quality,

mercy will always be a part of perfect character.

As we have stated, there is a tendency by many to trust the creeds of man rather than the Word of God; however, the truly consecrated child of God seeking the Truth turns to God's Word "The Bible." God in His wisdom recognized that man would need a proof positive! By speaking through the Prophet Isaiah, 55:11, God gives to us this guarantee, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

Justice is the foundation of God's throne—the foundation of the Divine government. Justice had control of Father Adam and offered him eternal life in an Edenic home, as a reward for obedience, or else death, extinction, as the penalty for disobedience. As Divine Wisdom had foreknown, man disobeyed and the penalty of justice, "dying thou shalt die," was executed. Through heredity Adam's entire race became involved—all inherited sin and death. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5).

For more than two thousand years death reigned through the edict of justice and our race as a whole was subject to it. A little later [1615 B.C.] the Law Covenant was made with Israel—one nation out of many. It seemed to offer mercy, but did not. They were placed under the Law and were merely offered eternal life, if they could keep the Law—which they could not keep, because of inherited blemishes, moral and physical. It was over four thousand years from the time justice struck the fatal blow, until Divine mercy stepped forward with the healing balm. God's mercy is His love in active operation for the relief of the unfortunate and condemned. Mercy and love triumphed over justice—not through a failure of justice, not through conquering it, but through a satisfaction of justice, its appeasement by the provision for the ransom-price, a corresponding price (1 Tim. 2:6).

JUSTICE AND LOVE

Although God is Love, and must always have been loving and kind and merciful of disposition, yet this quality of His character was held in restraint as respects condemned men for more than forty centuries. So the Apostle explains, saying, Herein was manifested the love

of God, in that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9).

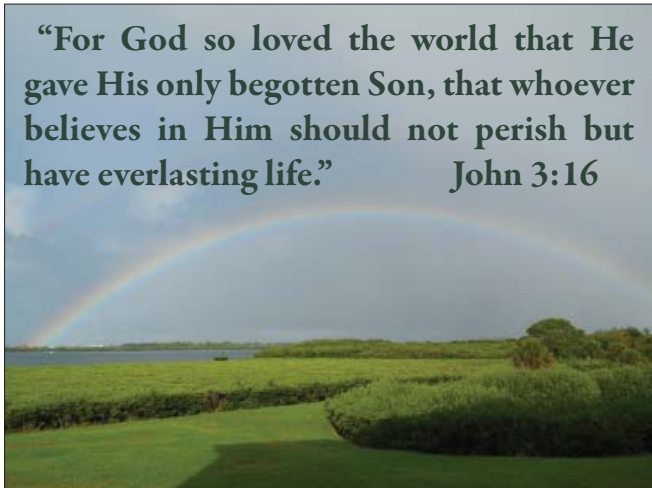
But meantime the darkness of sin and the Adversary's misrepresentations of the Divine character had so operated upon the fallen race that—eyes had they, but they saw not; ears had they, but they understood not; hearts had they, but they comprehended not, the message of Divine mercy. They fulfilled the Scriptures in slaying the One sent for their relief. And they have misunderstood, slandered, maligned, "killed" His followers; the few blessed with the hearing ears, the understanding hearts and the eyes of faith. These few constitute what the Scriptures designate the one true Church of God, including the Apostles and all the faithful throughout

this Age—the household of faith. These special calls in the Expanded Gospel Age Harvest, now with the Consecrated Epiphany Campers, will continue until the Lord's Millennial Mediatorial Reign begins; a time that God has not revealed.

Man's necessity became God's opportunity for displaying His glorious character—perfect in justice, wisdom, love and power. While love could not clear the guilty, it could provide a Redeemer to suffer, "the just for the unjust." But Divine justice could not allow this, unless with the consent of the sufferer. We read that God set before His only begotten Son a glorious Plan and invited His cooperation therein. The Son assented, left the heavenly glory, was made flesh and "offered Himself" an acceptable sacrifice, "the just for the unjust"—for the redemption of Adam and his race.

The Father honored Him by raising Him from the dead to a still higher glory and honor than He had before; to immortality—the Divine nature. Now, from this glorious station, He is empowered to be the Mediator between God and men; between Divine justice and fallen humanity. He is empowered to give the earthly rights which He sacrificially laid down for Adam and his race—to as many of them as will accept the perfection of human nature and its rights and privileges upon terms in harmony with the Divine Law—the remainder He will destroy, "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" be annihilated "as brute beasts" (Acts 3:23; 2 Pet. 2:12).

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16



As though all this were not sufficiently wonderful, as though with all this the heavenly Father's wisdom, justice, love and power would not be sufficiently illustrated, exemplified, God added another feature. Before beginning to deal with the world as a whole, to give back to the willing and obedient of the race, human perfection and an earthly Eden, paradise, and eternal life—before commencing this work of Restitution (Acts 3:19), the Father made known to the Son another feature of His Plan. He would give to the Son a Bride, a class selected from among the fallen race—called, chosen, faithful overcomers. These, as the Joint-Heirs of the Second Adam, will share with Him in uplifting those of Adam's race who will become the children of Christ through obedience; just as did our Lord Jesus "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

REJOICING IN TRIBULATION

The trials and testings of all those who became the Bride of Christ were similar to those of the Redeemer. They suffered with Him in order to reign with Him. In this transaction, be it noted, the merit, the value, all proceeded from the one man—the man Christ Jesus. No more was needed. No more was demanded by Justice for the sins of the whole world. So to speak, the Lord Jesus loaned to His Bride the merit of His righteousness, imputing it to them by faith as a wedding garment. Thereby they were qualified as His members and in His name to share in His sacrificial work in order that they could be permitted to share with Him in His Millennial Kingdom glory and its great uplifting work for the world of mankind. Whoever has not the Spirit of Christ in this sacrificing is none of His, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1); and whoever, after consecrating his life, draws back, does so unto perdition, destruction (Heb. 10:39).

Those accepted as His Bride, once belonged to the race of sinners. They were "children of wrath even as others" (Eph. 2:3). Their acceptance as sacrifices, therefore, was not possible except as the great Captain of their salvation imputed to those sacrifices a sufficiency of the merit of His sacrifice to compensate for their defects. This made their sacrifices acceptable to the Father as a part of His sacrifice—they being counted in with Him as "members of His Body" (E 15 pp. 170-171).

As the great Jehovah continues to expand the features of the Gospel Age Harvest, we now recognize that these regulations mentioned above are continuing in principle for the called, chosen and faithful of today. We are given to understand that the general call has ceased (1881); however, God continues to seek His faithful under special calls, those truly consecrated, to complete the Consecrated Epiphany Camper class. Like Jesus and the Little Flock, the Great Company and the Youthful Worthies; the Consecrated Epiphany Campers sacrifice their rights and interest as Paul has exhorted "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). True, there is a difference between these followers and Christ Jesus. He was brought into the world holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners; His sacrifice was a perfect one.

The Youthful Worthies and the Consecrated Epiphany Campers, the antitypical sons of the stranger and the antitypical eunuchs, take firm hold of the earthly features of the Oath-bound Covenant (E 4, pp. 353-358; PT '78, p. 52, col. 2) as a part of the sand-seed, "sand which is upon the sea shore." The Youthful Worthies (and perhaps the Consecrated Epiphany Campers) take firm hold of and are developed by the features of the Covenant typed by Hannah (E 13, pp. 19, 20, 31).

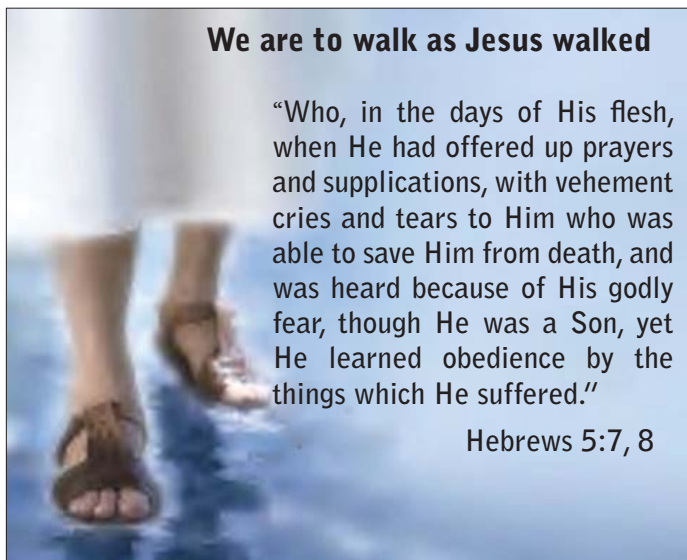
God promises in Isa. 56:5 that the strangers and the eunuchs will have "a name better than of sons and of daughters." Antitypically, the word "name" here seems to refer to character, honor and nature. The Youthful Worthies and the Consecrated Epiphany Campers will surely not have finer characters, honor and nature than the Little Flock sons and the Great Company daughters (2 Cor. 6:16-18). But they will have finer characters because of development while sin is still much in the ascendancy than those who do not consecrate before the Mediatorial Reign, who will be sons and daughters of restitution (Joel 2:28; Isa. 60:4, 9).

The Consecrated Epiphany Campers will have greater honor also than the unconsecrated quasi-elect and the non-elect. The Youthful Worthies will have, e.g., the marvelous honor under the Ancient Worthies of giving

We are to walk as Jesus walked

"Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

Hebrews 5:7, 8



Millennial and Little Season revelations (visions; Joel 2:28; E 4, p. 319) and the Consecrated Epiphany Campers will have, e.g., the grand honor of serving as the highest class of the eventual restitutionists, antitypical Miriam, in leading mankind in the grand post-Millennial anthem of praise and deliverance (E 11, p. 293). And the Youthful Worthies will obtain also a glorious spirit nature post-Millennially (R5182; Vol 6, pp. 156, 157; E 4, pp. 331-336). Hallelujah!

Those of us who have the eye of faith and the bearing of faith to appreciate this, the Message of God's Word, may surely be thankful to the last degree. What more could our heavenly Father do for us than He has done—redeeming us, giving us the necessary helps along the way, and making us sharers in the Kingdom blessings and honors. More than this, He has been blessing our friends, our children, our parents, our neighbors, the heathen—all of mankind, of one family.



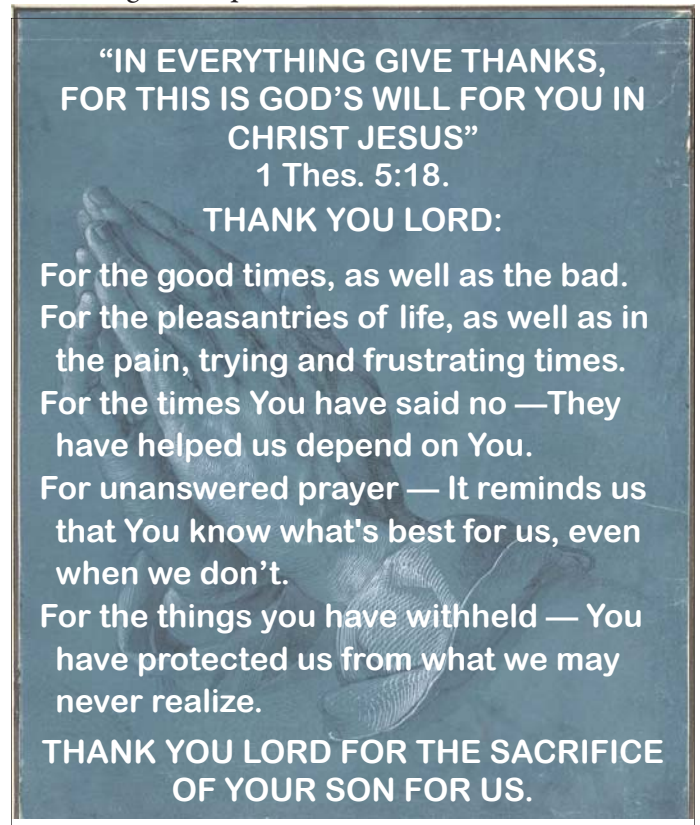
GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever” (Psa. 107:1)! During this Expanded Gospel Age Harvest His mercy has been manifest to all those who take up their cross and follow Jesus. Matt. 16:24 exhorts, “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.” Luke 14:27 states the same thought only much stronger, “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” And we, as justified, consecrated, children of God want to be His disciples! As stated, the General call ceased in 1881; however, God through His present Truth (Prov. 4:18) has continued the special calls as required to fulfill His plan of salvation for all mankind “in due time!” God has not provided the closing date for the work going forward at this time; however, we will certainly recognize the Millennial Mediatorial Reign of Christ when it begins. Then His mercy will return to natural Israel under the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31),

of which Christ and the one true Church are “able ministers,” Servants, Priests and Kings.

Could all the world discern, through the trials and tears and sorrows and imperfections and dying of their present experience, the glorious outcome which God is providing for the whole world, they would be filled with praise to Him who loved us and bought us back from the penalty of death and who ultimately will complete His glorious work through Messiah's Kingdom. Oh, how many Christians have misrepresented the facts of the case and endeavored to have people give thanks to God because they fear Him for His unkindness, injustice, lovelessness.

Let us go back to the Word of God and free our minds of the prejudices of superstition and misinterpretation handed down from the Dark Ages. Let us see the glory of our God, as revealed in His Word—the Bible. Let Christians give thanks that, by the grace of God, their eyes and ears of understanding are opening to a better knowledge of Him. Let them give thanks, not only for redemption from the death sentence, but also for their call to stewardship and its consequent sacrifices in this present time and its promise of reward of Kingdom honors and privileges. Let the world give thanks in proportion as it is able to discern God's goodness and mercy for Adam's race—that eventually through the channel of the glorified Church, the Divine blessing will be extended to every member of Adam's race, giving opportunity to all to attain life everlasting with full human perfection and an everlasting Eden upon this now sin-cursed earth of ours.



CHRISTIANS AND **TRUE** CHRISTMAS OBSERVANCE

Many professing Christians look forward to the yearly observance of Christmas as a joyous occasion, as a time to reflect on the monumental important event—heralded and celebrated in heaven and on earth—our Savior’s human birth, a cause to rejoice and give thanks to God for His great gift of salvation to mankind through faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:15-17). The Christmas season is for them a traditional time for families, relatives, friends, neighbors and other loved ones to get together in good associations, and to pause from the cares of daily life and be especially mindful of their love for God, Christ and each other.

But there are other professing Christians who, believing that its observance is improper for true Christians, scrupulously avoid marking the Christmas season in any way special. To them Christmas observance is false worship, paganism (*i.e.*, the worship of heathen gods, especially the ancient Roman Sun God Sol), hiding under a false Christianized guise; therefore it is to many of them a blasphemy to the name of Jesus Christ! The idea that Christmas is actually unchristian is not new. The Puritans who settled early in New England rejected Christmas as heathenism, and at various times in the past, especially in American Colonial times, laws in some localities even forbade the celebration of Christmas. Eventually, as the founding principle of religious freedom as a right of all citizens was established firmly, and as more and more people from European ethnic backgrounds settled in America, bringing their fondness for Christmas and its customs with them, all such laws against its observance were abolished, and Christmas observance in the U.S. became a cherished religious tradition, as in the other countries of Christendom.

But the controversy over Christmas observance never totally died out, and now there is a spreading vocal and organized opposition to true Christians observing Christmas. The arguments against Christmas observance are put forward with the aim of exhorting true Christians to remove all that is tainted with false worship from their belief and practice. Indeed, the Scriptures direct all true believers to reject what is bad and false, and cling only to what is good and true; “Let all things be tested; keep to

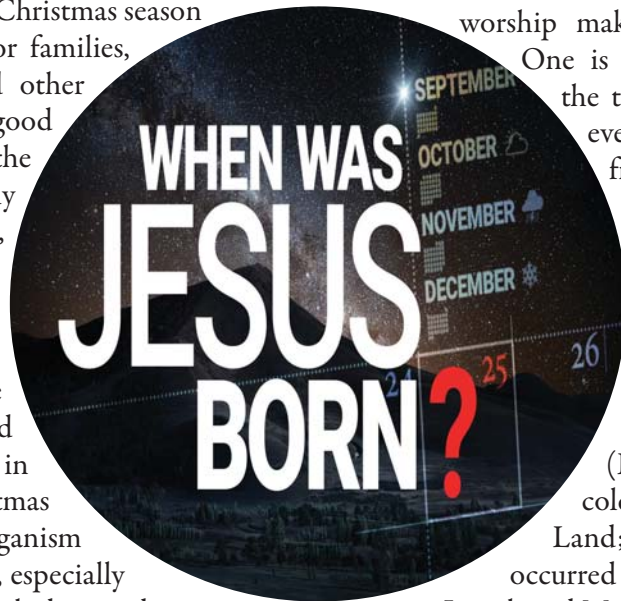
what is good; Keep from every form of evil” (1 Thes. 5:21, 22; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Isa. 52:11). It is in a Truth-seeking, God-honoring spirit that we here examine this matter, and seek to get God’s view of it from the Bible.

JESUS’ BIRTH DATE

Those who claim that Christmas observance is false worship make several points concerning it. One is that the Dec. 25th date is not the true date of Jesus’ birth, and that everything false should be removed from Christian worship. They are quick to point out that Jesus could not have been born on Dec. 25th, the traditional date for the celebration of Christmas. They point out from the Scriptures that the shepherds were out watching their flocks by night (Luke 2:8), a thing not done in the cold and damp of winter in the Holy Land; therefore Jesus’ birth obviously occurred during a more temperate season.

Joseph and Mary were given makeshift lodging in a stable, which would not likely have been done in the case of a woman about to give birth had it been winter! Jesus presented Himself to be baptized by John, to begin His ministry, at the 30th anniversary of His birth and this would have been during appropriate weather for it. John had been in his ministry of baptizing for six months prior to Jesus’ baptism—which therefore would have been from spring until fall—for at other seasons the weather would have been inappropriate for outdoor baptism.

Jesus’ ministry is known from the Scriptures to have been for 3½ years and His death in early spring. This would confirm His birth as having been in early autumn. The decree of Caesar Augustus had gone out for the people to be taxed (Luke 2:1). In an agricultural area, such as that part of the Holy Land in Jesus’ time, the logical time for taxation would have been immediately after the harvest, early in the fall. Because of these and other logical deductions from Scripture testimony, those who object to Christmas observance place the birth of Jesus at about Oct. 1. They claim that the date cannot be exactly determined, that there is no record of the precise date in the Bible, that it was never commanded in the Bible to be observed, and that early Christians are not recorded as having done so. Therefore, Christmas observance is



foreign to original Christianity, and we ought not to observe it.

Many objectors to Christmas observance seem to have the thought that they alone have been illuminated by the Truth of the Bible, and that they exclusively take the proper view of the facts; however, others conscientiously interested in properly serving God in the manner most pleasing to Him possess the same factual and Scriptural information and understanding of the time of Jesus' birth, and yet draw a different conclusion concerning the propriety of Christmas observance among Christians. We fully agree that Dec. 25 is not the date of Jesus' birth and that He was born in early Oct. B.C. 2 (SITS. 2, pp. 54-62). The book's author, who placed a very high premium on Bible Truth, understood when he wrote it in 1889 that Jesus was born about Oct. 1 and not in December; yet he saw no reason to condemn Christmas observance among true Christians.

WORLDLINESS IN CHRISTMAS OBSERVANCE

The Jehovah's Witnesses and others consider as unchristian the worldly emphasis which has attached itself to Christmas observance—the materialism, the commercialism, the myths of Santa Claus, Kriss Kringle, St. Nicholas, etc., and the many other customs connected with it in the churches, communities and homes of Christendom; which customs have heathen origins and no connection with the birth of our dear Savior. This sad degeneration they say is really due to the fact (which they have concluded) that Jesus has never actually been a part of the Christmas observance. That Christmas observance, inherently bad, can never be made good, and can never glorify God and Christ.

We must agree that for many, the Christmas season has degenerated into a season of commercialism and a secular free-for-all, quite removed from any thought about Jesus Christ. It is an occasion for drunken parties (including "office parties"), revelries and excesses of all kinds; for letting inhibitions and responsible behavior be disregarded each Christmas season. Many rightly ask, is this the way to honor God and Christ?

However, such abuse of Christmas observance is not universal—there are many for whom it remains a solemn, reverent and joyful occasion, and for whom the thoughts and desires of the heart are especially drawn to good



And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men! Luke 2:13,14

family and spiritual matters, to meditation on God's great expression of love for us in the sending to earth and sacrifice of Jesus Christ (John 3:16). Children and the young-in-heart of all ages in many places go out on Christmas Eve to sing for those nearby of the joys of knowing that Jesus came to earth and was born to save them from sin and death. Much Godly cheer is spread in this and other ways, and people who seldom get to speak to one another find in the Christmas season an opportunity to share the message of peace on earth and good will toward men. Are we to condemn them? No!

The heavenly host specially rejoiced over and praised God after the human birth of Jesus

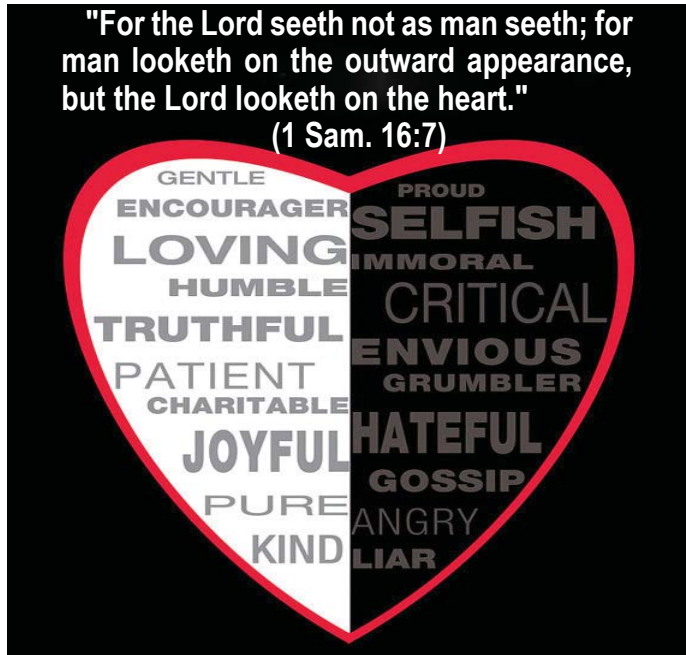
(Luke 2:13, 14), realizing its importance in God's Plan; and the subjects of earthly kings rejoice at the birth of a son and heir to the throne. Shouldn't we therefore imitate them? Should we refrain on Dec. 24, 25, or any other time from joining with others in likewise rejoicing over and praising God for the human birth of Jesus, realizing its importance in God's Plan—and even criticize and condemn others for doing so? Surely not!

We should state, lest we be misunderstood by what is given above, that we are not advocating lavish, expensive Christmas observances or displays, which usually take much time, effort and means. But we see no objection to Christians, especially those who have young children, having a modest and inexpensive Christmas observance.

THE SANTA CLAUS STORY

For many, young children, merchants and others, Christmas centers around Santa Claus, not Jesus Christ. The Santa Claus legend has usurped in the hearts of many the place of God as our Heavenly Father, the true, generous Giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift" (James 1:17), especially the unspeakable gift of His Son Jesus (2 Cor. 9:15), and has taken the place of the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people! Children learn to express gratitude, not to God, but to a mythical character, for the generosity of parents and grandparents; and to develop self-indulgent, greedy attitudes which expect to get desired things on Dec. 25th in a windfall, usually in return for good behavior—instead of cultivating appreciation of the greater blessing of giving. They look to a red-suited fat fellow with a beard for appreciation and understanding—they in effect pray to Santa Claus for the

things they want—and so lose sight of trust in and prayer to God to bless them with what is best for them in their lives.



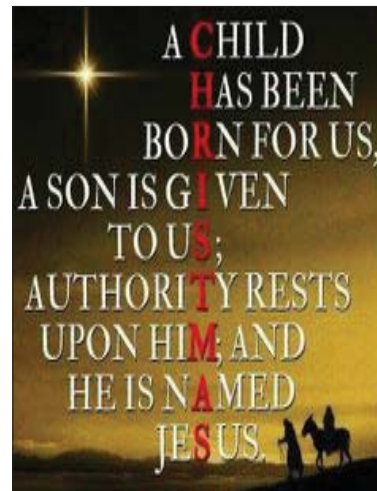
Children from families with modest financial resources must suffer the sting of falsely believing that Santa loves rich children more than poor ones. Indeed, the pressure to bestow gifts upon many at Christmas time, regardless of the financial ability to so do, prompted on by the Santa Claus legend, is usually a tiresome and frantic chore, and has led many to extremes of hardship and financial ruin in the early spring! Even the argument that Santa Claus is “fun” cannot stand. How much “fun” is it for children to finally discover that the legend is false, that they have been deceived by an empty fable at the hands of their parents, whom they naturally trusted? How can parents perpetuate a falsehood upon their children and then expect their trust in difficult times later?

Parents often do not so view the matter. They are led by social pressures, and an increasingly myopic view of their own childhood, to romantically regard the early years as times of unrestrained fantasy, to be encouraged and retained as long as possible. Many parents, perhaps due to unresolved hurts they themselves experienced when the age of awareness overtook their childish fantasy-world, defensively struggle against any enlightenment which might “deprive” their children of believing fables; some even seem to vicariously “recover” their own “lost” childish superstitions through teaching such ideas to their children, inflicting upon them a perpetuation of the same hurt. Naturally such is done innocently, without thought as to underlying motives, and often without conscious awareness of them. Young children are full of wonder and readily believe many fables and fantastic stories

because parents and others teach these, not because it is especially natural for children to need to believe things other than reality for a time.

GIFT GIVING

The mutual giving of gifts at Christmas time comes under attack from the Jehovah’s Witnesses and others because it is alleged to have been borrowed from the pagan Roman observance of the Saturnalia on Dec. 19 (BS. Dec. ‘81). We agree that Christians should, in full consecration of their lives to God, leave off pagan and Dark-Age beliefs, doctrines and practices. However, even though, as we have already acknowledged and decried above. Gift giving at Christmas time has become its own form of abusive excess in the world, to the great injury of many. We see no reason to take the extreme view that simply because it has been done immoderately or wrongly by some, or was historically done at a special time in the worship of false gods, that Christians should avoid doing similarly at its anniversary!



We need to balance our view in proper moderation, and to avoid the spirit of variance, a worldly spirit (Gal. 5:20), that seeks to find self-righteousness in setting oneself apart, in variance from the ways of most others. In perpetuating the custom of giving gifts at Christmas time, some will say that we

are actually sacrificing to pagan idols (Acts 15:28, 29); because of an alleged connection between the current custom and a similar custom connected with the heathen worship of Saturn. The Bible tells us that as one thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7). “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). Do Christians today who mark Christmas observance with gifts to others do so out of a desire to serve a pagan god, or to observe a pagan holiday? Of course not! What they are doing is in accordance with generous hearts, not the circumstances of history! The unselfish giving of little gifts and remembrances at Christmas time, regardless of any coincidental historical pagan gift giving, seems to us especially appropriate; in that God is continually giving and encouraging others to give, and that this day is so generally set aside for the remembrance of the gift of His dear Son for our redemption! Luke 11:13, “If you then,

being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” Acts 20:35, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Those who still object on the basis of historical connections to heathen worship and practices should remember that the Apostle Paul did not consider it wrong under certain circumstances even to eat meat that had been offered to heathen idols (1 Cor. 8:4; 10:25-33; Rom. 14:14-23), let alone merely using certain days and legitimate customs that the heathen used in their festivals long ago. Surely the doing of good, or the free-will, unselfish and judicious giving of proper gifts by Christians at Christmas time, would not be a sin, any more than it would be to do so at any other time of the year. If we were to skip by Dec. 25th without thanking God for the great gift of His Son (for which we should thank Him every day!) just because of ancient heathen holidays at that season, we would be more unchristian than Christian.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE



Some of those who object to Christmas observance among Christians appeal to Jer. 10:2-4, which in the ASV reads: “Thus saith Jehovah, Learn not the way of the nations [heathen], and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold;

they fasten it with nails and with hammers that it move not.” This, say the objectors, is describing the Christmas tree, and is Scriptural condemnation of it. On the surface the argument may appear and vs. 5-6 (ASV) reads: “They are like a palm-tree, of turned work, and speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good. There is none like unto thee, O Jehovah; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.”

As we see therefore, the cut tree is then fashioned into an inanimate idol, a wooden god richly decorated with much careful labor, which the Scripture rightly points out is still incapable of even doing the simplest things that a man can do—this points out the foolishness and vanity of the worship of idols, and is an exhortation

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and stern warning to all to flee superstition and fear of them, and to worship Jehovah, the one true God, who only, through His Son, is able to act on our behalf, and who only is worthy of such worship and fear (reverence). The language of Jer. 10:1-16 makes it clear that objects of worship are referred to, and the implication is that the objects are portable which the usual decorated Christmas trees would not be—and that they cannot get around by themselves, without being carried. V. 5 (BBE*) “It is like a pillar in a garden of plants, and has no voice: it has to be lifted, for it has no power of walking. Have no fear of it; for it has no power of doing evil and it is not able to do any good.” A similarly worded and more detailed description of inability of idols is found in Psa. 115:2-7.

Of course, if any of God’s people were to worship a Christmas tree or any other object in nature, or manufactured object or spirit being, or to divide worship between Jehovah and a Christmas tree or any other natural or man made object; the Bible’s stern warning against idolatry would apply to them. The spirit of a sound mind in God’s consecrated people, “For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of self-control” (2 Tim. 1:7 BBE*), will guard them against idolatry of any kind; 1 John 5:21, “My little children, keep yourselves from false gods.” (*BBE=Bible in Basic English)

Nothing in the Scriptures indicates or refers to Christmas trees in any way; the Bible is silent on the subject. A live evergreen tree in midwinter would indeed be a fitting reminder of the everlasting life we gain through Jesus Christ, and has been a touching symbol in the hearts of Christians for centuries.

A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

The Scriptures specifically set apart a date and a method for the solemn observance of our Lord’s Memorial Supper annually, which Jesus Himself instituted as the antitypical Passover (Luke 22:15-20; John 6:53; 1 Cor. 5:7, 8; 11:26-30), which is commonly observed incorrectly by many (see BS Nos. 300, 488). It is far more important to be careful about those things the Bible directs us to observe than to become overly scrupulous about the observation (or not) of Christmas, which is not treated in the Scriptures. Some teach that only the observances specifically commanded in the Bible are for Christians; however, the Bible does not condemn commemorations done in the right attitude and to the glory of God which have no direction specifically from the Scriptures, despite the contrary claims.

But some say birthday celebrations are condemned in the Bible, and so a “birthday” celebrated for our Lord would be blasphemy. Let us examine this in the light

of the Scriptures. It is based primarily on two heathen birthday celebrations recorded in the Bible, at each of which a life was taken, and also on a lack of any record in the Bible of true believers celebrating birthdays.

One Bible account of a birthday celebration is Pharaoh's in Gen. 40:20-22, at which a life was taken; however, careful consideration of the context gives the proper thought. In Gen. 39 we see that Joseph was made master of Potiphar's house, and that he spurned improper advances by Potiphar's wife (vs. 8, 9). When she found that she could in no way seduce him, she pulled off his outer garment as he fled, and then accused him falsely (vs. 13-18)—and for the alleged rape attempt he was thrown into prison (v. 20). But Jehovah continued with him, and he was made chief keeper of the prisoners (vs. 21-23).

Pharaoh's chief butler and baker had offended him somehow and were cast into prison with Joseph (Gen. 40:1-3). They each had a dream and were troubled (vs. 5, 6). Joseph pointed out that interpretations belong to God (v. 8). When they recounted their dreams (vs. 9-19), Joseph told them that within three days the butler would be restored to Pharaoh's favor and the baker would be hanged by him. The third day happened to be Pharaoh's birthday (v. 20), and he gave a feast. And, true to the interpretation, the butler was restored (v. 21), but the baker was hanged (v. 22). So the birthday was not at all the cause of the execution, but rather was only incidental to it; in fact, it could just as easily be argued that perhaps both men might have been slated for execution, but that the birthday celebration was the occasion for the deliverance of one from death. Chap. 41 shows that the dreams and the subsequent birthday celebration at which the interpretations came true evidently are recorded so that we might understand how Joseph came into Pharaoh's favor two years later (vs. 9-13). It does not follow that there was any special significance to the birthday celebration itself.

The other birthday celebration is Herod's, recorded in Matt. 14:6-11; Mark 6:21-28. It is called "a convenient day" (Mark 6:21), the occasion for the beheading of John; again, the implication is that the birthday was incidental to the event, not the cause of it—the context shows this. Herod was already turned against and fearful of John because of the popular regard for him; and John's reproof of his adultery with his brother's wife, Herodias. Her daughter pleased him greatly with a dance, which

provided the excuse for Herod having John beheaded—the birthday celebration was not the cause. But some will say the above two specified examples of birthdays are heathen, and at both killings took place—therefore surely these two are bad examples, and are in the Bible for the purpose of showing us that birthday celebrations are detestable to Jehovah!

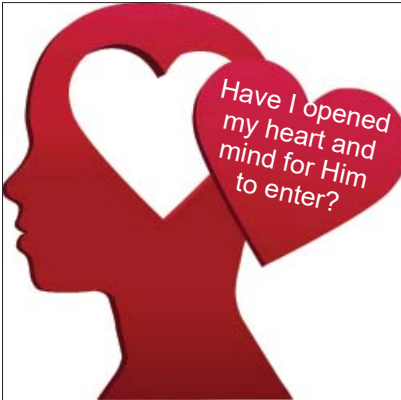
Without any other Scriptural indication, such a thought must be read into the accounts—a careful reading will show that, while birthdays are mentioned as occasions for the events described, there is no thought, good or bad, expressed or implied about the birthday celebrations themselves. The celebrations recorded, as well as historical knowledge of those of royalty in Biblical times, show that they were generous affairs for the feasting and entertainment of those present, and often for good acts; acts of magnanimity, such as the pardon and release of prisoners.

It is alleged that only heathen nations observed birthdays in Bible times, and therefore they were shunned by true worshipers, as Israelites were instructed to avoid mixing in false worship (Ex. 23:31-33; Deut. 7:1, 3, 4; Psa. 106:35-40). The claimed reason is that birthday celebrations are creature worship, which is condemned by God (Rom. 1:23, 25). This is an extreme view, and shows to what lengths in contrived legalism some will go! How many of our readers worship in any sense at all those whose birthdays they commemorate? What constitutes worship? In the Bible the Hebrew word *shachah* and the Greek *proskuneo*, translated worship, means to bow self-down, to do obeisance, to prostrate or to kiss the hand—acts of adoration, deep reverence. Worship includes also the act of whole-hearted service, as our Lord indicated in Matt. 4:10 by the parallelism, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

In modern times it is surely not the practice to worship those whose birthdays are observed in love and appreciation. To such illogic does the extreme definition of worship lead!

Note too that Jesus knew just when He was 30, and others also in Bible times among Israelites and early Christians, seemed to be aware of their precise ages, and able to take actions incumbent upon them on the occasions of particular birthday anniversaries; this seems unlikely in a culture in which nothing marked the anniversaries of one's birth. While we have no absolute

Once an artist painted a picture of our Lord standing at the door. An observer pointed to what seemed to be an oversight — the absence of a latch on the outside door. But the artist explained that he omitted it intentionally — that this was a door that was to be opened only from the inside.



and direct Scriptural statement that birthdays were commemorated by true believers in Bible times, we also have no direct statement that they were not. The absence of a strong Scriptural statement against birthday observances would fail to convince many honest and conscientious Christians of the idea that birthday celebrations are “unclean” pagan rites, to be shunned by servants of God.

But some claim to find a statement favoring their idea in Eccles. 7:1, “A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death, than the day of one’s birth.” Generally speaking, the day of death—the day of life’s completion under the curse, when the life has been lived is of greater value than the natal day. All Christians readily agree that this is especially so in Jesus’ case. His death brought with it the hope of our salvation directly; His birth did so only prospectively (Luke 2:10). However, Eccles. 7:1 is only a comparative statement—nothing in it implies that the day of birth has no value. Such a thought must be read into the text, for it cannot rightly be concluded from it. So that argument is inconclusive.

We should mention here, lest we be misunderstood, that we are not, by what is stated above, advocating lavish, expensive birthday parties or lesser observances. But we see no Scriptural objections, *e.g.*, to Christian families and/or friends, sometimes getting together at an inexpensive meal on someone’s birthday anniversary, rejoicing with him or her in gratefulness to God for another year of life, and expressing love, good wishes and encouragement for the future in good and Christian ways.

THE DATE OF JESUS’ HUMAN BEGETTAL

What about the fact that the Dec. 25 date, on which Christmas is observed, was from a heathen source? Those who emphasize this are strangely silent about the biological and mathematical fact that Jesus was in Mary’s womb nine months. By their reckoning (and ours) the probable date of His birth was about Oct. 1. So the annunciation to the Virgin Mary had to be nine months earlier—at about the Christmas season. There is some evidence that when the Dec. date and observance were first adopted, it was the annunciation to Mary that was observed most especially, and not so much Jesus’ birth. Even today, when Christmas is observed by God’s people, we find that the account of the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38) is often a prominent part of what is recalled. So, once again, the agitation against the Dec. 25 observance as a false deceiving lie, and as merely a perpetuation of a pagan rite, is seen to have no sound foundation.

Indeed, the extreme view of rooting out from our teachings and practice every trace of anything once
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associated with paganism or false religion in any way would mean that we would have to object to the names of our days of the week and our months because most are named for heathen deities. Like the Jehovah’s Witnesses sect, we would insist upon B.C.E. (Before our Common Era) and C.E. (our Common Era) for the years B.C. and A.D., because the latter terms imply that the change in the calendar corresponds to the birth of Jesus Christ—which it does not exactly do (He was born in Oct., B.C. 2, about 15 months prior to where the calendar changes). Many words in our usage would have to be changed or expunged, and new terms found. In short, we would have to be so far out of step and in variance with others that we could not, without great difficulty, communicate with only others of like radical view. How, then, could we tell others of the blessed hope that is within us? How could we even conduct the daily affairs of life? (Matt. 5:14; Mark 16:15; John 17:11, 15; 1 Cor. 5:10; see B.S. Dec. ‘68).

Matthew 5:14-16

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

TRUE CHRISTIANS AND TRADITION

It is alleged by some that the fact that a custom has become traditional in itself testifies against it and that tradition is an enemy of true worship and a friend of false worship; so they can then condemn anything labelled as “tradition.” But others revere traditions, and many resent any effort to stamp them out in the name of true worship. Let us examine this matter carefully and prayerfully to get God’s view of it as set forth in the Scriptures, first noting some passages alleged to condemn all tradition. “For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups . . . Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition . . . making the word of God of none effect through your tradition . . . and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:8, 9, 13). “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? . . . This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship

me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:2, 3, 8, 9; see also Isa. 29:13). “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Col. 2:8).

Although the Scriptures above all are critical of man-made tradition in religious practice, in each case we note that the criticism stems directly from the fault of setting aside God’s Word in order to continue in a tradition of men. Because of the related remarks, are we to conclude that it is offensive to God to wash our pots and cups and our hands before eating? Surely not! But some could draw such a conclusion from the Scriptures. Jesus gave an example of what He meant about the Scribes and Pharisees’ improper view of tradition when He pointed out a supposed exception to the Law that they were making; which was not in the Law, was antagonistic to the spirit of the Law and was not intended in or by the Law (Matt. 15:4-6; Ex. 20:12). The application of all of the above Scriptures is in reference to setting aside the doctrines or commands of God with tradition. There is nothing stated or implied about tradition in and of itself. Once again, a Scripture text, removed from its context, becomes a pretext—usually for error!

Those who object to traditions, such as Christmas observance among Christians, stress also the Scriptures; “learn not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV) and “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:5, 6). By legalistically applying these Scriptures to mean that we ought not to do anything which is not specified in the Bible, and thereby to effectively wear a spiritual straitjacket to avoid any possibility of offending Jehovah, they attempt to prove too much!

Those who seek to find specific Biblical rules and legalisms regarding every possible thought or action to be undertaken by Christians are in their efforts frustrated by the clear principle of Christian liberty—that Christians are under grace, not under the Law, and walk by faith and not by sight! In their vain attempts to surround everything with hard and fast rules, legalists are the ones who, “go beyond the things which are written” in trying to find evidence in the Scriptures for all sorts of condemnations of customs and things which are essentially unimportant

to Christian faith and which are left without Scriptural direction. The fact is, Christ has set us free from such legalism and we praise God for it! Christ has truly made us free, then keep your free condition and let no man put a yoke on you again. (*e.g.* Gal. 5:1)

A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE

What Jehovah wants us to believe is found, *e.g.*, in Rom. 14:5, 6, 10, 13, 14, ASV: “One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured [persuaded, KJV] in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? Or thou again, why dost thou set at naught thy brother? Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge ye this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother’s way, or an occasion of falling. I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself: save that to him who accounteth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”

Here we have a clear testimony that not all Christians must think or believe alike in matters of conscience, which because of no Scriptural mandate or forbidding are optional. Christmas observance is such a matter. Those whose consciences permit may rejoice with others who are rejoicing, and encourage such rejoicing in the Lord; building each other up in the most holy faith! Indeed, true Christians remember God’s precious gift of salvation through Christ Jesus every day—so why not on Dec. 25th with those who are especially making an occasion of commemorating it? Let us not, therefore, classify and judge one another according to matters of conscience—let those who feel free to observe Christmas in the Lord do so, but not stumbling nor browbeating those whose consciences forbid it; but also not accuse those who do of blaspheming God and Christ.



May all be richly blessed in this season of joy for so many, and always keep in their hearts the good news of the Kingdom, rejoicing in God’s precious free gift of salvation made possible through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!



FAITH AS TO JUSTIFICATION

How often do we hear the phrase “justified by faith” in our conversations and see these words in the writings? Well, we would say very often and with good purpose. The purpose of a consecrated child of God is to seek our heavenly Father every hour of every day—we pray to Him without ceasing. We do all things

before God because of our faith, “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” (Heb. 11:6). Except love, nothing is more pleasing in the sight of God than faith. The Father is therefore pleased with those that exercise confidence in His character.

The victory that overcomes the world is the faith, that in all conditions, is able to look up to the Lord with absolute confidence in His ability to lead us into righteousness. Oh, there are times when it seems to us that He has set us aside in the guiding of our Christian walk and experience. There is a scripture that admonishes us with this saying “O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Have faith in God” (Matt. 14:32; Mark 11:22). The Christians Faith is a mental appreciation of, and heart’s reliance upon, God and Christ. The scriptures have in so many ways demonstrated their absolute reliability and therefore worthy of our confidence.

We have lived our lives where tears fill the eyes because of the great sorrow that covers the earth, pain fills the body and death is the conclusion to life! “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it” (Isa. 1:6). While we cannot enjoy the sufferings; we can enjoy the thought which faith attaches to them. Jehovah has promised with an oath that, there will be a time of restitution of all things, “which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). The Christian has good reason to rejoice with faith and trust in that promise.

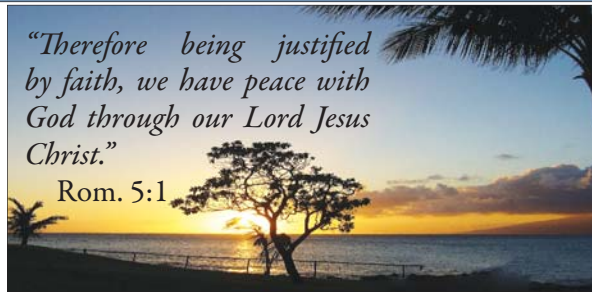
Let us consider the faith taught in God’s Word that brings the sinner into justification in God’s sight. It is faith in “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” that justifies the sinner. But this implies much more than appears on the surface—much more than many suppose. It implies:

(1) That the sinner recognizes his own condition of imperfection, sin, separation from God, and his sentence; even if he does not fully and correctly understand that the penalty for sin is death, destruction. It implies this, because to admit that God has provided a redemption implies that there was need for redemption on the part of the sinner, and that a condemnation rested upon the sinner justly because of sin.

(2) Faith in this redemption implies that the sinner discerns at least something of the sinfulness of sin; and that he desires to escape, not only from the extreme penalty of sin (death, destruction), but also from the other features: viz., his own imperfections and his alienations from the Divine mind.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rom. 5:1



Such a faith, implies repentance and a desire to return unto God and to righteousness. It means therefore, dissatisfaction with sin, and a longing desire for righteousness; which is most willing to avail itself of the Divine provision in Christ. This faith, therefore implies not only a desire for the forgiveness “. . . of sins that are

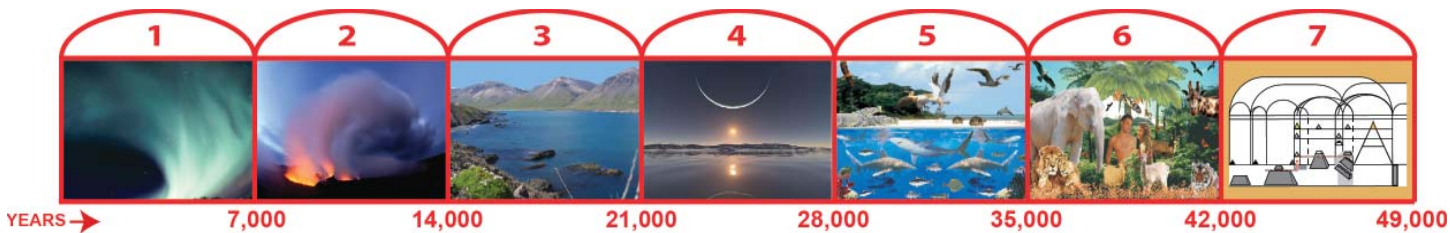
past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:25). You must also have a desire to live godly, righteously, soberly, and from this point on, avoid all sin, so far as possible.

(3) This faith is said to justify us in the Divine sight. That is, God, through the merit of the great sacrifice, can be just in recognizing those who, although still blemished by sin and unworthy actually of His notice, have, by His appointed way through the merit of the redemption, come back to a condition of mind and heart, which He can thoroughly approve.

(4) It is called justification by faith, because it is not an actual justification. An actual justification would mean that the sinner was made absolutely perfect or correct. A justification by faith signifies that although actually imperfect, even so, they are now accepted of the Lord and treated by Him as though they were perfect because their heart and intentions are now perfect. The sacrifice for sins, which by faith they have shared, is reckoned as covering their past shortcomings.

(5) This new condition of justification, having been entered into implies, as we have seen, a determination upon the part of the justified ones to live righteously in thought, word and deed, to the extent of their ability. At first, this may seem to be a comparatively easy thing—simply to do right and to avoid doing wrong. But whoever tries to do this will soon find that it is no easy task; that the weaknesses and tendencies of ones own fallen nature, and similar weaknesses in those with whom they daily and hourly come in contact, have a tendency to oppose their resolves for a life of righteousness, justice and equity toward God and men. They find the necessities of life and the conditions of the world socially and financially, to be a current more difficult to swim against than they first thought.

As they look the question squarely and honestly in the face, they find that neither their own flesh nor the world in general are friends to grace to help them on to God, and that the only thing to do is either join with the majority in unfaithfulness or else to the higher sense of righteousness, truth and love, to reckon themselves dead to the world—a living sacrifice to God and His righteousness. (6) This was and is a turning point in the pathway of all the justified during the Gospel-Age and its expanded harvest; there is no escaping it. They must either go onward to a full consecration to the Lord (Rom. 12:1), or they must retrograde from the standard of righteous, and be content to avoid the grosser sins, and to live on the common plane of worldliness. This is what the majority seem to do. (Continued on last page)



YEARS → 7,000 14,000 21,000 28,000 35,000 42,000 49,000

The Prodigal Son (Parables)

The Scribes, Pharisees and Doctors of the Law were the Elder Brother of the Prodigal Son parable. Publicans and sinners, careless of spiritual privileges, were the Prodigal, estranged from their Father's House. Jesus shows God's attitude toward the returning prodigal. For such He provides a "feast," a blessing which all may share, if they will. Those who received Jesus' Message included not many great, wise or noble, but chiefly penitent prodigals.

The parable of Dives and Lazarus illustrated the same lesson. The Jewish nation was Dives, the Rich man. His table, his spiritual food, the promises of God, was abundantly supplied; his raiment, fine linen, represented justification, effected through the typical Atonement-day sacrifices. His purple robe represented, symbolically, the fact that he was identified with God's Kingdom, purple being a symbol of royalty. Lazarus represented the hopelessness of the sinners and Gentiles, who hungered for a share in the promises to Abraham, but who got only "crumbs" until Israel's rejection.—Matthew 23:38.

The Poor man's sores represented a sin-sick condition; the dogs which licked them represented the sympathy of Gentile "dogs." This was illustrated in the Syrophenician woman whose daughter Jesus healed. She was not a Jewess, and therefore Jesus at first refused to aid her, saying, "It is not proper to take the children's bread and give it to dogs." But she pleaded: "Yes, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the children's table." Jesus gave her the crumb.

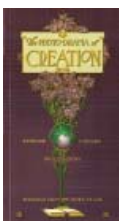
The Rich man, the Jewish nation, died to his great blessings. Nationally he fell asleep in Hades, and awaits reawakening. But personally the Jews passed into a great time of trouble, symbolically represented as fire, for eighteen centuries.

Lazarus also died to his condition of disfavor, and found himself in "Abraham's bosom"—a child of Abraham. Thus the Gentiles have become Abraham's Seed, and heirs of the Spiritual part of the Abrahamic Promise.—Galatians 3:29.

Lesson 60

- 1* What is the parable of the Prodigal Son about? Luke 15: 11-32
- 2* How many sons did the man in the parable have? Luke 15: 11
- 3* Who represented the Elder Brother of the parable? Par. 1
- 4* Who represented the Prodigal who was estranged from his father's house?
- 5* What was God's attitude toward the returning prodigal and what did He provide
- 6* Who may share the blessing and on what terms?
- 7* What other parable illustrates the same lesson? Luke 16: 19-31. Par. 2
- 8* Who represented the Rich man?
- 9* What was he rich in?
- 10* What did his raiment, fine linen, represent?
- 11* What was shown by his purple robe?
- 12* What is the color purple a symbol of?
- 13* What did Lazarus represent? Matt. 23: 38
- 14 What is represented by the Poor man's sores? The dogs which licked them? How illustrated? Par. 3
- 15* What happened to the Jewish nation (The Rich man)? Par. 4
- 16 What personally occurred to the Jews and for how long?
- 17 Since Lazarus died to his condition of disfavor where did he find himself? Par. 5
- 18* Who have become Abraham's Seed and what did they inherit? Gal. 3:29

* The questions marked with an asterisk are especially for children.



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TO:

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So far as we may be able to discern, they are compromising themselves and would lose their position of justification for Gospel-Age purposes; which reckoned to them at the time of their earliest faith and resolve to follow righteousness, justice and Truth. Their justification for purposes of Gospel-Age consecration remains, as long as they are conscientiously doing this. Their justification would seem to lapse, for Gospel-Age purposes, from the moment that they come to realize that obedience to righteousness in this present time would mean self-sacrifice and they turn back and no longer follow in the footsteps of Him who has given us an example that we should walk in His steps.

(7) Some, we think many, stop when they reach the point of decision. They are unwilling to compromise righteousness, and yet unwilling to bear the reproaches and losses or sacrifices demanded by a life of full consecration. These show that they have the *spirit* of the Truth, though not in an overcoming measure—not in the measure of *sacrificers*. These, the Lord patiently deals with for a time, with the hope that under His disciplines and the instructions of His Word, they may see their privileges and learn that the things they would sacrifice are but loss and dross as compared with the rich rewards in the Kingdom.

The ransom-price guarantees that there will be given to the whole world what it lost in Adam, *if and as it obeys* in the next [Millennial Mediatorial] age. What the world lost in Adam is perfect humanity and perfect life with the right to perfect human life and its life rights. Only those that will come into Christ, *but no one else*, will then get these again!

Some advancing thoughts come from our Pastor “There are none justified who do not go on to consecration. There are those who take steps looking toward justification; that is, they come into a justified attitude, they are drawing near to God, but they do not reach the place where they are counted as having been pardoned and reconciled to God through the death of His Son until they come to that place where they make the full surrender.” “He does not justify a person that merely wishes to put away the filth the flesh.” (What Pastor Russell Said, pages 406, 411)

Let us seek wisdom from the inspired Apostle James 3: 8-10; “But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude

of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.” He is here addressing the “brethren” not the world. First to the Little Flock, however, there are other consecrated “brethren” who partake of the blessings received through God’s Holy Spirit, to whom the exhortation of our text would also apply—*viz.*, the Great Company (all of whom as individuals were originally inducted into the Body of Christ), the Youthful Worthies and the Consecrated Epiphany Campers. Let us consider the astounding statement of our text, and seek to ascertain in what sense it should be understood; resolving that, should we find that in any sense or degree it applies to us individually, we will assuredly and quickly respond to the Spirit’s teaching. “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13).

ANNOUNCEMENTS
VISITING MINISTERS 2016

Michael Hanning

Galloway, OH, November 6;
 West Frankfort, IL, December 4,

Richard Piquene

Phoenix, AZ, November 13

Brandon Penney

Palm Springs, FL, November 10;
 Keystone Heights, FL, November 13

Lawrence Williams Sr

Indianapolis, IL, November 20.

John Wojnar

Springfield, MA, December, 4; Chester Springs, PA,
 December 31, January 1

EVANGELISTIC SERVICES

David Hanning

Grand Rapids, MI November 3,

David Lounsbury

New Haven, CT, December 18

Roger Mullen

Wrentham, MA, November 6; Carlstadt, PA, December 18

Ainsley Maine

Pittsfield, MA, December 11

Harold Solomon

Roanoke Rapids, NC, November 4