

The Book of Psalms:
Psalms 1–47

Bro. Frank Shallieu

(2004–2006 Study)

The following notes on the Book of Psalms were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu from 2004 to 2006. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original study did not follow a prepared text but was extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu from 2004 to 2006)

The Book of Psalms is sometimes described as the Psalms of David. However, of the total of 150 Psalms, the exact number David actually wrote cannot be proven, just estimated. Some of the Psalms have no title or superscription, and others, especially in the King James Version, have a short commentary that has come down from ancient times. There must have been good reason for the titles because of the nature of the detail. Just because a Psalm does not say David is the author does not necessarily mean he did not write it, for in some cases, his authorship can be proven. We will not try to go into the semantics of the proof, but certainly with the Psalms that are ascribed to him, the content is a proof in itself. And in some cases where the Psalm is not ascribed to him, the content is evidence of his authorship.

Almost all teachers of the Book of Psalms are generally agreed that the purpose of the First Psalm is introductory. As a preface, it gives the general intent of the whole Psalter. Moreover, the First Psalm begins Book One of the Psalter. In all, the 150 Psalms have five divisions, which are not necessarily an even breakdown into 5 x 30.

Many have felt the five divisions were purposely done because the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) is the long history *in prose*, whereas the Book of Psalms is the long history *in poetry*. That thinking seems valid, for the Psalms contain an extraordinary breadth of history and descriptions on a wide variety of subjects. Although the Psalms are presented in a somewhat helter-skelter fashion, when all of the situations that are sprinkled throughout the Psalms are read, they provide a verification of the Pentateuch. In fact, the correspondencies are remarkable, and sometimes the Psalms contain more detail than the Pentateuch. However, unlike the Book of Psalms, the history in the Pentateuch, or Torah, is set forth in an orderly progression and sequence.

PSALM 1

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

When read in its entirety, this First Psalm can be summarized as a comparison between the experience and fate of the ungodly and the experience and fate of the godly. Sometimes this comparison is described as antithetical, meaning that the two are compared side by side, with a contrast going back and forth, negative and then positive (or vice versa depending on the verse).

The word “blessed,” which is in the plural, could be rendered “blessednesses.” By not walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of the scornful, one is blessed in numerous ways. The individual who follows the advice in this Psalm receives not just one general blessing but *many and varied* blessings.

A *progression* of sin is shown: walking, standing, and sitting. For a man to walk “not in the counsel [advice] of the ungodly” implies several things. For example, the inference is that the ungodly outnumber the godly. Not only has God permitted evil, but He has given advice to those who love Him of what to do and what not to do. A person who walks in the counsel of the ungodly *follows* that advice. Normally, we think of one who is sitting as then getting up and walking, but this Psalm presents the situation from the reverse standpoint; namely, one who is walking then stands and eventually sits down. Either way there is a progression, but God

purposely used the order of walking, standing, and sitting. The progression is expressed in *descending* order, with the worst situation being to sit “in the seat of the scornful.”

The “counsel of the ungodly” would be teaching or advice that condones evil by influencing individual(s) to become ungodly. An individual who communicates with those of a wrong disposition and ungodly character is apt to be influenced in that direction. Stated another way, if one continues to walk in the company of the ungodly and does not oppose them but remains silent, he will, after a while, become contaminated by that influence.

Comment: The Apostle Paul said, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” (1 Cor. 15:33).

Reply: Yes, and a common saying is, “Birds of a feather flock together.” We will be blessed if we shun the counsel of the ungodly and do not befriend, walk, communicate, or keep company with those of an ungodly nature.

“Nor standeth in the way of sinners.” “Standing” is a more hardened condition than walking, for it means becoming increasingly like the ungodly. It is one thing to walk with the ungodly and listen to their counsel, but when a person *stands* in the way of sinners, he is more in agreement.

“Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” To sit in the “seat of the scornful” is even more ungodly than walking and standing because the individual is now comfortable and relaxed in the sin. Being at ease, his conscience no longer troubles him. Thus verse 1 shows progression in ungodliness, in increased degradation. The contrast in the First Psalm between the godly and the ungodly is a *history of the human race*.

Let us consider the opposite viewpoint. Although it is a blessing not to walk in the counsel or the teaching of the ungodly, just the mere disassociation or removal of oneself from that counsel is not sufficient. The person who does so is in a vacuum or a condition where he needs to do something further. Although he may not go to the degree of degradation of the ungodly, shouldn't he want something better than just withdrawing?

Psa. 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

“But his delight is in the law of the LORD.” The one who removes himself from the counsel of the ungodly and *delights* in the counsel of the law of Jehovah tastes and sees that the instruction is helpful, good, and profitable. If he then purposes to follow in the leading of this counsel by consecrating and saying, “This is the way I want to go,” he finds not only that his delight is not just superficial or temporary but that it is so wonderful he wants to meditate *day and night* in this new way. He is *consumed* by the desire to follow the instruction, or counsel, of the Lord. Thus blessings come from not merely shunning the counsel of the ungodly but *cleaving* to that which is good—the counsel of God.

Comment: Definitions of “scorning” include talking arrogantly, scoffing, and being inflated.

Reply: Yes, scorning is a greater degree of entrenchment in evil. For instance, when Jesus was nailed to the Cross and suffering a horrible type of death, the two chief priests scorned and mocked him: “He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him [become his disciples]” (Matt. 27:41,42).

If we had been in Jesus' situation, oh, how we would have liked to shut the mouths of the

mockers, but he saw that their words were the spirit of the Adversary challenging him to go in a wrong direction. Had he come down from the Cross, the ransom price would not have been paid. We believe that the two high priests will probably not get an awakening from the tomb. Although Luke 13:28 says his adversaries will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, that text does not mean *all* of the scribes and Pharisees who derided Jesus during his ministry will be resuscitated. We believe, and so did the Pastor as expressed in a couple of *Reprint* articles, that just as Judas, who betrayed Jesus before Pentecost, went into Second Death, so it is possible some of the scribes and Pharisees have already incurred a similar fate because of the degree of willfulness. For example, when the tomb guards reported that angels had appeared and rolled back the stone, the chief priests paid hush money to suppress the account. That action was willful sin of the worst type—like what Judas did. For one who is natural-minded to incur a Second Death penalty before the establishment of the Kingdom means that Christ first had to be on hand. In other words, those who lived and died before the First Advent will come forth from the tomb regardless of the degree of willfulness and sin. The scribes and Pharisees *saw* Jesus' miracles and *heard* his teachings, so what further evidences could they have in the Kingdom? At that time, even those who refuse to bow the knee after being given just a brief understanding of truth will be peremptorily cut off in Second Death (Acts 3:23). The point is that there are different degrees of guilt.

Q: Based on 2 Peter 3:3 and the tendency of those in the Laodicean period of the Church to be scoffers, are the consecrated especially liable to Second Death at this end of the age ?

A: Yes. Chapter 2 of Second Peter is a parallel to the Epistle of Jude, which tells of a Second Death class. Those portions of Scripture are advice primarily to those who are not merely consecrated but consecrated in the Truth movement. There will be real trials in the membership in the near future. Even the Great Company, to some extent or fashion, will be partially deceived temporarily—all but the very elect (Matt. 24:24).

Psa. 1:3 **And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.**

Psa. 1:4 **The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.**

“And he [the righteous class] shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” Not only is verse 3 presented in a positive fashion, as opposed to the negative approach of verse 1, but it gives the reward. The righteous become like a tree that is planted by rivers of water. The Apostle Paul sometimes similarly used this antithetical method for giving good, sound advice by showing progression in one direction and then reversing the direction in the next verse.

The tree is compared to a leaf that “shall not wither.” Of course a green leaf holds fast, but here the leaf does not wither. By inference in verse 4, the wicked are like a dry leaf or “chaff,” both of which lack fruit. Chaff is the outer covering of the fruit that peels off and blows away. When wheat is threshed, it is thrown up in the air so that the chaff will be blown away. Being heavier, the wheat falls vertically, by gravity, into a heap.

Those who follow God's counsel delight day and night over a *period of time*. Likewise, a tree takes *time* to grow. A tree grows from a small beginning, from a seed or an acorn. If the tree is healthy during the growth process and has proper soil, it bends in the wind and does not break. By delighting in the law day and night, one grows from a babe to a mature Christian, and when a mature Christian has done all, he is expected to stand. In the natural picture, a tree is more apt to stand than chaff, which blows away in the wind and is useless. Also a mature tree brings forth fruit. And so most of the Lord's people are favored with a sufficient length of

time in their consecration to bring forth fruit. If neglectful in developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit, they will suffer correspondingly in proportion to their neglect. A tree in prophecy can indicate two things: (1) a person developed for either good or bad and (2) a nation (for example, Israel, the fig tree). Verse 3 shows a progression leading to the good fate of bringing forth fruit. The fruit might seem to be nothing special, but God is hoping Christians will bring forth fruit and thus become inheritors of the Kingdom class.

Comment: Jeremiah 17:7,8 sounds like the First Psalm: “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

Comment: Verse 3 is a reminder of the “tree of life” on both sides of the river; the fruit will be for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

Reply: Trees will be along the river coming from the Temple in the Kingdom. The fruitage developed in the Church class in this age will be a blessing to those in the next age who come into the Temple arrangement down here.

“The ungodly are ... like the chaff which the wind driveth away.” The ungodly, pictured by the chaff, are contrasted with the green leaf that does not wither and the tree planted by the river. Two opposite fates are thus pictured. The one is planted; the other is driven away by the wind. The comparisons go back and forth in this First Psalm.

Psa. 1:5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.” They will not be acquitted; hence they will not get life. “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). The ungodly class will be taken away in one fashion or another in the Kingdom Age; that is, they will either be sentenced to Second Death or be given stripes and punishment. “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment [prior to the Kingdom Age]; and some men[’s sins] they follow after [in the Kingdom Age]” (1 Tim. 5:24). The judgments of some in the world take place now so that they will have a better chance to get life in the Kingdom Age.

Psa. 1:6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

PSALM 2

This prophetic Psalm focuses primarily on Jesus’ role in the judgment of the nations. It has already had a partial fulfillment in certain aspects.

Psa. 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Psa. 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

The introductory question is, “Why do the heathen [the people, the Gentiles] rage, and ... imagine a vain thing?” As the Revealer, the Holy Spirit is prophesying, making an observation to those who are spiritually minded.

Verse 1 has a primary application to the First Advent at the time Jesus was about to be

crucified. The “heathen” raged when they cried, “Crucify him, crucify him,” at Jesus’ trial before Pontius Pilate (Luke 23:20,21).

Comment: The word “rage” means “to be in tumult or commotion,” “to conspire or plot,” implying something sinister.

Reply: Yes. Verse 1 is a miniature picture of those who were before Pilate’s seat at Jesus’ trial. The multitude called out in unison, almost like a chant, “Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!” Those in the tumultuous gathering vented their spleen upon the Master. At the behest of the two chief priests, Caiaphas and Annas, the multitude desired the death of Jesus. This time of trouble visited upon Jesus resulted in his crucifixion.

The first two verses engage our attention. “Why do the heathen rage, and ... the kings of the earth set themselves, and the [religious] rulers take counsel together, against the LORD [Jehovah], and against his anointed”? Two personalities are brought to our attention. The first is Jehovah, and the second is “his anointed,” who was particularly Jesus because the Hebrew renders the term in the singular. The “kings” were Herod and Pontius Pilate, a procurator and representative of Rome in Judea and Jerusalem, where Jesus’ trial took place. Pilate tried to avoid the responsibility of being involved in Jesus’ judgment, which eventuated in crucifixion. He saw that because of their envy of Jesus’ popularity, the religious leaders were raising charges to have him executed Roman-style. Upon hearing that much of Jesus’ ministry took place in the Galilee region, Pilate sent him to Herod, who had jurisdiction of that area.

New Testament Scriptures show that the Second Psalm had a partial fulfillment at the time of the First Advent and Jesus’ resurrection. “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Acts 13:33). “Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:25-28).

Verses 1 and 2 were uttered by the Holy Spirit through the Psalmist David, referring to the statements, actions, and deeds of Pilate, Herod, the religious rulers, and the people who were gathered together early in the morning and shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” before the public was aware of what was happening. The Gospel accounts show that the religious rulers, the two high priests, instigated these shouts, stimulating the crowd that accompanied Jesus to Pilate’s Praetorium to demand his death.

Comment: Matthew 26:3,4 reads, “Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.”

Reply: The religious leaders, who had *previously* conspired to kill Jesus, voiced their intention in the presence of Pontius Pilate. The first appearance was early in the morning, around 6 a.m.

The conspiring, the taking counsel together, was against Jehovah and “his anointed [primarily Jesus at the First Advent].” From one standpoint, the emphasis is on the singular, that is, on Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior, the Promised One. However, a second application to the feet members of the body of Christ, *as a group*, is implied.

Psa. 2:3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

The religious “rulers [who] take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed,” were prophetically speaking in verse 3: “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

The word “saying,” in italics at the end of verse 2, was supplied by the translators, who felt that verse 3 was spoken by the kings, the rulers, and the Sanhedrin. However, if “saying” is omitted, one could reason that verse 3 was prophetically spoken by God, who “sitteth in the heavens,” for a temporary restraint was placed upon Jesus when he was nailed to the Cross, his hands and feet being pinned. But Jesus’ death at the hands of the conspirators resulted in his triumph when he was raised from the dead. The pronoun “their” implies a dual application in the sense that the conspirators put the cords of restraint on Jesus, but the Heavenly Father broke the “bands asunder” and granted victory.

The religious leaders felt that Jesus’ ministry and popularity jeopardized their authority over the people. With thousands following him and rejoicing to hear him speak, they thought putting him to death would settle the issue. Envy was their motive, and of course Satan was manipulating the situation.

Comment: The statement “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us” seems to indicate that the religious rulers wanted to break what bound the people to Jesus by killing him. The Scripture comes to mind “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered” (Zech. 13:7).

Reply: That is why we like to view verse 3 from a dual standpoint. The usual interpretation is that the conspirators were talking, but it works both ways. What was binding to one class was actually, in the final analysis, a victory over the grave to Jehovah and “his anointed.”

Comment: If the conspirators were speaking, what they were saying about Jesus also applied to themselves, for they had bands and cords over the people.

Reply: That is true, but they felt Jesus was threatening their authority. Out of jealousy, some, particularly the chief priests, became so culpable in their willfulness of purpose that it appears they will reap the reward of Second Death. They sinned against the great light that was available through the ministry of Christ.

Psa. 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Psa. 2:5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Again the Holy Spirit is speaking. “He [Jehovah] that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh ... [and] have them in derision. Then shall he [Jehovah] speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” The laughing, speaking, and vexing did not take place until later, when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 69-70 as retribution.

Why was the expression “He that sitteth in the heavens” used? By inference, the *great and mighty* Creator laughs as though the creatures down here on earth are puny. There is a marked contrast between the two different authorities—those down here and that which exists in the heavens above at the hands of the Creator. To those living at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, it seemed as if evil and wickedness were predominating. Wouldn’t Satan have been delighted at Jesus’ experience on the Cross? And of course Jesus’ tormentors were also delighted. Some even taunted, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matt. 27:40). Thank God, Jesus did not do so to put them in their place!

Q: Did Satan know that Jesus' death would result in victory and resurrection?

A: We do not think so, for the idea of a sin offering was not really appreciated. The Jews looked on the Messiah as a Deliverer. It was the Apostle Paul who later expounded on the necessity for Christ's death, for example, in his epistles to the Romans and the Corinthians. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). God used Paul to bring to light the mystery of the *suffering* Messiah preceding the *saving* Messiah, the Deliverer. Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on the disciples, Jesus was limited in some respects as to what he could say. Therefore, they could not comprehend this mystery until the later due time.

By appreciating the Church's share in the sin offering through Paul's writings, we look back and see how excruciatingly important it was for Jesus to die for our sins—so much so, in fact, that the appreciation led many of us to consecrate. Seeing the compassion of God manifested in His Son attracted us like a magnet to feel we were bought with a price and, therefore, wanted to consecrate. We saw the need for Jesus' death because we realized we were laden with sins.

"The Lord shall have them in derision." The word "Lord" (Hebrew *adonai*), which is not capitalized, can refer to Jesus in many instances. However, *adonai* sometimes refers to Jehovah, describing the love or pity aspect—His compassion—as in John 3:16, "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." We can be very thankful for the mercy and pity side of His character, for God saw that with the power of His Spirit in His Word, He could glorify ordinary, humble, honest people who had faith. Only through the Bible do we know Jesus. Because *great power* is inherently embedded in the Word, it is a *living* Bible (Heb. 4:12). We are nothing in and of ourselves; the credit goes to the *power* of God's thinking. He passed by the angels as well as people who are more noble than we so that the result would glorify His power and name and, at the same time, humble the proud in heart.

"The Lord shall have [*future tense*] them in derision." We may think of "Lord" here as Jehovah, with His name being used in couplet form, but possibly the reference is to Jesus with the future tense applying after his death and resurrection.

"Then shall he [Jehovah] speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." Sometimes we speak of the "day of the LORD'S wrath" (Zeph. 1:18). An application in the Time of Trouble seems to center solely on God's wrath.

Now let us think of the primary application of verse 5, which was during the First Advent of our Lord. The wrath and the vexation occurred in the trouble of AD 69-73. The people had said, "His blood be on us, and on our children," and their words had a startling application when the trouble fell upon the Jewish polity (Matt. 27:25).

A secondary application will take place down here at this end of the age after the death of the feet members. God's wrath and sore displeasure will be manifested when He delivers Israel out of Jacob's Trouble and the hand of Gog and Magog. As Jehovah is displaying His wrath, a visual representation, or hologram, of Jesus nailed to the Cross will be seen by those Jews who are "written in the book" as survivors (Dan. 12:1). Obadiah 21 shows that Jesus and the Church will also be involved in the inauguration of the Kingdom: "And saviours [plural, hence The Christ] shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the LORD'S." The fallen angels who materialize and try to vent their wrath on (1) the Great Company and (2) the Holy Remnant will be stopped by Jesus and the Church. Incidentally, the Great Company will live further into the Time of Trouble than was formerly thought.

Psa. 2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Psa. 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

God is speaking in verse 6: “Yet have I [Jehovah] set my king [Jesus] upon my holy hill of Zion.” Then the speaker switches to Jesus: “I [Jesus] will declare the decree: the LORD [Jehovah] hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” Jesus declared the decree of his Father, audibly expressing it in a public manner. The Hebrew word translated “begotten” can refer to either the begetting or the birth of an individual. In this case, the birth is signified; that is, Jesus was brought forth, or raised, from death to this position of authority by his Father. In other words, the statement “This day have I begotten thee” refers to Jesus after his ascension when he appeared before the Heavenly Father. This distinction is important, for his “birth” occurred not when he was raised from death and was down here for 40 days, appearing part-time to his disciples and part-time to the fallen angels, but when he ascended on high. The decree was then made as an official pronouncement in the audience of the holy angels. The Father was saying, “This day have I brought thee forth. You are my particular Son in the highest sense of the word.”

The Book of Hebrews refers to this event. “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb. 1:5). “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee” (Heb. 5:5).

Jesus was set as a King back there, and he will also be set as a King at this end of the age—but in a different fashion. First, he will stand up as he did in the boat on the Sea of Galilee and rebuke the antitypical raging waves. Then he will sit down as a King with his Kingdom organized and operating. Jesus was a King at Pentecost, and he has been reigning as a King over his disciples ever since—down through the Gospel Age. Jesus is our King now, for we have surrendered our all to both God and Jesus. In contrast, the “reign” spoken of in the Book of Revelation will be over the world (Rev. 5:10; 11:15; 20:6).

Q: Is God’s statement that He set Jesus upon the holy hill of Zion another way of saying He set Jesus at His right hand of power?

A: Yes. The “holy hill of Zion” is Jerusalem in the natural application. Down through history, Jesus has been identified with that city, just as Rome has been identified with Satan. A peculiarity exists between these two locations. In the spiritual application, the “holy hill of Zion” is the spiritual rulership, the Kingdom, the ruling class, The Christ. The Kingdom is the governmental class who are called to reign over the earth. Before God’s will could be done down here, the Church class had to be called out. Both the King and that calling started with Jesus’ ministry at his First Advent—and officially began at Pentecost.

Verse 8 answers the question more definitively. God was saying to Jesus, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.” God has not yet given Jesus the go-ahead to smite the image. The future reign over the nations will be a reward for The Christ.

Psa. 2:8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Jesus, who was anointed to be a King, continues to speak, but he was merely repeating what God will say to him: “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” The translators realized that the anointing was

not particularly to a priesthood but was of a King to be a ruler over subjects. Therefore, they preferred to use the word “king” in verse 6 in order to show the type of anointing. Verse 8 is not yet operative, for Jesus has not asked Jehovah for the heathen as his inheritance. The asking is still future and awaits the fulfillment of other circumstances first.

Q: How much did Jesus know when this Psalm was written? Prior to the First Advent, did he know he was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8)? Did he know the proper time to ask for the heathen as his inheritance?

A: At his First Advent, Jesus knew he would be put to death, but he did not know the time to ask for the heathen as his inheritance, as proven by the following Gospel texts. “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matt. 24:36). Also, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the Son, but the Father*” (Mark 13:32). The angels and the prophets of old desired to look into these things (1 Pet. 1:10-12). The Matthew and Mark citations took place late in Jesus’ ministry of 3 1/2 years, not long before his crucifixion.

Thus Jesus did not know the “day and hour” during his earthly ministry, nor did he know during the 40 days following his resurrection, when he was still down here. Upon his ascension as a spirit being, he was given the divine nature, being made in the likeness of the Heavenly Father. Of course Jesus now knows the timing of events at the end of the Gospel Age—and specifically the correct time to ask for the heathen as his inheritance. The Father wants Jesus to ask formally for that authority—in a *legal* fashion according to the proper decorum of divine government. However, other things will have to transpire first (see verse 9, for example).

Q: Did Jesus know he would receive a reward for giving his life a ransom for all?

A: Yes, as shown in Hebrews 12:2, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the *joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Although Jesus probably did not ask for a reward, he was given assurance, by implication, that the Heavenly Father would honor him for that act.

Psa. 2:9 **Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.**

God is speaking to Jesus, who will smite, or break, the image. “Thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold” (Dan. 2:45). The “stone” represents the complete and glorified Church, who will be with Jesus at that time and participate in the smiting. The stone class will be completely cut out of the “mountain” (earth’s quarry), raised up, and then used to dash the image to pieces. The Prophet Daniel saw a vision of one who looked like Messiah approaching God: “I [Daniel] saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days [God], and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13,14). When Daniel inquired further about the meaning of the vision, the angel replied that the one who looked like Jesus was actually the “saints of the most High [God]” (Dan. 7:18,22,27). Stated another way, the one who looked like the Messiah was The Christ, Head and body members, the “stone” class. Daniel chapter 2 pictures the image from King Nebuchadnezzar’s (earthly) viewpoint, whereas Daniel chapter 7 is God’s standpoint.

If the stone has already smitten the image, the Church would have to be complete, and there would be no more high calling. How could we run for something that has already happened? Some say not only that the image has been smitten but that it is being ground to powder, even though, according to the Hebrew, when the image is smitten, it will be *entirely* broken—and *instantly*. The smiting will be of quick duration. The main questions are: Has the image been smitten? Is the Christ class finished? No, for there is strong evidence this is not the case. Since Jesus' reign will be over the nations, the reign cannot begin while Satan is still the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Matthew 8:21,22; 10:37 and Luke 9:59-62; 14:26,27,33 show that Jesus has been reigning as King over his Church since Pentecost, the time of its inception. No earthly king could expect the kind of loyalty that is shown by Jesus' disciples—they give up everything to follow him, loving him more than mother, father, husband, children, etc. In fact, one cannot even be a disciple of Christ without recognizing him as Lord, Master, King, Head, Captain, and elder brother. For Jesus to be King over the world is an entirely different situation because the Church will share with him in that future kingship.

Part of the promise to the church of Thyatira is, "And he that overcometh [in any period of the Gospel Age], and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26,27). By implication here too, the smiting of the nations cannot take place until all of the saints have made their calling and election sure.

Comment: At the present time and throughout the Gospel Age, Jesus' primary focus has been the selection and development of the Little Flock, but when the Church is complete, the focus will shift to the world of mankind. At that time, Jesus will ask for the heathen as his inheritance.

Comment: Psalm 149:7-9 also shows the Church's involvement in the smiting work: "To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD."

Comment: When Jesus reigns as King over the world, Satan will be bound. No other "god" will compete with Jesus.

Reply: In the *Question Book*, pages 117-118, the Pastor stated that if Christ and the Church are reigning, they are doing a poor job, for evil is prospering. Unfortunately, that statement does not mean anything to the majority of brethren, who say Jesus is and has been reigning. In fact, elders who do not believe the reign has begun are not given a hearty welcome in that office. Generally speaking, they are accepted only as a brother or sister in Christ. We are living in a rather strange time. It is a blessing to be able to understand, through the power of God's Holy Spirit, what the Scriptures really teach. We cannot take the statements of men and equate them with the Word of God, which is the foundation of our faith. The Pastor is not the foundation of our faith—he did not die on the Cross for us. God sent Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Master.

Comment: The exact quote from the *Question Book*, given in 1912, is as follows: "Question: Is it scriptural to say that the glorified members of the Church have reigned at any time up to the present? Answer: No! They have *not* reigned at any time. At least if they have reigned, we have not found it out, and they have made a poor reign of it so far.... The reign of Christ did not in any sense begin in the past.... When the reign of Christ begins, you will find it such a thorough reign that all the members of His Body will have some part in it. So we assume that when our Lord's Kingdom shall begin its reign, conditions for the whole world will be very much changed. If the reign of Christ should begin today, the saints would be with him."

Comment: Revelation 19:14,15 reads, "And the armies which were in heaven followed him

upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The "armies" in heaven are the Church.

Reply: Yes, there is an abundance of pertinent Scriptures, but if a person has been cultured otherwise, it is very difficult for him to admit his error.

The Scriptures are powerful with regard to the coming trouble that will precede the reign of Christ. That God will gather all nations to Jerusalem to battle is shown, for example, by the following two texts. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine *indignation*, even all my *fierce anger*: for all the earth shall be *devoured* with the fire of my jealousy" (Zeph. 3:8). "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (Zech. 14:2). In addition to an understanding of such prophecies, the emphasis is on character development. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3). The primary thrust is that we are to be made like unto Jesus, the beginner and the finisher of our faith. Jesus, the forerunner of the race, gave us the example.

Q: Is God's saying in Zephaniah 3:8, "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey," the same as His saying to Jesus, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa. 110:1)? At that point, will Jesus ask for the heathen for his inheritance?

A: Yes. Several pictures are applicable. Since it is God's determination to gather all nations to Jerusalem to battle, He will manifest His wrath first, even before Jesus. God is primarily the One who will produce the miracles. He will take the authority when His fury rises up in His face (Ezek. 38:18). It is *God's* determination to gather the nations; His emphasis is on "I," "I," "I" (Zeph. 3:8). Jesus' role will occur in this same short period of time but in a different slant or direction as a part of the inauguration of the Kingdom. The Church will also be involved. Events will happen quickly, and the sequence has to be accurate.

Psa. 2:10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

The "kings" and "judges" can be considered from two standpoints: (1) as *earthly* leaders and rulers and (2) as the Church, who are called to be kings and judges in the *heavenly* phase of the Kingdom. Some who are in positions of authority will come into the truth when they become knowledgeable. As the common saying goes, "We are not the only pebbles on the beach." A danger in the Laodicean period is to feel that we alone have the truth, but that may not be the case. Thus we should not be high-minded. The message of Laodicea is slanted to the true Church, to those who have made a consecration to the Lord. Christians can become satisfied and stop in their development, feeling they are mature and fully equipped with all of the armor. In fact, there is even a tendency to neglect the armor.

Psa. 2:11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

Comment: Here is an admonition that we should never forget our place before God.

Reply: In other words, we should not be too confident. We are to remember that we are but dust, and it is only by God's grace and the robe of Christ's righteousness that we have a standing (Psa. 103:14). Anything we accomplish is not by *our* wisdom, strength, prudence, or

any other quality but by *God's Spirit* (Zech. 4:6).

Verse 11 describes a proper “trembling.” Some misapply 1 John 4:18, “Perfect love casteth out fear,” by saying there is no fear in love. God respects those who tremble at His Word and feel it is more important than anyone else’s word. Psalm 111:10 speaks of proper fear: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Also, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12).

Psa. 2:12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Verse 12 shows the advisability of “kissing” the Son and reminds us of Psalm 82. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. We should each become personally convinced that we have the right perspective, generally speaking, so that when the path divides, we will know we are going the right way. Very few of us can quote all of the pertinent Scriptures, but when a sufficient number convince us that we have the correct meaning, we are ready for another step of information. This Second Psalm pertains to prophecy.

“Kiss the Son, lest he [Jesus] be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his [Jesus’] wrath is kindled but a little.” While it will be the day of *God's* wrath, Jesus is like God and has similar emotions. He has the same spirit as the Heavenly Father and clearly sees the necessity for ruling with a rod of *iron* in the Kingdom, not a rod of wood.

“Blessed are all they that put their trust in him [Jesus].” This portion of verse 12 is slanted more to Jesus’ followers, who have to put on all the armor of character development in preparation for the period of persecution that is coming. The persecution will be a separating influence among the brotherhood, thus manifesting the faithful. Of that time, Jesus said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24). In other words, *all* will be deceived by the lying signs and wonders except the “very elect.” Even the Great Company class will be momentarily deceived. As foolish virgins, they will come to their senses later. In the parable, they did get the oil subsequently but not in time for entry into the marriage. The study of prophecy is one of the legs of the stool that we need to be seated on in order to make our calling and election sure. “Despise not prophesyings” (1 Thess. 5:20).

We need the general gist of the proper enlightenment so that we can proceed further. In the meantime, we should not try to be too inventive. The Lord will open our eyes if we are in the right heart condition. We will be equipped for the warfare if we follow the Lord’s instructions.

PSALM 3

Psa. 3:0 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

David’s flight from his son Absalom gave rise to the Third Psalm. He was telling about an incident that occurred near the end of his reign, when his enemies flocked around Absalom. This information indicates we are not to expect the Psalms to be arranged in a time sequence.

With regard to David, it is strange that people are prone to look upon the infirmity of old age as a sign of weakness. The people back there considered Absalom to be a fit successor to David. Not only was Absalom handsome with his long hair, but evidently, he was very glib of tongue. With savvy, he spoke nice things, and the people liked his personality. However, God was with David, who was still king at this time. Rumors can discredit honorable individuals, as was the case here. It is David who slew Goliath, the one who challenged Israel every day for 40 days.

Out of fear, the Israelites, including King Saul, who was taller than any of the others, did not accept the challenge. Along came David at the last minute with a slingshot, which he used to kill Goliath. Natural Israel had the problem of forgetting, and the same is true of spiritual Israel.

With the Ancient Worthies, the Old Testament saints who were justified by faith to friendship with God, the same principles operated more or less as they do with regard to Christians and the Gospel Age. The difference is that more understanding is needed now and more has to be sacrificed than was required of the Ancient Worthies. However, the Old Testament saints suffered for righteousness' sake, and their obedience pleased God. Consequently, they will be given a role in the coming Kingdom.

Every so often as the Psalms are read, there is an indication of "Book Two," "Book Three," "Book Four," and "Book Five." Since one scroll was not large enough to hold 150 Psalms, five scrolls were required to put together the Book of Psalms. Parts and pieces of the original scrolls that were unearthed in the vicinity of Jericho are called the "Dead Sea Scrolls."

Psa. 3:1 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

David was speaking: "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many ... rise up against me." He was very cognizant of the fact that he had lost the esteem and confidence of the people of Israel, especially those of the northern kingdom.

Absalom had ulterior motives, for he used flattery and insincere words to gain the affection of the people. He positioned himself at the gate so that he could speak to as many as possible. His pleasing personality was persuasive. Many have nice personalities but lack understanding and content in giving counsel.

Comment: Satan worked the same way with the fallen angels originally.

Reply: Yes, he was handsome and had a good singing voice, plus savvy. No doubt spirit beings, as well as human beings, look on the outer man, which becomes almost a subconscious guide that has to be carefully examined before taking a serious step. When we see a person approaching, the first thing we notice is his face, and subconsciously we make a temporary judgment of the individual. Then we begin to see his body frame and make a supplemental judgment. Thus we do judge by the outer appearance, but we must be careful not to misjudge.

Psa. 3:2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.

David continued to speak. In many instances, "Selah" means "Just think of that!"—indicating either approval or disapproval depending on what was said immediately preceding the expression. "Selah" is somewhat like "Amen," but with this different slant.

Why did many say concerning David, "There is no help for him in God"? (1) Absalom's popularity and influence were so great that many shortened God's hand in their own minds. (2) In his old age, David began to appear decrepit and bodily weak to some. For example, he was cold and frequently had chills—so much so, in fact, that arrangements were made to have a maiden warm the bed for him (1 Kings 1:1-4). (3) Because of David's physical deterioration, some subconsciously compared him with Absalom, making bodily appearance an indicator that God was departing from David and favoring Absalom.

It is hard to make judgments because we cannot read the heart, but we are to observe the fruits of individuals. As Jesus said, we are to judge a tree by its fruit (Matt. 12:33). Those who observed Absalom saw him as being solicitous and friendly and speaking pleasant things, and

they considered these “fruits” to be signs of spirituality.

Comment: The very fact David’s own son opposed him led people to think, “No son would usurp his father without grounds for doing so.” They assumed that Absalom had inner, familial understanding.

Reply: Yes. The people knew that Absalom had been sent into exile, and some might have questioned David’s motive in doing so. “Was it jealousy?” they would ask, being unaware of Absalom’s wrong acts. Even so, it was with reluctance that David banished Absalom. The point is that the people did not study David as an individual and see his exceptional qualities, as Psalms 3 and 4 will show.

Many felt God’s providence was now favoring Absalom and leaving David. The outward signs of David’s appearance seemed to support this thinking or judgment.

Q: Is this Psalm a prophetic prayer of the Church in the last days? The people will oppose the feet members for not believing in the Trinity and say, “There is no help for them in God.”

A: It is true that many Psalms are prophetic, but whether or not this Psalm fits that category remains to be seen. However, David’s experience here is the experience of many of God’s people. Over the years, we have known three brethren quite intimately whose last experience was to lose their former standing through misjudgment and a lack of understanding of some of their statements and actions and/or the stand they took. Two of them lost not only their popularity but also their eldership among the brotherhood. Therefore, from the standpoint of principle, all of the Psalms have helpful lessons. Since David was a man after God’s own heart, his feelings and expressions can be prophetic from that perspective. Not all of the Psalms are prophetic, but the Scriptures do show the feet members will have extreme experiences.

Psa. 3:3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

Comment: Even if David was elderly and no longer walking with his head erect as would befit the posture of a king, he was now resting in Jehovah, who was his shield. He always looked to God for help.

Reply: Just as Peter was a rock after receiving forgiveness for his denial of Jesus and after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, having leadership qualities like Paul, so David, as a result of one particular sin, saw that he could not rely on his own strength of character. In later life especially, he had to lean very heavily on the Lord.

An optional rendering in the King James margin for “a shield for me” is “a shield *about* [that is, *around*] me.” Instead of just being a shield in front of David, God was a shield all around him—in front, in back, and on the two sides. That thought, which is the thrust of this Third Psalm, is conveyed elsewhere in the Psalms as “shield and buckler,” meaning all-around protection (Psa. 35:2; 91:4).

Comment: Multiple times in Holy Writ, David said God was his shield.

Reply: Yes, that terminology was especially used in the Hebrew. The thought of armor for the Christian impressed the Apostle Paul.

“Thou, O LORD, art ... the lifter up of mine head.” The lifting up of the head suggests that the head was formerly in a downcast, mourning attitude and that God changed the mourning into joy. Psalm 27:6 is a good cross-reference: “And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine

enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.”

Psa. 3:4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

When David cried with an audible voice, God heard him out of His “holy hill,” which is Zion, the heaven of heavens. Stated another way, David’s cry reached God’s throne in the uttermost heaven. “Selah”—“Just think of that!”—the Almighty God heard David out of His holy hill! Concerning this distance, Jehovah said, “Am I a God at hand ... and not a God afar off?” (Jer. 23:23). From our perspective, God is “afar off,” but from His perspective, He is very, very close. This thought, among *numerous* other reasons, indicates God’s size is so tremendous that we are like little ants in comparison. A light-year is like traveling 186,000 miles per second. If God takes one step, He covers what would be many light-years away from our perspective, because all of our time, reasoning, body mechanics, chemistry, etc.—whether we realize it or not—are proportioned to our life span and size in order to be realistic and practical. If we try to imagine things in too large a sense, they are beyond our comprehension, so we have used the following illustration. God sits on a throne, or chair, above all the universes or galaxies (plural), which are like a rug. Distance-wise, He is only a step or two from the farthest, most remote part of the galaxy. King Solomon said, “And the house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods. But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him?” (2 Chron. 2:5,6). In other words, “the heaven” is not large enough to contain God. Now we begin to get a feeble grasp of His magnitude. How truly remarkable that tiny man has brains capable of reasoning with and worshipping God! Great spirit beings also have brains, and they can reason and worship, but how marvelous that God created the human being with the ability to worship an *unseen* Creator! People read His Word and make a consecration to serve their God and King based on such *little* information in a *small* book because they have *great* faith. Thus is seen the *power* of the Word itself. It magnifies and glorifies God’s name and shows what His Holy Spirit can do if we yield ourselves to that power and become filled with it.

Comment: Not only does God know what we need before we ask, but sometimes even the answer is there before the asking. Isaiah 65:24 reads, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

Reply: Yes, He knows what is in our heart. A burdensome need leads us to plea to God in prayer. He sees our emotion and knows that need will cause us to get down on our knees, sometimes crying, to ask for assistance. Sometimes in such instances, He has already sent someone in answer to our prayer while we are still on our knees.

Psa. 3:5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

David had a good night’s sleep and awoke refreshed, for God had sustained him.

Comment: Jesus slept in a boat during a fierce storm on the Sea of Galilee. Jonah also slept on a boat during a storm, and Peter fell asleep between two guards when he was in jail.

Reply: Yes, in those instances, they had peace in their heart. The Apostle James was executed just before Peter’s experience. Logic would say that Peter’s execution was next, yet he had a good night’s sleep. In times of duress, sleep is especially needed. To sleep soundly when danger is abroad is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Jonah awoke, he told the others that his disobedience was the reason for the storm. He said, “If you throw me in the water, the storm will cease.” Those on the ship complied. Jesus

likened himself to being in the sleep of death for parts of three days and nights just as Jonah had been in the whale's belly.

Comment: Jesus slept, knowing God was protecting him, and that is our hope too.

Reply: Even if one is rudely awakened, that is God's providence, and He is watching to see how we react. We hope to be members of the Little Flock, but whether we merit that as a final reward is based on how we handle our experiences. When we fail, we get the lesson not to be too confident in our own flesh and strength.

Psa. 3:6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.

Notice that the word "thousands" is in the plural, so "ten thousands of people" could be 100,000 at least.

Comment: This same promise is in Romans 8:31, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Psa. 3:7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Verse 7 is expressed in past tense. We do not know the exact year or time David composed this Psalm, but it was near the end of his life. In the past when David was popular and in power, and even earlier when he was fleeing from King Saul, he was delivered from one incident after another. God delivered him when the end of his career seemed nigh, for a curse seemed to be on those who conceived mischief against him. When David was a general leading the army during Saul's reign, he accomplished some remarkable feats. A popular saying was, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). By comparison, Saul's leadership in battle and warfare resulted in only one tenth of the damage done and the victories obtained by David. This disparity was one of the seeds that led to jealousy on Saul's part and undermined his character. When first chosen, he seemed to be a person of integrity, but one can change as the years go by.

"Thou [God] hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly." The last clause is a powerful expression, for when teeth are broken and crushed, the victim may even swallow fragments of the teeth and bone. Verse 7 shows that the experience was deadly for those who became the enemies of David.

Comment: The faces of people who are brazen reflect the harshness.

Reply: That quality is likened to a brazen forehead, that is, to a forehead of brass. A smiting of the cheekbones was needed to stop the stubborn, cruel opposition. An expression used by parents many years ago was, "I will have none of that cheek," meaning "none of that sass." There followed a slap on the face to indicate disapproval of what had been said or done.

Psa. 3:8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

Verse 8 is a summation of what David had already said. Because God was his shield, comforter, and pacifier, he could get refreshing sleep and deliverance from the enemy. Likewise, all who lean wholly on the Lord experience such salvation. This last verse is meant to be especially comforting to the Christian.

Psa. 4:0 To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David.

Remarks such as this one, which preface many Psalms, were in the original manuscripts. Thus “To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David” is in the text itself. Since the remark is instructional, it was not put in the main part of the Psalm but serves as a signpost or preface telling something about the Psalm. Many Psalms do not have a heading, but for those that do, this is one reason the Hebrew manuscripts are frequently one verse out of sync with the King James and other Bible versions we are accustomed to reading. Generally speaking, the Psalms in the Hebrew text are one verse longer.

The “chief Musician” led, or directed, the singing of the Psalm. Similarly today, with either an orchestra or a choral group, there is a conductor, or leader. The title “chief Musician” is frequently used in prefaces to the Psalms, indicating that the instruction was given to him. Moreover, the preface usually tells whether a stringed or a wind instrument was to be used or if the Psalm was to be sung without instruments. Of course the music would be in harmony with the content of the Psalm itself.

“Neginoth,” which pertains to the fingers and includes the thought of strings, is in the plural. Therefore, the music accompanying the singing of Psalm 4 was played predominately with stringed instruments such as a harp. The particular stringed instrument to be used would depend on the nature of the Psalm itself. With the Fourth Psalm, the mood frame is apparent almost from the beginning.

Psa. 4:1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

David wrote, “Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness ... Have [now] mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.” The preface does not tell, as it did in the previous Psalm, what gave rise to the particular comments of this Psalm. Since David is sometimes called “the sweet psalmist” or “the sweet singer,” he evidently had a very good voice, and on certain occasions, he may have sung the Psalm he composed (2 Sam. 23:1). Only the Tabernacle existed when David was alive, and the instructions for the Tabernacle made no provision for singing, at least not during Moses’ time. There is an absence of information on any particular organization of a choir. To the contrary, when the Temple was built in the days of Solomon, instructions were given for singing. However, the interim period between the days of the Tabernacle in the wilderness wanderings and the building of the Temple was quite different. Now the Israelites were in the Promised Land, and the Tabernacle was presumably residing at Shiloh.

On one tour of the Holy Land, we visited Shiloh, and as we were exiting the place, we were rather shocked at Israel’s lack of respect and paucity of understanding, for the site where the entrance to the Tabernacle would have been was being used as a garbage dump. As a nation, Israel pays little attention to the sayings of the prophets and of the Psalms. Fortunately today, a remnant in Israel are going back to singing the Psalms, and some have even accepted Jesus in one manner or another. Possibly some services were performed when the Tabernacle was at Shiloh, but we can see why David was anxious to have the structure brought to Jerusalem. Therefore, even during his lifetime, he began to make arrangements for transporting the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle.

Q: Did David make the musical instruments himself?

A: According to tradition, he invented some of the stringed instruments. We would not be

surprised if that was the case, for he was musically oriented. Music and songs with words are like prayers, and they are very effective when one is in the right mood frame and the proper spirit of reverence. The Heavenly Father hears the hymns being sung to His honor and praise.

Q: Will the Third Temple have singing?

A: Yes. There will be two singing chambers in the future Temple. In addition to serving in the Temple, all of the priests will be singers. Incidentally, one does not have to be a soloist. When congregational singing is properly directed, the multitude of voices blends together beautifully, especially if the singers are in sympathy with the mood of the song. Thus the singers do not necessarily have to be experts.

Q: Are instruments mentioned in the instructions for the Third Temple?

A: No, although there are hints. The words of many of the Psalms will probably be sung on the appropriate occasion in the future Temple arrangement.

In verse 1, David was pleading with God, acknowledging that any righteousness he now had was of Him—“O God of my righteousness.” Of course the Ancient Worthies did not have the robe of Christ’s righteousness, but God encouraged those who were of the right heart condition. As one drew near to Him, God drew near to the individual in a “friendship” type of justification, particularly during the Jewish Age.

“Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress.” In what way would a person in distress be enlarged? A hymn expresses the sentiment that sometimes in the depth of sorrow, one encounters a world of experience that teaches certain lessons. This is especially true when God’s providence responds to a prayer uttered in the depths of despair and depression. As a result of the prayer being answered, the individual appreciates the Heavenly Father that much more. Even in David’s day, answered prayer enriched one to a further development of faith and obedience. Thus those who experience sorrow can be taught, and can learn to appreciate, things in a way that might not otherwise be possible.

Psa. 4:2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

The word “leasing” means “lies,” as stated in the Revised Standard: “O men, how long shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? Selah.” The Psalmist David was being moved by the Holy Spirit. “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). Sometimes they did not fully understand the words coming out of their lips, but the nature of whatever was exhaled through the power of the Holy Spirit was dependent on the messenger’s being in a proper disposition or mood frame. The individuals who were mechanically moved were no doubt surprised at what was specifically spoken, but they had to be in the right mood frame and have some experience that would be in harmony with what came forth from their lips. Here the words “my glory” indicate that David was speaking as the mouthpiece of God. In the Third Psalm, for example, David, who was still king, was fleeing from Absalom. In David’s old age, his son Absalom was planning to put David out of office and, through devious means, wanted the people to proclaim him as their king. Thus David was in the right mood when he penned the Third Psalm because the purpose of kingship was to honor God. The king was to be the servant of God and His mouthpiece particularly in civil matters. (The two offices of king and priest were separate under the Tabernacle arrangement.)

In verse 2, David was in the right mood frame, but with an insurrection occurring, it was as if

God were talking. In other words, the Lord was speaking, but David was having an experience in harmony with what was being expressed. “O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame [through your negligence in worship and your disobedience]? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing [lies]? Selah.” Two sons of David, Absalom and Adonijah, were planning to overthrow their father. First, Absalom tried to endear himself to the people. In fact, he seems to be a type of Satan. With his handsome appearance and excellent bearing, he was a natural leader. What got him in trouble in the final analysis was his hair—his glory. Usually hair is the glory of the woman, but Absalom’s hair was so luxuriant that when he let it grow for one year and then had it polled, the weight was 200 shekels (2 Sam. 14:25,26). Incidentally, as a race, some Jews have thick, curly hair. Pride and the desire to honor self brought Absalom’s demise, and the same sins will bring about Satan’s eventual destruction.

The insertion of the word “Selah” shows David’s depth of feeling. Probably only a person going through a similar situation would fully appreciate the depth of his feeling here.

Comment: In regard to the question “How long will ye love vanity?” Solomon said that everything was vanity except the Lord (Eccl. 12:8,13,14). Anyone who looks in another direction is seeking vanity.

Reply: Yes. David used “vanity” a number of times, although not as prominently as the word is used in the Book of Ecclesiastes, where Solomon, the son of David, recorded his experiences and observations in life (Psa. 10:7; 12:2; 39:5,11; 62:9; 94:11; 144:4).

In a recent talk on the topic of pride going before a fall, Bro. David Bruce pointed out that where there were two sons, the younger son was usually the one to be honored. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

Psa. 4:3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

Comment: Verse 3 teaches sanctification.

Reply: The word “sanctification” means “setting apart” or “both hands full.”

This Psalm and the previous one were probably written in the latter part of David’s life, yet in Holy Writ, they are the Third and Fourth Psalms. It seems they were placed consecutively because they are the same mood frame. The point to be noticed is that these Psalms were not written or placed according to the sequence of events, for they were included in Book One of the five books of Psalms. Since there were too many Psalms for one scroll, they were put in multiple books, or on scrolls made of animal skins, for reasonable handling.

Comment: In verse 1, David pleaded with God to hear his call. By verse 3, David was sure God would hear his call.

Reply: David had sinned, but if the sins weighed on his mind throughout his entire life, that spirit would have dampened many of the Psalms. Instead he was continually praising God with a joyous spirit, as is especially noticeable in the later Psalms. How did David know he was forgiven?

Comment: (1) David was allowed to continue his reign. (2) He paid the price of retribution. For example, his first son of Bath-sheba died. (3) God told him to collect the materials, and Solomon would build the Temple.

Reply: When David was in a somber, depressed mood, he did what we are sometimes advised to do; that is, we get out of that rut by counting our blessings, naming them one by one, as the hymn goes. By taking inventory of God's leadings in the past and tracing them as far as possible up to the present, we begin to have confidence and reason with more sanity while we are in a down mood. The anchor of faith does not loosen its hold.

David knew that he loved God. When we take inventory, we examine what we have done. We may even ask, "Do I wish I had never consecrated?" It is encouraging to find that *no matter what our experiences may be*, we are glad we consecrated our life to serve and obey the Lord. Unfortunately, we sometimes hear brethren express doubts and misgivings such as, "Perhaps the Lord did not accept or recognize my consecration." Such doubts must be stopped lest they lead to the dangerous situation of leaving the truth and going back into the world. Critical times of testing come, especially as we mature. In those trials, we should take serious inventory to see that God did miraculously call us. Unless we make a full consecration, it is not possible to understand the truth in depth. Past providences become very meaningful as we reflect upon them. Just as Jehovah proved, or tested, natural Israel to see how they would react to His providences, so that is the experience of the Christian. At times, it will appear for a little while as if the Lord has forsaken us, and such experiences are necessary for our development and enlargement. When these tests are passed successfully, our Christian experience is enlarged, and we are strengthened for the next experience that will come upon us in due time.

Psa. 4:4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

Comment: Sometimes it is advisable to just be quiet so that we will not get ourselves in trouble.

Awe is a form of reverence. We "stand in awe" that God even called and dealt with us in the first place when the whole world is in darkness. We were privileged and honored to receive the invitation to give our heart to the Lord. How many of the human race are given that privilege? Many are born in nations where they do not hear the gospel at all, and some live in nations where there are very few Christians to communicate with. Of course conditions are changing with the computer and technology, but that was not true of most of the Gospel Age. It is essential for the Christian to communicate with God in prayer, making requests known, for we need assurances, providences, and companionship in order to recognize that He is still dealing with us. Sometimes when we ask for an assurance, the answer may not come for months, and then we get a distinct response to our earnest prayer.

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." In other words, we are to *think upon* the Lord. Sometimes after our closing prayer at night, we try to think on something good in God's Holy Word or Providence. We stand in awe during the daytime, and we are in awe in thought upon our bed at night. Thus we are in constant communication with the Lord in one way or another, thinking upon Him, His people, and His Word—things we know would be pleasing to the Heavenly Father.

Q: Does "be still" mean to be at peace?

A: Yes. Verse 1 was the opposite condition where David was depressed, but as he remembered God's past dealings, he got stronger in faith and was enlarged.

It is always good to reflect back on our consecration. We know we made that commitment, and in doing so, we obeyed God. To fully dedicate our life, giving our all to the Lord, is the most we can do. Reason tells us that if God called us and we did His bidding, He is pleased. This reflection should lift us out of our down position to stronger faith.

“Selah” is again mentioned in this prayer, showing how outgoing David was in his worship. We are reminded of the Apostle John’s saying “Amen” in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 1:6,7; 7:12; 22:20,21). “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” John’s remarks show his responsive heart condition of thankfulness to God for what has been done for us.

Psa. 4:5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

Verse 5 pertains to offering the “sacrifices of righteousness.” At this time, there was no Temple, but there was a Tabernacle with services. David gave this advice to others: “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.” Just as David put his total safety and security in God, so it is with us. Our safety under any circumstance is in God—especially when everything seems to be awry, for we have many enemies and relatively few supporters in our Christian walk. Of course we also trust in Jesus, in the robe of his righteousness, knowing that our prayers and petitions to the Heavenly Father will be heard.

If we put our confidence in God, who can be against us? David was saying, “I am putting my trust in God even under this circumstance where my reign over Israel is in jeopardy.”

Comment: A lesson for us in verses 4 and 5 is that we stand in awe as we reflect at night on God’s dealings in our life and offer our sacrifices of righteousness. Verse 5 is like a command to fulfill our covenant of consecration and trust in God.

Reply: Yes, verse 4 is related, for it speaks of communing with our own heart upon our bed at night. This Fourth Psalm is the nighttime Psalm.

Q: Is obedience a sacrifice of righteousness, the principle being that to obey is better than sacrifice?

A: Yes. A sacrifice is meaningless if it is not accompanied by a right heart condition, and the right heart condition has to be accompanied with obedience.

Psa. 4:6 There be many that say, Who will show us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

Psa. 4:7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

It would be better to omit the supplied word “any.” Many said, “Who will show us good?” In his experience, David was in the minority, for his enemies were more numerous than his supporters. A few hundred were loyal to David, whereas the people at large were more comfortable with Absalom. Their affections were being turned toward David’s son.

“LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.” David was making a comparison between him and his supporters on the one hand, who were not in public favor, and their opposers on the other hand. David had confidence in God and in the anointing that Samuel had given him many years earlier. He trusted that the anointing was still with him, having that feeling of security. Even under this condition of turmoil, he was happier than his enemies, who seemed to be prospering. Their joy was ephemeral and relatively meaningless, whereas his joy was abiding, for he knew that he was in God’s favor and that he was trying to do God’s will to the best of his ability. Therefore, he felt that his lot was better than theirs. He had asked in verse 2, “How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing [falsehood]?” David

was contrasting the experience of his enemies with his experience. They had a false faith and a false confidence that were not based on proper obedience to God, whereas he was truly trying to do God's will. His experience had more of a foundation and substantiality.

People were afraid to show support for David because they felt his was a losing cause. In fact, even the favored wise person whom David consulted changed his loyalty and went over to Absalom, believing that David's son would be the new king. David felt that the turmoil he was experiencing was a test of his devotion to God, but knowing what was in his heart, he was confident and happy even under these circumstances. He knew he was fully dedicated to doing God's will, and the others were not. David highly valued the spiritual experiences he was having, for he saw the vanity, falsehood, and emptiness of the material benefits and popularity his enemies were seeking and receiving.

Psa. 4:8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

With the gladness that was in David's heart, he could go to sleep in peace, confidence, and safety, for he knew he loved God and His Word and instruction. David knew there was a purpose in whatever experience befell him. He was happy in his experience because he was learning. David and those with him who put their trust wholly in Jehovah could sleep with a good conscience, which was more valuable than any silver or gold.

PSALM 5

Psa. 5:0 To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth, A Psalm of David.

Psalms 3, 4, and 5 were more or less intended to be grouped together. Relatively sequential, they pertained to an experience in David's life when the kingship was under siege and he was fleeing from his enemies, particularly Absalom. It is difficult to give a constructive analysis unless the three Psalms are read in their entirety and we try to picture the setting. Psalm 3 was inferentially an evening prayer (Psa. 3:5), Psalm 4 was also an evening prayer (Psa. 4:4), and Psalm 5 was another evening prayer, where David trusted that the answer would come in the morning (Psa. 5:3). In both Old and New Testament times, prayers are an expression of one's devotion and feelings, or emotions, as the petitioner looks to God as his Guide and Director in all of life's affairs. The nature and subject matter of the Second Psalm are so distinctly different that there does not seem to be a relationship to the following three mood Psalms, in which David petitioned the Heavenly Father and related his experiences in making his petitions known.

The accompanying music, or sound, for this Fifth Psalm is called "Nehiloth," which is a wind instrument, as opposed to the stringed instruments ("Neginoth") of the Fourth Psalm. A wind instrument is a flute or some other kind of pipe instrument.

Psa. 5:1 Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

David's opening petition was that God would hearken to his evening prayer and meditation.

Psa. 5:2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

Psa. 5:3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

David acknowledged that God was his King. Verses 2 and 3 confirm a continuing coherent

prayer theme in Psalms 3, 4, and 5. David directed his prayer to God and looked upward to Him. He looked to his King for leadership, guidance, instruction, and recognition that his voice was heard.

Comment: Meditation and prayer go together. When we thus consider our prayers, God will take to His heart that which comes from our heart.

Reply: Meditation can be a silent prayer, but when we add our audible voice, the prayer becomes a little more meaningful. Voicing our words, as well as being on our knees, is helpful for enhancing our prayers and bringing us more in harmony as a petitioner hoping to get the benefit of being heard.

David was confident that God would hear his opening prayer of the morning. “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; ... I [will] direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

Psa. 5:4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

Psa. 5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Psa. 5:6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

In verses 4-6, David was speaking of the others, who were putting their trust not in God but in receiving material benefits. Their works were not in harmony with righteousness. “Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing [falsehood, lies].”

No doubt if we had been there and had known exactly what was happening in Israel at the time of this petition, we would be able to enter more fully into David’s prayer. The wickedness was so disturbing to David that he wished God, who hates such evil, would destroy the workers of iniquity.

Indignities were committed against not only David but also God. Since David was the steward God had appointed as leader, any disrespect shown or any infraction committed against the office of king was a reflection on God. Now David’s enemies were happy, but he knew that in the end, it would not be favorable for them. “The LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.” Those who were rallying support for Absalom showed by their life’s deeds and actions that they were not in harmony with God. David contrasted them with himself and his followers.

Incidentally, those who supported David were strange individuals, but under his tutelage, they became changed individuals as time went on. Not only did they become mighty men of valor, but they began to have principles and like and admire David for his integrity. They tried to imitate him and looked to him for guidance and leadership. Similarly, we look to Jesus and admire his devotion to God, and we take instruction from what he did and preached. The more we meditate on Jesus’ leadership, the more we try to emulate and be like him in order to please the Heavenly Father.

Psa. 5:7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

The pronouns are very meaningful throughout these Psalms, for they give distinctness of understanding. Here David was relying on God. “I will come into *thy* house in ... *thy* mercy:

and in *thy* fear will I worship toward *thy* holy temple.” This spirit pervaded David’s petitions—he was dependent on the *Lord’s* strength, mercy, forgiveness, and leadership, whereas his enemies did not rely on God but did their own thing in their own way.

David said, “In *thy* fear will I worship toward *thy* holy temple,” but when Psalms 3, 4, and 5 were written near the end of his life, the Temple had not yet been built. However, David had been saving up money and materials—his life’s savings, as it were—for the building of the Temple. He had even prepared artifacts to garnish the integral part of the Temple. God gave David all of the plans and measurements, but in the final analysis, it was David’s son Solomon who utilized the materials and followed the pattern to make the Temple a reality. Although the Temple was not constructed in David’s day, it was being built in his mind, for he knew it would become a literal structure. Stated another way, the vision was a reality to David.

David was given to prayer, and the Psalms reveal his motivations and joy. He was unusual in his devotion to God, praying seven times each day. “Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments” (Psa. 119:164). His likely times of prayer were 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., 6 p.m., 9 p.m., and bedtime. To pray seven times a day indicates he had habitual fixed hours. Jesus’ nighttime prayers lasted for hours. Sometimes he departed alone at dusk and returned early in the morning, having spent the whole night communing in prayer with his Father. Thus Jesus’ prayers were of greater duration than David’s. Prayer is one of the essential ingredients of a successful Christian.

In later life, David knew that the Temple would be built on the threshing floor of Ornan, so he prayed in that direction. As a result of an experience where a huge angel appeared in heaven directly over Jerusalem, David purchased the threshing floor from Ornan (1 Chron. 21:15-28). “In *thy* fear will I worship toward *thy* holy temple.” Some Christians try to do the same thing in principle by facing north, the direction of the Pleiades, when they pray in the evening.

Psa. 5:8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

The directness in David’s Psalms suggests that these were the prayers of an archer who had purpose in his devotion. Similarly, the Apostle Paul mentioned that he had one goal, which he likened to a race toward the finish line. He said, “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). Through David’s training with the slingshot and the bow and arrow, there was a directness in the mood frame in which he offered his prayers. And Jesus often looked upward when he prayed.

Q: Was David asking God to make the way plain for him?

A: Yes, he was praying for the Lord’s guidance. He continued in the same spirit that was expressed in verse 2: “Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God.” In other words, “Make the way plain and straight before my face so that I will know what to do this day.” Frequently in our morning prayer, we likewise look for guidance for the day in doing the Father’s will.

For many years, we avoided having a class study on the Book of Psalms because to explain many of them with particularity is very difficult. However, we have studied the Psalms personally to glean golden nuggets and to know the habits of David. Some of the Psalms are very structured and extremely mathematical, but generally speaking, when David was in the type of mood frame of Psalms 3, 4, and 5, it is difficult to extract substantive information and give definition except to see and observe the nature of his prayers.

Psa. 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness;

their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.

David used strong denunciatory language in regard to what he considered not only his enemies but also their waywardness toward God. They dishonored Jehovah as well as the office over which David was given charge.

There seems to have been an anomaly or a contradiction in David's enemies in that their mouth lacked steadfastness, their inward part was utterly wicked, and their throat was an open sepulcher, yet they flattered him with their tongue. In other words, they flattered David to his face but were undependable because of their words and actions behind his back.

Absalom flattered those who proved to be David's enemies, taking advantage of an audience on several occasions. He used the people to promote himself on the one hand and to denigrate his father on the other hand. In bringing forth what he considered faults and shortcomings of David, Absalom did not fully realize his father's circumstance or the permission of evil, which, as a test of faith in God, took various forms such as health and honor.

David was having a troublesome experience, yet he maintained his confidence that he was still in God's favor. David's triumph and steadfastness were manifest in spite of the turmoil. He felt the discomfiture but received the experiences well and honored God for having favored him.

Psa. 5:10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

David prayed with regard to his enemies, saying in effect, "Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels." They rebelled against God by siding with Absalom; they favored him as their leader because he winked the eye at their transgressions.

Of course David had a higher standard, as those with him came to recognize and honor. In their association with David in his flight, these castoffs were brought to a higher level.

Comment: With Saul, David would not lift a hand against God's anointed, but David's own son was willing to do that.

Reply: David was reluctant to wish ill toward Absalom until Joab, his general, brought him to his senses. Then David realized what Absalom was doing.

Verses 9 and 10 are generalizations. Although we cannot be certain of the specifics, we see the emotions that David was experiencing.

Psa. 5:11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

David was saying to God, "Let all those who put their trust in you rejoice because you support, protect, and defend them." He had faith that whatever the experience, there was a purpose for it—whether for good or for correction. Here David considered the trials to be a test of his own personal faithfulness, and he was telling the Lord of his love for Him in spite of the treacherous experiences.

Psa. 5:12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

Notice the future tense: "For thou, LORD, *wilt* bless the righteous." In other words, what

seemed to be against one who was putting his trust in the Lord would ultimately work out for his good. The temporary experience was not pleasant, but afterward it would yield the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11). “With favour *wilt* [future tense] thou compass him as with a shield.”

PSALM 6

Psa. 6:0 To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

Psalm 6, like Psalm 4, was to be accompanied by stringed instruments. However, while stringed instruments (plural—like an orchestra) were to be used, the music in this instance was to be played an octave lower because of the mournful intonations. In addition, the phrase “upon Sheminith” tells that the particular instrument had eight strings and thus was more like a lyre, a harplike instrument. With the music being played an octave lower on a lyre, it fit the mood of the words of this Sixth Psalm. Similarly, sometimes the words and music of a hymn coordinate so beautifully that the hymn becomes a favorite. David gave advice in connection with many of the Psalms, choosing not only the individual who should sing or play but also the type of musical instrument to be used. The title introducing the Psalm in the King James Version is actually in the Hebrew scroll. Many other Bible translations omit that commentary.

Psa. 6:1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

Psa. 6:2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

Psa. 6:3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

David was in a low period, just as we, as Christians, have times of depression. He felt a weakness of not only depression but also health. His experiences were affecting him physically, mentally, and spiritually. King David was confessing to Jehovah his weakness and his need, as we do when being tried in a special fashion. We call upon the Lord for help in our time of need.

David’s experience seemed to be prolonged. He was expressing his mood in prayer, but the prayer was not being answered as soon as he would like. Therefore, he was beseeching the Lord to have mercy on him. “Rebuke me not in thine anger.” Sometimes we do not know whether the experiences are in the nature of something we have done wrong or if the Lord is teaching us along another line to work out fruitage in our character development. For the moment, David felt the Lord may have been displeased with him, so he was asking for mercy. “Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.” He felt the experience intensely.

Why did David say, “Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak”? He did not want to succumb to the experience by giving up. Feeling the experience in his very being, he did not want his faith to be crushed. He was affected not only in his mind but also in his body and strength. “My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?”

Psa. 6:4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies’ sake.

David petitioned, “Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies’ sake.” He was asking for deliverance from this particular experience. David did not give any more detail about the experience, so we do not know what was provoking his emotions.

Psa. 6:5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

Verse 5 is often quoted in witnessing: “For in death there is no remembrance of thee”; that is, one’s very thoughts perish. “In the grave [Hebrew *sheol*] who shall give thee thanks?” Not only is there no torture in the grave, but also no praise is uttered, for the grave is silent. David was talking about a personal experience, and his emotions show how serious it was. In fact, the experience was so serious that it could lead to his demise. He wanted to give thanks to God, for his main purpose in life was to always rejoice in the Lord, but he could not rejoice in this circumstance, so he was asking for help.

Psa. 6:6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

Here again David was praying at night, and his prayer was accompanied by many tears.

Psa. 6:7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

David’s very eye was weakened because of the strain of his emotions and grief. “It [David’s eye] waxeth old because of all mine enemies.” The mention of “enemies” reveals something of the basic reason for the trauma he was going through. One who is lonely and grieving looks for some solace, help, and sympathy. “Misery loves company” seems to be a general law. When undergoing trouble, a person wants commiseration and the empathy of others.

Psa. 6:8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

Comment: Verse 8 indicates David received strength from the Lord. There would now be a change in his mood.

Reply: The strength did not necessarily come in one night. He had been troubled by his enemies over a period of time with one situation occurring after another. He needed help in his weakness and desired to be sustained by an answer from the Lord. Verses 8-10 show that he received an assurance.

Comment: Jesus spoke similar words in Matthew 7:23, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Reply: The principle applies, but there Jesus was speaking of the Great Company. The word “iniquity” means “lawlessness.” The Great Company class are given sufficient information during their lifetime to make their calling and election sure, but they are slothful in not being attentive to the warnings of the end-time period. They do not heed the admonition for having a sufficient supply of oil to fill their lamps, so when the circumstance arises, they will not be prepared and will suffer the consequences. They will be shut out from the wedding.

Jesus used the wording of verse 8 as a principle in other places as well. While the circumstances are different in each case, they all have the common factor of being a form of *lawlessness*. For example, some pursue the willful enjoyment of the pleasures of this world, and others are completely unmindful of their neglect to follow Jesus’ instructions. With some, the penalty will be Second Death. For others, some kind of retribution will be required in order for the individual to return to God’s favor.

Psa. 6:9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

David did not tell exactly how his prayer was heard and what assurance he received to lift him

out of his low period and restore him to his usual joy in the Lord. He was testifying that *God answers the prayers of the righteous*. In his need during the prolonged experience, he received the necessary help. Reading of David's experience gives us some assurance that while we are going through deep waters, God will, in His own way and time, provide the necessary strength.

Here David introduced the word "prayer," which, when combined with the term "all the night" in verse 6, indicates that the Sixth Psalm was also a nighttime prayer. Psalms 3-6 were all night experiences.

Psa. 6:10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

Review of Psalms 3-6

It takes time to digest these Psalms and to see their purpose. As we meditate on them, they become a little clearer and begin to focalize. The bottom line in Psalms 3-6 is that they were all prayers—*nighttime prayers*. "I cried [in prayer] unto the LORD with my voice.... *I laid me down and slept; I awaked*" (Psa. 3:4,5). Psalm 4:1 begins with "hear my prayer." The Psalm continues, "Commune with your own heart *upon your bed*.... I will both lay me down in peace, and *sleep*," again showing an evening prayer (Psa. 4:4,8). Psalm 5:3 reads, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD." David had confidence that God would answer his evening prayer by daybreak. He continued his evening prayer, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee." In Psalm 6:6, David prayed at nighttime in bed, "I am weary with my groaning; *all the night* make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears." He added, "The LORD will receive my prayer" (Psa. 6:9). Thus all four Psalms (3-6) were evening prayers.

These Psalms are not structured compositions written while David's thinking was calm and collected. On the contrary, they were written with emotion according to the mood he was experiencing, and his moods were going back and forth.

PSALM 7

Psa. 7:0 Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

According to the King James margin, "shiggaion" is a Hebrew word indicating a turbulent lyric. Although there is some truth in that statement because of the ups and downs in mood that David expressed in this Seventh Psalm, the word "shiggaion" means "wandering" in another sense. While the emotions in the Psalm do wander, or change back and forth, much more is involved. Psalm 7 is a song that David sang either to himself or to the compatriots who were with him as he wandered from place to place, seeking safety and refuge during his flight from the wrath of King Saul, who intended to kill him. The content of the Psalm bolsters this thought.

The rest of the preface, "which he [David] sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite," helps us to understand what David was referring to. However, nothing in Scripture particularizes anything pertaining to Cush the Benjamite. Actually, from the standpoint of discretion, David was using a hidden pseudonym in the expression of whom he had in mind. As we read this Psalm, we will see that he was protesting his innocence much like Job, who contended for his integrity of heart. While Job's conscience was clear, his trials were severe, yet he knew God's judgment was superior to his. Therefore, he very much wanted an answer to his prayer. Likewise, David asked for an answer to his prayer in this Psalm. (Incidentally, the terms Benjamite and Benjaminite are synonymous and interchangeable.)

The point is that we believe “Cush” was a pseudonym for King Saul, who was the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin. “Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish ... a mighty man of power. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man ... and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people” (1 Sam. 9:1,2). Therefore, Saul was a Benjamite, and his father was Kish (Cush). The “c” in the English “Cush” is the eleventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet, namely, “kaph,” or “k.” However, this paronomasia is spelled with the nineteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, “qoph,” yet strangely, both kaph and qoph are pronounced the same as a hard “k.” Since the “u” of Cush is a vowel, it could just as easily be an “i,” and hence the son of “Kish” the Benjamite. Therefore, we believe—and others have believed as well—that David was referring to Saul. David composed this ode, or Psalm, to express the experience he was having when fleeing from place to place to escape Saul’s wrath.

Psa. 7:1 O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

David was referring to Jehovah: “O LORD.” The term “my God” means that David had entered into covenant relationship and that his whole soul, or being, lay at the disposition of God, his Creator. On the one hand, having made this commitment, he wholly put his trust in God, but on the other hand, he immediately said, “Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.” We know Saul, in his pursuit of David, at times sent out soldiery to apprehend and bring him back so that he could vent his spleen, or wrath, upon David. In addition, there were a couple of instances in which Saul left the throne, as it were, and *personally* pursued David, and that was the case in the incident recorded in this Psalm. Of course some soldiery were with the king, but they were a more private kind of soldiery and very few in number. Evidently, Saul was given explicit information as to David’s whereabouts and was, therefore, more interested in personally going after him for various reasons. We will try to extract clues from the Psalm as we proceed. It is important to realize that before David did anything, he put his trust in God and petitioned for protection and deliverance from all who were persecuting him.

Psa. 7:2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

Verse 2 becomes more personal. Instead of “all them” who persecuted David, he now mentioned “he” (singular). “Lest he [Saul] tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.” Here is a little clue as to why Saul was personally pursuing David on this occasion; namely, he was like a lion about to rend his victim into pieces. Just as a lion in the forest is the king of the animal creation, so Saul was a lion in the forest of men. Sometimes the Scriptures liken individuals to trees (plural) and sometimes to a tree (singular).

The king of Israel was now in pursuit, and there was “none to deliver.” Saul was personally pursuing David because of the latter’s reputation. Among the populace of Israel, David had many friends who considered him to be of good report. For example, “the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). Moreover, David slew Goliath when for many days, the giant had challenged Israel and none dared to fight him. Along came David, who went out with a slingshot and delivered Israel by God’s providence in directing the stone through a chink in the armor to slay the giant. Saul was now pursuing David so that he could privately execute his wrath following the capture. The king cagily wanted to complete the capture before any of David’s friends, who far outnumbered the king and his few soldiery, could interfere.

Comment: David knew that King Saul was the Lord’s anointed. Therefore, he was troubled because he could not fight back and take Saul’s life or allow his men to do so.

Psa. 7:3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;

Psa. 7:4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)

Psa. 7:5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.

Again David said, “my God,” showing his total commitment. David continued, “If I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands; If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me ... Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.”

In the parenthetical expression “(yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:),” David was referring to Saul, for David could have had him killed. David’s men wanted to slay Saul when they found him sleeping in a cave at En-ge-di, but David commanded them not to kill God’s anointed (1 Samuel 24). Thus the theme of the Seventh Psalm was motivated by the actions of Saul, a particular individual.

In his integrity, David was very much like Job, who similarly prayed to God that if there was any iniquity in him to please reveal it. Job had honestly searched his heart and could not find anything that would merit the experiences he was having. Here David was saying that if, unbeknownst to him, there was a flaw in his character that merited his being hunted like a fugitive, he wanted to suffer the consequences. He was examining his heart as Job did and could not find any fault with his motive and intent. “If there be iniquity in my hands ... Let the enemy persecute my soul, and ... tread down my life.”

“Selah” is like an exclamation point. David was appealing to God, the righteous Judge, to do that which was fitting. This Psalm, a prayer, was recorded for posterity after David was made king, but it was uttered earlier while he was in flight from Saul. In other words, the Holy Spirit, as the spirit of remembrance, enabled David later to put the prayer into proper writing for preservation in the Hebrew record of Holy Writ.

In verses 1 and 2, David was asking, “LORD, save me from them that persecute me and deliver me, lest Saul tears my soul to pieces like a lion.” In verses 3-5, he said, “If there is iniquity in me, let it be as Saul intends.” Verses 6-9 are a radical change, being another soliloquy.

Psa. 7:6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

Psa. 7:7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

Psa. 7:8 The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.

Since, in searching his heart, David could not find any iniquity to justify his experience, he now had a degree of confidence in his own personal integrity of heart. Again his spirit reminds us of Job, who consistently and persistently claimed his innocence to the three supposed comforters who persecuted him during his trial. David was convinced of his integrity of heart (verse 8). He was contending that his heart was pure in intent.

“Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies.” David wanted justice to be done on his behalf. “Awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.” David knew that God was just and that He had commanded others to be just and fair in judgment, so now he was asking God to execute judgment on his behalf and thus to exonerate and deliver him. David knew he had been anointed to be king, but in the meantime, Saul was still on the throne. It was not David’s intention to cut short Saul’s reign but to let the situation be just as God, in His providence, would ordain.

In verse 7, David was saying that when he got into office, he would benefit the congregation of Israel, for he would execute justice on behalf of those who were in need of help—widows, orphans, and those who had been encroached upon in various ways. The end of the verse reads, “For their sakes therefore return thou on high.” In any court of justice in any nation in any land, the throne of judgment is invariably an elevated seat. Even if the seat is only six inches above the ground, there is a platform with a chair. The judge ascends the platform and sits on the chair of justice either to hear the charges or to render the verdict. Therefore, David was saying to God, “Thou righteous Judge, ascend on high, be seated, and render the verdict to benefit my cause.” Of course when God rendered the verdict in Saul’s judgment, David would be enthroned. God would judge the people, and David, as God’s spokesperson on the throne, would render that judgment according to the integrity and righteousness that were in him. Not only would he be exonerated personally as an individual, but he would, in turn, do justice on behalf of others. David knew about the wrong acts that Saul, as king, had already committed.

Comment: David prayed to the Lord for protection from his enemies but was not necessarily asking for their death because he loved Saul and Jonathan and mourned for them.

Reply: On the one hand, David’s intent was not to do harm, but on the other hand, as we will see, he indicated that if he were in power, he would destroy enemies.

Psa. 7:9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Verse 9 is rather touching, for David was reasoning with God. Just as Moses reasoned with the Almighty God, not wanting any bad reflection on His throne or name, so David reasoned that God should put an end to this situation for His name’s sake as a “righteous God [who] trieth the hearts and reins [of men].”

Psa. 7:10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

Psa. 7:11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Psa. 7:12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

God was a shield and buckler to David. God saves the “upright in heart [not only David but all who are righteously inclined]” and “judgeth the righteous [in delivery or salvation], and He is angry with the wicked every day.” For example, God raised up judges in the nation of Israel to help bring about relief from oppression, bondage, wrongdoing, and injustices. Although His anger is usually secondary, it is always there.

The King James wording for verse 11 is a little awkward. Many Bible expositors express pros and cons on this verse. Some say that God is not angry with the wicked every day, and others say that He is, which is the slant of the King James. The thought is that God recognizes the wicked for what they are. Verse 12 says, “If he [the wicked] turn not,” implying that while God has anger against the wicked, a patience is combined with that anger, for His intent is to save

the wicked from wrongdoing if they have a change of heart. But if the wicked “turn not” and persist, then impending judgment will come, thus revealing God’s anger. However, that anger is held in abeyance and will not come right away. God has righteous anger and wrath, but He curbs it patiently for a time.

“If he [the wicked] turn not [from what he is doing], he [God] will whet his sword.” To “whet” the sword is to sharpen it, and since the sharpening process takes time, the implication is that there is time before the execution of justice. God is figuratively whetting His sword, intending to use it on the wicked who turn not from their evil way. An impending judgment is coming, and God patiently holds His anger in abeyance until the due time.

God “hath bent his bow, and made it ready.” When the archer has an arrow in the bow, he pulls it back, but he also carefully aims the arrow, focusing attention upon the target. Again time is involved, as well as purpose. Finally the archer lets the arrow go, bringing about swift destruction.

Verses 10-12 were prophetic of Saul’s demise, for both he and Jonathan died in a war. When Saul was wounded, being pierced by an arrow, he asked one of his men to slay him, for he was afraid the enemy would behead him and use his head as a trophy. Rather than to fall into the hands of the enemy and have dishonor and shame come upon his posterity, Saul wanted his servant to slay him and put him out of his misery right away. Thus he was mortally wounded by an arrow and then slain by a sword in fulfillment of verse 12 (1 Sam. 31:3-5). Way back when Saul first intended to kill David, a judgment awaited him, but that judgment was held in abeyance until the due time of God’s providence. Not only are verses 10-12 a prophecy, but they provide instruction about God’s patience and desire to change the wicked from their way if possible. If the change is not made in the allotted time frame, then judgment surely awaits the individual(s) and will be inflicted. God is ever ready to judge the wicked—He has the desire to expunge them—but His patience holds the judgment in abeyance for a time.

Psa. 7:13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

Psa. 7:14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

Psa. 7:15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.

Psa. 7:16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

Impending judgment awaited Saul. God prepared the “instruments of [Saul’s] death,” that is, the sword and the bow and arrows. In His own time, God will take care of matters, but in the meantime, the temporary permission of evil continues. Ultimately, in His own time and way, He will reveal that He is a just God.

Saul “travaileth with iniquity.” At times, he was filled with violent emotions. On more than one occasion, he wanted to pin David to the wall with a javelin (1 Sam. 18:10,11; 19:9,10). Instead of the javelin killing David, Saul had a similar experience in connection with his own demise.

Saul “hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.” Saul told the people that David was a mischief maker in conceiving a conspiracy to seize the throne. This false reasoning gave Saul an excuse to try to exterminate David. He gave wrong slants on David’s character to justify the iniquity he had in mind, but David knew his own heart was not evil. He had no

intention whatever of assassinating Saul to obtain the throne of Israel.

In his mind, Saul “made a pit, and digged it” by thinking how to capture David. However, Saul fell “into the [very] ditch which he [had] made.” His mischief returned “upon his own head, and his violent dealing ... [came] down upon his own pate [the crown of his head].” To a large extent, much of the retribution to be inflicted on the wicked will be somewhat in the nature of what those individuals originally conceived. An example is Haman, who plotted the death of Mordecai, a Jew, and had a gallows built for that purpose. Instead Haman was hung on the gallows (Esther 7:10).

Psa. 7:17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

David was saying that in spite of his persecutions and the evil and slander directed against him, he would not change—he would praise God. Regardless of what happened in his life, he would begin and end each day praising God. A reading of all the Psalms shows that this sentiment was characteristic of David. Most of the Psalms express praise and honor to God, so David did not let circumstances make him forget to render praise and thanks. The lesson for us as new creatures is to be thankful to God for calling us and to accept whatever providences He permits, appreciating them as part of our training for office in future glory, Lord willing.

PSALM 8

The Eighth Psalm is a familiar one and perhaps one of the top ten, normally speaking. Of the first 50 Psalms, the five that are preached on most frequently are Psalms 2, 8, 19, 23, and 45.

Psa. 8:0 To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.

Some King James margins say that the Eighth Psalm was sung with a turbulent pace.

Psa. 8:1 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

“O Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!” A startling aspect of verse 1 is that it is expressed in the futuristic present tense. In other words, the fulfillment is still future, for the excellency of Jehovah’s name has not yet occurred. David spoke prophetically with such enthusiasm that we would think he was speaking in the present tense. Actually, however, he was speaking according to the Holy Spirit of the time when everything will be fulfilled.

From that standpoint, we can see that verse 1 has a dual future application—(1) when men believe, honor, and serve God, and (2) when they behold, understand, and thus glory in both His natural works and, figuratively, His work in the Kingdom.

Psa. 8:2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

In order to begin to understand verses 3-8, we will have to read several Scriptures, as follows:

“And [the scribes and Pharisees] said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matt. 21:16)

“For David himself said by the Holy Spirit, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my

right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:36,37)

“And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand.” (Luke 20:42)

“For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.” (1 Cor. 15:27)

“And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” (Eph. 1:22)

“But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” (Heb. 2:6-9)

Of the nine verses in Psalm 8, these Scriptures are particularly pertinent to verses 3-8, showing that the Psalm is prophetic. While there is a very good and wholesome natural lesson, we see that the Eighth Psalm was quoted in the New Testament as being of the Holy Spirit, the implication being that it is prophetic in nature. The prophetic application was given by Jesus in the three Gospel Scriptures and by the Apostle Paul in the subsequent three verses.

First, we will consider verse 2, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.” The first three texts—those from Matthew, Mark, and Luke—pertain to verse 2. These *three* New Testament Scriptures mean there is a particular, peculiar, and valuable hidden lesson.

Going backwards, we will start with the end of verse 2: “because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.” The context of the Matthew, Mark, and Luke Scriptures is during our Lord’s ministry, when the “enemies” were the scribes and Pharisees, who represent a class that is not only hypercritical but, being blinded, does not receive the truth. The expression “that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger” would be in today’s jargon “that thou mightest shut their mouth.” The scribes and Pharisees thought they were learned exponents and explainers of the truth, yet they did not know some of the simplest things. Thus we can see why Jesus occasionally addressed them in a blunt manner, as though they were dull of comprehension, “Hast thou not read the scriptures?” (cf. Matt. 21:42; 22:29).

The first part of verse 2 is unique: “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies.” In other words, “Thou hast ordained strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.” When this concept is understood, it will shut the mouth of enemies, for they will see the result that the gospel has on people who are supposed to be unlearned.

When the truth is understood, when the “enemies” see that they have been dumb and blind, when they see the marvelous effect the gospel has on people who are supposed to be unlearned, their mouths will be shut. The “babes and sucklings” will be way ahead in understanding. After Jesus finished his ministry, the people observed—and even the scribes

and Pharisees had to take note—that unschooled disciples like Peter, John, and James spoke boldly and with authority very much like Jesus and, in addition, performed miracles. Then along came the Apostle Paul, who, although he had schooling, was nothing to look at in appearance. He was small, his eyesight was poor, and his voice was not that of an orator, but he was a logician and preached with strength.

The lesson in verse 2 is on “babes.” As an illustration, Adam Clarke talked about the “Boylean vacuum” in his *Commentary*. In the 1600s, a British physicist by the name of Robert Boyle expounded on this phenomenon; namely, when babes suck the breasts of the mother, they get milk, but if an adult tries to do the same thing, he is not successful. To repeat the peculiarity: only a babe can extract the milk from the breasts of the mother. In other words, for infants and children who need that nourishment from the mother, the Lord performs a miracle. Adults can produce a partial vacuum but not the thorough vacuum of a babe that sucks out the milk without straining.

Spiritually speaking also, the mouth of a “babe” is a phenomenon. Every individual who consecrates and becomes a Christian is initially a babe, no matter how learned or advanced he is in other matters. A certain phenomenon occurs in the initial development of the Christian that is so radical even the public notices the effect—an effect that does not occur in an adult Christian. As an illustration, when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, his departure was sudden, visible, and startling. He came out with his goods, his family, and his nephew to go to an unseen land. John Bunyan is another example. He was a drunkard and a reprobate, but when he got the truth, such a miraculous change took place that the townspeople were amazed. Not only is the initial change very obvious, but the power in the early phases of a Christian’s development is unique. We ourselves noticed the miraculous nature of this “first love” when we initially learned about God and His plan and magnanimity (Rev. 2:4). That first love made us very different, so that we enthusiastically told our parents, best friends, coworkers, etc., what we had learned. We thought the truth was so marvelous that all would understand and embrace it, but as we witnessed to one person and then another and another, we found that very few responded to the wonderful message.

In our initial development, God’s power in our life was more manifest because what we left behind was fresh in our minds. Having just come out of the world, we had to acknowledge that our coming out was not because of any brilliance on our part but because something had happened to open our eyes to understand these truths. Once we consecrated, the truths were so logical that we thought everyone should see them. But then we began to appreciate the power of Satan in blinding the minds of men lest they see the glorious gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4). In the early phase of our development, we were being fed, and we had to acknowledge that the one God used to introduce the truth to us had something very unusual which attracted us. As time passes and we become more and more mature, the danger is that we may begin to think we were called because we were better than others—more honest, upright, brilliant, etc.—which is not the case. Stated succinctly, the danger is that we will become high-minded.

All of these thoughts pertain to verse 2. “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings,” who are being fed with the “milk” (simple doctrines) of the truth, God “ordained strength” (1 Pet. 2:2). This “strength” is what others witness, for they clearly see that a change has taken place. And this strength that we had when we initially came into the truth was not our own but something God gave to us. In beholding us, others may have thought we were losing our mind, but they had to notice the abrupt change.

The strength obtained from the milk of the Word enables the baby Christian to develop and grow to teenage years, young adulthood, and (hopefully) maturity—and then to pass the final exam and attain the divine nature. The purpose of God’s choosing these individuals who have

no viable talents and in whom this miracle occurs is to shut the mouths of those who are learned and think they are wise and who are admired by peers and elevated to positions of honor in the religious and the political world or in other avenues of influence.

When Jesus came into the city of Jerusalem in his Triumphal Entry, it was the children who spoke about the Messiah, not the adults. “And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Matt. 21:15,16). The chief priests and scribes could not understand what was happening. Similarly when the ass spoke to Balaam and asked, “Haven’t I been your faithful servant all these years?” he should have stopped in astonishment and thought, “This donkey is talking to me!” But instead Balaam began to reason with the animal. He actually had a conversation with the ass and did not realize for the moment what was happening. In another instance, Satan used the serpent to do the talking. Thus animals can be used for both good and evil purposes. God used the mouth of the ass to speak to its rider to provide a prophetic application as well as practical instruction.

Of course the adults at the time of Jesus’ Triumphal Entry were not completely quiet, for many who accompanied Jesus as he entered the city had just witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead after four days in the tomb. The startling point is that the children, who did not have any special schooling, were shouting “Hosanna!” with spontaneity. And that was our reaction when we first came into the truth. We just had to tell the glad tidings to others, and the words seemed to come out in a spontaneous fashion when we witnessed. Therefore, verse 2 shows the class who, if they go beyond drinking the milk and grow up into adulthood and maturity, will become the kings and priests of the next age.

Comment: Matthew 11:25,26 is a cross-reference for Matthew 21:15,16. “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Reply: Whatever God does is good, and He has a good reason for the methodology He uses.

Psa. 8:3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

Now we come to the part of the Psalm that is better known, for there is a sublimity just from a natural standpoint. One lesson in verse 3 is that the heavens are the “work of thy [God’s] fingers.” In looking at the heavens, we are very impressed, especially on an unusual night when the stars are very visible. The fact the sun is not mentioned shows that David viewed the heavens and mused at night.

“Which [the heavens] thou [God] hast ordained.” Notice the emphasis on God: “*thy* heavens,” “*thy* fingers,” and “*thou* hast ordained.” The implication is not only that God is the Creator but that He is the *sole* Creator, and that is one of His peculiar honors. He is a jealous God, and that glory He will give to no other being but Himself as the Emperor and Founder of the universe (Isa. 42:8).

Psa. 8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” What would have elicited this expression from David even from a natural standpoint? Man is so much lower than God that these tiny, little

beings are like dust. When David saw the heavens and the order of the universe—so beautiful and impressive with a time element involved—he thought, “What are we down here?” Man cannot tell the stars to stop shining; he just beholds the glory.

“What is ... the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Here the Holy Spirit was particularly calling attention to not merely the fact that God created man and originally made him in His own image, from which man has fallen, but that there is a spiritual application. Inferentially, the “son of man” is a reference to Jesus. The three Scriptures read earlier from the Apostle Paul’s writings—1 Cor. 15:27, Eph. 1:22, and Heb. 2:6-9—incorporated recognition of verse 4.

Q: There seems to be a distinction between “man” and the “son of man.” Since verses 6-8 mention that man was given dominion over the animals, the fowl, and the fish, does “man” refer to Adam?

A: Yes, there is a double application, natural and spiritual. From that standpoint, “man” refers to the first Adam, and the “son of man” refers to the Second Adam. Even the natural plane is wonderful when we see what Adam could do. He not only had dominion over the animals, the birds, and the fish but also gave them names. It is even more startling to realize that Adam must have been near a seashore in order for God to show him the various kinds of fish, including the whale, for naming. Of course God gave additional names to some of these, but the names Adam selected were recorded and preserved to indelibly fix them in the minds of men. Those names were handed down from generation to generation. Initially, not only was Adam’s dominion one where he could command animals, fowl, and fish and they obeyed, but also it was a dominion of respect. When man disobeyed, the dominion became one of fear of the superiority of man, especially when man had weapons and became the enemy.

Comment: God visited Adam through the Logos, but the term “son of man” indicates a different time period.

Reply: Yes, the First Advent was a different time frame. And in the Kingdom Age, Jesus will come as the Second Adam, the “Lord from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47).

Psa. 8:5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

The article “a” is not in the Hebrew. Therefore, this verse should be translated, “For thou hast made him little, lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.” The point is that human beings are like pygmies or Lilliputians compared to the angels. From the natural standpoint, man is crowned with mental and moral capabilities. He can reason, analyze, and worship God. Moreover, when Adam was given dominion, he was crowned as a king with honor and respect. Even after he fell, people probably realized he was the progenitor of the human race, and no doubt respect was paid to him as having superior qualities, even though they were slowly degenerating. From the spiritual standpoint, Jesus was made little in coming down here, being born in the flesh as a human, and coming forth from the womb of Mary. Crowned with glory and honor, he was noticeably different from anyone else, having superior wisdom. For example, it was said of him in regard to the words that came forth from his lips, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). And four days after Lazarus died, Jesus raised him from the tomb. Many things happened that made his ministry so wondrous, but that crowning with glory is almost insignificant compared to what will occur in the future when he is endued with power from on high during the Kingdom Age. To get life at that time, every knee will have to bow to Jesus, and every tongue will have to confess that he “is Lord, to the glory of God” (Phil. 2:10,11).

Q: Hebrews 2:8 reads, “We see not yet all things put under him [Jesus].” Since this statement is still true today, when will it be fulfilled?

A: We will not see all things put under Jesus until the end of the Millennium when he turns the Kingdom over to the Father after the “little season” (Rev. 20:3).

Psa. 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

“Thou hast put all things under his feet.” Verse 6 is prophetic, for “all things” are not yet under Jesus’ feet. This verse will be fulfilled in due time, as stated in Scriptures quoted earlier (Eph. 1:22; 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 2:6-8).

In the natural picture, the animals were originally in subjection to Adam. No doubt even after he disobeyed, a certain dominion was still visible, but it was diminishing and changing into a different type of dominion.

Psa. 8:7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

Psa. 8:8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

The “beasts of the field” include both domesticated and wild animals. Initially, however, all of the animals were domesticated in the sense that they were mild and obedient to Adam. As time went on, man’s dominion over wild animals was accomplished through the spear and the gun, and the dominion over domesticated animals was achieved by a process of bringing them under subjection and training them. Even today this inherent quality is possessed by man. For instance, porpoises and whales in captivity are amazingly playful. The fact children can even put fish in the mouth of porpoises shows that this trait persists, and it is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to see the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:25, “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”

Psa. 8:9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Verse 9 repeats part of verse 1. Thus this thought opens and concludes the Eighth Psalm. While it is expressed here in the present tense, the fulfillment is future. Therefore, the tense could be called the futuristic present tense, for God’s name is not excellent yet in all the earth. In spite of the fact that Jesus’ name has been perhaps the most well-known name among all mankind over the many generations of earth’s history, verse 9 implies *universal* respect.

The Eighth Psalm is an exultant Psalm. We especially appreciate verse 2, which shows that the great God of the universe, with all His wondrous attributes of wisdom, justice, love, and power, considers babes. We are reminded of Isaiah 57:15, “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.” God’s very name is holy, yet He dwells in the heart of the lowly and the contrite. Now we see the spirit of the Heavenly Father—with all His power and might and wisdom, He is a *God of love*. And Jesus is the same in character development, for he said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.... for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:28,29). Jesus was meek and lowly in heart while down here but not in glory. While on earth, this disposition rubbed off and became a part of Jesus’ very character, and we want to be the same.

How wonderful are the sentiments of this Psalm, revealing that God even considers us! We view the term “visiteth him” in verse 4 from our perspective. God sent Jesus on a mission down here for a temporary time of 33 1/2 years at the First Advent. From God’s standpoint, He sent forth Jesus on a visit to us, and from our standpoint, we received Jesus as a visitor.

PSALM 9

Psa. 9:0 To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 9:1 I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.

The pronouns “I,” “my,” and “mine” are conspicuous in verses 1-4. With the title “A Psalm of David,” the Ninth Psalm has, first, an application to David’s own life and experience in being consecrated to do God’s will prior to the coming of Jesus at the First Advent. Therefore, we will try to see what occasioned these reflections by David.

Verse 1 is characteristic of David and his temperament, for he continually praised God in the Book of Psalms. “I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.”

Psa. 9:2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

In harmony with verse 1, the second verse introduces the subject matter to come as we progress into the Psalm itself.

Psa. 9:3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

Now David began to personalize the experiences that elicited the outburst of praise and wonder toward his Creator. “When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.” In reading this Psalm, we find that in places, it is as though some of David’s and God’s enemies have already perished, yet in other parts of the Psalm, the destruction is future.

Psa. 9:4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

“For thou [God] hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest [sat] in the throne judging right [righteously].” David continued to talk about his personal experience, saying that God had maintained the righteousness of his cause—that is, what David stood for and his faithfulness in obeying God’s will up to that time.

We are getting a little closer to what David specifically had in mind. Although there has been some recognition of David’s cause, verse 4 seems to suggest somewhat of a sequence in the Book of Psalms, at least in the earlier portion of the book, which hearkens back to comments in some of the previous Psalms. Those Psalms refer to David’s persecuting experience when he was fleeing from Saul. For example, the Seventh Psalm seems to have been written while David was still in flight but near the end of that particular persecuting experience. He had previously spared Saul’s life in the cave at En-gedi.

When we visited En-gedi on one of the early tours to the Holy Land, we noticed a cave in which water flowed down into a pool. There the verdure was so startlingly beautiful that it looked like a miniature Garden of Eden. Some years later when we revisited the cave, two of

us climbed up higher at En-gedi and saw a second cave above the first one. When we ascended higher above the second cave, which was deep, we saw a sign that said, “Beware of leopards.” However, we continued on to the top. It was in this location that Saul fell asleep in a cave and David came upon him and could have slain him. David’s bodyguard wanted to thrust a spear through Saul, but David forbade the killing of the Lord’s anointed. We think that the upper cave harbored David and his men, and the pursuing Saul must have been directed by some in allegiance with him that David was in those environs. How strange that David was in the upper cave and Saul was in the lower cave! The lower cave was so beautiful that perhaps Saul felt he would take advantage of the location and rest, but that thinking was his temporary undoing. When David revealed to Saul that he had cut off a portion of the hem of the king’s garment and could have slain him, Saul embraced David. However, David was cautious, for he knew that fits of temper had come upon Saul in earlier days. At those times, David had to play music to quiet Saul’s spirit, but eventually the spirit of Saul became worse, causing David to flee for his life. Perhaps this Ninth Psalm was written not too long after that incident, for it is not too far removed from the Seventh Psalm, which hearkens back to that experience at En-gedi.

“For thou hast maintained my right and my cause.” Saul had been spreading the rumor that David was looking for an opportunity to assassinate him in order to take over the throne. Of course such an act was the furthest thing from David’s mind, for he thought in his heart that God would remove Saul when and if that was His purpose. David respected the office of kingship, considering it an awesome responsibility.

Psa. 9:5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

Psa. 9:6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

David was very successful in warfare. In the past, in the days of his popularity when he slew Goliath and afterwards when he engaged in warfare with other nations, David slew his ten thousands to Saul’s thousands. This disparity created jealousy and enmity on Saul’s part, causing the initial friendship to turn sour. Not only did Saul misjudge David, but the jealousy showed an evil condition of heart.

David destroyed two types of enemies. (1) He was successful in finalizing the elimination of seven nations—the Hivites, Hittites, Perizzites, etc. After David’s conquest of these seven nations, nothing is said about their arising again. There is just silence in history. (2) David also expunged from history another enemy who is scarcely known, namely, offspring of some of the *nephilim*, who existed prior to the Flood. When God caused the Flood to inundate the earth, it destroyed all the seed of the fallen angels who had materialized and were familiar with the daughters of men. The fallen angels had brought forth a seed that was called “men of renown” (Gen. 6:4). Although the Flood destroyed them all, there is evidence that after the Flood, through a strange unexplained reason, some of that seed survived, yet we know that the Flood destroyed all but eight souls. Noah and his three sons each had a wife, and we have suggested that this inherent *nephilim* seed existed in the genetic makeup of Ham’s wife, thus surviving the Flood. The mother produces the nature of the seed, and the father is the progenitor of life. The mother nurtures the seed in the womb and thus determines the human nature. The Anakims, etc., were the result of the “giant” seed. Through David’s successful ministry and life, the seed of the giants was exterminated.

Thus two types of enemies were destroyed. The Amorites, Hittites, Canaanites, etc., will have an awakening from the tomb, for they were genuine posterity of Adam, but the other enemies, an alien strain appearing in a humanoid form, will not be awakened because they

were an illegitimate race. The final remnants, who perished at David's hand, were extinguished forever. A puzzling question that arises in verses 5 and 6 can now be answered.

“Thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed [the] cities [over which they predominated]; their memorial is perished with them [in Second Death].” Verses 5 and 6 would be difficult to explain without this further understanding about the seed of the giants, for we know that all of Adam's seed are guaranteed an awakening from the tomb except for those few who knew about Jesus and incurred sufficient responsibility to merit the ultimate penalty of Second Death in the present life, Judas being an example. We believe that a few of the scribes and Pharisees met the same fate because they sinned against a sufficiency of light during Jesus' earthly ministry. After all, he could not have done some of his miracles more forcefully if it were the Kingdom Age itself.

During the Kingdom, the fallen human race will have an opportunity to walk up the highway of holiness and to learn that Jesus is the Messiah. Those who then turn against the truth will go into Second Death. We believe that verses 5 and 6 are talking about perpetual destruction, and those who were contaminated with the seed of the giants were the only class that could perish in David's day, when no one had a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ. We would have to wade through the genetic strain to prove that such contamination was possible after the Flood, but that is not our purpose here. This subject was treated in more depth in the study of Deuteronomy. Generally speaking, we try to avoid this subject except when we are going verse by verse through Scripture and come to a text that requires this explanation.

Psa. 9:7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.

Verse 7 starts a new arena of exhortation and explanation. Notice the futuristic tense: Jehovah “hath prepared his throne for [future] judgment.”

Psa. 9:8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

Verse 8 will be fulfilled in the Kingdom Age.

Psa. 9:9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

Jehovah “also will be a refuge for the oppressed [Christians of the Gospel Age], a refuge in times [plural] of trouble.” Psalm 9 is intended, at least in part, for our edification in the present age. We can extract examples that are beneficial and useful in our thinking and character development for the high calling. Just like David back there, each one in the David class of the Gospel Age has some peculiar experiences in life of being unjustly criticized, misunderstood, etc. David is a type of The Christ, Head and body—David the beloved, Jesus the beloved, and The Christ the beloved (as a class). Verse 9 is more of a broad-stroke application in that the whole creation, which groans and travails in pain together, is unknowingly waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, at which time will come forth salvation and uplifting from prior experiences and injustices in times of trouble.

When we are rightly exercised, trouble helps us to develop patience. Thus what appear to be stumbling stones are actually stepping-stones in character development in those who are properly exercised.

Psa. 9:10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Verse 10 focuses more on those who have known about the Heavenly Father in the Jewish and Gospel ages. For instance, God said David was a man after His own heart, so we can see that David and the other Ancient Worthies benefited in character development (1 Sam. 13:14). Those of the gospel Church are also “they that know thy name.” To “know” God’s name in this sense has a deeper significance than just head knowledge. The reference is to those who *act in obedience* in harmony with their understanding. That type of knowledge is experimental (or experiential) knowledge. Individuals who are faithful in their trials have a trust that is more centered in God’s providence than those who have merely a head knowledge. We want both types of knowledge, for God teaches us through His Word and His providence.

Those who experimentally know God’s name will put their trust in Him in whatever situations occur in the future. Having put on the whole armor of God, they will stand and be faithful to that which they know of His goodness on their behalf and on behalf of the world of mankind. “For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” On several occasions, the Pastor reminded us that anytime we feel depressed or discouraged or we stumble and are sorry, we should acknowledge our failure to the Lord and try to make amends in some manner. At the same time, we should remember what the Lord previously did for us when we first became new creatures. To review our life from that beginning to the present should help us to feel that God has been for us because we can see times when He overruled for our good. Even with mistakes and failures, there are evidences He is still dealing with us. From time to time, we should take inventory of our past—just as is done in the material world in regard to profits and losses. Shortcomings and the need for remedies and adjustments thus become apparent. The new creature should proceed somewhat along the same line but on a higher plane.

The principles laid down in David’s Psalms are very helpful to us as Christians. As we consider the precious promises, the Apostle Peter tells us to add to our faith the quality of virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, etc. If we do these things, taking inventory and striving and looking forward, we shall never fall (2 Pet. 1:4-11). In trying to develop character, we may fall seven times, but if we advance in the development of these characteristics, we will come to the point where, instead of falling seven times, we will pass the test successfully. And not only will we be successful, but we will have an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God. No one will squeak into the heavenly Kingdom, that is, the Little Flock. In the Christian walk, some may have very sorrowful experiences, for Jesus certainly did on the Cross and in the Garden of Gethsemane, and we are not above our Lord.

Comment: We need to be well rounded out in Christian development. Experiences that could cause our defeat will, by the Lord’s grace and strength, result in victory.

Psa. 9:11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

Verse 8 states that God “shall judge the world in righteousness” and “minister judgment to the people in uprightness.” If faithful, we will be kings and priests with our Lord and “minister judgment to the people in uprightness,” teaching those under our charge what to do and what not to do. In the present life, we are learning lessons on what God is looking for in His people. As a result of our failures and our victories and the Lord’s mercy and patience with us, we will be able to remind those in the Kingdom Age that the same qualities are operating on their behalf in their efforts to walk up the highway of holiness. If faithful now to the high calling, we will then, in the Kingdom, declare “among the people his [God’s] doings.” And we can be sure that David, on the earthly plane in the Kingdom Age as an Ancient Worthy, will also be declaring among the people God’s doings.

Psa. 9:12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

“When he [God] maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them.” Jehovah has a proper inquisition. We think of the word “inquisition” as applying to the Dark Ages, particularly to the Roman Catholic Church’s persecution of faithful Christians, but that term can also be meant for good. That word has been blasphemed because the terminology used was “*Holy Inquisition*,” whereas it was really the “*Unholy Inquisition*.” The thinking and the tortures that were devised were demonic.

We would now like to counter and disclaim the thinking that when people come forth from the tomb who did horrible acts to others yet lived a normal life and died, their sins will all be forgiven, and they will start with a clean slate. The Scriptures teach otherwise. When Christians speak wondrously about the Kingdom, the wicked who hear think, “Let us continue with our wickedness because when that time comes, we will be forgiven.” In other words, that type of witnessing encourages the wicked not to repent and change their ways but to continue. Thus we can be too generous in speaking of the Kingdom Age. Retribution will be rendered to those who have willfully harmed others, verbally and physically, including torture of the most extreme kind. We have suggested a methodology for personal retribution that can be used by God without disturbing other people. The individual will get a taste of his own medicine.

“He [God] forgetteth not the cry of the humble [those who were previously afflicted].” Instead of “the humble,” some translations have “the poor,” which is also true. God will not forget those who were oppressed in the present life in one manner or another. Compensatory relief will be granted to such individuals, who will respond in a marvelous way to the leadings. “Thy people [those who obey Christ in the Kingdom Age] shall be willing in the day of thy [Jesus’] power” (Psa. 110:3).

Comment: All the “righteous blood” that was shed from righteous Abel unto Zacharias was required at the time of the First Advent (Matt. 23:35). Retribution had to come.

Reply: The blood required back there will help to relieve some of the bloodguilt, but there also has to be some retribution. Jehovah has a truly proper “inquisition *for blood*.” The emphasis is on blood, that is, on those who have tortured people in the most heinous fashion. To think that such individuals will be given a clean slate in the Kingdom Age is an insult to proper justice.

Q: What is the difference between retribution and expiation?

A: Expiation is the process of applying the retribution. When Jesus died on the Cross, he inherited, through perfect obedience, the life rights of the Law that God gave to Moses at Sinai. Jesus will utilize his right to human life on behalf of the life lost by Father Adam—a life for a life. Not only can Adam be forgiven for any sin he committed or receive expiation, but Christ will grant him the opportunity for life in spite of his having eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree. However, as an offset, Jesus had to experience the isolation that Adam felt as punishment for his sin. Thus Jesus had to be naked on the Cross, be forsaken, have a crown of thorns on his head, etc.—corresponding experiences for what was inflicted on Adam and his race. Jesus had rebuffs, rebukes, and trials. He took upon himself the iniquities of us all; by his stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5,6). The sufferings and experiences of Christ do not give inherent life to another person, but to a certain extent, they lessen the retribution that is necessary. In other words, that which Jesus and his followers experience is a partial offset for sin, whereas Jesus’ life rights are another matter. In addition to being a ransom for all, Jesus had to be a curse for all. Generally speaking, this latter aspect is not emphasized, but to take Adam’s place, Jesus had to pay that price as well. He had to be a substitute for Adam. Expiation is the only way willful sin can be

overlooked, for such sin cannot receive gratuitous, *carte blanche* forgiveness. In proportion to the *degree of willfulness* in a sin, some penalty has to be inflicted, and that penalty under the Law was money, goods, life, or the loss of a part of the body (such as an eye for an eye). The New Covenant will be along the same lines as the old Law Covenant except that the New Covenant will be more successful because of the better Mediator. Expiation is the cancellation of *willful* sin. Forgiveness and repentance are effective for *Adamic* sin, which is in our members.

Psa. 9:13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

Psa. 9:14 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

As David continued to speak, several things come to mind. For example, he had in mind to build a physical Temple to the Lord, and he had life savings to support that goal, let alone contracts that he established. God gave David a vision of the details of the Temple, which he eventually turned over to his son Solomon. Therefore, from the standpoint of design, the Temple was more David's than Solomon's.

Verse 14 reminds us of a statement David made on another occasion. Here he expressed the hope that mercy would be shown to him so that he might show forth all God's praise "in the gates of the daughter of Zion." David said he would "rather be a doorkeeper" in the house of his God "than to dwell in the tents of wickedness [the ungodly]" (Psa. 84:10). Thus David's hopes and ambitions were in this future work that he knew would take place in Messiah's Kingdom. He had enough understanding of the Word, based on the books of Moses plus the revelations God gave him, to be quite aware of the coming of Messiah and the building of the literal future Temple.

David wanted to show forth all of God's praise "in the gates of the daughter of Zion." In the Kingdom, the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3). In a number of Old Testament texts, "Zion" pertains to the heavenly, or spiritual, government of the Kingdom, and "Jerusalem" refers to the natural capital, or center, from which the Law will be expressed to the nation of Israel. However, in the context of Psalm 9, the "daughter of Zion" will be down here. The term indicates an affectionate relationship between the spiritual and the natural governments of the Kingdom. David seemed to sense that he would be prominently used in connection with the future Third Temple. He will be one of the Ancient Worthies who will be on hand particularly during the services of the major feast days; that is, he will be a prominent individual, usually styled "the prince," associated with the future Temple (Ezek. 44:3; 45:7,16,22; 46:2,4,8,10,12,16-18; 48:21,22). In serving as "prince," David will be a chieftain in *civic* matters (as opposed to a priest in religious matters), and he was looking forward to being not only a gate keeper but, as it were, a host to the nations who will come to the Third Temple to worship Israel's God. The office will be somewhat comparable to being a mayor of a large city, one of whose privileges is to welcome visiting dignitaries. He anticipated joyously welcoming those who enter the Temple. He would delight to perform that service.

"I will rejoice in thy salvation." Gates are usually associated with salvation, shutting out the enemy and securing the safety of the occupants within. Many thoughts are contained in the few words of verse 14. David looked forward with hope to the future, when he would be on hand. Through God's mercy in covering his sin in some manner, David would be privileged to have a part in the Temple service in the Outer Court.

Psa. 9:15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

The “pit” and the “net” were two methods of capturing a wild beast of prey. However, verse 15 associates the pit and the net with a wicked and evil generation. Certain principles are being enunciated here. For example, laying a snare of entrapment or a pit to capture the righteous is *premeditated willful sin*. The wicked regard the righteous as beasts and lay snares for them. This crime is not one of emotion or passion, such as momentary anger, but is a carefully laid plan to ensnare. Therefore, the transgressors of willful premeditated sin are more guilty than ordinary transgressors. Evidently, David had observed in history and seen through the written Word different instances where God’s enemies suffered the same fate that they had premeditated for others. Just as men captured literal wild beasts through premeditation, so, spiritually speaking, the wicked spent much of their nights thinking about the evil they would do the next day in forwarding their nefarious purposes. In some instances as time went on, retribution came upon the heads of the very ones who had practiced and pursued this type of evil. Jesus said, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52). Of course not all have that fate in the present life during their earthly sojourn, but sooner or later that fate awaits them.

When verse 15 is considered from a prophetic standpoint, there is the lesson, or principle, that “some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after” (1 Tim. 5:24). Retribution must come sooner or later. David was confident that God would, through some arrangement in the Kingdom, visit practiced iniquity upon the heads of the perpetrators. When a spiritual parallel is drawn, verse 15 shows David’s faith that God will be a God of justice and righteousness in His due time and manner.

Psa. 9:16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.

David’s faith is manifested here, for he was sure that judgment would be executed upon the heads of the wicked and that what they had premeditated would often be the fate awaiting them. An outstanding example is Daniel in the lions’ den. Having made a covenant at the hands of conspirators against Daniel, King Darius the Mede was forced to concede that anyone who worshipped any other god than the god of Babylon should be fed to the lions. He made the covenant in good faith, thinking it would honor his regal office and authority, but the legislation was set up to trap Daniel. However, when Daniel was thrown to the lions, their mouths were stopped and he survived. Instead those who premeditated his entrapment were thrown to the lions and devoured. In the antitype, the same principle will operate with the “three Hebrew children,” who will be cast into the “fiery furnace.” Thus a law of retribution operates either in the current life or in the age to come.

Comment: An illustration of Jehovah’s being “known by the judgment which he executeth” was His bringing the Israelites out of Egypt in the Exodus.

Reply: Yes, that is a collective illustration. As a wicked nation, the Egyptians held the Israelites in bondage and slavery. David was one of the prophets most aware of that judgment. He followed with avid interest every detail of the plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the experiences of the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai.

A collective picture yet future is Gog from the land of Magog, the end-time enemy who will purpose to utterly destroy Israel as a nation and seize the spoils of war (Ezekiel 38 and 39). What that element intends to do to Israel will be overruled so that five sixths of them will die in their own trap when God delivers the Holy Remnant at the beginning of the Kingdom Age.

Truly God is (or will be) “known by the judgment which he executeth.” In several instances, David saw that those who lived a lifetime of iniquity and violence perished in the same employ

they hoped to inflict on others. However, as time went on and wickedness increased more and more, the great majority seemed, to all appearances, to escape such retribution. Only the eye of faith, such as David had, could see that retribution would eventually come, that is, in the next life if not in this life.

Psa. 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

“The wicked shall be turned into hell [Hebrew *sheol*], and all the nations that forget God.” Verse 17 is not referring to the ordinary transgressor, for everyone goes into the grave, which, being very jealous, has an enormous appetite and is never satisfied (Song 8:6). The Hebrew *shub*, rendered “turned,” has the significance of “returned,” suggesting a fate of Second Death.

David realized that in spite of their wickedness, such individuals would come forth in the Kingdom Age. It is remarkable that he could see there would be a future awakening from the tomb of not only the just but also the unjust. His use of the word “returned” suggests that realization on his part. There are tidbits of information to this effect throughout the Book of Psalms. Even this Ninth Psalm verifies the principle that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, a matter is established. One witness is David’s saying that the pit dug or the net laid for others would entrap the wicked in the final analysis. In verse 3, another witness, David said, “When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.” He was referring to a “return,” a going back into the pit and perishing. Like Abraham, Joseph, and Moses, David knew that a day had been set apart when the promised Messiah would come and there would be some kind of judgment on the good and the bad of mankind. However, not until Jesus came was there any detailed understanding of the permission of evil or of the concept of a ransom in the mathematical sense of a man’s life for a man’s life. The Apostle Paul subsequently explained the reason for Jesus’ death and how it would be effectual as an offset for Adam’s sin. Jesus’ death guaranteed that all will be awakened from the grave to appear before the Son of man for either a requiting for evil or a rewarding for good (2 Cor. 5:10). Paul’s clear understanding of the Ransom, with the mathematical singularity of its application, was quickly lost, however, until the Harvest period. The Pastor was blessed with a unique and clear understanding of the Ransom, which necessitates the opportunity of restitution for all. The Ransom could not be clearly understood until Jesus came, for he “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10).

In regard to the word “nations,” the Scriptures succinctly state that it is God’s intention to enlighten all mankind with the doctrine of the Ransom. All will know about Jesus’ role, which will be testified in due time.

Psa. 9:18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

Psa. 9:19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

Verses 18 and 19 give us insight into David’s faith. Just as we pray for the Kingdom to come because we see the need, so David uttered similar expressions of faith. However, verse 19 shows that he wanted God’s judgment to come right away. Sometimes when we are in the midst of a very evil, traumatic situation, our reaction is the same; that is, we try to hasten the coming of the Kingdom when evil deeds will be put down by Messiah’s rod-of-iron rule.

“For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.” Verse 18 suggests that with some, the “expectation of the poor” does perish for a time. Many react by following the philosophy “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” Because of the long waiting period and not seeing retribution happen, they give themselves

over to unrighteousness, and their hope perishes. But that hope will not perish forever, and certainly it is revived from time to time. God's method is to prove the mettle of the character of His people. If, when their hope of retribution seemingly perishes, they give themselves over to sin, they are not being faithful to their covenant of consecration. God's method is to delay retribution in order to prove the worthiness or the unworthiness of both natural and spiritual Israel. David maintained his faith.

Verse 19 again uses the word "heathen" (verses 5, 15, and 19). "Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight." David repeated his desire for the salvation of the poor, the suffering, the needy, and the hungry—those who were righteously inclined and underprivileged.

Comment: Exodus 3:7,8 reads, "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians."

Reply: Yes, that was a manifestation of God's interest, care, and observation, but to the Israelites, the deliverance seemed to be a long time in coming. Joseph knew the promise that God would ultimately bring the Israelites out of Egypt. He died at about the halfway point in the time period set for the Israelites to be in that foreign country. Proof of Joseph's belief in the promises is that he wanted his bones to be transferred to Israel for burial. Some aspects of his life prefigured the work and ministry of Messiah.

Comment: In the meantime, God blessed the Israelites with good pasturage in the land of Goshen.

Reply: Yes, even in the present life, there is cognition by God on behalf of His people so that their experiences are not all suffering. He gives the sun and the shade, the summer and the winter, and the south and north winds (Song 4:16).

Psa. 9:20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

"Selah," meaning "Just think of that!" is mentioned twice in the Ninth Psalm (verses 16 and 20). It is a form of emphasis and empathy with the spirit of whatever is being narrated—good news, the punishment of the wicked, etc.

"Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men." Like David, we look forward to the time when the haughtiness of mankind will be stilled. God will awaken the people to the realization that their only hope for everlasting life is resident in Jesus. The principle that now applies to spiritual Israelites will be much the same for the world in the Kingdom. They, too, will have to identify themselves with Jesus. Christians submit their lives voluntarily; bowing the knee in the Kingdom will be mandatory. Through experiences and providences, we became aware of our need for forgiveness and saving. The desire arose in our hearts, and the Lord hearkened. In whatever age, people will exercise their free moral agency, but in the Kingdom, the world will be required to submit.

PSALM 10

Psa. 10:1 Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

Evidently, Ezra felt that Psalms 9 and 10 should be together, in proximity to each other, because of the theme in each.

Some of the Psalms were written before David was the king of Israel, some while he was king, and others in late life when he was infirm and feeble. The content of the Psalms thus far seems to suggest that David was enumerating experiences under the distress of seeing the prevalent behavior of the wicked, which was perhaps more obvious to him when he was fleeing from Saul. David may have been experiencing that situation now in the Tenth Psalm. He was in flight, fearing his life would be taken.

When David was king, his son Absalom caused a problem near the end of the 40-year reign. David also had problems with Uriah and others. In addition, he had to fight enemies throughout his reign, for warfare of one kind or another was almost constant, both within Israel and beyond Jordan, both north and south. Therefore, to carry out the administration of justice was not as convenient in David's reign as it was later during the reign of Solomon. In experiences throughout David's life, he noticed the oppression of the poor, the orphans, and the widows and how those in positions of power took advantage of them. We think the oppression was distressing to David, for certainly he had empathy for the downtrodden. However, he could not help the oppressed in a forceful way because outward providences prevented him from reigning in the fashion he would have liked. The Psalms give insight into David's character and the fact that he did a lot of thinking. As earlier Psalms showed, he talked a lot about the wicked and the plight of the poor and the needy.

The questions of verse 1 show that David was very much like Job in that he wondered why God hides Himself in times of trouble. The hiding pertained to David personally as well as to the Israelites, who were in distress and need. As revealed in the Psalms, David knew that God was permitting evil, and he could see that part of the holding back was to prove the righteous and the unrighteous in their deeds. The problem was that he did not realize the time element. He yearned for injustices to be stopped quickly, but nothing happened, so he asked, "Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?" Trouble happened over and over. David knew why trouble was happening, and yet he did not know why. Of course he did not know the plan of God for the human race because of the phase of Israel's history in which he lived. The light of truth increases as time goes on. From Job's day, there was an advance in the understanding of right and wrong. When Moses appeared on the scene and the Law was given, more information was made available. As the years elapsed through the Period of the Judges up to the time of the kings, more and more details of light were revealed. Finally, Jesus came, bringing life and immortality to light, among other things, and the call of a new gospel.

By his questions in verse 1, David implied that God saw the trouble but purposely stood afar off and did not intervene. In subsequent verses, David continued to pursue this theme, which troubled him for the moment. However, as the Psalms progressed, David developed and matured in understanding. The Ninth Psalm showed he had some insight into the Kingdom and knew Messiah would deal with the wicked. Of course there are two comings—the First Advent and the Second Advent—but David knew from a prophecy in the Law that when Messiah came, there would be a radical change of some kind. In studying the Psalms, we see David's progress in understanding. In a sense, then, the Psalms are somewhat sequential, for they show this development. They were written in five books, and we are still in the first book.

Comment: The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. 45:15). This text harmonizes with verse 1.

Reply: Yes, the co-relationship is apparent.

David was a wonderful character to start with, as shown by the slaying of Goliath, for example. The entire nation of Israel lacked the faith that David had as a young man. It is easy to see why

he was a man after God's own heart. He just happened to live before the call of the Gospel Age to the divine nature.

Psa. 10:2 The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

David was looking for retribution, and that seems to be the type of character God is seeking. The main problem in the Truth movement today is the "love bug"—the thought that when the wicked come forth in the Kingdom Age, they will be forgiven carte blanche and that everyone (or almost everyone) will be saved. However, the Scriptures indicate that stripes will be administered. Some are so enamored with the concept of God's mercy in the Kingdom that they forget the wicked sometimes live a long life, leaving a trail of violence and murder behind them, and die rather peacefully. Will they come forth with a clean slate in the Kingdom? No! Therefore, David had the right thought that those who love righteousness should also hate iniquity (Psa. 45:7). Incidentally, he prayed for perfect hatred, and we should do likewise (Psa. 139:22). We use the terminology "righteous indignation," and certainly God is looking for that component of the Christian character—a love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity.

A study of the Psalms helps us to see why God loved David. Of course David could not perform perfectly, but he dwelled on these principles. We have the same problem in the present life, but God takes the real will for the deed. Fortunately, we are covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness. The problem is to keep the robe unspotted externally.

Comment: In the Psalms already considered, we have seen this theme about the wicked falling by their own counsels.

Psa. 10:3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

The wicked bless the wicked, their fellow compatriots. Those of a kindred spirit join hands in covetousness along the lines of the flesh, money, power, etc. They revel in their desires.

The intent of David's heart was right, but the flesh at times was weak. The standard of his day was not as high as it is in the Gospel Age.

Psa. 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

God is not in the thoughts of the wicked. They may believe in a God, but because they do not see Him punishing evil and stopping it right away, they do not believe in a God of justice who is observing them. Those who habitually do wrong things become incorrigible. David saw that the wicked would come forth in the Kingdom but that they would get retribution (Psa. 9:3). Based on what David observed, the character of the incorrigible is being formed and hardened to such an extent in the present life that when they are awakened in the Kingdom Age, they will not pass the exam and get life. David was very observant of human behavior. Because of circumstances, he was unable to do more, but he knew that God is able. Therefore, he prayed for that time to soon come, just as we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Comment: Verse 4 is a reminder of when Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.... But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.... How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" (John 5:40,42,44).

Reply: In many instances, David was a picture of Christ and his experiences. Another pertinent strong statement was, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 23:33). The implication is that some in Jesus’ day were incorrigible. The big difference is that of the incorrigible at that time, certain individuals will not get an awakening from the tomb because Jesus was present and they saw his works, yet they sinned willfully in paying bribes to the tomb guards to keep quiet about his body. Thus not only Judas but also others who lived and died before Pentecost could merit Second Death. In two *Reprint* articles, the Pastor so stated.

A great portion of Jesus’ statements and parables were strong language. He was not always soft and courteous, but of course he could read the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. Since we cannot read the heart, we can only see the deeds of the unrighteous.

Psa. 10:5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

Psa. 10:6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.

Psa. 10:7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

David was speaking truth. There did not seem to be much hope for individuals who committed such acts. However, since those of David’s day did not know about Christ, they have to come forth from the tomb and learn of the true Messiah, and then they can be judged accordingly.

There is such a thing as searing the conscience, meaning that the conscience is no longer operative. The individual says in his heart, “I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.”

“His ways [the ways of the wicked] are always grievous; thy [God’s] judgments are far above out of his sight.” David saw that God’s judgments were out of the sight of the wicked in the sense that He was not inflicting punishment right way, but the wicked think God is indifferent to human behavior. David wanted to know more about why God permits persistent wicked behavior. He knew, but he did not know. In our Christian walk too, we observe experiences we cannot understand fully, but we know that God is aware of what is happening, that He has permitted the situation, and that He will take care of it in His own due time. We thank God for the cumulative knowledge available in the Harvest period that helps us greatly in our walk.

Comment: God watches us to see whether we are willing to compromise principle. Will we stand firm where evil is involved no matter who is at fault? Friendship or kinship should not affect our stand for principle, for example.

Reply: In several instances in David’s life and behavior, he had individuals summarily and abruptly put to death for good reasons. However, his supreme test came with his own son Absalom. While the test was hard for him, especially back there without the light that is available to us, he overcame and was amenable to God’s providences in the death of Absalom. The Christian who is nearing graduation for the high calling will likewise be sorely tested through a relative or a friendship. We should anticipate that such a test will confront us in some form. Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me [in the sense of getting the high calling]” (Matt. 10:37). Jesus is looking for disciples who will follow him in spite of all else.

The statement “under his tongue is mischief and vanity” reminds us of a snake with its venom.

What are some other Scriptures along this line?

Comment: “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom. 3:13,14).

Comment: “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). “An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45).

Reply: The Apostle James asked, “Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” (James 3:11). The implied answer is no.

Psa. 10:8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

Psa. 10:9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

Psa. 10:10 He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

Almost the entire Psalm dwells on the wicked and their premeditated deeds, covetousness, and violence. We are reminded of what Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, “Ye are of your father the devil” (John 8:44). Aren’t these characteristics very much like the devil? The descriptions fit his character. Satan humbled himself to reason with the woman through the serpent; that is, he came down to her level through the mouth of the serpent. In order to achieve their purposes, the fallen angels conveniently pose as a friend. Those who pretend to be a friend but have ulterior motives of mischief are our worst enemies. They step on others to advance themselves. As a result of Satan’s deflection, he got hardened in wrongdoing.

David continued to mourn at seeing the grievous evil and God’s delay in bringing retribution. Without the permission of evil, we could never perceive our Heavenly Father as a God of justice. When He finally expunges the incorrigible, it will be manifest to all that such individuals merited Second Death because of their deeds. God has to let them manifest their incorrigible characters so that we can understand He is a God of justice. If we did not see the fruits of their deeds, we might imagine that He overreacted in permanently destroying individuals.

As Bro. Oscar Magnuson used to say, “Had those who become saints seen the fire come down on Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have sung a hallelujah chorus,” for the destruction manifested evil being expunged from a segment of the human race. We need to have a perfect hatred. As Solomon said, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: ... A time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:1,8). “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time ... for every purpose and for every work” (Eccl. 3:17).

“He [the wicked] lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den ... to catch the poor.” What could be worse? “He croucheth, and humbleth himself, [so] that the poor may fall.” Figuratively speaking, the poor are meat for the lions. Robbers have their own secret code; namely, there is strength in union. The wicked admire one another in their respective perverse fields—sex, violence, etc.

Psa. 10:11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

If God did not hide His face, how would we know that a wicked person is wicked? The wickedness comes out; their deeds show that wickedness is a part of them. The temporary permission of evil is the wisest method that God could have used. Although the permission of evil seems like an eternity from our perspective, it is really a drop in the bucket; the Scriptures liken it to a dream.

Psa. 10:12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.

David uttered this simple, earnest plea for God to hearken to his prayer on behalf of the humble.

Psa. 10:13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

“Wherefore doth the wicked contemn [scorn, disdain] God?” Here is an insight into the real inner thinking of the wicked: “Thou [God] wilt not require it.” The Lord’s people have to be constantly reminded, lest they forget, that God said in advance, “I am going to prove you” (Deut. 8:2). For example, in the age before the Flood, God allowed the holy angels to come down here and try to lift mankind out of the mire of sin. Instead, not only did they fail, but many of them stayed down here longer than was required and took unto themselves wives. Therefore, God’s proving method seems to be that He purposely delays intervention on behalf of injustice to see what man will do. Will we obey His commands? The passage of many, many years without intervention leads those with an improper heart condition to reason that God is not concerned or that He is powerless. The seemingly abnormal length of time without retribution and judgment is a test. Evidently, Satan thought the delay was a sign of God’s weakness. Over time, if we do not study the principles in God’s Word, we can drift into all kinds of harmful imaginations.

Psa. 10:14 Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

Psa. 10:15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

David had the faith to realize that God knows about the injustices, oppression of the poor, etc., that are going on. Then he began to reason with God, pleading on behalf of the poor and presenting their cause. “The poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.” Faith was speaking here. On the one hand, David asked why the fatherless were not being helped or given relief, and on the other hand, he said God knows what is happening. David not only did not demean God in any sense of the word but made the wondrous statement that He is “the helper of the fatherless.” What was the basis for that statement? David knew that God had intervened at the time of the Flood, sparing just eight souls. He also knew that God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and he was aware of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Although all of these experiences happened suddenly when the due time came, there was a delay. At least a century passed with the mixing of human and angelic seed before the Flood intervened. Evil conditions prevailed in Sodom and Gomorrah for less than a hundred years before the judgment took place. Lot sat in the gate as a judge for a period of time, and his righteous soul was vexed with the increasing lawlessness (2 Pet. 2:7,8). The children of Israel were in Egypt for 215 years before the Exodus occurred. David, who lived in the Period of the Kings, gave considerable thought to God’s method or principle of delayed judgment, and now, again, the wicked seemed to prevail. As far as we know, the Tenth Psalm was written during the reign of Saul, before David was king and while he was fleeing from the king as a refugee. Although this time period of evil was shorter than the other periods, David

was hoping for swift retribution. Being very concerned about what he was witnessing in the society of Israel at that time, he hungered for a judgment. It is not improper to ask God for such action, for otherwise, we would not pray for God's Kingdom of righteousness to come. We can see that David was a thinker.

Incidentally, when Lot and Abraham entered the Promised Land, Lot chose the fertile, well-watered area of Sodom and Gomorrah. Of course the Dead Sea did not exist at that time, and the river Jordan coursed down from Lebanon into Israel and emptied into the Gulf of Eilat, one finger of the Red Sea. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by a giant earthquake was so great that it blocked the Jordan River a little south of those cities, damming up the fresh water. As a result, that part of the river became the Dead Sea. Thus the evil was limited to the time period between Lot's first seeing Sodom and Gomorrah and the destruction.

Psa. 10:16 The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.

The word "is" was supplied by the translators. A more accurate rendering would be, "The LORD be King for ever and ever." Verse 16 was a prophetic utterance by David. The Holy Spirit, which mechanically operated through the prophets of old, gave this assurance to David. As Christians, we may occasionally have peculiar times when a matter is on our heart and mind, and then, perhaps in response to a question, we will say something without really knowing it. When an individual repeats back our words, we ask in a good sense, "Did I say that?" Similarly, the Holy Spirit infused David's mind to give him an assurance in a mechanical fashion. In faith, David saw that God would answer his prayer.

To us, verse 16 is prophetic, showing that during God's Kingdom and Christ's reign, the "heathen" will perish out of the land. Faith sees the accomplishment. Stated another way, God sees the end from the beginning, and by faith and confidence in God's promises, we can enter into that condition, to a certain extent, through the Holy Spirit.

Psa. 10:17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

Psa. 10:18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

"LORD, thou hast heard [past tense] the desire [David's prayer] of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: To judge the fatherless and the oppressed." Somehow in verse 16, David was given an assurance, an answer to his prayer, but not with a time definition.

"That the man of the earth may no more oppress." The aggression of fallen man will no longer be tolerated in the Kingdom.

Q: Does the expression "thou wilt prepare their heart" refer to the hearts of the humble?

A: Yes. David wished to publish, or make known, his Psalms for manifold reasons. One reason was that they were a form of repentance and confession for some of his misdeeds that were publicly known. In addition, when the Psalms were put to music with instruments of David's choosing, he thought the mood for the words of the Psalm would be established. He had different reasons for expressing publicly that which comforted him, and he desired to comfort others. The preaching of the gospel is similar. David was making known his feelings and how God was dealing with him in order to help and comfort those who found themselves in somewhat similar straits. The Psalms were David's method of witnessing and praising God.

The desire of the humble, who were being oppressed, was for deliverance and remedial action. They were asking for help. David assured the humble that if they were patient and endured the experience a little longer, their petition would be answered in spite of the sorrow and the injustices they were going through. In many of the Psalms, David showed that the wicked do not have much chance to get life, for they will not turn from their evil ways. Nevertheless, everyone is guaranteed to know about Christ and to have the opportunity for life and salvation. How much guilt an individual acquires and how he responds are another matter. The great majority will come forth in the Kingdom Age, but some characters are so hardened that the individuals will be biding their time for the Kingdom Age to be over so that they can return to their previous practices (Amos 8:5,6). David, Job, and even Moses saw this situation.

PSALM 11

Psa. 11:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 11:1 In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

In the Eleventh Psalm, David stated his own personal conviction in God. "In the LORD put I my trust." Then he asked a question: "How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" What does this question suggest? (1) Trouble was coming. (2) David was revealing what some had previously counseled him. Those who realized David was in danger counseled him to flee to the "mountain," that is, to the caves of the mountain. We believe David wrote this Psalm prior to his flight from Saul, who wanted to murder him, especially during fits of anger. Jealousy entered Saul's heart because of David's popularity with the public in killing tens of thousands (1 Sam. 18:7).

Psa. 11:2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

Psa. 11:3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

David's counselors, presumably his friends, continued to reason with him in verses 2 and 3, for they saw that Saul was purposing his death. Being concerned for David's safety, they felt that the majority of the nation were going along with Saul's purpose to slay David, especially those in power. They believed that David's death was just a matter of time unless he fled.

The "upright in heart" can be considered both prophetically as a collective noun and as David personally back there. David was advised to flee from Saul to the mountain for refuge.

Comment: A footnote, as well as Young's *Analytical Concordance*, says that "privily" means "in darkness." A book discussing the history of war with bows and arrows stated that when men engaged in war at night, it was like a rule of war to set the tips of the arrows on fire so that the opponent could see the incoming arrows. To shoot unlit arrows at night was considered sneaky and improper conduct, for then the enemy could not defend against them.

Reply: That comment certainly conveys the lesson of verse 2.

In verse 1, David stated his confidence in God. However, he listened to the counsel of others, who urged him to use common sense and flee quickly as a bird to a place of refuge. They were saying that a force was being assembled privately to make sure he was eliminated. In verse 3, they assured David of their empathy: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous

do?” In other words, if the commonality of the government under Saul’s leadership supported him, what could David’s friends do? They liked David and wanted his life to be spared.

Psalm 11 contains dramatic action. Jonathan said that Saul had devised a specific plot to invite David to a conference, but the real intent was to murder him. As a result, David fled from Saul.

Comment: Please explain verse 3 again.

Reply: The wicked were in control of the government, advantaging themselves over the people. Verse 3 is saying, “If the foundations [of righteous government] be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” David’s friends were powerless to make sure he would be protected. However, later, when David was fleeing from Saul, some unusual mighty men left society to support him. For example, not only did David slay Goliath, but one of David’s friends slew a brother of Goliath, also a giant. Eventually, David ascended the throne but under *God’s* providence, not at his own behest, for David did not want to kill the king, God’s anointed.

Psa. 11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

As an aside, the content of the Old Testament is about four times as much as that of the New Testament, but the Pastor’s comments and usually our own thinking, generally speaking, are the other way around. Thus the New Testament is only about one fifth the content of the whole Bible, yet we spend about four times as much effort and time on character lessons in the New Testament as we do on studying the Old Testament. In a verse-by-verse study of the Psalms, it is relatively difficult to zero in on the particular thought that the Psalmist had in mind with each verse until we get to approximately Psalm 16. From then onward, the ability to zero in seems to increase.

“The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’S throne is in heaven.” The implication seems to be that although there is not necessarily a visible representation of Jehovah’s presence down here on earth, certainly He has a better vantage point to behold what is happening. From above, He has a better view of humanity. By faith, David realized that God is aware of what takes place and that He will eventually respond. David knew that God sometimes delays cognition of the oppression of the poor and the acts of the wicked.

From God’s throne in heaven, “his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.” From up there, He looks down on the children of men. Now the question arises, What is the distinction between God’s eyes “beholding” and His eyelids “trying”? His eyes “behold” from the standpoint of being open; that is, He is aware and cognizant of what is happening. The squinting of His eyes indicates a more careful scrutiny of what attracts His attention. Thus not only does He behold in a general way what is going on down here, but particular instances of extreme cruelty or brutality, as well as any outstanding righteousness, attract a closer scrutiny and examination. In other words, God especially notices both the wicked, who are committing violence, and the righteous, who are being oppressed. The latter are especially precious in the sight of the Lord. God’s eyelids “try” in the sense of making a more careful observation in contradistinction to the fact that with His eyes open, nothing can happen without His knowing. Not even a sparrow can fall—that is, if it has any significance—without His being thoroughly aware of the incident (Matt. 10:29).

Verse 4 has another nuance of interpretation. Not only does God have a greater vantage point, but being *holy*, He is particularly distressed when He sees some down here being persecuted as they try to do good and obey His will. A *holy* Lord in a *holy* place is observing mankind, but He is purposely silent because He is trying and proving men; that is, He is proving that the

righteous are righteously inclined and that the wicked are really wicked. The wicked are not just overcome for the moment, as, for instance, when one loses his temper for an instant, but they habitually practice evil deeds.

Psa. 11:5 The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Jehovah “trieth the righteous.” This suggests that the ulterior motive of the trial of the righteous is to better them. The very fact God does not interrupt too quickly manifests the efforts of the righteous class to abide in faithfulness to their Creator and to trust Him fully. This exercise benefits them, for faith is strengthened by its reaction to doubt. If there were no opportunity to doubt, there would be no real opportunity to exercise faith. The very absence of God’s intervention on behalf of the righteous gives the individual whom He is observing the opportunity to exercise faith. Since God reads the heart, He could immediately punish the wicked who are opposing the righteous, but the delay is beneficial in two ways. (1) It benefits the individual in the exercise of faith, and (2) it enables anyone who is observing from the sidelines to see why God favors certain individuals above others. Outward acts and efforts publicize the inner thoughts of the righteous individual. When God later honors some individuals with immortality, the office of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, it will be known why they were selected, for their deeds in the present life have all been recorded. Similarly, when we read the Old Testament, we can see the righteousness of Moses, Jeremiah, David, Isaiah, and others by the way they reacted to the circumstances of life that confronted them in their efforts to serve God. Therefore, although in the short term, the delay in God’s intervening does not seem beneficial, it will prove otherwise in the final analysis. Even a fool will then see why God temporarily permitted evil.

God “trieth the righteous [for their own good]: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.” If the wicked did not manifest wicked deeds outwardly and God just cut them off summarily, people would think God is unjust. We are trying to analyze the methodology the Heavenly Father uses in His dealings with both natural and spiritual Israel, good and bad.

Comment: Deuteronomy 13:3 states, “The LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Comment: As Christians, we must spend the necessary time in the Old Testament to find out everything that God hates.

Reply: Yes. To state the thought another way, the Law given to Moses, or the Law to be given to mankind in the future, is just and righteous. In fact, it is inherently better than the Law of Grace, which allows God to deal with fallen man under the robe of Christ’s righteousness in the Gospel Age. In the Kingdom, God will use a Mediator so that He can turn aside for the moment, as it were, and let the Mediator bring mankind up to the perfect standard. The Law of God will abide for eternity, but not the Law of the Grace Covenant, for no sin or wrong actions will be tolerated after the Kingdom Age. Should a single individual commit a misdeed, he will be cut off right away. In other words, God has permitted evil now so that mankind in the future will have no excuse should anyone sin after the Millennial Age. Sin will not be permitted in the ages of ages because mankind will have had the best opportunity to learn and to choose between good and evil. This principle pertains to mankind in the future and to us in this age; that is, because we are given insight now, we are without excuse. The grace that is shown during the Gospel Age and God’s methodology in the Kingdom Age will not be pursued after the end of the Millennium. We learn to distinguish between good and evil by studying God’s perfect Law in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we learn in a general sense, but in the Old Testament, we learn in a particularized sense. Sometimes an example is needed to wake us

up. Examples were given in the Law in the Old Testament so that when we have experiences, we will become more and more able to discern between good and evil. In fact, the definition of a mature person is one who can discern both good and evil. “But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age [mature], even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). A babe cannot make this distinction except in extreme cases of violence or wrongdoing. Nuances that occur later in life are difficult to understand, so the Lord usually gives us experiences by trial and error, as well as by His Word and the discernment of the Holy Spirit. Hopefully, we become more and more qualified to be blessed with the “inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12).

In short, then, both the Old and the New Testaments—both witnesses—are needed by the man of God (Rev. 11:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17). Even Jesus stated this principle in saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). More expressions from the mouth of God are contained in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. Many people use their own wisdom to zero in on the New Testament, whereas the entire Bible is needed.

Psa. 11:6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

God will rain snares, fire, brimstone, and a horrible tempest upon the wicked. Prophetically speaking and from a collective standpoint, verse 6 shows the necessity for a judgment day or time of trouble. *Retribution will come.* The Gog and Magog judgment will only temporarily affect the wicked who are on the scene at that time. When the wicked of the past come out of the tomb, they will be able to look backward in history and learn lessons, but in addition, they will need the Mediator, The Christ.

The “love bug” seems to have traveled over the country and affected certain individuals so that they speak on nothing but love. By their comments and expressions, they seem to think that if we talk along the line of judgment upon the wicked, we are not in the proper heart condition, something is lacking, and we do not have love.

Comment: In a recent study, a brother was disturbed to hear about the great sorrow that came upon Russia when Muslims seized a school and many children were killed. Another individual in the class then remarked that we must remember to pray for those who are doing the harm, for we have to deal with them later. Inferentially, the point was that we should have a loving attitude and deal with the wrongdoers with special kindness. However, some people are so steeped in evil that we cannot reason with them with kindness, for they would regard such an attitude as weakness.

Reply: Those individuals need to have stripes. “Spare the rod, and spoil the child” is one of the principles of proper instruction.

The “cup” of the wicked is that they must experience what they have done to others. And what have they done? They have laid a snare for others, and they have persecuted God’s people and burned them at the stake. Just as sulfur is added to brimstone to intensify the fire and make it burn more fiercely, so the wicked will experience what they have meted out to others. We should appreciate the principle of retribution, for that is the proper method to, hopefully, bring a person to a cognition of the need to repent and ask forgiveness of those he has harmed. An example is Job’s supposed comforters. God would not listen to them until, first, they asked for Job’s forgiveness. We have to *learn principles* in the present life in order to understand what God is looking for. Then the difficult part is *doing God’s will*.

Comment: It is amazing to think that God destroyed all of the people in the world with the Flood except for eight individuals, He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of the iniquity of the inhabitants, He destroyed 185,000 in Sennacherib's army, and He destroyed all of the Egyptian firstborn in the tenth plague. Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity. The proper love is to have a corresponding, or equal, hatred for unrighteousness.

Comment: Deuteronomy 7:9,10 reads, "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."

Comment: In some instances of violence and evil, we do not know if an individual was under Satanic control and possessed. Therefore, not knowing how responsible he was for his actions, we must be careful in making judgments. Sometimes we need to feel sorry for a person who has done evil, for he could be under demonic control.

Reply: Many try to say we should not think too much about wickedness and evil, but how can we have a hatred of iniquity unless we think upon evil acts? If we just brush them from our mind, we cannot cultivate a hatred of evil deeds. The point is that we are not to repay in the present life, for (1) vengeance belongs to God and (2) we do not know the heart (Rom. 12:19). However, if a person is crystallized in evil behavior, then we should be the first ones to "stone" him. Under the Law of Moses, if a child sufficiently injured another so that the damage was worthy of death, the parent had to throw the first stone. One who heard about a person who was leading the people of God astray (and properly told those in authority) was required to participate in the punishment in order to manifest his harmony with God's judgment. If, in God's sight, someone is judged unworthy of life, we should concur—even if the guilty one is our husband, wife, mother, father, child, etc. As Bro. Magnuson said with regard to witnessing on film judgments like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, our heart attitude should be, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty! True and righteous are His judgments." Love must be balanced with hatred in the present life if we are to be of the judging class in the next life, for we would have to be thoroughly in harmony with doing whatever God's will happened to be without our emotions being affected.

Psa. 11:7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

"The righteous LORD loveth righteousness"; that is, God loves His own Law, which is an expression of His thinking. "His countenance doth behold the upright." Jehovah loves not only righteousness but those who are endeavoring to do His will.

Comment: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15). This text puts things in perspective with regard to Jehovah's trying the righteous.

Reply: That text is harmonized by making a distinction between the victim and the victimizer. It is one thing to view the one who is doing the bad deed, and it is another thing to view the faithful one who has been mistreated.

Comment: God cannot look upon sin, yet He looks upon those who are struggling against it. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13).

Reply: When the statement is made that God cannot countenance evil, the context of that statement has to be examined. God has such a pure mind that He cannot allow Himself to think

on and observe evil deeds, but He has watchmen. The “eyes of the LORD” roam the earth not only to help the righteous but also to observe the evil deeds of men (Prov. 15:3). God has instituted a methodology whereby it is not necessary for Him to personally witness evil with any duration. We can be sure He saw Jesus’ sufferings on the Cross and the perpetrators who caused the sufferings, but the serenity of the divine character has to be maintained. Because God cannot countenance, even for a moment, anything that would disturb that serenity or distort the judgment of His thinking, He has set adequate institutions to take care of matters and also to promptly stop whatever might interfere with the divine plan. He arranged these props in advance to take care of every nuance that might happen. Nothing will get out of hand.

PSALM 12

Psa. 12:0 To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

Psalms 11 and 12, both of David, are related. “Sheminith,” meaning an octave lower, was an ingenious instruction, for it was a cardinal point of the mood frame of the music that would accompany the recitation of Psalm 12, especially in the future when it is properly understood.

Why was the Twelfth Psalm to be sung an octave lower? “Shem” has to do with the number 8. In music, every eighth note is the beginning of a new octave. The translators felt that this Psalm should be sung an octave lower than normal because it was a prayer, whereas the Psalms are usually songs of praise, thanksgiving, gladness, and rejoicing. While Psalm 12 was to be played on an eight-stringed instrument such as a harp, it would be played an octave lower. David invented different types of harps. An eight-stringed harp could be made with a normal octave or with a lower or a higher octave. David used the particular instrument that was appropriate for the occasion. Having multiple talents, he also organized the order of the Levitical priesthood into 24 courses of 15 days each. In addition, he sang certain Psalms when he felt he could sing them better than anyone else because they expressed what he had personally gone through. Thus the Sheminith was the appropriate mood instrument for the occasion.

Psa. 12:1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

Verses 1-4 give credence to the counselors of David in Psalm 11, who warned him that his enemies were waiting for an opportunity to assassinate him. The “foundations” of Israel—that is, the leadership, the governing body—were truly wicked at heart (Psa. 11:3). Therefore, feeling powerless, the few who followed David and thought highly of him advised him to flee. David responded by manifesting his confidence in God.

The Twelfth Psalm is one of a series of penitential and solemn Psalms that David wrote when he was in these straits. Here he said, “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth.” Numerically speaking, because evil prevailed, it was almost impossible to find anyone who was faithful.

Psa. 12:2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

Having a “double heart,” the wicked spoke with a double tongue; that is, they flattered on the one hand and plotted mischief on the other hand. The wicked were content and happy with the situation, but from David’s standpoint, none could be trusted. Being aggressive, the wicked advantaged themselves at the expense of the poor and the humble. The clause “they speak vanity every one with his neighbour” reminds us of Doeg, who informed Saul of David’s whereabouts (1 Sam. 21:7; 22:7-16).

Psa. 12:3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

“The tongue that speaketh proud things” refers to people who are boastful. They are not ashamed to express what they are thinking in their heart. David had confidence that God would eventually “cut off all flattering lips.” David knew that somewhere, somehow, sometime, God would put an end to this situation. Of course his own sentiments were the sooner, the better.

Psa. 12:4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

At the time David was speaking of this experience, the Kingdom of Israel was rather lawless. People did what was right in their own eyes, and the evil was great. The evil on the part of the people reflected the actions of the leadership. The leaders adversely affected the public, and the public supported them. Their boastful attitude was, “With our tongue will we prevail.” Based on a general principle, they were quite confident they would not be punished. The general principle is that if lawlessness is taking place and God does not stop it, then as time goes on, the lawlessness will increase, strengthening the hand of the wicked. Thinking that God was not interested, that He was not able to stop the evil, or that He had other things on His mind, neither the leadership nor the people feared any special judgment.

Verse 4 can be considered a general principle of behavior. There is a saying that where government ends, anarchy begins. When the smiting of the image takes place, anarchy will follow, with people doing whatever they please. This principle has been in operation in the past, but it will be very forcibly demonstrated in the great Time of Trouble yet to come.

Psa. 12:5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

The situation was such that the poor were oppressed, and the needy were mourning. Jehovah saith, “Now will I arise; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.” This last half of verse 5 reminds us of what the Apostle James said about retribution coming at the end of the Gospel Age. “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.... Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.... Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (James 5:1,3,4,6). James 5:7 gives the reason for the delay in this judgment for the oppression of the poor; namely, God is selecting a Church class. “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the [produce of the] early and latter rain.” The “early and latter rain” are, respectively, the usual application of (1) the fullness of the gospel when the Apostle Paul was on the scene with many coming into the truth and (2) the plentiful truth that is available in the Harvest period at the end of the Gospel Age, particularly when the Pastor was alive. However, this terminology can also apply in another way, in a microcosm, where both the early and the latter rains are related to the Harvest at the end of the Gospel Age. The early rain brought forth quite considerable results, whereas the latter rain brings forth relatively meager but very important results because the Lord is reaping—he is doing a *gleaning* work. God, the “husbandman,” waits patiently until He accomplishes the selection and the development of the full Bride class. He has long patience, but He will manifest His judgment in the not-too-distant future.

In this Twelfth Psalm, David expressed confidence. In the previous Psalm, he said, “The LORD

trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest” (Psa. 11:5,6). For example, *sudden* judgment came when the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah was full. The judgment was not spread over a long period of time, as some are prone to say today in stating that the Time of Trouble started in 1914 and continues. The Scriptures indicate that the real Time of Trouble upon the world will occur rather suddenly. What we see today are injustices, murmurings, and disquietings. We see the trembling but not the eruption, which will be the earthquake (1 Kings 19:11,12). The earthquake will be followed by fire and brimstone. As with Sodom and Gomorrah, sulfur exploded into the sky and rained down upon the wicked. David was yearning for this turn of events to take place where God would manifest His cognizance and judgment on the wicked.

There is always a reason for a delay in judgment. For instance, Israel could not enter the Promised Land until the iniquity of the Amorites was full. God’s purposed delay in judgment has two effects; it tries (1) the wicked and (2) the righteous. On the one hand, with the wicked ignoring the principles of righteousness and their iniquity being manifested over a period of time, God’s justice will be seen in eventually dealing with them in what would otherwise appear to be a most harsh, severe, and unkind fashion. People have to get the effects of unrighteousness and evil up to the gills, as it were. On the other hand, the delay in judgment is trying the patience and the faith of the righteous. If they remain faithful to their covenant of consecration, their characters will be crystallized for good. Thus the temporary permission of evil serves a double purpose, and that is true whether we speak of a long-term, broad-stroke basis or of a short-term generational experience.

What did Abraham do when the two “men” (angels) revealed that they would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? He asked God to spare the city of Sodom if 50 righteous individuals were there (Gen. 18:23-25). Then Abraham kept decreasing the number of righteous, going down to ten, but there were not even ten such individuals in the entire city. However, God did spare Lot and his two daughters, who were not contaminated with evil to the extent of the others. Lot pictures the Great Company class. His wife, who was initially led out of Sodom, died in the exiting because of a weakness. Because she did not obey after being enlightened as to what was occurring, she reaped the reward of death (Second Death in the antitype). Her sin was looking back longingly at the city that was being destroyed for its evil.

“I will set him [the poor and the needy] in safety from him [the wicked] that puffeth at him [the poor and the needy].”

Comment: The Young’s Literal Translation reads, “I set in safety him who doth breathe for it.”

Reply: The literal Hebrew has, “I will put him in salvation; he will puff at him.” This verse will have to be more carefully studied, especially since the King James has four supplied words, shown in italics: “I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.”

Psa. 12:6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Verse 6 is well known and often quoted. In the Psalms, David spoke frequently on this theme of purification and the proving of the Lord’s Word. For example, sometimes we have to go over and over a type, prayerfully reading it many times, before the meaning clarifies. By expending effort and diligently applying ourselves in trying to understand, we get rewarded with information.

Making a “furnace of earth” was the old method of raising the temperature to refine silver.

Incidentally, a higher degree of heat is obtained in a shorter period of time by digging a pit for the fire instead of building the fire on the surface of the ground out in the open air.

Silver can picture truth or the spirit nature, and gold represents the divine nature, gold being superior to silver. In regard to the Word of God, the same principle operates with divine truth versus truth. For example, the Bible contains truths on history and principles of character, and importance is relegated according to what is being refined or extracted. Malachi 3:3 states that Jesus sits as a refiner, purifying the sons of Levi as silver and gold. He is performing that function at the present time, spiritually speaking.

Comment: The dictionary defines a refiner as one who refines the precious metals and silver and gold by causing them to pass repeatedly through the furnace until the dross is taken away. The refiner knows when the purifying process is complete by seeing his image reflected in the precious metal. God is compared to a refiner of silver, for He casts His people into the furnace of affliction until they are refined and purified and thus clearly reflect His image in their souls.

Reply: There is a *Manna* comment along that line. Not only are the words of Jehovah refined seven times, but so is the individual who absorbs the truth of those words—he is refined seven times to bring forth a righteous character. Of course the Twelfth Psalm does not discuss the gold aspect, just the silver. Therefore, verse 6 is speaking about the righteous as a class without a special delineation of Little Flock and Great Company.

Psa. 12:7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

“Thou shalt keep them [the righteous], O LORD, thou shalt preserve them [the righteous] from this [wicked] generation for ever.” The Word of truth is the instrument that performs this function. Not only is truth purified as silver and gold—in this case, seven times—but those who study the Word are also purified as silver and gold. In other words, the silver and the gold can picture either doctrines or individuals, and the same principle is operative with both. Through a process of trials come crystallization and purification of character pictured by the silver (the Great Company) and the gold (the Little Flock), two different values.

Psa. 12:8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

When those in positions of rulership are corrupt—whether they are among the clergy or in civil government—that gives liberty and loose rein to the wicked. The vilest men can do what they want without fear of retribution.

Comment: Those in leadership positions usually have their friends ruling with them.

Reply: Yes, their friends support them. Satan, too, has cohorts who trust him, and he probably rewards them according to their degree of support for his ways and thinking. From an opposite perspective, Jesus spoke about the principle of rewarding when he said, “Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matt. 19:29). Both the unrighteous and the righteous share rewards among themselves. When one has company in pursuing a particular course, he is strengthened in either the wrong or the right. Thus it is important for the Lord’s Word to be residual in our hearts.

Comment: During the Holocaust of the Nazi regime, when Hitler was exalted, all kinds of evil and evil people prevailed, torturing and hurting others.

Reply: Yes, and their deeds were winked at. The wicked were free to do what they wanted as long as they supported the leadership. Along another line, it is always a little scary when ministers try to get congregations to repeat words after them. People can end up agreeing to something that should be opposed or contradicted.

Verse 8 shows the situation that existed in David's day and has existed in different periods of history up to the present. Of course verse 8 will have a particular application at the end of the age, before the Kingdom is established.

PSALM 13

Psa. 13:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psalms 10-14 are more or less in the same mood frame with the exception, to some extent, of Psalm 11, which is framed around the advice David was given to flee from the wrath of King Saul. These Psalms all start with trouble.

Psa. 13:1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

Psa. 13:2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

In verses 1 and 2, David was experiencing depression. The question "How long?" was used four times as an expression of doubt. David was asking God, "Is this condition forever? How long will you hide your face from me with the sorrow that is in my soul and heart daily? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?" Of course to build a sermon on these verses, an individual would have to extrapolate perhaps from his own experiences rather than from David's, because the expressions were peculiar to what he was going through at that time. Our personal thought is that all of these Psalms had to do with the persecution which came directly or indirectly as a result of Saul's attempt to assassinate David in order to remove him from the scene of public life back there. That circumstance would explain the continuous refrain in these Psalms, one after the other.

Psa. 13:3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Now David's petition was becoming more pragmatic in that he was making a more specific application. The supplied words "and" and "sleep of" should be omitted. "Consider, hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the death."

Q: Does the expression "lighten mine eyes" mean "Help me to see the light at the end of the tunnel"?

A: In a practical format, that is one way to express the thought.

David came directly to the point in verse 3. He was requesting enlightenment because he felt there was a danger that he might sleep the sleep of death. When we read the various Psalms, we see that they are of differing lengths—60 verses, 10 verses, 5 verses, or whatever—but scattered throughout the Psalms are fragments where the Holy Spirit spoke on a higher level than the personal feelings of David. The second half of verse 3 calls to memory an experience of Jesus. Not only was David a type of Jesus in different parts of his ministry in both a personal and a prophetic sense, but sometimes David's expressions were those of The Christ, Head and

body members. The last half of verse 3 reminds us of Jesus' experience in the midst of his sorrows in Gethsemane, the Garden of Sorrow, the Winepress Garden, just prior to his crucifixion. His words "My soul is exceeding[ly] sorrowful, even unto death" show an extreme anguish of spirit, but just as with David, solace was given (Matt. 26:38). Of course Jesus' sorrow was reflected in a far more dramatic form than the expression of David in Psalm 13. David's experience was somewhat along that line but certainly not to the degree and intensity of the Savior's suffering.

David was thinking along one level, but the Holy Spirit seized on that moment to speak at a higher level to the Christian of the Gospel Age. The Holy Spirit speaks in fragments, here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept (Isa. 28:13). And so, throughout the Psalms, there are perhaps 50 different references to Jesus, only a few of which we would understand. Psalm 22 is an obvious example of the prophetic speaking of the Holy Spirit.

The sleep in verse 3 is the sleep of death. Notice that it is preceded by the article "the"—"lest I sleep *the* death." David was saying that if this prolongation of depression remained with him, there was a danger that it might lead to suicide or to a depression where his anchor of faith would lose its hold and he would no longer look to God for help. Thus "*the* death" is perhaps a reference to Second Death. Jesus expressed this thought too in saying that his soul was "exceeding sorrowful." He was concerned that if he failed in his mission, not only would the ransom (or redemption) price not be paid for the forgiveness of sin for the Church and the world, but he himself would lose life. From that standpoint, there is a strong similarity in what David said here. For the sins David especially wanted to be guarded against, he used the term "presumptuous sins" (Psa. 19:13). "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." Presumptuous sin is a little different from despondency, for anger is intermingled with it. David was concerned with his eternal salvation and that he would be forgotten in God's Kingdom and thus be deprived of fellowship with God.

We had an experience with a brother who was near death. In a conversation, we realized the depth of his despondency and his struggles, which were like those of the Great Company in some instances. In another case, the person in death's throes was pleading for mercy for another chance. He expired right after that plea. Thus this fear of the unknown can be very real. For salvation, one who is consecrated has to desperately hold onto the hope that lingers, the anchor of faith, *whether or not he attains the Little Flock*.

Psa. 13:4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

First, David pleaded with God for cognition. Now he gave other reasons. Moses also reasoned with God, as have others of God's peculiar and precious saints in trying to cause the great Creator to hearken to their plea.

David had been privately anointed to be king, the act being known only by his brothers in the house of Jesse, but eventually those who were more or less in his circle also knew of the promise of future kingship. Now David was using logic to say to God, much as Moses did years earlier, "If I fail, others will think that you lacked the power." Moses had said to God, "If the children of Israel perish in the wilderness, your enemies will think that you were not able to save them." Moses was a great mediator at least in spirit. He even resorted to the statement "If necessary to maintain your integrity and honor, slay me rather than the people." God was testing Moses by saying, "I will destroy the Israelites and deal with you personally and make of you a great nation." God tries His people—whether it be Moses, David, or even Jesus, who was proven to the very core. The weight of the world was on Jesus' shoulders.

David concluded verse 4 by saying, “Those that trouble me [would] rejoice when [that is, if] I am moved [from a position of trust in God].”

Psa. 13:5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

Verse 5 is a startling reversal of the way this Psalm began. Martin Luther said, “Hope despairs, but despair hopes.” In other words, when one lives a life of faith and prayer and then trouble comes, faith and hope kick in. The Apostle Paul used this premise as a general principle when he said, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). The confidence a Christian has is born of the help from God’s Word, God Himself, the Holy Spirit, and faith in Jesus. If the Holy Spirit is purposely removed from a Christian for a moment so that he is troubled, it will kick in later if the individual has led a life of hearkening to God’s Word and trying to be obedient. A marathon race is a helpful illustration. A marathon is intentionally of such longevity that even strong individuals have an excruciating experience in the last mile. Being extremely exhausted, runners could give up hope, but for those who have practiced day after day after day, strength kicks in and gives them a second breath. That second breath, that strength of endurance, is what they previously stored up. Sometimes, surprisingly, they even run much faster than prior to their feeling of being ready to drop. Spiritually speaking, the same thing can happen.

Faith and hope are twin brothers. One precedes the other at times and vice versa, but the Apostle Paul, speaking in general terms, said Christians develop from faith to hope, where they get a confidence that they will be saved whatever that lot may be. That confidence kicks in and brings them to the summit, which is *love*: faith, hope, and then love. (That trio is an abbreviation of the fruits of the Spirit.)

Psa. 13:6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

In periods of depression, we should think back on how the Lord initially called us and how we responded. We should reflect on the wonderful things He has done in our lifetime. If we go through that review of faith, looking backward to God’s dealings with us in the past, and then think of the present and the mood we were just in, we will be able to surmount the difficulty with the hope of salvation. This Thirteenth Psalm began with *doubt* and ends with *assurance*. This seems to be a general principle that God uses in testing each of us at some time in our life.

PSALM 14

Psa. 14:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 14:1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Those who say in their heart, “There is no God,” are spoken of as being corrupt. They do abominable deeds, and “there is none that doeth good.” When David reflected in this mood frame, there were things he said and things he did not say. What did he not say? “The fool hath said in his heart [*but not with his mouth*], There is no God.” People can be a fool, not knowing God, but not because they boldly declare, like an atheist, that there is no God. Rather, their deeds, manner of life, and interest in doing what is evil so demands their attention, which they satisfy to a great extent, that to all practical effects, they are saying, “There is no God,” even though the words are not spoken outwardly. They are totally indifferent to the existence of their Creator, to their responsibility to Him, and to the possible culpability they are gathering

by their deeds. They are so engrossed in what they are doing that they are oblivious to the thought of responsibility to their Maker.

“They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.” David was saying, “Those who are committing iniquity far outnumber the righteous. The proportions are so overwhelming that to all common knowledge, experience, and observation, it is as though there are none who do good.” However, David was not speaking with specificity because in this same Psalm, he recognized that in addition to himself, there existed others who were righteous. “God is in the generation of the righteous” (verse 5). David recognized that there were some righteous individuals like himself, but they were so few in number that one who looked on the horizon could not see them because of the host who were doing their own thing. However, when Jehovah brings “back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad” (verse 7). Thus David was speaking in broad-brush terms, for a small righteous element did exist.

Psa. 14:2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

God looks down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there are any who understand and seek Him and His counsel. This was David’s inherent faith speaking. He was saying that there is a God, that He is not indifferent to what is going on, and that He has the capability—and is purposely using it—to observe mankind down here to see if any are doing good. Inferentially, there are some, but they are very, very few indeed.

Psa. 14:3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

David continued to speak in broad-brush terms when he said, “No, not one,” but the Holy Spirit tells us this statement is literally true. “There is none [literally] righteous, no, not [a single] one” (Rom. 3:10,12,23). At the time David was speaking, there was no literally perfect man. We would not get that thought if the Apostle Paul had not quoted verse 3. Paul’s quotation was at a higher level of thinking, for on the one hand, he was saying, “There is none righteous in his own righteousness.” On the other hand, Jesus said that Abraham was righteous, but his was a righteousness of *faith*, not of works. Prior to the Gospel Age, it was a righteousness of faith to *friendship*. Now, since Jesus’ death and resurrection, it is a righteousness of faith to *sonship*, which is quite different and at a higher level. We can only understand these distinctions when we have been in the truth for some years. It is much more difficult for babes to analyze and see these nuances of meaning. God’s Word does not contradict itself, and in searching for harmony, we can see a difference between an imputed righteousness and a real righteousness of works.

The Holy Spirit gave Psalm 13:3 a spiritual connotation and prophetic reflection in regard to Jesus’ trial in Gethsemane. Now, similarly, Psalm 14:3 is a lesson for the Church of the Gospel Age. None are righteous except those who consecrate and come under Jesus’ righteousness.

David’s mood here is characteristic of God’s people. Does not the Christian have ups and downs? Are they always on a high road, always rejoicing? No, for there are hard experiences, and God deals with His people in that manner.

Comment: Psalm 14 is almost the same as Psalm 53.

Psa. 14:4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

The “workers of iniquity ... eat up my [God’s] people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.” Notice, some called “my people” were righteous like David. However, hard facts teach us that the present road to life is narrow, and “few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:14). The term “my people” is broad. God’s people are those who make a covenant of sacrifice in either the Jewish Age or the Gospel Age, and another group of “my people” will consecrate in the Kingdom Age. David referred to them in Psalm 110:3, “Thy people shall be willing in the [future] day of thy power.” This futuristic methodology is sometimes used in Scripture. For instance, on the night of Jesus’ betrayal, leading to his crucifixion the next day, Jesus prayed aloud on the way to Gethsemane for those who were then consecrated (his disciples and apostles), but he also included those who would subsequently, throughout the Gospel Age, hear, recognize, and obey. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20,21). Jesus was predicting the future body members that would come on the scene after his crucifixion and resurrection—aside from his personal disciples at that time.

Psa. 14:5 There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.

“God is in the [thinking of the] generation of the righteous.” Those not in the generation of the righteous so hate the light that they are uncomfortable and fearful when anyone talks to them about the responsibility of giving up their will. They are not interested in being in the company of the consecrated lest they be converted. They actually fear that if they listen too much, they might have to leave the type of life they are leading at the present time. On the one hand, there is a fear on the part of the unconsecrated lest they be made to feel compelled to consecrate, and on the other hand, God is in the generation of the righteous, who have already made a commitment of consecration and are happy they have done so.

Unfortunately, a small percentage of individuals wish they had not consecrated, and they voice this feeling in different ways. Nevertheless, those who have made a consecration are responsible for fulfilling their vow, and if we give them the thought that perhaps God did not recognize their formal consecration, implying that, therefore, they are relieved of their responsibility, we incur culpability, for that advice is really of the Adversary.

Comment: A person’s trials may be severe, but there is danger if he reverts back to his condition prior to consecration, rationalizing that he never really made a consecration. If we support the individual in such thinking, we are contributing to his losing all life.

Psa. 14:6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.

How does the counsel of the unconsecrated shame the consecrated, who look to God as their refuge? Many feel there is safety in numbers. If the unconsecrated outnumber the consecrated, improper counsel predominates. Therefore, we must be very careful not to adopt or agree with common sayings that are out of harmony with Scripture. The wicked, especially those who not only do not want to consecrate but who prefer evil, look on the consecrated as being weak and inferior. In fact, the term “Bible idiots” or “Bible fanatics” has been used.

Q: Could we also say that the wicked speak shamefully to the righteous for their counsel?

A: Yes. For instance, some who were formerly consecrated will crop up in the midst of the consecrated in the near future and make strong statements with regard to the Lord’s presence.

Psa. 14:7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth

back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

With the Holy Spirit speaking, verse 7 gives us an inkling that David—like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses—believed in a Kingdom of Messiah with a future reign on earth, but the details of that Kingdom did not come to light until Jesus and the apostles brought the gospel.

Notice how Psalms 13 and 14 end up. Both Psalms start with trouble and end with joy and hope. Psalm 13 is more personal, expressing David's longings, sorrows, and grief of heart, whereas Psalms 12 and 14 speak in broad terms.

PSALM 15

Psa. 15:0 A Psalm of David.

Psa. 15:1 Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

In reading this Psalm and giving a cursory examination, we notice that it is divided into two parts. Verse 1 consists of one question, and the remaining four verses are the answer. The question has two component parts: (1) "Lord [Jehovah], who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" and (2) "who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" The first part explicitly mentions the "tabernacle," and the second part implies or infers the "temple." In other words, the first part of the question refers to the consecrated who are dwelling, or sojourning, down here in the flesh; that is, it pertains to their earthly pilgrimage. The second part of the question refers particularly to those who are successful in reaching the destination of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. A synonym for "tabernacle" is "tent," which is a *temporary* dwelling, a sojourning, that suggests a pilgrimage. The second half of the question pertains to a *permanent* residence. "Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"; that is, "Who shall reach that special state of endurance and permanent rest?" While to a certain extent we have a rest in our temporary situation down here, it is a rest of *faith*. If we obtain that for which we are hoping, the faith will change to the reality.

Therefore, the two parts of the question represent the wonderful hope of the Christian that whatever one might experience in the present life, if he is an overcomer, he will get life forevermore, but if he is more than an overcomer, he will become a pillar in the temple of his God (Rev. 3:12). Since the question contains a lot of information about the goal toward which we are pressing, we would like to know as much information as possible to help us attain that blessed estate.

Comment: In Psalm 43:3, David again referred to God's holy hill and tabernacle. "O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles."

Comment: At this time, there was no literal Temple structure.

Reply: Yes, that statement is true in both senses. There was no Temple down here, and the Temple in heaven had not been completed. As a class, Christians in the present life are pictured by the stones in the quarry that are being cut and shaped for future placement. A unique and remarkable feature in the construction of Solomon's Temple is that it was assembled in silence. The polishing and the preparation of each stone, as well as the numbering to show exactly where it would be in the building complex, were all done in advance in the preparatory work. And that is what is happening antitypically unbeknownst to mankind. Most of the world think, "Is there a God, and if so, what is He doing?" Not only are they thinking of self, but they are so preoccupied with their own concepts that they do not search for answers concerning the

existence of an intelligent Creator, from whom they might receive information.

The cutting of stones in the quarry for future placement in the heavenly Temple corresponds to the chiseling of the stone from the mountain, from earth's quarry, to smite the image (Dan. 2:44,45). Among a score of illustrations, this one tells us that the Church is not yet complete and that the stone cannot smash the image until it is entirely cut out. Part of the stone will not still be in the mountain—stones will not remain in the quarry—when the smiting of the image occurs, for all of the 144,000 are promised they will be participants. “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:26,27). “To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have *all his saints*. Praise ye the LORD” (Psa. 149:7-9). The image is still standing. How remarkable that many have the image smashed and being ground to powder when the component parts of the image *are still standing!* Iraq (Babylon), Iran (Persia), Greece, and Rome *still exist*, yet according to this other view, if we are fortunate, perhaps we will be able to participate in the final grinding. To the contrary, the Scriptures say that when the image is smitten, it will be broken in pieces *together*. “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, *broken to pieces together*” (Dan. 2:35).

Psa. 15:2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Verse 2 shows the three stages that are necessary for development—the three legs of the stool, as it were. In order to walk uprightly, we must know (mentally) how and where to walk. When we walk, our eyes watch to make sure that our footsteps are in the right path and that we are walking uprightly, for not only do we have to discern between right and wrong in our walk, but we need purpose. When we start as a babe, we “desire the sincere milk of the word” that we may *grow* thereby in order to discern between right and wrong (1 Pet. 2:2). To please God, we cannot go by our emotions in the judgment of right and wrong. We need to be instructed with divine wisdom to know what is right and what is wrong. As babes, we are prone to react the way we think we should. Sometimes we are right because some conscience is left when we first consecrate, but our conscience needs instruction and guidance in order to mature.

After attaining an inward discernment so that we can walk properly in the right path, we have to work righteousness; that is, we have to work out our own salvation (Phil. 2:12). Not only do we have to be careful that we are walking uprightly, but there are certain responsibilities to self, to family, to one's neighbor, and especially to God. Self is a big “I,” but it has to be instructed and to fulfill responsibilities. We have to work toward our fellow man, as well as toward *ourselves*, according to God's instruction and in obedience to Him.

Finally, we are to speak the truth that is in our heart. In other words, there is a responsibility to witness. The Bible tells about an inner and an outer working: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Keeping truth in the heart is very important, but it is not sufficient, for we must witness to others of what God has done on our behalf.

Thus verse 2 provides some instruction for those who would dwell in God's “holy hill.” The instruction continues in subsequent verses.

Psa. 15:3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

Comment: Verse 2 said that to dwell in God's holy hill, one must speak the truth in his heart. Verse 3 indicates that one whose tongue speaks slanders from his heart will not dwell in that holy hill.

Reply: A man is what he thinks in his heart. In other words, a person's fruitage is either good and wholesome or the opposite. Jesus said that it is impossible for a good tree to put forth both good and bad fruit or for a spring to have both sweet and bitter water at the same time. Thus Psalm 15 succinctly expresses the duties of a person who pleases God. There are people in the world who are trying to do good and to be a blessing to fellow man, but the essential ingredient they lack for being in the high and holy hill is the doing of *God's will*. To have kind and good feelings is not enough because the danger is that we will specialize in doing what we *think* the Lord wants us to do, whereas we have to try to reason as to what *the Lord* wants us to do. These little nuances of reflection in our mind and heart are determinants of success or not so much success.

"He that backbiteth not with his tongue." "Backbiting," which is done with the tongue, is like giving a backward kick to someone, and especially to one who is doing a work that is proper and good. Such an action should not be done to anyone unless we see that the Scriptures dictate the necessity for speaking the evil. To repeat: speaking evil must be backed up with Scripture so that we know our action is proper and not just expressing our *feelings* concerning others. After all, what we think are faults may not be the faults we think they are.

"Nor doeth evil to his neighbour." What has been considered thus far in verse 3 is paired with verse 2. Walking uprightly starts in the head with discernment and judgment as to what is right and wrong. Thinking or speaking evil without a scriptural basis is the opposite. Working evil is the opposite of working righteousness.

"Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." Examples would be to hold a grudge, to bear false witness, and to carry tales. The intent is to minimize the neighbor. Thus verse 3 tells what the Christian is not to do, and verse 2 tells what the Christian is to do. God's Word is as silver refined seven times. When we examine Scripture, sometimes the Holy Spirit helps us to look a little deeper into the beauty and depth of God's Word. At other times, we cannot penetrate the depth—but the beauty and depth are there, nevertheless.

Comment: Backbiting is an active slander that is told and retold to others.

Comment: We are to love our neighbor as ourself.

Reply: The Golden Rule is to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

One who backbites turns in the opposite direction, as though he is not responsible for what he is doing. In his own mind, the backbiter thinks he is telling a truth, but actually he is doing injury. Under the Law, a slander is a slander regardless of whether it is true. Of course today the courts are weak as far as administering real justice to those who are injured. Usually the criminal is handled more carefully and given more leniency than the victim, but God's court will be a completely different situation.

Comment: Isaiah 33:15-17 reads as follows: "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the

land that is very far off.”

Reply: That Isaiah text includes verses 3-5 of this Psalm.

Psa. 15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

“In whose eyes a [truly] vile person is contemned [despised, loathed].” In other words, we can judge a tree by its fruits. The character of the person is no longer secret. “But he honoureth them that fear [reverence] the LORD [Jehovah].”

“He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” This text is an important scriptural principle.

Comment: When an individual has made a vow, he must keep it, even if the vow was rash or unwise. An example is Jephthah (Judg. 11:30-39).

Reply: In other words, the swearing to one’s own hurt is interpreted in a positive sense.

Comment: This principle applies to a consecration vow, which is unto sacrifice. When we are going through a fiery trial, we must stay with our consecration and not change or renege on our vow.

Reply: Yes. The Lord does not take lightly the vows that are made to Him, although, of course, we cannot shorten or lengthen His hand. Some brethren who have consecrated, and even symbolized that consecration, have later reasoned that God did not accept their vow. From *their* standpoint, they say they did not realize the seriousness of the vow, and since they were not sufficiently serious, they feel God never originally accepted that vow. By a process of reasoning, they very nicely excuse themselves from the responsibilities of consecration. This issue comes up in the movement from time to time. In certain instances, the eye has been winked at these matters, and silent, or tacit, approval has been given, whereas there should have been a frowning.

Of course there can be exigencies with regard to a vow. Martin Luther took a vow to serve the Roman Catholic Church, but when he found out that the church was the Antichrist, he properly reneged on his vow. When repentance and restitution precede a vow, forgiveness is the result, and a premeditated vow is more binding than something done spontaneously, that is, on the spur of the moment. The deceitful human heart, the fallen nature, can reason that one did not give proper thought to a vow of consecration, but that reasoning may be self-deception. With regard to consecration vows, we cannot shorten or lengthen God’s hand as to what the penalty will be and how it will be administered, but from our perspective, we think there is some difference in allowance in the judgment being made between a premeditated vow and a sudden vow.

Psa. 15:5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Comment: Judas is an example of taking “reward against the innocent.”

Reply: Judas realized he had done wrong in betraying innocent blood, but the Scriptures indicate he was not forgiven. Instead of properly repenting, he committed suicide (Matt. 27:4). He should have confessed his wrong to Jesus and been willing to suffer the penalty.

Verses 2-5 contain a lot of information in condensed form that needs to be constantly kept in mind. However, while many things to do and not to do are presented in a nutshell, the whole answer is not given here. For example, consider the portion of verse 5 that reads, "He that putteth not out his money to usury." Was David saying that a Jew was never allowed, under any circumstance, to take interest? No. A Jew could take interest from a Gentile or for an enterprise. Thus the prohibition here was a judgment in regard to an innocent person. For the points listed in verses 2-5, there are other pertinent Scriptures. Therefore, the question has to be asked, "Is this Scripture applicable under other exigencies?" We are being trained to be kings, judges, and priests. Of course many of us are not that capable, for our brain structure is rather limited, but *desire* is important. If God sees in us an *earnest desire* to do His will, and if we *admit* our mistakes as David did so many times, He can change us and give us a new body that is very perceptive. For example, when Solomon uttered a wonderful prayer in connection with the dedication of the Temple, God subsequently gave him wisdom (1 Kings 3:6-12).

A scriptural principle is that the rich man who makes his calling and election sure will get a higher reward. Those who have more talents and use them faithfully will get more than those with fewer talents. However, just to get into the Little Flock, even if one is the bottom of the ladder, will be a great honor. God is looking at our heart's desire, intent, and purpose, and He will reward as He deems fit.

PSALM 16

Psa. 16:0 Michtam of David.

A prayer of meditation, this Sixteenth Psalm is called "a golden Psalm of David" in the King James margin. Some feel this is one of several Psalms of David that were engraved on golden plates and placed in the Temple of the Lord. Be that as it may, for we have no evidence to that effect, the content shows this to be a particular and a peculiar Psalm.

Comment: According to a Bible dictionary, this Psalm is thought to be an epigram, a poem, that was intended as an inscription to record memorable thoughts. It often indulges in refrains.

Reply: The word *michtam* can be broken up into two parts. Since *chtam* means "to engrave," a suggestion inherent in the word itself seems to justify the supposition of an inscription or an engraving.

Psalm 16 is used quite frequently in evangelical churches because it is felt that the entire Psalm is a prophecy concerning Jesus and some of his innermost feelings and thoughts in the Garden of Gethsemane. Verse 10, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," is the basis for this conclusion. No doubt when David recorded this Psalm, it expressed his own personal feelings, but God used the utterances to mechanically speak a prophecy through him.

Psa. 16:1 Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

Psa. 16:2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;

As stated, evangelicals think this Psalm expresses Jesus' thoughts in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, just before and when he was in the garden, he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. 26:38). Then he prostrated himself upon the ground in prayer and groaned, expressing feelings that the apostles heard before they fell asleep and later recorded. Thus the New Testament gives a quite different slant or impression with regard to Jesus in the

Garden of Gethsemane than is expressed in this Psalm. The different slants can be harmonized.

The mood of this Sixteenth Psalm is not as depressed as the Master's words seem to indicate because an angel came and succored him, giving some words of encouragement (Luke 22:43). Paul called attention to the fact that Jesus was heard in that there was some positive response to his earnest supplication. "Who [Jesus] in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. 5:7). When Jesus came to the apostles the third time and awoke them, his mood or behavior had changed to one of confidence. When the surprise attack of the soldiery occurred in the garden and the guards of the chief priests seized him around midnight, Jesus was very calm. Thus his demeanor changed from one of agonizing not too long before to one of self-assurance. His calmness was manifested in several ways. For example, when Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant, Jesus restored it and calmly said, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels [if I so desire]?" (Matt. 26:53). Thus Jesus was given reassurance and strength in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Psalm 16 expresses his positive behavior subsequent to awakening the disciples.

In verse 1, Jesus prayed to his Father, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust." Jesus wanted to be assured of God's presence to strengthen him for the exhausting and trying experiences he knew he was about to undergo. Even though the prayer was answered in the Garden of Gethsemane, he wanted the assurance to abide with him in the steps of his journey to the two high priests and eventually to the Cross.

"Thou art my Lord [my *Adonai*]: my goodness extendeth not to thee." In likening Jehovah to his *Adonai*, Jesus was referring to the Father's quality of *mercy*. In contrast, "thou hast said unto the LORD [Jehovah]" emphasizes the *power and extreme self-sufficiency* of the Father, who can do all things. The *Adonai* aspect of character is usually associated with Jesus, but in his prayer, he recognized that God was merciful and tenderhearted. Coupled with Jehovah's power, that very quality of mercy, which was reassuring, would enable Jesus to fulfill his passion (the agonies of his last hours). When it comes to mercy and forgiveness, Jesus realized that the real *Adonai* is God Himself. Jesus' cognition of that fact was a proper tribute of thankfulness tendered to his Maker when the very trying experiences of the Cross were imminent.

Psa. 16:3 But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

Jesus' prophetic prayer continued. Verse 3 is in harmony with that season of his experience just before he entered the garden, as recorded in chapter 17 of John's Gospel, where his attention was directed to the apostles, to those who were faithful to him in his earthly ministry. He also prayed for those who would become his disciples subsequently: "Neither pray I for these [apostles] alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20,21).

Psa. 16:4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

Psa. 16:5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

Verse 4 gives Jesus' negative reaction to the drink offerings of blood of others. Then he prayed, "Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup [of suffering and death]." Jesus'

attitude was, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). He would be very careful that his words and actions would be appropriate after leaving the garden. He would quietly submit to what lay ahead in God’s providence. He would not listen to suggestions of Satan. At this time, Satan was trying to do everything possible to put doubts into Jesus’ mind and cause him to be unfaithful in laying down his life. In addition to the actions of the two high priests Annas and Caiaphas, the buffetings of the soldiery, etc., something else was going on behind the scenes; namely, this was Satan’s hour of power to try Jesus. What were some of the testings?

Comment: Three examples are the following: (1) Satan was behind Peter’s denial of Jesus; (2) a crown of thorns was roughly put on Jesus’ head, and he was mocked as a king; and (3) Barabbas, a known insurrectionist and murderer, was released instead of Jesus.

Reply: Satan used multiple methods and indignities to shame Jesus and confuse him if possible. A particularly excruciating experience was the taunt “If thou be the Son of God [the Messiah, as you say], come down from the cross [and then we will believe you]” (Matt. 27:40-42).

“The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.” The hymn “Equip Me for the War” fits the mood of this Psalm as Jesus implored the Father to remain with him and give him a sufficiency of strength. Not only was it God’s will that Jesus drink the cup as the means of providing the Ransom, but the world’s salvation rested on Jesus’ shoulders. The cup was one of sorrow and shame, but Jesus felt the reward of the “inheritance” and the benefits he would receive both personally and as the Redeemer of the human race—the portion of his “lot”—was a sufficient offset to whatever indignities he might undergo.

Q: Verse 4 sounds threatening. Does it teach that the names of those who were responsible for Jesus’ blood would be expunged from the book of life?

A: That would be true, for some incurred the penalty of Second Death. Even the Pastor had feelings along this line. Obviously, Judas forfeited the right to a resurrection, but the two high priests also incurred tremendous guilt. When we follow all of the experiences and indignities that were inflicted on Jesus, we see that Annas and Caiaphas accompanied the mob in Jesus’ journey. Wherever he went, they were there—at Herod’s, before Pilate, at his crucifixion, etc.

Q: Would the other “god” after whom they hastened be Satan?

A: Yes, for this was Satan’s hour of power. “Drink offerings of blood” were practiced by heathen religions. Back in the type in the Old Testament, it was often the practice of heathen religions to drink the blood of the sacrifice that was placed in Molech’s arms and also to drink blood in regard to the worship of Ashtoreth, the queen of heaven. Drinking the blood of the victim was the height of delight and satisfaction. Such sadistic practices are inherent in some people—and so much so that they cannot separate from that spirit. While those individuals of the Old Testament, as well as people who have committed such acts subsequent to the First Advent (and thus incur much more guilt), will get an opportunity for life in the Kingdom, many will not pursue the path of life very long. In other words, they will not pass the hundred-year test but will prove to be incorrigible relatively quickly. Others will live to the end of the Kingdom but will not pass the test when Satan is loosed in the Little Season.

Psa. 16:6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Verse 6 shows the depth of Jesus’ consecration. It is astounding that when he got the reassurance, he could make statements like this. The lines that befell him were pleasant because of the inheritance he would get. Those who are high on the ladder of the Little Flock

have the same disposition. Some will have brighter illuminations than others according to the degree of honor attained. Consider the disposition of the Apostle Paul, who said, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:8). He reckoned the sufferings of the present time as not worthy of comparison with the glory that awaited him for faithfulness (Rom. 8:18).

The “lines” seem to be a reference to the lines of inheritance in the Old Testament. Upon entering the Promised Land, the various tribes were given their inheritance, which was marked out with lines, as mentioned by Joshua.

Psa. 16:7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

Psa. 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Psa. 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

By implication, Psalm 16 suggests that in the midst of Jesus’ sufferings and trials, particularly from the time he left the Garden of Gethsemane until he expired on the Cross, he experienced a surreal calmness to the indignities that he suffered. The exception was when the Father’s face was momentarily turned from him and he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). At that time, he had another experience where his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. And that experience did bring him to death, for his heart burst. The experience took Jesus by surprise, but it was necessary as one of the counterparts for Adam’s disobedience.

What Jesus did not know—and has not been seen by Christians as a whole except for the Apostle Paul—is that there was an equal importance not only for him to be the Ransom, providing the opportunity for life and the hope of salvation for all, but also for him to take the place of the sinner. That aspect is not emphasized in the Truth movement, but it is just as important as the Ransom in redeeming the human race. Jesus had to be the guilt bearer and experience the shame and guilt of Adam. Although he understood that philosophy, he did not realize in advance the extent to which it was necessary for God to forsake him for a brief moment—hence his agonizing cry. As the guilt bearer, he took the place of the sinner, and as the Second Adam, he has the right to life, which he will give to the human race. His calmness of demeanor was remarkable when he was before Pilate and Herod, when he was being nailed to the Cross, and when he was on the Cross. He manifested the calmness and the serenity of *submission to the divine will*. However, the experience of being forsaken by the Father still awaited him. Nevertheless, God knew Jesus would be faithful, and that assurance, given to Jesus by the angel, was sufficient to carry him through. Although Jesus died as a result of being forsaken, he seemed to sense he had done everything he could, for he said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” and with a note of triumph, “It is finished” (Luke 23:46; John 19:30)—that is, “I have done all I can; I finished!” Jesus passed the final exam to the praise and honor of the Father and to the glory that awaited him: “Worthy is the Lamb” (Rev. 5:12).

Incidentally, there is the possibility that the offer to come down here to earth and be a ransom sacrifice was tendered to whoever would be a volunteer. No one offered until Jesus stepped forward. Certain pictures in the Bible seem to suggest this possibility.

Many Psalms, and portions thereof, give an insight into Jesus that we might not get in the New

Testament, which tells mostly what Jesus *said and did*, whereas the Psalms tell what he *thought*. When both are studied, we get a fullness of understanding of our dear Savior. Generally speaking, Christians are primarily cultured and trained in the New Testament, which is where our adoration, affection, and feelings that we were bought with a price come from as we learn what Jesus did for us. The Psalms provide further insight into his character.

Q: Does verse 7 refer to Jesus' reassurance in the Garden of Gethsemane?

A: Yes. Jesus' preexistent knowledge of the Father and the Father's actions and deeds, plus the knowledge and sympathy he obtained by being down here with the human race, helped him to be a success. The weight of the whole world was on his shoulders.

Psa. 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

The Apostle Peter quoted this verse twice, applying it to Jesus (Acts 2:27,31), and subsequently the Apostle Paul also cited it (Acts 13:35). It is true that God would not leave Jesus' soul in hell (*sheol*). Jesus' soul was quieted for the parts of three days that he was dead, but then he arose from the dead, being awakened from the sleep of death. Jesus' soul, the new creature, never died; it simply went into a sleep, into "hell." Jesus' body, the old creature, as it were, even though perfect, had to stay dead forever. So that his body would never be found and used as a fetish to be revered, it dissolved into gases; it disintegrated without the odor and corruption of death. Proof is that Jesus' body was removed without the shroud or the separate head piece being unwrapped (John 20:5-8).

Psa. 16:11 Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

As individuals, we have this same hope. What fullness of joy we will have if we are more than overcomers! To think that God would have such a calling for members of the human race is incomprehensible. His mercy is very large, and thank God, those who do not make the high calling but are overcomers are assured of everlasting life. His mercy is full to those who put their trust in Him as best they can. Many runners are in the race, and Paul told us to run as if there is only one winner. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (1 Cor. 9:24).

Comment: God showed Jesus the "path of life," and God's Word shows us the way.

Reply: Yes, we have the hope of being fellow brethren with Jesus as our chief elder brother. The Heavenly Father will test each of us accordingly.

PSALM 17

Psa. 17:0 A Prayer of David.

Psalm 86 has the same superscription.

Psa. 17:1 Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.

"Hear the right, O LORD." David was confident of his innocence in what was happening to him. Feeling he should not be pursued as a criminal because he had not done anything wrong, he was saying, "Hear the petition, O Jehovah, of one who has not done wrong but, rather,

whose behavior has been proper in this situation. Therefore, hearken unto my prayer, which is uttered without any deceit. I have no ulterior motive that is out of harmony with the principles of thy righteous Law.” David was paving the way for God to reply to the petition he was about to make.

Psa. 17:2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

“Let my sentence [judgment] come forth from thy presence [the bar of justice].” David wanted to hear Jehovah’s response to the petition he would make out of pure lips.

Comment: When David numbered the people and God gave him three choices of punishment, he asked God to select the judgment.

Reply: Yes, that was David’s mannerism. He put his entire faith, confidence, and trust in the judgment of God rather than in the judgment of man.

“Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal”; that is, “Let thine eyes behold equity.” David felt he was free from any guilt or inequity in the matter on which he was about to approach the Lord. His words excite our interest to ask, “What was the burden that rested on his heart?”

Psa. 17:3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

David continued to declare his innocence. There was no guile on his part. “Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night [seasons]; thou hast tried [proven] me, and shalt find nothing.” His words remind us of Job.

“I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.” The Apostle James gave admonitions on how easily the tongue, a little member, can waggle and thus, like a rudder, steer an ocean vessel to do harm. The tongue can set a forest on fire (James 3:2,4-6).

David was saying, “Not only have the motives of my heart been pure in thy sight, O LORD, but I have purposely put forth effort to keep my tongue from transgressing with wrong words.” We still do not know the burden of David’s heart, but we can see that he was pleading his innocence before the Judge in preparation for asking a favorable response.

Comment: In verse 1, David said his prayer would not go out of feigned lips. Now he was making doubly sure of his words.

Reply: Yes, once words go out past the teeth, they are already a deed. It is one thing to purpose something in the heart, but when what is in the heart is voiced, the words cannot be retrieved. Like Job and Moses on occasion, David was very eloquent in presenting his case. The Psalms give insight into David, a man after God’s own heart, enabling us to see why God loved him; that is, we see the characteristics that pleased the Heavenly Father.

Psa. 17:4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.

In the expression “by the word of *thy* lips,” David was giving the reason for doing all the things mentioned in verses 1-3; namely, he had obeyed the instruction he had received from God’s lips. David did not feel the victory was his; that is, he was not proclaiming self-righteousness but was saying he had been faithful to the instruction that came from God’s lips. In other

words, he gave credit for his innocence to his Maker. Like a lawyer, David was still presenting his case to the Heavenly Father.

“I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer [Saul and/or Satan].” No doubt when this prayer was uttered, the occasion had to do with the experiences that Saul had purposed in regard to David’s destruction. In addition, we see that the Holy Spirit guided David’s words, slanting them for the new creature, so that in this picture, Saul was like Satan, who pursues the innocent ones, trying to cause them to stumble and falter in their loyalty to God. Thus the “destroyer” (singular) referred to a personage—to Saul in David’s experience and to Satan in the Christian’s experience. Saul’s pursuit of David seems to be what prompted this Psalm.

Psa. 17:5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

Now David went into another aspect. First, he pleaded his innocence. Then he credited his innocence to his obedience of the instruction God had given him. David attributed to God his success thus far in evading the murderous intent of Saul, the destroyer. He was saying, “Continue to uphold me. Hold up my goings in thy paths, O Jehovah, so that my footsteps will not slip.” His prayer to God was, “I have kept your instruction, and you know the purity of my words and actions. You study me even in the nighttime and see that I have not planned mischief. I am innocent day and night.” However, David was not sure he could maintain his pure actions. Because he was feeling the stress of the trial, he sensed that he might slip. Wanting to maintain his faithfulness, he prayed for the continued sustenance of God’s grace.

David’s sentiments were a beautiful and eloquent prayer. Although the same in substance, the Hebrew is even more musical and poetic than the terse English in the King James Version. David’s words were very personal. He was talking to God in prayer and wanted a response.

Psa. 17:6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.

David persisted in pleading for a response from God. He wanted to be sure his petition would receive attention from Jehovah. The *earnestness* of his petition, as opposed to mere lip service, would bring an answer. Praying once a day adds up to 365 prayers in a year. Normally, our prayers are uttered in a repetitive format, and then we include a burden or appropriate praise for something done on our behalf. However, when we are undergoing a particular trial, our prayers change quite dramatically and become more pertinent, especially if a difficult decision has to be made. As we see the fervency of David’s prayer, we sense that something confronting him merited the earnestness, as well as a proper response.

Psa. 17:7 Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

Starting with verse 7, we begin to sense the circumstance that was troubling David. The details of the burden of his prayer were starting to filter through. He was still petitioning: “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up.” The final words, “against them,” were supplied by the translators and should perhaps be either omitted or changed to “against thee.”

Psa. 17:8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

David continued to plead his cause, using multiple types of persuasion to try to prepare God for the revelation of what he wanted to disclose. First, David pleaded from the standpoint of God’s justice and equity, saying he knew that God hearkens to the prayer of the innocent and

uses His right hand of power to rescue such. He also mentioned God's loving-kindness and tender mercy. He was certainly persistent in prayer, speaking like an earnest orator in petitioning God to respond.

Verse 8 is a tender poetic expression: "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings." The apple of the eye is very sensitive. In desiring God to be sensitive to his situation, David wanted to climb under His wings; that is, he wanted to hide as a little chick under the wings of the Father. Verse 8 is an example of why some who are familiar with the Hebrew feel that the Psalms of David excel any poetry ever conceived and recorded by man. There is an eloquence that cannot be fully perceived in English. However, when we enter empathetically into David's experiences, we begin to see the stratagem he used to get a response from God. David felt he needed a response so that he would not fail or slip.

Psa. 17:9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.

While previously David spoke of the "destroyer" (singular), we find that Saul had engaged the force of government in the pursuit of David. In fact, he was so intent on killing David that he personally accompanied the force. In time, David began to gather the disenfranchised individuals under Saul's jurisdiction. As these misfits in society, who had questionable characters at first, aligned themselves with David and accompanied him in his flight from Saul, a remarkable change came over many of them. Although David uttered this prayer silently, they could see that he was unusual and exemplary, and their characters began to change for the better. Admiring David, they started to develop a character like his.

Psa. 17:10 They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

David's enemies "fattened" themselves by currying favor with Saul; that is, they benefited by receiving positions of authority. A slippery type of people surrounded Saul. Now we begin to see that Psalm 17 shows the experiences of Jesus. With David being a prototype of Jesus, every verse could have had a fulfillment with Jesus during his earthly ministry, the destroyer being Satan instead of Saul. Satan and his cohorts were determined to make Jesus' ministry a failure; that was their purposed intent. Verse 10 begins to open up some thoughts. For example, those who were "inclosed in their own fat" and spoke proudly were the Pharisees, both literally and figuratively. Not only were they fattened with the riches of their position before the nation of Israel with clothing and material items, but even Pontius Pilate, representing the Roman government, catered to those in religious authority to keep a stability in the province of Judea, which was known for irascibility and rebellion.

In other Psalms where this same parallelism exists, some verses apply to Jesus, and others do not. However, all of the verses in Psalm 17 can apply to Jesus, who proclaimed his innocence, his faithfulness, and his covenant with God. In fact, the verses are more fitting with Jesus than with David. David purposed innocence and faithfulness, but Jesus matched those qualities with perfect words and perfect deeds. Thus we start to get a little of the substance of Psalm 17, which comes to a happy climax and brings a response from Jehovah.

Psa. 17:11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;

The pronoun "us" does not change the analogy because Jesus, like David, had followers. David and his little company of followers were being pursued. Likewise, Jesus and those who followed him during his earthly ministry were the objects of criticism and ridicule. And so we, as outcasts of society, as people with no particular outstanding qualities from the world's standpoint, find that God chooses those who are humble and who recognize and confess their

failures and do not have the aggressiveness that is rewarded in the world. If a worldly person pursues a goal and moves everything in that direction, he is usually a success. He gets his college degree and his promotions in proportion as he steps over the bodies of those in his way. In contrast, Christ's disciples, the poor and the meek of this world who are rich in spirit, will inherit the earth as kings and priests if they listen to and obey him. Thus we nobodies can be a somebody by God's grace, forgiveness, and loving-kindness and by the strength of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in God's Word jumps out and gives us strength, knowledge, and encouragement as we follow the Master. As we look at the Master and study his words and his conduct, we are changed into his character likeness.

"They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth." This second half of verse 11 describes enemies who looked carefully for David's footsteps as they pursued him. They looked for broken dried grass, disturbed twigs, and footsteps to determine which direction he had taken. They were close on his heels in this pursuit. Spiritually speaking, this pursuit is the same, for we fight not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers (Eph. 6:12). Our enemies are looking for flaws to capitalize on for our destruction. Jesus had the same experience, but he ended up with perfect submission and obedience to the Heavenly Father. However, Psalm 17 tells about Jesus' experience before his crucifixion, resurrection, ascension on high, and glorification. We are privileged with a marvelous insight here.

Psa. 17:12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

In this close pursuit, it was almost like howling hounds right behind a fugitive. This verse describes how Saul and his men were following David. With Jesus, the "lion" was Satan, along with the fallen angels. The Adversary is pictured as a "roaring lion" desiring to destroy God's children (1 Pet. 5:8). He is like "a lion that is greedy of his prey, and ... a young lion lurking in secret places."

Psa. 17:13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword:

David, who was not victorious yet, was praying, "Hearken to my long prayer. Now speak and perform a miracle for our deliverance. Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked [one], which is thy sword." Unbeknownst to himself, the Adversary is really, in one sense, the means of proving us and our faithfulness. He is an unwitting tool. Similarly, the plagues in Egypt were a blessing to the Israelites and a curse to the Egyptians. As spiritual Israelites indeed, we are given the victory, and the victory that overcometh the world is our faith (1 John 5:4). We are justified by faith not just in the beginning, when we receive the robe of Christ's righteousness, but throughout our Christian walk. Faith is the continuing stability that upholds us and to which we are to add the other graces of the Holy Spirit.

Psa. 17:14 From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

"Deliver my soul ... from men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." This class has a counterpart for the new creature, namely, false Christians, the Antichrist, and the priesthood who are enriched with temporal benefits, using the Scriptures to add to the collection plate and to call attention to themselves as individuals. In short, they use the treasures of the truth to benefit themselves with earthly pleasures in the present life. For their own enrichment and prosperity, they take

advantage of the conscience and the sheeplike qualities of those who are hungry and looking for fellowship and leadership. In Jesus' day, these "men of the world" were the scribes and the Pharisees.

Psa. 17:15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Verse 15 is the climax. Again the words sound like those of Jesus. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). Jesus was not even asking for something higher but was saying, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." He delighted to do God's will—period! His attitude was, "Just give me the glory that I had before with thee, and I will be satisfied."

Here David was expressing his confidence in the resurrection. He looked forward to the Messiah just like Moses, Noah, Abraham, and others. He realized there would be an awakening from the grave and a higher reward, but he loved the Scriptures and the Law so much that he would be satisfied just to be in God's holy presence. In Psalm 84:10, he said, "I had rather be a doorkeeper [or gate keeper] in the house of my God, than to dwell [with magnificence] in the tents of wickedness." Verse 15, then, is the answer to what David wanted.

When Jesus agonized three times in the Garden of Gethsemane, an angel came and rewarded him with a mysterious Scripture that convinced him he would be faithful. It would be interesting to know which Scripture brought such comfort that afterwards he was a different person. Jesus left the Memorial in heaviness and with so much weight on his mind that when he arrived at the garden, he said, "My soul is exceeding[ly] sorrowful, even unto death." Both Jesus and David were given assurance.

We can conjecture how David's prayer was answered. Because of the assurance he received, he subsequently had the opportunity to kill Saul but did not. Saul was so humiliated that he forgave David and temporarily gave up the chase.

Let us consider verse 15 from another perspective: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Christians particularly use the last half of the verse, and those words are the basis for a hymn: "If I in thy likeness, O Lord, may awake, and shine a pure image of thee, then I shall be satisfied when I can break the fetters of flesh and be free." However, the awakening "with thy likeness" does not mean awakening to the divine nature. The emphasis is different than is normally thought.

For one thing, this is David's Psalm and prayer. There are two applications: David was earnestly praying on his own behalf, and yet that prayer is the prayer of the Church as well. Since David will be "satisfied" when he awakes "with thy likeness," the thought has nothing to do with the divine nature.

A second point is that if we awakened to the divine nature, would we be merely "satisfied"? Why, we would be so exuberant, so joyful, so unbelieving, that the word "satisfied" is too weak! Even Jesus, our perfect pattern, would have been satisfied to awaken to the condition he previously had with the Father.

And there is a third point. The thought of "likeness" is used elsewhere in Scripture. (1) When God rebuked Miriam and Aaron, He said, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num. 12:7,8). God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth, even

apparently, and not in dark speeches.” In other words, God’s conversing with Moses was so realistic that it seemed to be a reality, but it was not. That some members of the nation of Israel could turn against Moses is hard to believe. (2) No man can see God and live (John 1:18; Exod. 33:20). Therefore, the “likeness” is a similitude. It is a *likeness* rather than being *like in kind*. If one thing is said to be like another, they can be alike in *many* respects, but the word “likeness” does not imply being alike in *all* respects. (3) Moses said, “And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.... Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female” (Deut. 4:12,15,16).

The preposition translated “with” in verse 15 can also mean “by,” “for,” “in,” etc. The King James Version of verse 15 reads, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, *with thy likeness*.” Rotherham’s translation uses the preposition “by”: “I in righteousness shall behold thy face, shall be satisfied when awakened *by* a vision of thee.” “By” is quite different from “with.”

In the incident already referred to where God was speaking to Miriam and Aaron, His criticism was, “If there is a prophet among you, I might appear to him in a dream or in a vision, but with Moses it was different. I spoke with him mouth to mouth, even apparently.” In other words, God used a *form* when He talked with Moses rather than just letting him hear a voice. To explain again, God was saying, “It is wonderful for a true prophet to have a vision from me, or to hear me speak in a dream or a vision, but with Moses I spoke direct, using a form.” However, that form was not the divine nature because Jesus said, “No man hath seen God at any time.” No man can see God as a divine being and live. Therefore, the account is saying that Moses’ experience was so real that it was different from God’s communication with any of the other prophets in the Old Testament. With the others, God spoke in various ways. Some heard a voice in the ear telling them what to say to Israel. Other prophets either heard a direct oral voice or had a dream or vision (such as Daniel and Joseph). However, even though God spoke with Moses in a way that was different from His method with the other prophets, some in the nation had the nerve to question and murmur that Moses took too much upon himself. Korah said in his rebellion, “We are all holy. We are all God’s people and His holy congregation, and we are Levites too” (Num. 16:3 paraphrase). Even Miriam and Aaron murmured against their brother. For them to say that Moses was speaking too much meant they failed to recognize how unusual he was.

These statements were made even though *God appeared personally to Moses*. The same wrong attitude of heart kept the nation from accepting Jesus as Messiah at his First Advent. The nation was not converted because they did not comprehend who was speaking to them. How dense and shallow people are—unless they rely on God’s Word! The criteria for evaluation should be the questions “What does God teach us? What does God say?” The standard should not be our own emotions.

Comment: Today holographic cameras can project in front of a person what appears to be a three-dimensional image, but it cannot be felt or touched.

Reply: A three-dimensional image is more realistic than a vision or a regular movie, but to see a *hologram* movie would be so realistic that it could be described as “even apparently.” Since “form” is more the thought, the hologram is a good illustration. After having a dream or a vision, the person wakes up and knows it was just a dream, whereas to have a form appear is much more realistic.

In summary, if we had Jesus' likeness in the sense of actual divine nature, we would be *overjoyed*, not just "satisfied."

PSALM 18

Psa. 18:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

Psalm 18 is very unusual. As indicated by this superscription, it was addressed to the "chief Musician," and it was a "Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD [Jehovah], who spake unto the LORD [Jehovah] the words of this song in the day that the LORD [Jehovah] delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and [even] from the hand of Saul." David wrote this Psalm to express his reaction to having withstood all of King Saul's efforts to apprehend and slay him. The Psalm is a prayer of thanksgiving and recognition that God was responsible for this deliverance, which was remarkable, considering the tenacity, strong intent, and number of forces that were available to Saul in trying to seize David. However, God delivered David from all of these attempts to put him to death.

This Psalm is actually a Messianic Psalm in a secondary sense, which is more important than the primary sense of David's original writing when he thought he was expressing his feelings in regard to what God had done for him. Whether or not he recognized the fact, the Holy Spirit spoke through his mind and operated through his hands so that when he recorded his experiences, the message was couched in such peculiar words that it is really more appropriate as a prophecy about Jesus. Thus Psalms 16, 17, and 18 are prophecies concerning Messiah. Many Christians realize that some statements in the Psalms express the thoughts of Jesus during his earthly ministry, but they do not comprehend the full extent of what has been recorded. Some brilliant Protestant scholars have seen that these Psalms apply to the Messiah, but they did not necessarily have the truth such as we have it today. Therefore, although we have benefited from the help of those who wrote on the Psalms in the past, we should see a greater depth when we investigate these Psalms because of the time period in which we are living. The credit goes to the present Lord, who has revealed the truth to us as children, enabling us to get a hold on some of these things.

Psalm 18 is initiated as though David thought it was his experience. The Psalm does apply to David in part, but the purpose of the principles inculcated is chiefly to edify the Christian in the feelings and thinking of Jesus during his earthly ministry. In years past, we felt we were not qualified to give instruction on the Psalms, that is, until we were more mature in our thinking. We avoided talking on something we felt was above our level of understanding, but after being in the truth for so many, many years, it seems that Divine Providence has now pushed us into leading a verse-by-verse study on the Book of Psalms. Thus it is rather unusual that we have the prophecy of Psalm 18 before us.

Psa. 18:1 I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

"And he [David] said, I will love thee, O LORD [Jehovah], my strength." Psalm 18 is recorded twice in Scripture, here and in 2 Samuel 22. The Psalm is extraordinarily long with 50 verses, and 2 Samuel 22 has 51 verses. Certainly verse 1 is applicable to both David and Jesus, for both loved the Lord God with all their strength.

Comment: From his youth, God was David's strength—when he fought the bear and the lion, for example, and of course with Goliath.

Reply: Yes, David gave credit and praise to God as his strength in all of his exploits. However, verse 1 is just an expression of sentiment, of heart intent, with no other details except to say that he loved Jehovah, who was his strength.

Psalm 18 and 2 Samuel 22 are very similar, particularly in the Hebrew, with only minor differences. Substantively, they agree remarkably well. Those who make a critical examination and comparison of the two miss the spirit and flow of the beautiful expressions. In the King James Version, the translators of Psalm 18 were not the translators of 2 Samuel 22. Generally speaking, five scholars examined each book of the Bible, one being the editor-in-chief. The very fact that different individuals were involved means that the translation of the words into English is both similar and different. Because many words have exact synonyms, which are closely associated with the Hebrew in the translation, those who try to make a critical examination are straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Therefore, we would like to avoid a critical examination entirely.

Psa. 18:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

In verse 2, David used eight nouns to express different manners in which he appreciated how the Lord God dealt with him on a daily basis: rock, fortress, deliverer, God, strength, buckler, horn, and high tower. This verse was appropriate for David, but it was even more appropriate for the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The LORD [Jehovah] is my rock.” A rock is something we stand on, and unlike sand and water, it is solid. In the desert, a rock (a boulder) provides shade. One can take a nap in that shade, protected from the heat of the sun. A rock is also a defense because arrows, etc., are not as apt to hit a person who is behind a rock. Thus a rock can be a means of protection and a blessing in one’s providential experiences in life.

“The LORD is ... my fortress.” A fortress is considered from the standpoint of protection. One feels more secure in a fortress than if a rampart is not around him.

“The LORD is ... my deliverer.” When one is in a circumstance where he is liable to be defeated or slain, a deliverer comes and rescues him. Thus the term has to do with a savior.

“The LORD is ... my God.” We are purposely avoiding the semantics of the Hebrew words, for this Psalm is just giving a general broad-view explanation of the many different venues of help David and Jesus received from God in their times of need. The term “my God” is usually thought of as the “mighty one.”

“The LORD is ... my strength, in whom I will trust.” The word “strength” is self-evident. The terms are almost like synonyms but with slightly different perspectives of God’s help in protecting His people. The clause “in whom I will trust” suggests that when we note God’s providence on our behalf, especially when reviewing past leadings and remarkable circumstances since consecration, faith and trust in God are increased, solidified, and made more whole. As a result of His methods of mercy on our behalf, we become more determined to be faithful unto death. In addition, we are guarded against becoming discouraged. By reflecting on past deliverances, we get stronger in faith, and faith is a quality we need to have throughout our Christian walk. Not only are we justified by faith initially, but we *live* by faith.

“The LORD is ... my buckler.” A “buckler” is the part of armor that is usually in close proximity to the heart or the chest (or breast). It can also be likened to a shield, the difference between the two being more the size of that protective armor as a shield. Basically, the buckler protects

one's front when face to face with the enemy. In a confrontation or battle of faith, a person is usually more vulnerable from the front.

These terms remind us of the Apostle Paul's admonition to put on the whole armor of God. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:13-17).

"The LORD is ... the horn of my salvation." In Scripture, a "horn" is usually a symbol of power. For example, four horns, one in each corner, were an integral part of the Brazen Altar in the court of the Tabernacle. The horns of the altar became very important to an individual who was accused of a crime or to one who needed a last resort for a petition. A person who wanted to be heard, desiring a close communication with God and an answer to a prayer or a request, could cleave to a horn of the altar. Thus, spiritually speaking, the horns on the altar are a means of salvation when one repents and asks for forgiveness, help, mercy, or power. The four horns represent God's power addressed to the four corners of the earth and to those who earnestly rely on Him as their only hope of salvation. The altar saves, for sacrifices put thereon are acceptable to God.

"The LORD is ... my high tower." From a high tower, one can look out and see impending danger. Hence a tower provides advance warning of the approach of the enemy.

All of these terms describe various ways in which God helps us in our fight for survival against the enemy. In David's case, the enemy was Saul, but Saul prefigures Satan, so we can see how apropos all of these terms are for the Christian.

Psa. 18:3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

The words "who is worthy" are supplied, but they are almost essential because the Hebrew is sort of like a sign language. Verse 3 reminds us that David called upon God when he was in extreme danger on different occasions, hiding in the hills of Judea for refuge. We surmise that on some of those occasions, the place he sought for protection was entirely surrounded by Saul and his forces, but the Lord miraculously delivered David. Of course we think more particularly of the time at En-gedi when Saul was in one cave of the mountain and David was in another cave of the same mountain. The search party that accompanied Saul was below, in the lower mount where the pool was. In the caves above, Saul and David were encamped with their respective followers. God delivered David out of that situation.

Jesus was particularly delivered when he was on the Cross. Hecklers taunted him and tried to break his spirit and his confidence in the Father. He was especially vulnerable in the Garden of Gethsemane when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and on the Cross when he was weakened from the preceding experiences associated with and leading up to his death and also from the Crucifixion itself with blood flowing out of his body.

Psalm 18 was written *after* David's experiences. This Psalm is prophetic of Jesus from the perspective of his looking back at his experiences and thanking God for his deliverance. Jesus certainly prayed in Gethsemane, but he also prayed on the Cross. The innermost thoughts of Jesus both in Gethsemane and on the Cross are prophetically recorded in Psalm 22.

Psa. 18:4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

The use of past tense shows a looking back to prior experiences. Verse 4 is more appropriate for Jesus because in the Garden of Gethsemane, his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. The word “sorrows,” being plural, suggests that sorrow came upon Jesus in waves; that is, it was duplicated. There was the sorrow of Gethsemane, the sorrow of feeling alone in his trial before Annas and then Caiaphas, and the sorrow on the Cross. His experiences were a wave of sorrow, some reassurance, a wave of sorrow, some reassurance, etc., until he died with the victory cry, “It is finished!”

“The floods of ungodly men made me afraid.” The King James margin has “men of Belial” and “men of Baal,” showing that the reference was to the fallen demons (plural) of Satan who beset Jesus, spiritually speaking, motivating the two high priests and the mob to inflict many indignities upon his body—spitting, insults, etc. Satan prompted these deeds, especially when Jesus was before Pilate and the mob chanted in unison with much ferocity, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” The devils gave the people even stronger voices than they might have had normally, so that their words *thundered* in the ears of Jesus and Pilate, rejecting any appeal for Jesus to be loosed from his bonds. Generally speaking, the public was sympathetic to Jesus, for the people loved to hear him speak, but on this occasion, the multitude succumbed to evil desires of the religious leadership.

Psa. 18:5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

Of course the word “hell” is the Hebrew *sheol*. For “sorrows,” the margin has “cords”: “The cords of hell compassed me about.” Verse 5 is a powerful expression of the experience Jesus went through on the Cross. The cords were being drawn tighter and tighter. When Jesus was agonizing on the Cross, he was affixed, nailed, and any movement brought the most excruciating pain. The pain was like cords binding him, and he had to withstand the temptation to loose himself from the Cross and come down. He had to have the self-will to be faithful to God and to his covenant. He knew that the cords would lead him to the grave, for he was steadily weakening as his life blood oozed out from his system. Eventually he died from a heart attack, from a burst heart. Thus Jesus’ experience was superior to that of David, who just feared for his life and felt there was no way out when he was surrounded. Jesus’ being nailed to the Cross was somewhat along the same lines but was much more excruciating and on a higher level of suffering and death than David ever experienced.

Comment: Jonah 2:1-4 reads, “Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish’s belly, And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.”

Reply: That text is very appropriate. Jesus equated Jonah’s being in the belly of the whale to his own experience: “For as Jonas was [parts of] three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth [in the tomb]” (Matt. 12:40).

With the depth of detail, a book could be written on just this Psalm. All kinds of other incidents would be in harmony with the different verses. The detail, which is overwhelming, shows God’s prescience, His ability to foretell and to foresee the future and to read the thoughts of the mind of anyone He so desires. God recorded these events more than a thousand years in advance of their occurrence with Jesus.

Comment: For verse 5, the Revised Standard has, “The cords of *Sheol* entangled me, the snares of death confronted me.”

Psa. 18:6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Psa. 18:7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

Psa. 18:8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

Psa. 18:9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.

Again we will say that Psalm 18 cannot be mathematically interpreted as to exactly, succinctly, what is being referred to. It is clearly a prophecy, and the superscription states that it is related to David’s experience in being delivered from the hands of all his enemies and Saul. In addition, some of the verses apply solely to Jesus. Verse 48 uses the expression “Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.” This verse is the only place in the entire Psalm where we are given some indication that it has a partial application to Saul, the “violent man.”

And another point needs to be addressed. In the Psalm, there is a going back and forth throughout Israel’s history, so the interpretation of a large part of the Psalm is reason and conjecture. In other words, we cannot be dogmatic in the application.

With regard to verses 6-9, nothing is recorded in the historical account in Scripture of David’s experiences that indicates these happenings; that is, no direct Scripture gives this application. David was very successful in battle against the Amorites, Moabites, Edomites, and Philistines, yet verse 6 says, “In my distress I called upon the LORD.” The question is, Whose distress—David’s, Jesus’, or Israel’s? Since the preceding Psalms had a Christological application, we certainly feel there is a reference here to Jesus’ crucifixion. At that time, a great earthquake occurred that was so powerful it rent the Temple veil, which was at least six inches thick, tearing it from top to bottom (verse 7). It would have taken a *tremendous* force to rip apart that large veil between the Holy and the Most Holy of Herod’s Temple. In addition, the earthquake opened graves and a darkness occurred from noon until 3 p.m. while Jesus was on the Cross.

Lightning, thunder, and sounds were involved. If the earth shook so violently, there must also have been the rumbling sound of an earthquake, portraying God’s anger. Not only did the lightning reveal Jesus on the Cross, but all of the violence in the heavens showed God’s wrath. We believe that in the divine sanctuary, all of these events have been photographed for future showings of what really happened at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. The “films” are ready to be revealed at a proper moment in the future, during the Kingdom Age, and also in the ages beyond the Kingdom when fit occasions arise to show Jesus’ life, his ministry, his sermons, his disciples, and the ending of his earthly career. No wonder, then, that a centurion who was on the scene at the time of the Crucifixion said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

The Gospels were purposely written in low-key language so that they would not attract too much attention from the worldly-minded, who are looking for worldly excitement. If the events in the Gospel accounts were seen, many more would believe and come into the truth who are not really ready for the truth. Therefore, the goodness and mercy of God has kept the accounts low-key so that the truth attracts only those who are hungering and thirsting for knowledge concerning Him, His plan, and answers to questions such as why He created us and

where He is. Now we can see why the Gospels are muted and kept in the background. There is purposely no description of Jesus' appearance, his height, how handsome he was, if he was always smiling, etc., and only a very few occasions are recorded when he was filled with indignation. The intent was not to excite the attention of those whom the Lord did not wish to draw to the Cross during the Gospel Age.

However, the fact that some of this information was prophetically recorded in the Psalms shows that God wanted a written record. Not only are events being photographed for a visual viewing in the future, but a written record was hidden in the Bible. The wise and the prudent of the world are not that interested in the Psalms, which contain a lot of praise to the Lord that is meaningless unless one is Spirit-begotten. Only the consecrated appreciate the reverence and devotion of David and can understand why God loved him and thought of him as a man after His own heart. Thus explicit information is hidden in the Psalms so that there will be a twofold witness of (1) sight and sound and (2) recorded words.

Verse 6, then, applies to Jesus. When he was expiring, God responded in a way that Jesus heard His voice. At the end of his three hours on the Cross, in the few seconds when he died, there was complete darkness on the face of the land. In addition, we would not be surprised if the dense darkness was illuminated with the violence of an earthquake in the distance. Meanwhile, the ash from a volcano beclouded the sunlight. Since no eclipse occurred at that time, which was during daylight hours, the darkness was most extraordinary. Although these events are muted in Scripture, they shut the mouths of the scribes and Pharisees for a hundred years. Whenever the gospel was subsequently preached by the apostles, if events had not occurred such as the tearing of the Temple veil and the appearing of some in Jerusalem who were previously dead, the scribes and Pharisees would have said they were fabricated. The fact that living witnesses knew of and could certify these happenings silenced the religious leaders and gave rise to the wonderful effulgence of the gospel, which prospered during the Ephesus period in the beginning of the Gospel Age.

“Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he [God] was wroth.” This powerful language is self-explanatory once we get the proper perspective and application of the time period.

“There went up a smoke [earthquake ash] out of his [God's] nostrils, and fire [red-hot lava] out of his mouth devoured [illuminating the sky]: coals were kindled by it.” The “coals” were fireballs of lava that were expelled by the explosion, going way up into the air and then raining down on the earth.

“He [God] bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.” How did God bow the heavens? A dark cloud that was seen high above came down nearer and nearer to the earth as if “darkness” was under God's feet. The people could not see God, but they saw that the storm was unique—as if someone was very angry with the Crucifixion of Jesus. What a powerful picture, and this information is not in the Gospels! The Psalms are seldom read with this intensity of interest.

Generally speaking, Christians study the New Testament, even if superficially, but they ignore the Old Testament because they feel it was done away with when Jesus was nailed to the Cross. By misunderstanding certain principles, they justify that the Old Testament is passé. They are more interested in the gospel of mercy and forgiveness, which they think allows them to do their own thing with relative immunity. A belief that love covers a multitude of sins is very appealing to the flesh. However, those who hunger and thirst after truth and righteousness appreciate Jesus' words: “It is written [in the Old Testament], Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3). Therefore,

an earnest Christian is responsible for having at least read the Old and New Testaments in their entirety. The first duty is to read the Bible, not everything that Pastor Russell wrote. God's Word is what begets us, not the Pastor's word. What is happening in the brotherhood is strange, let alone in the nominal Church.

Comment: Since the earth is the Lord's footstool, the darkness would have to be down here, under His feet.

Reply: At that time, many probably fled and covered their ears, for it seemed that the very God of nature was angry. His presence was manifested by His feet being down here, as it were. The Old Testament states that the Temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the earth were all God's footstool depending on the perspective.

Comment: In verses 6-9, God's ears, nostrils, mouth, and feet are mentioned, showing that He has a form (John 5:37).

Psa. 18:10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

In what way did God ride upon a cherub and fly? How would that characteristic be manifested? The second half of the verse is related to these questions: "Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." The lightning was more or less parallel to the earth. Lightning is not always vertical or east to west in direction, for on rare occasions, it can be almost parallel to the earth. In this case, the lightning probably came forth with a straight line rather than in a zigzag or crooked-line fashion. At times, bolts of lightning go forth like an arrow, emphasizing speed of travel, and that was the focus here. It was as if God was in that lightning, traveling on the "wings of the wind" with speed and intensity.

The repetition of the word "fly" emphasizes the swiftness of travel: "he [God] ... did fly: yea, he did fly." In His anger, He struck out in different directions like a mighty man. This event was very scary to witness.

Psa. 18:11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

The second half of verse 11 explains the first half from a rather literal visual standpoint that reminds us of the Tabernacle arrangement. Jehovah was in the clouds, but he was especially in the main cloud above, which covered the entire nation of Israel. From that cloud, a pillar dropped down and connected to the Most Holy, wherein was the Shekinah light, which no man could see except the high priest. On certain occasions, such as Korah's rebellion, lightning came out of the pillar, or column, to render a judgment. Even though the Israelites could not see any similitude, or form, it was as though a personality was in the pillar. They felt the existence of a presence who was very angry, but the cloud of darkness covered the similitude. Verse 11, which continues the focus of attention on Jesus' experiences at the time of his crucifixion and the Father's reaction, is reminiscent of such judgments in the wilderness.

Comment: Exodus 20:21 reads, "And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

Reply: Moses was allowed to go up Mount Sinai and actually into the cloud, whereas Joshua had to wait. When Moses entered the cloud, he had communication with God for 40 days.

Psa. 18:12 At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and

coals of fire.

Psa. 18:13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.

“Hail stones and coals of fire” are like a contradiction. “Coals of fire” were the fireballs, the molten rock that exploded up into the air and then fell down and quickly simmered out. What is the lesson? Nature itself was so upset about the Crucifixion that what we would not expect to occur simultaneously did occur. The God of nature was venting His spleen on the inhabitants down here who manipulated such a heinous act. Thank God, His wisdom blinds historians from seeing this picture of the Crucifixion in its true light. This event and others are particularly cloaked so that only those who have the Holy Spirit can begin to understand and appreciate them with greater depth.

Psa. 18:14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

Verse 14 is describing a storm of exceeding ferocity. God “sent out his arrows [lightning], and scattered them [the arrows, that is, the lightning]; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.” The lightning was exploding as a manifestation of God’s anger. Lightning takes place during normal violent storms, but at times it can produce fireballs. History has recorded occasions where clouds have spit out giant fireballs that land on the ground, roll along like balls in a bowling alley, and then explode and disappear. Such phenomena have not been seen in recent history. Smaller fireballs that are the size of a basketball are more common.

Verse 14 is describing a storm with giant fireballs that took place at the moment of Jesus’ death. The storm produced the desired effect at that time. Had the storm occurred earlier, it would have interfered with events during the Crucifixion. For instance, Jesus had a conversation with his mother and John, giving the custodianship of Mary to the apostle for the remainder of her days.

When the powerful effects of nature that occurred at the time of the Crucifixion are replayed, people will be shaking in their boots momentarily. As a little boy, I loved thunderstorms because they showed the power of the God of nature. Foolishly, I fled for safety under a tree. Although scared, I sat there and watched the storm.

The lightning showed God’s anger. The scattering lightning produced fear as it shot here and there with great speed. These events are stated twice, the verification being 2 Samuel 22. Out of the mouth of two witnesses, God has testified to mankind concerning the Crucifixion and what was done to His Son. God was disturbed with the hardness of the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees, particularly the leadership, who went from place to place just to hound Jesus until he expired.

Q: How long did the darkness last at the time of the Crucifixion?

A: There were three hours of darkness, from noon until 3 p.m. Caused by ash, the darkness was not total, but its intensity increased toward the end of the three hours, resulting in complete darkness at that time. The intensity indicates an eclipse of the full moon, which was symbolic as well as literal at that time.

Psa. 18:15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

“The foundations of the world were discovered at thy [God’s] rebuke.” Instead of just going around in the air, the lightning struck the ground at times with accompanying thunder, causing the ground to rupture. These manifestations of nature were timed to coincide with Jesus’ death, and later the aftershock was equated with his resurrection. The same earthquake that occurred at his death produced the aftershock, which was not quite as violent as the initial explosion. “Channels of waters” seem to indicate rain, which fell after Jesus died, sending the people back to their abodes with the Crucifixion in mind.

If we had lived back there, many of us would have been like the apostles, who preached with boldness after Jesus’ resurrection. Seeing these events increased their faith. These very evidences proved to them that Jesus was the Son of God, and then, when he arose from the dead, they were delirious with joy and could not contain themselves. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit, they ran around the city, spreading the truth. It is true that they did not receive the Holy Spirit in the sense of adoption to sonship until Pentecost, but they had the Holy Spirit at this point, just as the 70 did earlier. Even the Old Testament saints had the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak mechanically and do certain things, but they did not understand the technical meaning. They could see the natural application but not the spiritual symbolisms, the higher plane.

Psa. 18:16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

Verse 16 refers to Jesus’ resurrection, the “many waters” being the tomb. Jesus likened his experience of being in the belly of the earth to Jonah’s being in the belly of the whale. Just as Jonah was vomited out in the environs of Israel, so Jesus was delivered, or awakened, from the tomb in Jerusalem. Verses 19 and 20 confirm that Jesus’ resurrection is now the subject. “He brought me forth also into a large place; ... the LORD rewarded me.” Without paragraphs in the original Hebrew, the translators did not know where to break the verses.

Comment: Similarly, water represents the tomb in baptism.

Reply: Yes, there is harmony in Scripture. As we build up a spiritual vocabulary, it is easier to see the connections.

Psa. 18:17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

“He [Jehovah] delivered me from my strong enemy.” Although this verse has an application to David when he fled for his life from Saul, there is a secondary application to the Savior himself, the antitypical David, during his fight of faith. Portions of Psalm 18 could not apply to David but do apply to Jesus, and vice versa. In later Psalms, the application sometimes even changes within a particular verse. In fact, one verse contains three changes of thought.

With David, the “strong enemy” was Saul. With Jesus, the “strong enemy” was Satan, as shown by the term “strong man’s house” (Matt. 12:29). The Gospel of Luke states, “When a stronger [that is, Jesus] ... shall come upon him [Satan, the strong man], and overcome him, he [Jesus] taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils” (Luke 11:22).

“He delivered me ... from them which hated me.” The pronoun “them” refers to those who were manipulated by the Adversary in plotting the death of Jesus. Their goal was to exterminate Jesus and his influence because it was jeopardizing their popularity in the religious world before the public of Israel.

“For they were too strong for me.” David certainly had these sentiments when he was being

pursued by Saul and his collaborators. However, Jesus also had these feelings from the time of his betrayal through his crucifixion. He did not sleep for at least 30 hours and had continual mental strain, which included teaching his disciples prior to his apprehension in the Garden of Gethsemane. He used his energy to instruct the disciples and prepare them for his departure. Then came his hour of trial in Gethsemane onward. In the garden, Jesus said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” showing he was in a weakened physical condition. He was under mental strain, deep distress, for he wondered if he had failed in any manner in performing God’s ministry. To be a ransom for the human race, he had to do everything as a perfect man with perfect obedience. Not only was he troubled in thinking he might have failed in some iota of obedience to his Creator, but he was troubled about being crucified naked on the Cross. Three times Jesus petitioned the Heavenly Father for help. From the time an angel appeared to him in the garden and strengthened him, he was remarkably composed until his death. Although still in a weakened physical condition, he remained calm and was submissive lest he be released from crucifixion. He had severe experiences in the hours before his demise. His apprehenders came on him suddenly, like a flood, with torches at night. Thus the expression “they were too strong for me” had some prophetic application to Jesus.

From David’s standpoint, this Psalm was describing a past event. From Jesus’ standpoint, the Psalm was prophetic, but his experiences were presented as a future past tense. Many prophecies of the future are expressed this way, for God sees the end from the beginning. In the final analysis, Jesus was “delivered” in that he did not fail. He was a perfect corresponding price for Adam, he was faithful in his ministry, and he died according to his mission of giving his life a ransom for many.

Comment: The principle of 1 Corinthians 10:13 applies to Jesus’ experiences as expressed in verse 17: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Psa. 18:18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

The Old English word “prevent” has the thought of “precede.” In other words, “they went before me in the day of my calamity: but Jehovah was my stay.” That was true in regard to David. Saul was so intent upon assassinating David that he seemed to be neglecting all his kingly duties. Slaying David was uppermost in his mind—and so much so that he even joined the pursuit, especially when he thought David was surrounded in a way that prevented escape.

Verse 18 also applies to Jesus. According to the Gospel accounts, the scribes and the Pharisees were particularly responsible for his death. The two high priests and the scribes were not necessarily present when Jesus was apprehended in the Garden of Gethsemane, but Malchus, a servant of the high priest and captain of the guard, took the leading role in bringing a band of soldiery there to capture Jesus. Thus Annas and Caiaphas did not go into the Garden of Gethsemane, but they were waiting for Jesus. Instead of sleeping that night, the two were in their own headquarters in the palatial palace, so that Jesus could be first taken to Annas and then to Caiaphas, the kangaroo trial at night having been premeditated. All of the plotting in connection with Jesus’ death was done in advance of his coming to Jerusalem. Knowing that as a male, Jesus had to come to feasts three times a year, the high priests made preparations to imprison him when he arrived and operate their nefarious scheme. In every aspect and place where Jesus went, the chief priests were on hand except the Garden of Gethsemane and the Via Dolorosa en route to the Cross. They kept out of sight at those two times because they did not want to be seen as responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion. In those two cases, they wanted the soldiery and the Gentiles to be blamed, but in all other cases, they were right there, watching and beholding everything that happened.

Verse 18 is telling that when Jesus was taken to Herod's palace, the two high priests preceded him, going ahead to alert Herod as to what they were doing and why. Thus everything was in preparation for an audience where Herod could question him. When Jesus was taken to Pilate for trial, the high priests were in the front. He was led to Pilate twice and to Herod once. On all three occasions, the high priests made preparations so that Pilate or Herod would be present. The first trial with Pilate took place very early in the morning, and the second trial occurred later, although still early in the same morning. The high priests not only plotted Jesus' death but were on hand every step of the way to make sure that he could not escape this final judgment and that he would end up dying on the Cross. During this period of being led about, Jesus was physically exhausted, including later when he carried the Cross on the Via Dolorosa. The lack of sleep, as well as the mental anxiety as to whether he had been faithful, weakened him, so that he had experiences such as Christians have. He was perfect, yet it was necessary for his development that he have fluctuations of emotion. Going through experiences that Christians would have subsequently in being faithful to God, the truth, and the brotherhood made him more sympathetic as a High Priest.

In Jesus' trial in this precarious "hour," God gave him the necessary strength to not fail or falter in fulfilling his destiny to give his life as a ransom. Back in verse 4, the Psalmist prophetically wrote, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." The extreme wickedness and persecution caused him not to be too confident. For example, he was blindfolded and taunted, "If you are the Christ, prophesy who smote you." In his excruciating experiences, he could have put his persecutors in their place, but he was faithful to the commitment and purpose for which he had come to earth. He was under extreme pressures, so it was not strange for him to have fluctuating emotions. Jesus was a sympathetic person with feelings, not a stoic.

Psa. 18:19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

In spite of Saul's efforts, David came forth "into a large place," for he became the king at Hebron, as well as the king at Jerusalem. With regard to Jesus, verse 19 refers to his death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification; that is, it was a prophecy of future events recorded as being in the past. God frequently used this method in Old Testament prophecies, especially those of the Kingdom Age. Therefore, verse 19 foretold that Jesus finally ascended to the Father and was acclaimed by the host of heaven with the words "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). The "large place" he was brought to was the divine nature—a very large place indeed!

Psa. 18:20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

Verse 20 was the experience of both David and Jesus. When David wrote Psalm 18, he thought he was telling of only his experiences. The prophets spoke with emotion and were wholeheartedly in sympathy with their pronouncements, but the Holy Spirit actually did the talking on many occasions, so that they did not understand their own utterances at times.

Psa. 18:21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan tempted him with the offer, "If you will bow the knee to me, I will give you all these things. Just be my servant, and you will not have to die on the Cross." The extreme pressures placed on Jesus in his earthly ministry of 3 1/2 years make

us realize that we were bought with a great price.

Psa. 18:22 For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

In the latter part of David's ministry, he was a changed person. We know of two cases where he sinned earlier, for he dwelled in a tabernacle of fallen flesh. However, the summation of his life is that he was a man after God's own heart.

When we apply verse 22 to Jesus, we are reminded of his words at the time of his baptism: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Psa. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:7-9). Not only did he come to do the Father's will, but he had considerable knowledge of what the prophecies indicated he should do. He delighted to enter his ministry at Jordan, but he became a "man of sorrows" in the last days of his ministry (Isa. 53:3).

Following his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness to meditate on the prophecies. When John the Baptist lifted him from the water, not only did the dove come and light on Jesus' shoulders, but two things happened: (1) he found himself "in fashion as a man," and (2) "the heavens were opened unto him" (Phil. 2:8; Matt. 3:16). In other words, the knowledge of his preexistent state as the Logos flooded his mind. Now he wanted to sort out how to conduct his ministry for the remaining days of his life. At the end of the 40 days of prayer, fasting, intense study, and meditation in the wilderness, when Jesus was weak, Satan tempted him three times.

Psa. 18:23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

"I kept myself from mine iniquity." Of course, being born imperfect, David had some iniquity. Most Protestant Bible scholars who apply this verse to David say that like the Christian, he kept himself from "the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1). Mankind has various types of weaknesses, and Satan usually preys upon the Christian's particular weakness to try to make him fall from God's approval.

As stated here, this part of verse 23 could not apply to Jesus, for he was perfect and had no iniquity, and the Hebrew and the Septuagint verify the wording (Heb. 7:26). However, there is another way of looking at verse 23. The Hebrew manuscripts can be read different ways depending on how vowels are inserted. The scholars of the New International Version (NIV) interpreted the literal word-for-word Hebrew of the Old Testament the same way—namely, "I kept myself from mine iniquity"—but when they translated the Hebrew into English, they made an unusual change: "I have been blameless before him and have kept myself from sin." Apparently, the NIV scholars felt that if the vowels were changed, the connotation would be different. Before reading the NIV, we had come to the same conclusion, as follows: "I was also upright before him and kept myself from sinning." Therefore, we would not be surprised if verse 23, like previous verses, also applies to Jesus. As a confirmation, since the wording of verse 24 seems a little too strong to apply to David, we would question the literal word-for-word Hebrew with the rabbinical points in verse 23.

Comment: Although Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, he had free will and could have sinned.

Reply: Yes, that is correct. Free will is very precious in God's sight. Even during the Kingdom Age, bowing the knee will be mandatory at first, but subsequently each individual will be judged for life beyond the Millennium according to the exercise of free will.

Psa. 18:24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

Psa. 18:25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;

Psa. 18:26 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.

Verses 25 and 26, with regard to the merciful, the upright, the pure, and the froward, remind us of the Apostle Paul's setting forth the correct manner of approach with the Jews, the Gentiles, the weak, etc. (1 Cor. 9:19-22). "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15). If we extend the principle, as is done in the Book of Proverbs, then with the foolish, we would speak foolishly in order to embarrass them (Prov. 26:5).

Comment: In Matthew 7:2, Jesus said, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." If we are pure, the Lord will judge us as pure.

Reply: That approach would be considering the principle in a reflective sense. For example, if we are actively merciful with the merciful, God will respond similarly to us. Part of the Lord's Prayer is, "Forgive us our debts [or trespasses], as we forgive our debtors [those who trespass against us]" (Matt. 6:12). However, we must remember that Jesus was speaking of trespasses *against us*, not trespasses *against others* or *against God*.

Verses 25 and 26 pertain to our contact or relationship with other individuals and how God deals with them according to the spirit in which they act or perform their duties in life—whether they are merciful, upright, pure, froward, or whatever. Paul said that we should sorrow with the sorrowful and rejoice with those who rejoice. People frequently try to uplift the sorrowful by telling them to rejoice and be happy in the Lord, but that conduct is opposite to scriptural counsel, for we are to enter into the experience of others. By getting ourselves into the same mood, we truly help the individual. In nature, the dove mourns with the sick and sometimes even becomes sick out of empathy. An ill person gets some benefit from a pet like that. A common saying is, "Misery loves company."

Psa. 18:27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

"High looks" are haughtiness and pride.

Psa. 18:28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Comment: The NIV reads, "You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light."

Reply: The NIV gives a present-tense rendering instead of using the future tense.

Comment: Conversely, the Lord puts out the candle of the wicked (Prov. 24:20).

Reply: Jesus said of the present life, "Men do not light a candle and then hide it under a bushel, but put it on a candlestick so that it gives light unto all who are in the house" (Matt. 5:15 paraphrase). We are to let our light shine, but the light will go out if we are disobedient or neglectful and go out of the truth. "If therefore the light that is in thee be[come] darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23). However, the light can also go out in a good sense; that is, it can go out when we die with the hope of a future resurrection, which David had.

Verse 28 is stated in the future present tense in the sense of what will happen while we are still alive. In addition, there is a future sense expressing what happens after our demise. It is helpful to view verse 28 from both perspectives.

Psa. 18:29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

Verse 29 reminds us of a deathbed prophecy of Jacob pertaining to the tribe of Gad. “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.... Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last” (Gen. 49:1,19). “Leaped over a wall” reminds us of Jacob’s deathbed prophecy concerning Joseph: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall” (Gen. 49:22). Joseph’s branches leaped over the wall in the sense that his is the only tribe with double representation. Instead of his name being mentioned among the tribes, his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were included. The “double” representation means an excess or an abundance, hence a growth or flourishing “over a wall.”

Psa. 18:30 As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

For the next few verses, Psalm 18 pertains more to David’s experiences (and ours in antitype). “The word of the LORD is tried.” The reading of God’s Word gives us an understanding of His care for us over all our ways. His Word has a marvelous depth and height, and it is a protective agent like a buckler. We know that David was very interested in the Scriptures because he said that the Law was his meditation and delight both day and night (Psa. 63:6; 119:97,148). Even as king, he was absorbed in the study of God’s Word. How unusual it was for a king to take time and devote attention in that direction! Usually the duties of office and/or life dull the senses along some of these lines. We sing the words “Take time to be holy,” and we need to equally take time to study the Word. God’s way is perfect, His Word is tried, and the buckler is sure to those who trust in Him.

Comment: The Psalmist also wrote, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psa. 19:7).

Psa. 18:31 For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

Although verse 31 refers to Jehovah, it calls to mind the words of a hymn, “On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.” The Word of God and the Author of that Word, as well as the Son whom He sent, are likened to a Rock.

Psa. 18:32 It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

The word “perfect” has the thought of “complete.” “God ... maketh my way complete”; that is, He makes our way with understanding. God gives instruction through His Word, which is “a lamp” unto our feet as we walk in the way (Psa. 119:105). We are furnished with adequate instruction.

Comment: God fills the void in our life.

Reply: Yes, and from another standpoint, He supplies the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Our imperfections are safely hidden under that robe so that God can look upon us as His sons. Verse 32 can be viewed in various ways that are helpful.

Psa. 18:33 He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

A hind, a deer, is agile and skillful in climbing rocky hills with great speed and surety to attain a height. The speed with which such animals can descend without stumbling and falling is even more remarkable. Figuratively or spiritually speaking, God makes our feet like “hinds’ feet” by giving us, as Christians, a depth of understanding above that of the world. We have higher hopes and perspectives and a great vantage point by being able to see into the future through the prophetic Word. We can almost see the Promised Land from such heights. As we get older, we pray for a renewal of strength to mount up on eagles’ wings again (Isa. 40:31).

Comment: Jacob prophesied that the tribe of Naphtali “is a hind let loose” (Gen. 49:21).

Reply: Naphtali, the last jewel on the high priest’s breastplate, means “wrestling.”

Psa. 18:34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

Verse 34 does not particularly apply to any action of Jesus that is recorded in the Word. As a perfect man, he could exercise such strength if he felt he was performing a duty God intended. When given a more literal application, verse 34 applies to David’s experience. Psalm 18 was introduced with the superscription that these are the experiences of David in connection with his flight from Saul.

“A bow of steel is broken by mine arms.” David attributed the great strength of his arms to God’s Holy Spirit empowering him for whatever experience confronted him. For example, he killed a bear and a lion with his own hands. He delivered a lamb out of the mouth of a lion and then, when attacked, he grabbed the lion by the beard and slew it (1 Sam. 17:34-36).

A good illustration of David’s strength was his confrontation with Goliath. When David appealed to King Saul for permission to challenge Goliath, he used his shepherding experience in slaying the bear and the lion as justification for being given the privilege to represent the nation of Israel against the giant. Not a youth at that time, David was strong and quite tall. An evidence is the fact that he could wear Saul’s armor, and Saul was head and shoulders over all of the other Israelites (1 Sam. 9:2). However, David declined the armor, for he was not accustomed to the encumbrance. He felt he could be effective and agile without the armor. When Samuel went to anoint a son of Jesse, seven sons were brought before him. Puzzled, he asked, “Is there not another son?” The answer, referring to David, was, “There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep” (1 Sam. 16:10,11). David was very unusual in many ways, having remarkable capabilities.

Q: Is the thought in verse 34 that David could actually break the bow or that he was strong enough to bend a steel bow?

A: Our thought is that he could break the bow over his knees, but either way he gave credit to God in that his natural strength became like supernatural strength when the Holy Spirit came upon him in a mechanical way.

Comment: The Church in the present life is called the Church militant and is thus represented as a Church at war. As a counterpart to the help David received, God helps us spiritually.

Reply: Yes, and conversely, Solomon pictures the Kingdom of peace.

Psa. 18:35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.” Love is resident in God to the highest extent, yet there can be anger. The two qualities coexist in the one personage, with strength being compared to gentleness here. People usually think of someone who is merciful or gentle as weak, whereas the individual can be mighty strong. Thus we are given an insight into God in verse 35. How comforting to know that He is gentle!

Comment: Jesus displayed that quality when he wept over the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41; compare Matt. 23:37).

Reply: Yes, that incident is a touching emblem of his true feelings. Even at that late date, when he knew he was about to be crucified, he still had those tender feelings.

Psa. 18:36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

The “steps” are a foundation, which is very necessary to keep our feet from slipping.

Psa. 18:37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

Psa. 18:38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

David was successful in personal combat—so much so that a saying went abroad. “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). David fought against the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, etc. We are not given any particularity of detail on those conquests, but his success must have been outstanding for this saying to be popular.

The unfavorable change that took place in Saul was remarkable. He was so humble at the beginning of his ministry as king, but how he changed! In fact, from one standpoint, Saul seems to be a picture of Lucifer, whose name was changed to Satan when sin was entertained.

Psa. 18:39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

Several commentators would unquestionably say, and would have much to justify the statement, that this part of the Psalm has a particular application, as noted in the beginning, to David, whom the Lord granted success in his warfare against those who rose up against Israel. Out of fear and recognizing his success, many who knew that David was coming toward them submitted themselves to his power.

Verse 39 is self-explanatory in its application to David, but to give a secondary application to Jesus, we would have to consider it as still future in fulfillment. When Jesus “came unto his own” at the First Advent, not only did the Jews not receive him as a people, but he was slain in the house of his friends, who proved to be enemies (John 1:11). In the Kingdom Age, there will be a mandatory bowing down, which seems to be indicated by the word “subdued.” Under Jesus at that time, every knee will have to bow (Phil. 2:10,11).

Q: Is the time setting when Jehovah will say unto David’s Lord [that is, Jesus], “Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa. 110:1)?

A: Yes, it will be along that order. In the Kingdom Age, those who previously were the enemies will have to kiss Jesus’ feet, bowing the knee and acknowledging their wrong.

Comment: In regard to a personal application for verses 35-39, the Lord helps us so that we do not slip, and we are to destroy anything that would be a temptation and ensnare us.

Reply: Yes, we must slay the seven enemies in the land—Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Hittites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Perizzites—all of whom are in consort with Satan. We must fight enemies in the Christian warfare, spiritual enemies being the most dangerous.

Comment: In resisting these enemies, the principle is, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

Comment: Verse 37 uses the clause “Neither did I turn again till they were consumed.” The November 11 *Manna* comment states, “One great difficulty with the Lord’s people is that, even when determined for a right course and thus resisting the temptation, they do not take sufficiently positive action. Many say to the tempter, I have concluded not to yield at this time. Thus they leave in their own minds an opportunity open by which the tempter may return. Our Lord’s course was the proper one: we should dismiss the tempter once and forever. We should take our stand so firmly that even the Adversary would not think it worthwhile to come back at us along that line.” We cannot yield even an inch but must give a definite no.

Reply: The only way we can be sure that Dracula is dead is to hammer a stake through his heart into the ground. The battle of the Christian is very subtle, for Satan capitalizes on our besetting faults and weaknesses. Hopefully, as we grow older, we will get stronger and stronger, and by God’s grace, we will win the warfare.

Psa. 18:40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

Psa. 18:41 They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

Righteous indignation and the hatred of evil are being expressed here. Not only did Jesus acquire these attributes, but he was given the reward of the divine nature because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity and wickedness (Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). “Therefore God ... anointed thee [Jesus] with the oil of gladness above thy fellows [the fellow Church members].”

Q: If God will not hear this class, wouldn’t they be going into Second Death?

A: Yes. Their becoming like “dirt in the streets” indicates a treading underfoot, which is an unfavorable sign (verse 42). Jesus stated the principle, saying that when salt loses its savor, it is “good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot” (Matt. 5:13). Proper love (for God) and proper hatred (for His enemies, who are also our enemies) are companions. Of course at the present time, we, as Christians, cannot read the heart or make a sufficient study of the deeds of those who are evil, but during the Dark Ages, some of the Christians who were persecuted could see the wickedness of those who delighted in the sadistic torture of followers of Christ. We get some idea of the depth of evil when we hear of the violence committed by terrorists in the earth, but to be in the midst of the evil and see the actual deeds and the hatred that is inbred in some suggests that the individuals cannot rid themselves of it. Stated another way, the sin becomes a part of their own soul, and their destiny will be Second Death.

“They cried ... even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.” The pronoun “they” refers to professed Christians who take Christ’s name but are his enemies. When these false worshippers cry out in their trouble yet future, they will not get an answer to their prayers. Similarly, the scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses’ seat as the religious leaders of the people

in the reverence and worship of Jehovah, hounded Jesus to death. Because of their total dislike of the principles of righteousness that were manifested so clearly in front of them, the Master said, “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation [judgment, Greek *krisis*] of hell [Gehenna]?” (Matt. 23:33). Just as the professed false worshippers of the future will not get an answer in the time of mystic Babylon’s fall, neither did the dissolute Jews, who lived contradictory to God’s laws, when Jerusalem was surrounded in AD 69-73. However, at the end of the present age, those Jews, a minority in number, who sincerely call on God soon enough prior to the coming down of Gog and Magog will receive an answer to their prayers and be spared. God promised, “Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee” (Jer. 30:11).

Psa. 18:42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

Verse 42 describes the fate of the enemies of both David and the antitypical David.

Psa. 18:43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.

Psa. 18:44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

Psa. 18:45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

“Thou hast made me the head of the heathen [Gentiles]: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.... the strangers [Gentiles] shall submit themselves unto me. The strangers [Gentiles] shall fade away.” The Israelites regarded the Gentiles, who were not under the Law Covenant, as dogs. Verses 43-45 suggest a much larger application in the Kingdom Age than just the private success of David in warfare during his lifetime. The Apostle Paul said that while the Israelites for a time were the exclusive people of God, the time was coming when favor would be shown to the Gentiles, who would accept the gospel message, which, except for a small remnant, was rejected by the nation of Israel at the First Advent.

“As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me.” When David fought his battles, only one part could be considered “strangers” and “heathen.” He was very successful against Moab, Ammon, and Edom, who were kinsmen of Israel, being descendants of either Lot or Esau. Therefore, the fulfillment of verse 44 goes into the Kingdom Age.

“The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.” In a literal sense, the “close places” were the caves and the mountains where enemies sought protection and security. Realizing they would be found, they came out of their hiding places and surrendered.

Psa. 18:46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

David’s “rock” was Jehovah. Both God and Jesus are a “rock” depending on context. For instance, Paul likened Jesus to a “spiritual Rock” (1 Cor. 10:4). In the desert, one can look for miles in all directions and not see anything to hide against or behind. Thus when a sufficiently large rock is found, it is like a fortress from wind, sand, sun, and enemies.

Psa. 18:47 It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

It is easy to see how verse 47 applied to David, but it will also be true of Messiah in the

Kingdom Age, when every knee must bow to him.

Psalm 18 was written so that the singers in the Temple at one side of the court sang one part of the verse, and the singers on the other side of the court sang the rest of the verse. The two groups faced each other diagonally with the singing going back and forth. One writer, who has this thought, nicely separated the two parts of each verse into phrases and/or clauses. The rhythm of the Hebrew pronunciation suggests a sort of subliminal cadence that lends itself to this particular Psalm.

Psa. 18:48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

Psa. 18:49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

Psa. 18:50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and shouted mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for nevermore.

Verses 48-50 clearly have an application to David, but there is also a background suggestion of an application to Messiah because of the name David, which means “beloved.” Jesus is the beloved of the Father. At the time of Jesus’ baptism, he heard “a voice from heaven, saying, This is my [dearly] beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

With regard to David, the “violent man” was Saul, but he is also Satan. We usually think of the Adversary as the accuser, the deceiver, etc., but he is also sadistic and violent, for his fall increasingly denigrated his character so that he became more and more hardened in his sin. The Scriptures seem to suggest that had Satan not pursued Jesus and thus been responsible for his death, there might have been some hope for his recovery. However, Satan put the last nail in his coffin when he arranged Jesus’ death through the scribes and Pharisees. The “sure mercies of David” will have a literal application in God’s literal Kingdom on earth (Isa. 55:3). However, the sure promises of David also have an application to the sure promises concerning God’s cognition of Jesus as the Messiah and what He will do through that Messiah for the Church, let alone for the world of mankind.

“Thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me.” Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32).

Q: Why was Jesus lifted up as a serpent?

A: Jesus had to take Adam’s place as a sinner. Bro. Russell emphasized the Ransom to cover sin—that Jesus had to keep the Law of Moses perfectly, and that in doing so, he gave, and thus earned, the right to human life for one person. In other words, the redemption of Adam with a corresponding price was made possible by Jesus’ keeping the Law perfectly. Therefore, he has the right to give life to Adam and his race. Throughout his ministry, the Pastor emphasized the Ransom and restitution as being like twin brothers, as cause and effect. However, the Scriptures also show it was equally important that Jesus be made a curse, that he had to take the place of Adam in every sense of the word. He had to feel alienation from God, be naked on the Cross, take the sinner’s place, bear the iniquity of all, wear a mock crown of thorns, etc. And he had to be a serpent, for “cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13; Deut. 21:22,23). The Pastor emphasized the Ransom rather than this aspect because he wanted to give hope and encouragement to God’s people, but Jesus also had to go through this other part of the equation. One of the chief reasons Jesus is pictured as a serpent is that he had to literally take the sinner’s place. He was naked like a worm on the Cross, having no protection or

coverage, his body being distorted out of shape (Psa. 22:6). His appearance was pathetic as he hung in agony through his nailed feet and hands, with his body twisting every moment (Isa. 53:1-3). Thus Jesus was pictured as a serpent in two ways, and that representation had to be put to death. The life rights aspect, which benefits us and the human family, was emphasized by the Pastor to help counteract the false doctrine of eternal torment.

“Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and shouted mercy to his anointed.” David’s and Solomon’s anointings show two different aspects of the anointing of Christ. Like a warrior, Jesus had to fight the good fight of faith, and Christians, who follow in his steps, have to do likewise, putting on all of the armor (1 Tim. 6:12; Eph. 6:11). However, Solomon’s anointing was followed by a reign of peace, which represents the peace and benefits of the Kingdom Age. The “still small voice” will follow the wind, the earthquake, and the fire (1 Kings 19:11,12). Israel’s first three kings were Saul, David, and Solomon. In antitype, Saul represents Satan; David pictures Jesus in the flesh, during his warfare; and Solomon pictures Jesus as the anointed King over the earth. Thus there is a play on words, a paronomasia, in Psalm 18.

PSALM 19

Psa. 19:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

This beautiful and significant Psalm is one of the famous Psalms of David.

Psa. 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

“The heavens declare the glory of God.” The second half of verse 1 is somewhat of a repeat: “The firmament [sky] showeth his handiwork.” Psalm 19 is a flashback to the first chapter of Genesis. “In the [a] beginning God created the heaven and the earth.... And God said, Let there be a firmament [expanse, air, atmosphere] in the midst of the waters [that is, between the heavenly bodies and the earth], and let it divide the waters from the waters” (Gen. 1:1,6).

What are some lessons of verse 1? How do the visible things that we behold in the heavens declare the glory of God?

Comment: “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [Deity]; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20). One who honestly contemplates the heavens will know there is a God.

Reply: Yes, if one observes and meditates upon the heavens and uses proper reasoning powers, that will be the conclusion.

The heaven of heavens is the universe, and the more local heavens are our solar system. In looking into the sky and observing the solar system, we see the sun in the daytime and the moon, stars, and some of the planets at night. However, we are more impressed with the expansiveness and the overwhelming immensity of the physical universe. It takes the context to understand that “heavens” is always rendered in the plural in the Old Testament (but not necessarily in the King James Bible).

Just looking at the heavens manifests that there is a God, but the manifestation is done in sign language. The Pastor usually quoted verse 1 from the Leeser translation, which emphasizes that there is no sound at all. The testimony is loud yet mute; it corresponds, to some extent, to the commonly used expression “Actions [or deeds] speak louder than words.” That same principle applies to the heavens. When we look up at the heavens, what we behold is louder

than literal words because the testimony is so overwhelming. This thought is expressed in almost a couplet form in verse 1: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and [even] the firmament showeth his handiwork.” As we look at the heavens, we think, “They did not create themselves.” As we study the heavens, we say, “Some super being created the heavens. An intelligent and wise Creator exists.”

Comment: Verses 1-4 read as follows from the Moffatt translation: “The heavens proclaim God’s splendour, the sky speaks of his handiwork; day after day takes up the tale, night after night makes him known; their speech has never a word, not a sound for the ear, and yet their message spreads the wide world over, their meaning carries to earth’s end.”

Reply: Notice that the word “sky” is used in the second half of verse 1.

Psa. 19:2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

Whether we look at the sky in the daytime or the nighttime, what we study and meditate on is very impressive. For instance, the sun provides light and warmth. Without the sun, there would be no life, for all our green vegetation is dependent upon the process of photosynthesis. By this process, leaves change light into, as it were, the bloodstream of the vegetation so that plants grow and bear fruits or vegetables.

Of the two—that is, day and night—the nighttime most impressively bespeaks the presence of God to the natural man, who may not be a deep thinker by nature. The sheer size of the heavens is impressive.

And there is another point. Day and night are not always the same, for the sun is most beautiful at sunrise or sunset. At those times, panoramic displays can be magnificent and have a glory of their own. Also, as time goes on, there are such phenomena as eclipses. Thus every day is not necessarily the same. Changes occur for various reasons, such as intervening clouds, eclipses, or fog. However, the sun moves through the heavens with the same speed each day, appearing to go from east to west like the minute and hour hands on a clock.

Psa. 19:3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

If verse 3 is read too quickly in the King James Version, we will not get the intended force. “There is no speech or language; there is no voice” is the thought. In other words, “Their voice is not heard.”

Comment: Because the earth revolves on its axis, the entire earth is affected by the sun, the moon, and the planets. For that reason, the “voice” of the heavens is heard by all peoples.

Reply: Yes, on one hemisphere—that is, on one half of the earth—the sun is shining. At the same time, the nether or back half of the earth is dark. As the earth revolves, all parts are exposed to the sun at one time or another, with regularity, during a 24-hour day. Therefore, the statement “the heavens declare the glory of God” means that this language, or testimony, is universal, for all peoples of the earth witness the sun at some time during a 24-hour period and also the stars and some of the planets at night. Although no voice is heard, the thinking mind of the natural man who is searching for understanding is impressed that there is an unseen God, an invisible, intelligent Creator, who makes possible the beauty and the order of the heavenly bodies as they stay in their orbits. The title “Lord of Sabaoth,” meaning “LORD of hosts,” calls attention to this order in the heavens (Rom. 9:29; James 5:4; 2 Sam. 6:18; Isa. 47:4). “LORD of hosts” refers not to armies down here but to the heavens, which declare God’s glory. The very multiplicity of suns in the heavens is like an army underneath Jehovah’s

control; that is, they are His *heavenly* host.

When this exquisite Psalm is read quietly without interruption or the belaboring of each verse, it is a beautiful testimony. We wish we could hear David play the music and sing the words, which came from his heart.

Psa. 19:4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

“Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” In the past, the word “line” would have brought to mind the telephone, but today the “lines” can be invisible. Through transformers and power stations down here on earth, one person can speak to another person anywhere on the globe without any lines being visible. Therefore, “lines” exist, even if we do not see them. Verse 4 uses up-to-date language.

Communication is made possible by sound waves, which are strung out in a line. The thought in verse 4 is, “Their *testimony* is gone out through all the earth.” A “line” goes out through all the earth, transmitting verbal information as well as pictures, so that with the proper medium in our homes, we can see what is happening in any part of the world. We cannot see or feel that line, but we can hear what comes through it. In between, however, there is no sound. Miracle upon miracle is being performed because God made atoms, electrons, quarks, etc., in the air of the universe. In other words, all of the technology is possible because God put the elements there as a medium of transmitting information.

Today we can see more clearly how refined God’s Word is. Embedded in these few words is information that man can only now begin to understand. For thousands of years, man could only hear sound from fellow man if it was within an extremely limited range. People marveled at the invention of the telephone, but the telephone is now like an antique because of advances in communication. We are living in a very advanced state of technology.

“In them [the firmament] hath he [God] set a tabernacle for the sun.” Especially from the Christian’s standpoint, a “tabernacle” is a temporary dwelling, a tent. The heavens are a tent, or a canopy, in the sense that they are like a curtain (Psa. 104:2; Isa. 40:22). The sun, which moves from one end of the heavens to the other, seems to be under this wonderful canopy. From the beholder’s standpoint, the sun appears to be going around the earth, whereas actually the sun is relatively stationary, and the earth does the revolving. However, verse 4 pictures the effect from the standpoint of an observer—that the sun visually seems to travel from one end of heaven to the other.

Verses 1-4 are introductory to the main point of Psalm 19. The wonderful heavens speak an international language in their own way to those who behold them. All peoples—Chinese, Russian, English, etc.—can understand the sign language of the heavens. The “speaking” of the heavens should be an incentive to man to want to know more about God.

Psa. 19:5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

Psa. 19:6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

In likening the sun to a bridegroom, verse 5 draws a lesson from the introductory first four verses. Of course we think of the sun as the Lord Jesus, who is both the Sun and the Son. The sun can also be likened to the gospel message. As the Apostle Paul extrapolated, the heavens

beautifully emblemize teachings that the spiritual mind can understand.

Verse 5 pictures the sun as a man, “as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber” and rejoicing “as a strong man to run a race.” David could have just said that the sun is like a strong man coming out of his chamber to run a race, but the Holy Spirit intentionally inserted the word “bridegroom.” When was Jesus the Bridegroom?

Matthew 24:27 states, “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming [presence] of the Son of man be.” Jesus’ initial coming from the east is the picture of his resurrection from the grave. When he arose from the grave, he possessed life rights to purchase the human family, particularly the Bride, who is likened to a pearl of great price hidden in the earth (Matt. 13:45,46). Thus the “bridegroom coming out of his chamber” is Jesus’ successfully becoming the Ransomer of the human race. After his resurrection from the tomb of death, he appeared to his disciples off and on for a period of 40 days, he ascended to heaven, and he was feted in heaven for ten days until Pentecost. Through the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit gives clues that open the door to our understanding, showing that the testimony of the heavens is not only the existence of a wise and intelligent Creator but also our now knowing Him. Having made a commitment of our lives to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we begin to see things that were not possible to see previously.

From one standpoint, the transit of the sun from east to west represents the Gospel Age. From another standpoint, the transit pictures the Kingdom Age. The Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age are together likened to the (one) Day of Atonement. The first part of the Day of Atonement is the Ransom and the atonement for sin that takes place in the Gospel Age. When that age is complete, the Kingdom Age will be ushered in for the accomplishment of the work of atonement. After the foundation is laid for redeeming the human race, which includes both the Ransom and the sin offering, mankind will be taken from the grave and helped to walk up the highway of holiness. The laying of the foundation—that is, the sacrifices of The Christ, Head and body—makes possible the work of the Kingdom Age. At sunset, the atonement work, the healing of mankind, will be complete.

To summarize the sequence of events: (1) the Bridegroom comes out of his chamber, (2) the marriage takes place at the midpoint, and (3) the work of atonement starts and progresses to completion. Thus the larger picture includes both the Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age.

Lest there be a misunderstanding, the Bridegroom’s rejoicing “as a strong man to run a race” does not pertain to Jesus’ earthly ministry of 3 1/2 years. Jesus came out of the tomb as a strong “bridegroom,” and he will run the race until it is complete. From this perspective, the marriage was approximately 2,000 years distant from the start of his race, and the complete work is the salvation of both the Church and the world.

Q: Joel 2:11-16 starts with Jehovah’s uttering His voice before His great army and ends with the expression “Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” Is there an application to verse 5 in Psalm 19?

A: Yes. When the Bridegroom came out of his chamber in verse 5, he was not married, but at the midpoint—at noontime, as it were—the marriage will take place, resulting in the glory of The Christ, Head and body members. The remainder of the day until sunset will be the completion of the second work of atonement, namely, the salvation of the world. At evening time, it shall be light, the light of the sun being sevenfold, that is, seven times brighter than in the Gospel Age (Isa. 30:26).

While from our perspective, the sun sets in the west, it is actually still shining as the earth

revolves and, therefore, has not finished its course. We are only aware of our side of the earth, so the circuit must be completed. In another picture, the earth's traveling in its orbit around the sun is likened to a journey to a completion. The literal journey requires a sidereal year.

Psalm 19 is very, very deep, but it starts with simplicity so that anyone who studies it can get a blessing according to the depth of his understanding. And there is still more to follow—the understanding goes deeper, deeper, deeper, the more one grows—yet the Psalm has a beauty that all can grasp to the degree of their development. How wonderful! As we grow and mature, we can then understand and appreciate the beauty and value of the truth more fully.

To repeat, verses 1-4 are introductory to the running of a race, showing the Bridegroom's determination to accomplish what he came to do. He has already completed the laying down of his life, his will being to do the will of his Father. Another work follows—the completion of the Church—which is almost finished. Jesus is improperly called the “author” of the race. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Actually, he is the *beginner*, the starter, of our faith. He is both the starter and the finisher. We are enabled through consecration and the ministry of our present Lord, the writings of the Pastor, etc., to have a wonderful understanding so that we can see things now that Christians down through the age could not see, even current events. One of the most astounding current events, which shows we are near the end of the age, is not only Israel but the building of the literal fence in that nation. That wall of protection for defending Israel's villages has to be torn down, for Gog and Magog will come down to *unwalled* villages (Ezek. 38:11). It is as though we are seeing the curtain on the stage starting to rise on the final events of this age. The curtain is being lifted, and we see walled villages around Israel. Before long, that wall will be removed. The introduction of the Kingdom Age will be within a score of years.

We are blessed by having the benefit of hindsight plus current events that are beginning to take on real meaning. In the Pastor's day, when the First World War took place in Europe, brethren thought the end of the age was imminent. It was a time of the end but not *the* time of the end. Now we see a current event that is a sign almost like the heavens; the wall is something tangible that we can see.

The last part of Psalm 19 talks about what David appreciated the most, namely, God's Law and testimony and the precepts of His dealing with the human family. David could see that there is a spiritual connotation in beholding the heavens. The Apostle Paul also drew this lesson, for he began to tell us that this picture applies to the gospel, which includes both the salvation of the Church and the world's restitution. (An alternate application is that Jesus comes forth as the Bridegroom after the marriage when the Bride is with him, but we prefer the application expressed earlier of Jesus' being raised out of the grave.)

Q: Is the “race” in verse 5 the Gospel Age?

A: The Gospel Age is *part* of the race. From the Christian's standpoint, the race is the Gospel Age, as Paul showed. However, the larger application is that the race of the strong man includes the Kingdom Age.

The Christian runs a marathon race of endurance. Most people subconsciously think of speed when they hear the word “race,” but the race of the Christian is not a hundred-yard dash. Some Christians burned out when disappointments came, especially in 1914.

Q: Does this race terminate at the end of the Kingdom, when God is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28)?

A: Yes, although from the Christian's perspective, the race will terminate at the end of the Gospel Age. The Bridegroom rejoices "as a strong man to run a race." Jesus' personal "race" lasted for only 3 1/2 years. However, since verse 5 does not bring in the feminine aspect, the Bridegroom's race really embraces both the Gospel and the Kingdom ages, as already stated.

Since the foregoing explanation introduced an application that is not familiarly known in the Bible Student movement, we will review verses 5 and 6. We will consider them once more and give some of the reasons for the previous explanation. Let us start by reading the verses again.

"Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

"His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." (Psa. 19:5,6)

First, we will familiarize ourselves with the application to the *beginning* of the Gospel Age. John the Baptist said the following:

"Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.

"He [Jesus] that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom [that is, John the Baptist himself], which standeth and heareth him [Jesus], rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

"He [Jesus and his disciples] must increase, but I [John the Baptist and his disciples] must decrease [pass off the scene]." (John 3:28-30)

Here a comment was made with regard to the Bridegroom and the Bride at the beginning of our Lord's ministry. The Gospel of Mark also mentions the Bridegroom in the beginning of the Gospel Age.

"And the disciples of John [the Baptist] and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him [Jesus], Why do the disciples of John [the Baptist] and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

"But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." (Mark 2:18-20; compare Matt. 9:14,15)

Notice the term "children of the bridechamber." Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come, the disciples were in a tentative relationship at that time. In other words, during Jesus' earthly ministry, even though he called them out, the disciples were not legally represented as sons from one standpoint nor as a part of the Bride class until the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. However, we can be sure that many of the disciples went on in faithfulness and eventually got the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, of those who believed on Jesus during his earthly ministry and followed him, many turned away when he made the statement "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53,66). The point is that the bond did not really take place until Pentecost when the disciples' covenant relationship was legally represented and they made a full submission.

There is another way to show the Bride and Bridegroom relationship, for out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a matter established. Two witnesses have already been given: the words of John the Baptist and the words of Jesus about the Bride and the Bridegroom. Hebrews 12:1,2 is a third witness. First, we will consider verse 1, as follows:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Heb. 12:1)

The Apostle Paul likened the Christian walk in the present life to a race in a stadium before a great cloud of spiritual witnesses, the angels in heaven, who are looking at the strange, new phenomenon of the call of the New Creation. Athletes prepare for a marathon race by putting weights in their shoes before running so that over a period of time, their muscles will be better exercised. Then, when the weights are removed and the race begins, they will be able to run with great swiftness to a maximum of their ability. A marathon race is to be run with patience, whereas a person runs all out in a hundred-yard dash—like an explosion from a canon—for the quicker the start, the greater the advantage. In a marathon race, the runner must pace himself for a long and enduring trial with stress and strain particularly in the last part of the race.

“Looking unto Jesus the author [beginner] and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2)

The word “author” is an improper translation, even though *Strong’s Concordance* gives it as one of three meanings. An examination of all the various roots shows that they have nothing to do with authorship. Several factors are involved. The Greek word, No. 747, is a combination of two other words. One word is *arche* (pronounced ar-key’) which means “a chief leader,” thus emphasizing one of the members of this race as being the chief one, the one who sets the example for the others to follow. We know that Jesus finished his ministry with success—he completed his course—for on the Cross, he cried, “It is finished!” When we examine his life in the Bible, we see the zeal with which he ran the race of his 3 1/2-year ministry, and we try to follow that example, which preceded us. The Apostle Paul called attention to the fact that not only did Jesus start the race—not only was he the beginner—but we follow him to the end of his course. Stated another way, he is before us, and he finished the race in front of us as an example to encourage us onward. “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). In other words, “Do not be discouraged. If I have overcome the world, I can give you advice as to how to be successful in this race.”

We have no problem seeing that the gospel calling is a marathon race and that all participants, all Christians, are entered in that race. Paul said that we do not just run this marathon being faithful and making sure we finish the course, but that we have to run with great purpose and zeal, as though there will be only one winner. “So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24,26). Of course in the final analysis, 144,000 will successfully run the race and obtain a crown. Paul’s counsel was that the race is not merely an endurance of being faithful unto death but that one must be more than an overcomer, pursuing the race with purpose and enthusiasm. Our motivation should be, “This one thing I do” (Phil 3:13).

This race has been taking place down through the Gospel Age, and it is not yet complete. Verses 4 and 5 speak of “the sun,” which in this picture is “the Son.” David said, “In them [the heavens] hath he [God] set a tabernacle for the sun [the Son], Which [who] is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.” Jesus’ personal race

was not finished until he cried victoriously with a loud voice, "It is finished!" Even though his heart broke, it was as though the Holy Spirit from the Father caused him to say, "I have done all I can."

When Jesus died, his thoughts died, but when he was raised, coming out of the chamber of death, he knew he had successfully and faithfully finished his course. He was a "strong man" now, and he was rejoicing. Therefore, his words took on even more meaning when he said that he was faithful and that, as the leader, he could help us. We are encouraged to find that he will assist us in the completion of this marathon race. He runs with us by example, and through the apostles, the chosen spokespersons, he gives us the information we need to make our calling and election sure. Thus one application of verses 5 and 6 is during the Gospel Age.

Now we will try to show and give evidence for another application, which is foreign to the thinking of brethren. In Matthew 25:6 is the announcement "Behold, the bridegroom." (The word "cometh" is spurious.) When the ten virgins went forth to meet the bridegroom in 1914, the call had not yet been made. The brethren knew Jesus was present and were waiting for their change, but when he tarried, they all slept. Then at midnight came the call "Behold, the bridegroom"—that is, "He is here!" All of the virgins awoke, but only the five wise virgins, who had sufficient oil in their lamps, were ready to enter the marriage, resulting in the closing of the door. The five foolish virgins were advised to buy oil from those who sell, but when they returned and knocked on the door, Jesus said, "I know you not"; that is, "I never recognized you as members of the Little Flock." The foolish virgins, the Great Company, are a secondary class, the bridesmaids, not the Bride. Their consolation prize will be spirit nature and being associated with Jesus as his helpers, or servants, in the Kingdom Age.

Now we will consider an Isaiah text that pertains to the Kingdom Age and the earthly calling, as follows:

"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

"And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers.

"But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.

"For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them.

"For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

"And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed.

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

“For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.” (Isa. 61:4-11)

This Isaiah text pertains to the Holy Remnant, who will be spared in the trouble and thus be saved at the end of the present age. They will be alive and rejoicing when the Kingdom is set up, as shown in verses 10 and 11. The next chapter continues the setting.

“For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness [as the sun], and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

“And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

“Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.” (Isa. 62:1-3)

We always assign verses 1-3 to the gospel Church, but they have a dual application, first upon the glorified Church, which, during the Kingdom Age, will be instrumental in teaching the people righteousness. At that time, the Church will be as the sun shining in the firmament, and the Ancient Worthies, who will lead many people down here to righteousness, will become like stars at the end of the Kingdom Age, when they are given a spiritual resurrection (Dan. 12:3). During his earthly ministry, Jesus likened the Church to a part of the sun, whereas Psalm 19 emphasizes Jesus, the chief leader, the Bridegroom (Matt. 13:43). The Church, who will be the Bride, not part of the Bridegroom, is identified with the sun.

Chapter 62 of Isaiah also has an earthly application, that is, an application to the natural seed. The reading continues:

“Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.

“For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” (Isa. 62:4,5)

Other Scriptures tell that God will marry the nation of Israel, which forsook Him. At the end of the age, He will have mercy on Israel and reestablish that relationship as a nation, as a land, and as a people in the overall sense—but not as individuals. Otherwise, if God married the Jewish people as individuals, Christians would rather be married to Him than to His Son. The higher calling in regard to Jesus is an *individual relationship*, where each one is given a name that no man knows; that is, Jesus will have a *personal relationship and a familiarity of understanding* with each member of the 144,000, in addition to marrying them as a group. The individual relationship, a higher reward, is one of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Psalm 19:6 states that Jesus’ “going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it.” This “circuit” is not like a circle, which has no end. The term “unto the ends of it” is talking about the shining of the sun during the daylight period in a given part of the earth, in one hemisphere. In other words, from sunrise to sunset is *half* of a circle; the circuit is curved but is not a complete circle.

Verse 6 continues, “And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.” The sun rises in the

morning and reaches its peak of brightness at noontime. Accordingly, we liken noontime, when p.m. (post meridiem) takes place, to the second application of Psalm 19, pertaining to the world in the Kingdom Age. During that time, nothing will be hidden from the heat of the sun. On a clear day, the sun is hottest when directly overhead, and it continues to extend its light to the end of the day, which would be the end of the Kingdom Age. We are reminded of the Scripture that in the Kingdom Age, “they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34). The heat, the light, the benefit, of God’s mercy through Christ will be extended to the world of mankind during the Kingdom Age. For those who prove faithful at the sunset of that day, in the last hour as it were, when the test is given—for those who truly, with their whole heart, love God supremely so that they will never again sin as they did in the past—the glory of God will be in them. God will be “all in all”; that is, He will be 100 percent in 100 percent of those who prove faithful in the Kingdom Age (1 Cor. 15:28). Actually, there is a calling in both the Gospel Age and the Kingdom Age, and there is a reward at the end of both ages for those who are overcomers. Those of mankind who pass the test at the end of the Kingdom Age will die no more but will be as the angels (Luke 20:36). They will then have a character crystallized in righteousness. Any infractions beyond the Kingdom Age will be minimal, for then the people will have a full understanding of the meaning of the permission of evil, and they will have seen the poisonous effects of sin as well as the beneficent results of obedience to their Creator.

Thus we feel that *two* races take place, one in the Gospel Age and one in the Kingdom Age, with *two* victories. From another standpoint, we can consider the Day of Atonement, which has two phases. The *sin offering*, the basis of atonement, takes place during the Gospel Age, and the *work of atonement* takes place during the Kingdom Age. From one perspective, the laying of the basis of the sacrifice and the work of atonement are all part of the one day of at-one-ment.

In chapter 2 of the Book of Joel, verses 1-11 give the setting just prior to the beginning of the Kingdom Age, and verses 15-20 tell of another situation.

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;

“A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

“A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

“The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

“Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

“Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.

“They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:

“Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path [like a locust plague]: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

“They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

“The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

“And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:1-11)

Verses 1-11 introduce the opening of the Kingdom Age. We will now jump to verses 15 and 16.

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

“Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” (Joel 2:15,16)

Notice the last part of verse 16, “Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” Most people bring these clauses into the equation of what is being described, but we feel it has a dual application similar to what we have been saying about the Bridegroom.

Verse 17 returns to the earthly application: “Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?” This figurative picture is based on the literal altar back in Joel’s day to show how important it was for one who was mourning to grab the horns of the altar and how important the priesthood was in the forgiveness of sin. Verse 17 tells that the nation of Israel will eventually be in such excruciating straits that as a people, they will break down and ask for God’s help.

The second chapter of Joel continues:

“Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

“Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

“But I will remove far off from you the northern army [Gog and Magog], and will drive him into a land barren and desolate [by the Dead Sea], with his face toward the east sea [the Dead Sea], and his hinder part toward the utmost sea [the Mediterranean Sea], and his stink [from the carcasses] shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.” (Joel 2:18-20)

In other words, God will fight for His people as He did in the day of battle (Zech. 14:3). The time application when God will favor natural Israel is likened to the Bridegroom coming forth from his chamber at the end of the Gospel Age. During the Kingdom Age, all in their graves will come forth, but it will take time for the heat of that sun to reach every individual, with Adam being the last. Adam will have to feel the beneficent effect of Christ’s ransom sacrifice

because the human race was condemned through him as an individual. He will be given opportunity for life with the realization that condemnation came upon the whole human race from his loins. Thus the sun will shine into the prisoners in darkness in the tomb.

The picture of the Bridegroom is complicated, and other pictures give support to the reasoning presented. We have tried to show that there are several applications: in the beginning of the Gospel Age, at the end of the Gospel Age, and at the end of the Kingdom Age. Christ died not just for the Christian but for all to have the opportunity and hope of everlasting life.

Q: After the thousand years have ended and the earth is completely restored, will the specific covenant with Abraham and Israel cease so that henceforth everything will be on an individual basis?

A: The New Covenant will be introduced when the Kingdom Age opens, but the completion of the New Covenant and its reward will not take place until the end of the Kingdom Age. The covenant will not become binding until Jesus steps out from being the Mediator. During the Kingdom, when he is mediating the New Covenant, he will stand between God and men, and he will not officially withdraw himself until all enemies are destroyed, the last enemy being death. He will hand over to the Father a finished, complete, perfected work; that is, he will not present merely a race with perfect human bodies but a race whose hearts are perfect. The New Covenant will forever be in effect down here, and as long as people obey, they will live forever. The at-one-ment will be accomplished. Those formerly estranged from God will be with God but on an earthly plane.

Q: Will the special relationship with Israel ever end?

A: It will end in the sense that every man will be a king after the Kingdom Age has ended. When all who pass the test at the end of the Millennium live on into the ages of ages, the Israelites will no longer be a peculiar people. All will be children of the Second Adam.

Psa. 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Psa. 19:8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psa. 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

In reading verses 7-9, which describe God's testimonies, what do we notice? (1) They all pertain to Jehovah. (2) They have to do with the soul, the mind, the heart, and the eyes. God's Law has an effect on us inwardly as well as outwardly. Of course, knowing our true situation, we need the most help in understanding the inward parts. (3) There is nothing negative in these verses. Everything is positive and corresponds to a nice and wholesome day. The brightly shining sun has a good effect on our emotions and greatly influences our attitude.

God's Word is as silver refined seven times, and His thoughts are both deeper and higher than our human reasoning capabilities. Nevertheless, we try to understand His thinking on the upper level and also to examine the deep content that is rendered. Verses 7-9 describe six component parts: God's Law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments. It is difficult to ascertain whether these six attributes are in ascending or descending order, or not in any particular order at all. Our understanding is that the "law," listed first, is most important, but so are His "judgments," which are listed last. The four in-between attributes provide details

of the Law. Similarly, love has three, six, or even seven characteristics in the New Testament depending on who is giving the explanation. Faith, hope, and love are presented in ascending order in one place, and the component parts of love, such as kindness and long-suffering, are described in 1 Corinthians 13. When the descriptions are combined, they complement each other and describe, as simply as possible, what love is. In other words, love embraces, or contains, various elements or graces, and all are needed lest we interpret love from an emotional or human standpoint of feelings.

To summarize: In regard to the six component parts in verses 7-9, we understand that the Law at the beginning is very important, as well as the judgments at the end. The four in-between attributes help us to understand how to apply the Law and judgments in more concrete terms.

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul.” In other words, “The law of Jehovah is complete, restoring the soul.” Normally, the word “law” is the Hebrew *torah*, which reminds us of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. In fact, Jews consider the first five books to be the Torah. The “law” restores, converts, or brings back the soul to a right condition from what it lacks in its imperfection. We read God’s Word in the hope of obtaining instruction for thinking and acting aright.

Of course the Psalms give the perspective of Old Testament teaching, so we should examine Psalm 19 from that standpoint. The first five books of the Bible have different component parts. (1) Genesis tells the history of how planet Earth was made and describes the various stages of its development. We are told that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and of man. Approximately 2,000 years of the history and beginnings of the human race are presented, going through the Flood of Noah’s day and beyond. (2) Exodus provides a continuation of the history of Israel, telling about the nation’s coming out of Egypt, entering the Sinai wilderness, and receiving the Ten Commandments. (3) Leviticus gives details, precepts, and ordinances of the Mosaic Law. (4) The Book of Numbers follows with details of events during the 40 years the Israelites were in the wilderness. (5) Deuteronomy concludes the Pentateuch, with Moses giving a review of the 40 years. The remainder of the Old Testament continues to show the degradation of mankind as a result of Adam’s sinning in the Garden of Eden.

Between the Law and judgments in verses 7-9 are four different descriptions. One is the “testimony” of the Law: “The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple”; that is, it instructs babes. By the multiplicity of Scripture, even those whose understanding is limited can gain instruction. They can feed on different component parts like milk, glean some understanding. As they mature, they get further and deeper instruction. Wisdom is involved, making wise the little ones.

Comment: David’s contemplation of the Law day and night converted his soul by increasing his faith to know that God will do what He promises.

Reply: The Septuagint uses the word “faithful” instead of “sure.” As the Creator, God has the ability, the wisdom, and the power to give surety to His instruction.

The Torah is usually described as the teaching or instructions of the Word. The “testimony” is sure and faithful; it is confirmed, as signified by the Hebrew word *eduth*. What does the word “testimony” remind us of from God’s standpoint? The prophets always started their instructions with a “thus saith the LORD,” which indicated a spoken testimony that was heard. With His Holy Spirit, God gave the prophets inspiration to mechanically speak things they often did not fully understand. They uttered, or testified, what the Holy Spirit prompted them to say. When we were babes and made a full consecration of ourselves to God, we recognized that the Bible truly is *God’s Word*—the Holy Bible is sure and faithful. We can rely on that Word

because the Creator is in back of it.

Thus babes can feed on the Word and obtain milk for their sustenance. The part they are capable of understanding sustains them. There is a sufficiency of simplicity in some of the statements so that even the most unlearned can understand moral values, for example. As God's creatures mature—even the weakest of them—they understand more and more in proportion to their talents, hunger, and perseverance. The “testimony,” then, is a “thus saith the LORD” in the written Word.

Incidentally, we are only scratching the surface and making suggestions with these remarks, for the Scriptures are deeper than we can go. The four—testimony, statutes, commandment, and fear—are four perspectives of looking into the Word of God that assure us it speaks *truth*.

Verse 8 contains two component parts: statutes and commandment: “The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” The Hebrew word *piqqudim*, rendered “statutes” only once, is translated “precepts” 21 times in Scripture. Therefore, common sense would say that the word “precepts” is perhaps a better description of this second attribute of the Law. “The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.” The word “precepts” is derived from “engraving,” meaning something sharp that is cut out. Right away the suggestion is that if these precepts are codified, or brought down to something more understandable, they are best enunciated in an abbreviated form, namely, the Ten Commandments, which were engraved on tablets of stone. Those two tablets were a witness, a testimony—specifically, the two witnesses.

Engraved upon that testimony were the Ten Commandments, which really cover the whole Torah from a *moral* perspective. They describe what God's Law should do to us in our inward parts. David was not talking about the ceremonial law here but the moral precepts, which are “right,” for they rejoice the heart. That principle is stated elsewhere, “Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:5). Certainly our first duty is Godward, toward Him who created us. The commandment “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” is in harmony with this principle (Exod. 20:8). We should not only respect God's Word for what it states but take time to study it. The sabbath day was instituted as a rest from physical labor, but in addition, it was meant for the study of God's precepts.

Another word for “precepts” is “principles.” The moral law is the principles of God's Word. Therefore, God's Law is a testimony written on paper “tablets,” so that one is without excuse for not studying it. The principles are right and just; they make sense. We rejoice that there is a God of order who can instruct us and restructure our life. Originally, we came to Him as sinners, recognizing our need to be healed. The more we look into the precepts, the principles, underlying God's written Word, His testimony, the more we realize that they are right and that they rejoice the heart. We are looking for this very thing—for something to bring us out of the mess of our own life and make us something worthwhile where we will be at rest. Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden [in sin], and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

“The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” *Mitsvah* is the Hebrew word for “commandment.” A “commandment” not only tells what is right but requires obedience lest there be a penalty. Commandments tell us what we should do and what we should not do. They are a different perspective of the Torah, the Law. Although God gave these statements to natural Israel, we can extrapolate principles to guide us as new creatures. After all, the Law is God's thinking. It is *His* Law; *He* is the Author. The gospel is better for us because it is an arrangement whereby a person in sin can repent, reform, make restitution, receive Christ's

robe of righteousness, and enter into covenant relationship with God, but God's Law in the Old Testament is perfect. When once instilled into all of God's created beings, the Law will last forever. Jesus is an Advocate for the Christian and will be a Mediator for the world of mankind in the Kingdom. In the present age, he is at our side as our helper. Through him and his merit, we can approach God.

These Scriptures are over our head, but we can glean wonderful truths. If we are faithful and we mature as Christians, deeper truths will keep unfolding as the years go by. The Scriptures are a mine deeper than mortal man can ever go, and they are higher in elevation than we can ever attain, for God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Nevertheless, we can fly in the atmosphere down here up to a certain height, as it were. The commandments enlighten the eyes, which are a symbol of intelligence.

When we read the Law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandments, the fear, and the judgments, we find something very interesting. The Law converts the soul. The testimony instructs the babe (pertaining to the mental capability). The statutes cause the heart to rejoice. The commandments enlighten the eyes. We can hear, see, think, and talk. Thus these verses address us from different perspectives. The soul is listed first, for it is the most important part of our being, but the heart, the will, and the mind—inward parts—are also involved. However, in addition to cleaning the inner part of our life, we must clean the outer part. Some evidence of what is going on inside must be seen outside, that is, in our conduct, our walk. We can judge a tree by its fruit, but we cannot see the inward parts. "Out of the abundance of the heart [and the mind] the mouth speaketh [the thinking exits]" (Matt. 12:34). We hear what a person says, and we see his behavior—both are conduct. Both inward and outward parts are involved.

"The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever." The Hebrew word *yirah* is translated "fear" 42 times. Jehovah wishes to instill a *proper* fear in us. He does not want to frighten us into doing His will; rather, He wants to encourage us, of our own volition, to reverence Him. We should fear to displease God. When used as a watchdog, fear is a very useful tool, but if the watchdog barks at every little noise it hears, then the fear becomes dulled and is not proper. We should examine ourselves to see whether the faults are minor or serious, for we want the barking to occur in the latter case. God does like us to tremble at His Word, but He appreciates obedient children who have respect for Him so that they fear to dishonor Him in any way. He delights to see a freewill offering—an offering from the heart that is not the result of peer pressure. Although God will not interfere with free will, the Holy Spirit is a sentinel that guards our mind. Thus proper fear is a *holy* fear.

"The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether." These judgments pertain to us as individuals. It is as if we are before a judge in a courtroom. As the Apostle Paul said, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" to see whether he will accept us and whether we are worthy to get life (2 Cor. 5:10). Of course the Heavenly Father makes the decision, but Jesus is the spokesperson for the Christian and will be in that role for the world in the Kingdom Age as well. The sentence, the judgment, is as important as the Law. Therefore, of the six attributes, the first, the Law, and the last, the judgments, are exceedingly important, and the four sandwiched in between are different perspectives to understand what God's will and thinking are. The judgment at the very end will reveal how well we have done. Were we faithful unto death? Are we more than overcomers? God's decisions in regard to the Church, His judicial pronouncements and enactments of judgment, are the fruits of the works being done in the Gospel Age. These remain to be seen with each of us. Our hope is that we will stand the test and be of the Little Flock—that Jesus will say to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). These thoughts should keep us humble.

Psa. 19:10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Verses 10-14 are the expression of David as to the reward, the benefit, that comes from meditating on what was expressed in the earlier verses of Psalm 19. What is very unusual is the mathematical sequence of this Psalm, for it rivals anything the Apostle Paul said in the New Testament except that he had the benefit of the Holy Spirit in a most unusual sense. However, in our judgment, as far as natural wisdom is concerned, David was certainly a match. Some reasons are as follows.

Earlier in the Psalm, David mentioned that the heavens declare the glory of God. From his observation of the heavens in the evening when, as a shepherd, he lay with his sheep and meditated, he applied what he saw along spiritual lines, which he categorized into six component parts, starting with the Law, the Torah. He spoke of the Law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandments, the fear, and the judgments—all being of Jehovah. Then he told the effect, spiritually speaking, of these six component parts; namely, they were perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true. The precision and succinct expressions were unusual. Based on his meditations, David also said that the component parts changed, converted, improved, and benefited the different parts of one's being: the soul, the mind, the heart, the eyes, and the conscience. With regard to the last, or sixth part, while the judgments of Jehovah are righteous altogether, the benefit we receive from them can be summed up as a completeness, a satisfaction of being. This completeness is like the epitome of the benefit received from all six component parts.

First, David observed and drew lessons from the heavens by night—the moon, the planets, and the stars that shone. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (verse 1). Next he observed that in the daytime, while the stars are obliterated because of brightness, the sun becomes center stage. And he made that sun a representation of Jesus as a Bridegroom bursting forth from the chamber.

In considering all these things, we see how wonderful is the satisfaction received from the judgments—that is, from the judicial sentences for the enactments of the previous benefits of the soul, mind, heart, eyes, and conscience. Now we come to verse 10, which is stated in a very pragmatic sense. Previously, David drew analogies, for he realized that the literal things he beheld not only taught spiritual lessons but also had a benefit on his personal life.

“More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” The benefit received from the six component parts—the Law, testimonies, statutes, commandments, fear, and judgments of Jehovah—is more precious than any gold that we might possess. Not only are they “more to be desired” than material benefits, but also there is a sweetness when we meditate on these principles day and night, as David did.

The previous six component parts are more to be desired than gold, and they are sweeter than honey and honeycomb. Notice what precise, short statements David made—how *refined* they were! God's Word is described as silver refined in a furnace seven times (Psa. 12:6). David's meditation shows what an apt figure he was of Jesus. Surely David pleased God, and Jesus is the most beautiful example of one who treasures up God's Word and wants to obey to his fullest capability.

Comment: Psalm 19 expresses how we should feel about the Lord's Word in our heart. We should desire His Word above anything else.

Reply: Yes. In fact, we consecrate because the Bible is like finding a wonderful and important

gem from God. His Word is the foundation of our faith. We love God because of His Word. Someone may expound on and be of some benefit in explaining that Word, but the bottom line is, “Thus saith the LORD.” Otherwise, we should be very suspicious as to what we are learning from the mouth of another. “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). Conversely, if there is light, if individuals speak according to the Word, we can get some benefit because they might bring out points in their sermons that we ourselves are not capable of discerning. We thank the leading servants, the seven messengers down through the Gospel Age, whom God raised up.

Gold represents divine truths. In regard to the honey and the honeycomb, the Apostle John said God’s Word was in his mouth sweet as honey, but when it went down to his belly, it was bitter (Rev. 10:9). The Word gets into the cells of our body when we partake of and digest it. In studying about the clean and unclean foods, we realize the benefits of proper spiritual food and also the damage that can be done by the improper selection of doctrine and the entertaining of wrong thoughts. What we meditate upon is important, for as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). In addition to being sweet like honey, God’s Word is different from anything else in the world.

Psa. 19:11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

By these various principles and precepts (the six mentioned earlier) “is thy servant warned,” and “in [the] keeping of them there is great reward.” It is one thing *to hear* the Word of God, and it is another thing *to obey* the Word—not only to receive the precepts but also to practice or exercise oneself in developing the various fruits of the Holy Spirit. Of course this development takes time, and many distractions in life occupy our time in one way or another to delay concentrating our attention along these lines. The sooner we realize the importance of the possession of the Word, the better. If we have not at least read completely every word of Scripture, we lose benefit through that neglect. Then, in harmony with how we obey, the Holy Spirit will bless us with the understanding of what we read and help us to later recall and extract information as it is needed in our Christian walk.

The “great reward” of obedience is the divine nature and immortality. “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). How startling that Peter, the uneducated fisherman, made these statements! How he changed! With the depth of his thinking in later life, he almost rivaled the Apostle Paul. Peter lacked the training of Paul, who sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but those two apostles stand out, with Paul, of course, being superior (Acts 22:3).

Psa. 19:12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

We can understand some of our errors, especially when someone bluntly tells us to our face, but there are so many other errors that we need God’s Word to inform us. “Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

Comment: The Apostle Paul said, “For what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I,” the principle being that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Rom. 7:15). His intent was pure and honest, but he sinned, nevertheless, on various levels throughout his life, and we are all confronted with that fight. We want to do what is right, but for some reason, we turn around and do that which is wrong.

Reply: The Lord’s Word will reveal those thoughts. However, sometimes when we come to parts of the Bible we feel are too penetrating and too revealing, the old man in us, the flesh,

tends to skip over them. We avoid what may be the most important medicine for our soul and, instead, select the portions we like. Some of the things that we dislike, which could expose our secret faults, the old man in us says are not necessary.

Psa. 19:13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

The “great transgression” is the sin unto Second Death. “Presumptuous sins,” or *willful* sins, are bold and contradictory to the instructions given to us in the Word. Since these sins are not due to Adamic weakness but are done with knowledge, we become personally more responsible for this type of sin in proportion to our knowledge. Stated another way, the damage to the new creature is proportionate to the degree of disobedience. “Let them [willful sins] not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and ... innocent.”

Psa. 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Notice the precision: “Let the words *of my mouth*, and the meditation *of my heart*, be acceptable.” God is the source of all these blessings.

Psalm 19 is very, very deep. We would now like to pursue it from the original standpoint of the heavens. The emphasis is usually put on the beautiful pageantry of the heavens at night and how infinite they are. However, we will consider them in the daytime. In addition to likening the sun to a bridegroom coming out of a chamber, there is another aspect. On a nice day, the sun has a healing quality. For example, it dries up the marsh where disease and filth accumulate and mosquitoes breed. A beautiful day with a clear atmosphere also affects the mind, so that we feel better and are more cheerful. Moreover, the wind blows away bad odors.

Not only does the sun restore the mind and heal the body, but it restores the “soul,” the spirit. Thus it has a practical benefit. The “testimony [makes] ... wise the simple” (verse 7). On the one hand, a college degree is not needed to see the distinction between the light of day and the darkness of night. On the other hand, meditation on day and night is of benefit, even if we have little understanding and are only one-talented. Some practical benefits can be perceived; for example, sunlight is necessary for the growing of crops and flowers. The same is true with the spiritual feeding of the mind. Feeding on God’s Word not only gives us life but also seems to prosper even the marrow of our bones. What the “testimony” does to the mind, it also does to the flesh and the spirit. David also said the “testimony ... is sure.” The 12 hours of the day and the 12 hours of the night are so dependable that mankind can use clocks. There is a mathematical definition or structure to day and night.

In addition to the heat of the sun, a coldness is necessary. Moreover, the beauty and the variety of color, texture, and fragrance in nature rejoice our heart.

The “statutes [ordinances or precepts] ... are right” (verse 8). The earth has not only a gravitational pull on our bodies but also a centrifugal force as it revolves on its axis. The centrifugal force offsets the gravitational pull, providing a beautiful balance in nature, so that when we walk around, we do not feel any pressure.

“Fear,” an important watchdog, is related to our conscience, which warns us of danger. To have a barking dog when an enemy is near is very helpful but not if that dog barks all day and all night. Thus fear has its place as a warning. Accordingly, we tremble at God’s Word. If we disobey, we can be sure that something will happen to us as new creatures. The “fear,” or reverential awe, instilled by nature is the fear to dishonor God. This type of fear has a warning

effect such as, “Do not look at that!”

The “judgments” of Jehovah are also in nature, for example, earthquakes, tornadoes, and hurricanes. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by an earthquake and the resultant molten lava. The Flood of Noah’s day cleansed the earth, leaving only eight people as survivors. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was a necessary judgment. Jeremiah continuously warned the people what would happen, but they turned a deaf ear. If that judgment had not occurred, all would have gone into Second Death because the characters were becoming so pernicious. The plagues that occurred prior to the Exodus brought deliverance to the Israelites and death to the Egyptians. All of these outward enactments were justified judicial sentences because God produced them. In addition, there is probably a reason for many of the judgments taking place today, and we believe the reasons will be revealed in the future.

In observing the firmament (the sky or atmosphere—the expanse, or layer of air, between outer space and planet Earth), we see the power of God and what He can do with the forces of nature. All of these things give us confidence that God can and will, in His own due time, do whatever He intends. How thankful we are that His Word gives us some little inkling of what is going on! He instructs us and makes us wise, simple though we are in understanding.

Psalm 19 is an astounding example of the profound knowledge and wisdom of David. In our judgment, he was wiser than Solomon, but Solomon was wiser in the more mundane things. Solomon did have some spiritual understanding about a resurrection and the distinction between the body and the soul, but only a few verses give that explanation, whereas we are inundated with profound knowledge when we read the Psalms.

PSALM 20

Psa. 20:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 20:1 The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

Verse 1 is a commentary by David, who was moved by the Holy Spirit to address the people of Israel. The second half of the verse sounds as if he was in the role of a king praying for God’s blessing to be upon his subjects, and there is evidence to this effect; namely, “the name of the God of Jacob [the father of the 12 tribes, hence all Israel] defend thee.” The wonderful quality of David’s leadership was his commiseration with those underneath his authority or rule. While reigning, he prayed for a blessing on his subjects, and of course those subjects were really the subjects of the God of Jacob.

Q: Does the phrase “in the day of trouble” apply to Israel at the present time?

A: We understand the term, as used in this Psalm, to apply to any day of trouble.

Comment: Verses 1-3 are good in the New American Standard Bible: “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high! May he send you help from the sanctuary, and support you from Zion! May he remember all your meal offerings, and find your burnt offering acceptable! Selah.”

Reply: A King James marginal reference supports the alternate rendering in verse 1: “set thee on a high place,” the thought being of exaltation. The NASB, which is a more literal rendering, is a good version. Down through history, important buildings in England and France—castles, forts, and especially residences of kings, lords, and nobles—were built on hilltops because a

higher location made them easier to defend.

Psa. 20:2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

Notice the rhythmic or couplet form of the verses. For example, verse 2 is composed of (1) “Send thee help from the sanctuary,” and (2) “strengthen thee out of Zion.” We can see how easily this Psalm, which was a prayer, could be put to music and sung with meaning. In the Temple, one music chamber was on one side of the court, and a second music chamber was diagonally across on the other side of the court, both facing the altar in the middle of the court, which looked toward the front of the Temple. The choir on one side sang the first half of the couplet, and then the choir on the other side sang the second half. The performance would be very moving to hear, and the nation in the stands could also be singing in their own way as an accompaniment to the voices emanating from the Inner Court of Solomon’s Temple.

Although the Temple had not been built when David penned the Psalms, we can see that the future structure was so much on his mind that he even prepared the hymns in advance—hymns for the choir as they would ascend to each platform, or level, where they would be positioned to sing as in a bowl, or sort of amphitheater, to convey the music in the proper direction. How pleasant the echo would sound, and how full of meaning the hymns would be!

What is the distinction between “the sanctuary” and “Zion”? Sometimes Zion is synonymous with the location of Jerusalem, and at other times it refers to the spiritual source of blessing. Here the signification was probably the sanctuary of God’s presence among His people Israel. In a little broader sense, it included the Inner Court, and in the more meaningful sense, as used here, it embraced those in the Temple complex who heard this singing. The singing was for their enjoyment and pleasure, as well as the enjoyment and pleasure of those who were doing the actual singing, praising God. Therefore, David seemed to be thinking of the Temple, which was constructed after his death.

Q: Can “Zion” be considered the glorified Church, who will save Israel out of Jacob’s Trouble?

A: We do not think the reference is to either The Christ or the Kingdom Age. Verse 2 pertains to sending help from on high—from God or some agency He might employ—to defend the Israelites in their hour of need.

Psa. 20:3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

Verse 3 is a continuation of the prayer, being directed heavenward. Notice that the “offerings” are plural, whereas the “burnt sacrifice” is singular. In this context, the burnt sacrifice was the morning and the evening sacrifice, which were wholly consumed. On many occasions, from either an individual or a collective standpoint, the burnt sacrifice can be considered a plural noun as a national offering on behalf of Israel. In regard to the sin offering for the people, the Lord hearkened to the voice of the congregation of Israel and blessed them.

Psa. 20:4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

“Grant thee [that blessing] according to thine own heart.” The reward of prayer is usually proportional to the degree of the petitioner’s intensity of feeling, that is, in proportion as he hungers and thirsts and employs energy for help, information, or direction. Thus emotions and the heart play an important part in one’s prayer life. When an injustice occurs, emotion takes over—and properly so. For example, when the poor are being taken advantage of, there should be a hearty response on our part. Sometimes, however, the poor are the wrongdoers, and in that case, we should not allow poverty to influence our decision.

The intellectual approach of David is apparent, and his remarkable character is brought out in a special way in the Psalms. Here he was saying, “God reward you according to the sincerity and thirst of your heart.”

“And fulfil all thy counsel.” David could safely use this terminology for if the prayer was superficial, the fulfilling of the counsel of that petition for guidance would also be superficial. Sometimes the Lord answers no, and sometimes He does not give an answer. In any event, we can see the depth of David’s wisdom. Today many improperly say, “Just accept the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved forever. There is no danger that you will lose your relationship with him.” David was very discreet in his petitions, and his discretion benefits the hearer, who then examines his own depth of feeling. At times before a large congregation, one will conclude his testimony with the words “Pray for me as I pray for you.” The answer will be in proportion to the way the prayer is uttered. Does the one testifying literally pray for every individual in the room? No. It is a different matter when attention is focused on particular individuals who are in specific and dire need. Therefore, it is preferable to omit the rather meaningless statement “Pray for me as I pray for you.”

The couplets are balancing statements. According to the weight and depth of feeling, sorrow, and grief for another, the Lord is more apt to, in some manner, balance the scale with more focused attention in answering the prayer in one form or another, perhaps granting the individual under that situation an unusual momentary blessing. The prayer may not eliminate the pain or the problem, but it will give sufficient strength so that the person does not succumb to the trial and let go of or loosen his anchor of faith, which is centered in the Most Holy.

Psa. 20:5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

In one word, verse 5 is saying, “Amen!” David included himself in the pronoun “we.” Jesus and the apostles often did the same. For example, in teaching the disciples to pray, Jesus said, “Our Father.” How sweet is the camaraderie of the spirit of brotherhood that exists among the true body members of Christ!

“We will set up our banners.” What are “banners”? Today, to the worldly mind, a banner is usually a flag or a placard, but David was referring to publishing the truth. Not satisfied to merely teach those of our household or our friends, we should want to have a more public participation in witnessing to the Lord’s greatness in some manner of development. Witnessing can be done in various ways, and each of the consecrated should operate according to his talent(s) and as the Lord gives opportunity and not be restricted to one method of proclaiming the truth.

Psa. 20:6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

On a personal level, God saved David from Saul earlier. At the time of this Psalm, David was on the throne as king. He was not a shepherd in the field tending the flock, nor was he a helper and adviser in King Saul’s household, for he had been delivered from Saul, who had deceased. Now he was in Saul’s stead, so he could speak in past tense. He had yearned to be delivered, but he would not in any fashion jeopardize the king’s role. When David had two opportunities to kill Saul, he refrained, for he did not want to touch God’s anointed.

“He [Jehovah] will hear him [the anointed, specifically David back there] from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.” David was now king, but previously, for several

years, he had exercised patience. He knew that one day he would sit upon the throne of Judah because he had been anointed to office through Samuel, but he had to wait for the Lord's timing. Now he knew not merely that he had been saved but also that the Lord answers prayer. The answer may be delayed, even for years, but with patience and persistence, the prayer is answered in almost all instances.

Since David was saved and enthroned, he knew that he, in occupying the role of king under the direction of Jehovah, could make a petition on behalf of the Lord's people, for it was entirely reasonable to assume, based on faith, that he had been providentially placed there as the shepherd of the Lord's flock. His prayers had been properly presented to the throne of grace, using modifying terms, so he expected they would be answered, even if the answer was simply yes or no.

Q: Is the "holy heaven" the same as the "heaven of heavens" (Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27)?

A: Yes, in our judgment.

Q: Is Jesus the "saving strength of his [Jehovah's] right hand"?

A: That will be true in the future, but in studying the Book of Psalms, we should first consider the setting in David's day. He was reigning as king, so the implication was that when he deceased and someone else occupied that office with divine approval, God would respond to the prayers of his successor. Of course living in the Gospel Age, we extrapolate from David's petition and apply the lesson either to our own experiences or to the future experiences with the world of mankind in the Kingdom Age. The first application is the literal one with David, for we base the spiritual upon the literal. As a rule of thumb, if we misunderstand the literal, we will, to some degree, misunderstand the spiritual. At least that has been a guiding principle in our own studies, for it helps us to understand with more specificity and distinctness certain prophecies of the Old Testament. In other words, we should not be too hasty to give a spiritual or an antitypical meaning but should, first, properly examine the literal account.

Psa. 20:7 **Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.**

Those who do not look to God for "saving strength" usually look for material support and strength—in this case, chariots, which were implements of warfare. Horses were also used in warfare, sometimes pulling chariots. To use chariots and horses would be trusting in the arm of man, or armaments.

From a favorable standpoint, "horses" picture doctrines. As Christians, our conduct is guided by doctrine. That instruction supports us and leads us in the way we want to go. The promises of God and the instruction, or doctrine, of His Word are our "horses," for they convey us to a destination or a harbor of safety.

A "chariot" represents some type of organization, agency, or corporation or a group of people or a particular medium of support. For instance, from a good standpoint, a chariot (our support in time of need) could be the prayers of other brethren on our behalf. A chariot could also be money that is given for a particular purpose. The world looks for material, political, or religious support or perhaps for charismatic character. Thus the chariot is the mechanism used.

Comment: Mankind trust in their riches; that is, they buy their strength.

Reply: Yes, money is regarded as power. The wealthy use their money in ways that, in their

judgment, are expeditious for their safety and security.

In antitype, a chariot could be a religious system such as the Catholic Church or a corporation. The individuals behind a corporation are responsible for the ethics or lack of ethics in business dealings. The persecutions and fiery trials that result in the death of the feet members in the near future will deliver the spirit from the body. The new creature will be born through the experience. A chariot and horses of fire will be the means of separating Elijah and Elisha prior to Elijah's change to the heavenly condition by a "whirlwind" (2 Kings 2:11).

"But we will remember the name of the LORD our God." The Christian should trust only in God. We "remember" His name when we call on Him in prayer for help. Sometimes experiences come on the Lord's people where, for instance, a person suddenly breaks in the door to do damage. In such cases, we pray immediately and without the preliminaries: "God, help me to do what is right!" In any event, we call on the name of God and the Savior to help us. The word "remember" suggests prayer as an immediate introduction into God's presence to hearken unto our need. Prayer is vital to the spiritual prosperity of the Christian.

Q: Is the thought of verse 7 that whatever group we belong to or whatever doctrine we hold will not save us?

A: That is correct when we give Psalm 20 a spiritual application.

Psa. 20:8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

"They [who trust in chariots, horses, etc.] are brought down and fallen [defeated]: but we [in calling upon the name of the Lord] are risen, and stand upright." Sometimes we are "risen" on this side of the veil, for we can be helped in the present life, and sometimes one is "risen" from the standpoint of receiving his change through death. In any event, verse 8 is a remembrance of the Lord God and the fact that He will not try us above what we are able but will deliver the soul (1 Cor. 10:13).

"We are risen, and stand upright." What a wonderful king David was! When the people had someone like him in their midst counseling them, their sentiment was, "We would like to serve David because God is with him." And that is the way we feel about Jesus, the one whom the Father sent for our salvation.

Comment: David brought out a lot of God's promises in the Psalms. If we do not make the "exceeding great and precious promises" our own, we will not be able to stand when trouble comes (2 Pet. 1:4).

Reply: That is true. Faithfulness and intensity of zeal bring the reward of immortality and the divine nature.

Psa. 20:9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

A better rendering is given in an interlinear translation of the Hebrew: "Save, O Jehovah: the king will answer us in the day of our calling." The word "let" in the King James Version should be italicized, for it was supplied. With King James being the sponsor in 1611, the translators subconsciously gave deference to him in petitions to the king. This version is a modified form of the Bishops' Bible, which is really Tyndale's Bible. In fact, in broad-brush terms, 90 percent of the King James Bible is Tyndale's translation.

Q: Is God the "king" in verse 9?

A: Yes, the king is Jehovah. After asking for help, David expressed confidence that God would answer the prayer. David was a wonderful person. Psalm 24 similarly uses “LORD” and “King” in the same verse. “Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle” (Psa. 24:8,10).

As an addendum, we will comment again on Psalm 20. Verse 7 reads, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.” When King David was preparing to fight with his relatively few faithful soldiery against the Ammonites, he gave a petition or pep talk, which inspired his forces, who were waiting to engage the enemy. The result was a boost in their spirits, and David won the victory. Subsequently he recorded the experience in this Psalm. Verses 1-4 contain David’s prayer, and in verse 5, he spoke as though he and his men had won the victory. God heard the petition.

PSALM 21

Psa. 21:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 21:1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

The basis of this Psalm is David’s installation in office as king after Saul was slain. Most commentators consider the king to be representative of Jesus. Of course we can extrapolate lessons for the new creature in that Jesus is our King. We have made a total commitment to the Heavenly Father that we will submit to the authority of His Son, recognizing that his merit covers us and that our allegiance to the Son is also an allegiance to the Father.

First, we will consider the Psalm from the literal standpoint. “The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!” When David was installed in office as king, he composed this Psalm to express his appreciation for the honor and joy of finally being given custody of the nation of Israel. He now looked forward to the fulfillment of all the promises.

The Psalm is equally joyous when verse 1 is applied to Jesus. The Second Psalm tells that he was installed as King. In spite of all the enmity and ignominy heaped upon him, he died faithfully on the Cross. As a result, God raised him from death and gave him personal glory: “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). Verse 1 is an expression of joy that the fruition of his hope finally came. Jesus was successful, even though (1) he was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, in the Garden of Gethsemane and (2) he said on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In spite of these experiences, his faith anchor held within the veil.

The same is true of David. He went through many experiences and patiently waited for God’s providence to accomplish his installation in office. David did not try to usurp the throne but endured being chased as a fugitive for several years by King Saul. He had been faithful to his commitment not to do any injury to Saul as the Lord’s anointed, and now he was in office.

Psa. 21:2 Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

Comment: “For the joy that was set before him,” Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Henceforth there was laid up for him the crown of righteousness.

Reply: Yes, Jesus' coming down here was based on the original promise of joy that was set before him, and verse 2 puts the receiving of that joy in the past tense.

During Jesus' ministry, when he went up in the mountain at night to pray, he knew that his Father always heard him because he did the things he was instructed to do. However, he was anything but joyful at the end of his ministry—he was a “man of sorrows” (Isa. 53:3). The last week of his life was tumultuous when the scribes and the Pharisees, in their bitterness and opposition, were successful in putting him on trial and manipulating his crucifixion.

Through sorrow, Jesus had now obtained “his heart's desire,” and God had “not withholden the request of his lips.” Jesus had fulfilled his mission successfully.

Psalm 21 seems to sequentially follow Psalm 20. God heard David's earlier prayer, and a crown was placed on his head, first at Hebron and later in regard to the northern kingdom, so that David became king of the entire nation.

Psa. 21:3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

The NIV reads, “You welcomed him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head.” The 1611 Old English word “prevent” is unfamiliar to us today in its originally intended usage. It can be rendered, “For thou presentest him with the blessings of goodness.”

Comment: Jesus did not have to wait until 1878 before he was set on the holy hill of Zion.

Reply: That is true, for he was made King over the Church when he sat on the right hand of the Father. The Second Psalm describes him as King when he ascended on high. His kingship over the world is still future.

Psa. 21:4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.

“Thou gavest it him ... length of days for ever and ever.”

Comment: Certainly David lived a relatively long life, but Jesus was rewarded with the divine nature. He was crowned as a King in AD 33 when he ascended to heaven before the Father and was rewarded and honored.

Jesus had the hope of everlasting life before he came down here, but he was made aware of that hope when the Holy Spirit opened the heavens to him at Jordan, revealing his preexistent knowledge. Immediately he went into the wilderness to sort out how to begin his ministry.

Q: Is there a record of David's having asked for life?

A: He said, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psa. 84:10). He looked forward to future security rather than for the comforts of the present life.

Q: Approximately how old was David when he died?

A: He was made king at age 30 and reigned for 40 years, so he was in his seventies.

Comment: “Thou gavest ... him ... length of days for ever and ever.” The Heavenly Father has

made arrangements for David to be on the literal throne in the Kingdom.

Reply: Yes, he was promised the “sure mercies of David.” God made a covenant with the nation of Israel, saying, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:3). In his closing days, David was assured that he would get a resurrection.

Comment: The seven-year span before David actually became king over the whole nation of Israel represents the seven stages of the Gospel Age. Not until those seven stages are complete will the reign over the world begin.

Reply: Yes, we have spoken on that subject in the past.

Psa. 21:5 His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

This verse is so powerful that the emphasis is on Jesus. Great was Jesus’ salvation, and it was God who saved him, hearkening unto his prayer in that most anxious moment of his earthly ministry and delivering him from the tomb.

Psa. 21:6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

As we continue with this Psalm, we see that the second application, referring to Jesus, becomes increasingly appropriate. However, in the literal account, King David was joyous when he got the privilege and honor of sitting on the throne. Originally, he was considered the least of the sons of Jesse.

“Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.” Not only was Jesus now back in God’s presence, but also he was in a much higher and more honored role. Jesus is still the Logos from the standpoint that he is God’s spokesperson both to us now and to the world in the Kingdom but on a higher plane than hitherto.

Comment: Jesus did not forfeit his previous office. Rather, he was given additional honors.

Psa. 21:7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

Jesus’ trust in the Father is exemplary, for he is “the chiefest among ten thousand” in behavior and responsibility (Song 5:10). He did not take this honor unto himself but was invited when God gave him this privilege and honor. When the holy angels were given the privilege of trying to lift up the human race, many of them fell from their first estate and were put in chains of darkness at the time of the Flood. Although conjectural, we believe that God subsequently tendered the proposition “Would anyone be willing to go down to earth under the conditions that I require and die on behalf of mankind?” None of the holy angels volunteered, for they saw how *crucial* the first test was, and they were thankful to have been obedient in holding themselves in check and trusting in God when He did not intervene in earth’s affairs but allowed the disobedient angels to do what they felt was good pleasure.

As the spokesperson of God, Jesus did not immediately volunteer, but when he saw that no one else responded, he said in effect, “Here am I. Send me.” Then the holy angels saw the true courage and faith that Jesus had as the Logos. Not only did they look upon him as the favored Son of God from the earliest beginning, but now they could see a personal worthiness in his coming down here, as manifested by Gabriel’s announcement to the shepherds at the time of

Jesus' birth. "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11). Suddenly a multitude of holy angels became visible in the heavens and triumphantly and happily proclaimed the message "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14). Because of Jesus' willingness to come down here, they admired his courage. They saw the willingness of the Logos to be humbled from his station, the most honored position of any of them, to become flesh. He volunteered to divest himself of his honor and office and allow God to make him a human and send him as the messenger in flesh.

The holy angels would have felt there was a nobility about Jesus. They beheld and admired his marvelous development from a babe, to a carpenter, to a young man, to his baptism at age 30, and during his ministry of 3 1/2 years. However, they did not anticipate the *depth* of Jesus' sufferings and experiences when he became the "man of sorrows." As a result of enduring them faithfully, he ascended to an even higher plane in their estimation.

Psa. 21:8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

Psa. 21:9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Verse 8 applies to the Kingdom Age. The Kingdom is Jehovah's, and He has given Jesus the privilege of being His representative down here. God selected Jesus, but the real success of the Kingdom will be His, as expressed in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is [done] in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). The time when no evil is permitted or tolerated will not be fulfilled until the age beyond the Kingdom Age, but verse 8 describes the *process* of that fulfillment and the successful outcome when Jesus hands over the Kingdom in a perfect condition to the Father. *God* is the One behind the scene; *His* hand sent Jesus. Therefore, the "right hand" is particularly focused on the ministry of Jesus, who will be the instrument to search out all those who are not fit to enter into God's everlasting Kingdom. He will search out all who hate Jehovah, that is, all who do not really love God from the bottom of their heart.

Verse 9 will be fulfilled at the end of the Kingdom Age in the termination of the Little Season. When Satan goes up to Jerusalem, fire will come down from heaven and devour all enemies (Rev. 20:7-10). At the same time—as *synonymous acts*—will come the rewarding of the Ancient Worthies with a spirit life and the destruction of God's enemies. Stated another way, the same "fire" coming down at the end of the Kingdom Age will accomplish two acts.

Comment: The NIV reads, "At the time of your appearing you will make them like a fiery furnace." Moffatt states, "You will burn them like a blazing furnace when you arrive in anger."

Reply: Yes, God's anger is the fire that will come down and destroy His enemies at the end of the Kingdom Age. *God's* "hand" shall find out all of His enemies (verse 8). *He* shall "make them as a fiery oven." Christ and the Church are the instrumentality God will use to destroy Satan and deal with the spirit realm, but God will deal with the earthly seed. There is a particular reason, we believe, why the saviors who come from Mount Zion will dispose of the one class and God will elevate the other (Obadiah 21). Although Jehovah's role might seem to be inferior, it is really the superior role because it will manifest to all beings who survive down here why He has permitted evil all along. Evil will end in a very startling climax that vindicates God's whole plan, for Wisdom is His last attribute to be revealed and thoroughly appreciated by those who behold it. God's Justice, Love, and Power will be manifested in other ways *during* the Kingdom, but Wisdom will not be seen in fullness until the *end* of the Kingdom Age. For that reason, Wisdom is at the back part of the faces of the living creatures (Ezek. 1:10). Thus

God will accomplish His purposes through His own “hand” and His “right hand” (The Christ). The twofold ministry is authored by Jehovah, who chose Jesus to be the Mediator between Himself and men.

Q: Does Malachi 4:1 refer to the same time period? “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

A: Yes, that is one of several parallel Scriptures. Two fires will come down. The fire at the end of the Gospel Age will leave bodies so great in number that seven months will be required to bury them. However, in regard to the fire that comes down at the end of the Kingdom Age, there will be no corpses. As a convenient term, a nuclear fire will consume the enemies of God, leaving nothing but perhaps ash. Thus two revealings will occur, one at the end of the Gospel Age and another at the end of the Kingdom Age, but the latter fire will leave a clean earth. Many Scriptures support these thoughts. We are thankful for the privilege of having given some of these background pictures over the years because now, predicated on understanding some of the prophecies, we have more liberty to speak and to delineate details.

Psa. 21:10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

As stated in Malachi 4:1, “neither root nor branch” will be left, for “their fruit ... and their seed” shall be destroyed “from among the children of men.” The destruction of the incorrigible means that those who are accounted worthy to enter the age beyond the Kingdom will be a thoroughly purged race who will not sin anymore. From time to time throughout eternity, there may be an individual who sins, but he will be immediately judged. Those who faithfully pass the test in the Little Season will be like the angels and not die henceforth because they will be crystallized characters just like the Church and the Great Company (Luke 20:35,36).

Comment: Noah is a type of the end of the age, and the purpose of the Flood was to destroy the offspring, the evil seed, of the unholy angels.

Reply: Another purpose of the Flood was to imprison the fallen angels in *tartaroo*. When Noah entered the time period after the Flood, he represented Jesus. In addition to Adam, Noah was the father of the human race, for all who were born subsequent to the Flood can be traced back to him. As a type, Noah is like a second Adam, so he and his three sons represent the world of mankind who enter into a new world, a new age—the Kingdom Age. In addition, Jesus will be the Father in the Kingdom Age, just as Noah was the father of the age after the Flood and Adam was the father of the age before the Flood. Hence we have a first Adam and a second Adam in picture form—Adam when he was perfect and Noah when he was considered perfect in that his seed was not contaminated.

Psa. 21:11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

The pronouns “thee,” “thy,” “thou,” and “thine” are interspersed about 25 times throughout Psalm 21, even though there are only 13 verses. In almost all cases, the pronoun refers to Jehovah.

When will verse 11 be fulfilled so that God’s enemies cannot perform their “mischievous device”? Two applications come to mind, so we will backtrack to verses 8-10 to ascertain the time factor. “Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that

hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.” The pronoun “thine” applies to Jehovah. Although His “hand” applies to Jesus in some cases in the Old Testament, the reference is to God’s own personal right hand in the majority of cases. Since there is a question as to the application in verse 8, we will go back to verse 7, which seems to indicate a change. “For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.” Psalm 21 is prefaced by the statement “To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David,” so we know that David wrote this Psalm. In most of the Psalms he penned, he narrated his own experiences. However, some of the Psalms have a higher application and really refer to Jesus. The point is that since David was guided by the Holy Spirit in writing this Psalm, it does not necessarily have to refer to him because sometimes the prophets of old mechanically spoke and wrote (or recorded) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God.

Verse 1 reads, “The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!” David probably felt that verses 1-7 were an account of his own experiences telling how God led him through life and resulting in a crown of gold being put on his head (verse 3). However, verses 1-7 can also refer to Jesus; that is, they have a partial application to David, but the more important and higher connotation pertains to Jesus. Some parts of Psalm 21 cannot possibly refer to David, for they are not peculiar to his own personal experience. Thus he wrote as he was mechanically moved. Therefore, in verse 8, “thine” refers to Jehovah, and “hand” refers to Jesus, the instrument through which Jehovah will find out all His enemies. Generally speaking, the pronouns refer to God, but the hand applies to Messiah. Verse 8 continues, “Thy [God’s] right hand [Jesus] shall find out those that hate thee [Him].”

“Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them” (verse 9). The clause “the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath” is parenthetical. From that standpoint, God’s hand (Jesus) shall find out all of His enemies; His right hand (also Jesus) shall find out all those who hate Him. God will make them as a fiery oven in the time of His anger. The statement “The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath” is like an inserted amen to reaffirm the previous statement.

The next question would be, What is the time element of the “fiery oven” and the devouring “fire”? Of the two possible applications, the obvious one is Malachi 4:1, pertaining to the Time of Trouble at the end of the Kingdom Age. “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” But there will also be a time of trouble at the beginning of the Kingdom Age. The day of God’s fury coming up in His face will be seen when the forces of Gog and Magog go down to Jerusalem. Ezekiel 38:18 states, “And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face.” God’s fury will be manifested to the world when His destruction is directed against the forces of Gog and Magog. We have suggested that Jesus and the Church will take care of the fallen angels, but to manifest that it is the time of *His* anger, God will, in a particular sense, *personally* be instrumental in destroying the host of Gog and Magog. Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 seem to be a vindication that Jehovah, who has been quiet all along, will now personally take action and do what He did in the past, as recorded in the Old Testament. For instance, the parting of the Red Sea by God’s power will be repeated with the splitting of the Mount of Olives. His mighty deeds of the past will be replicated with numerous different manifestations to show that the God of nature is angry about what is occurring at that time.

However, it is also true that at the end of the Kingdom Age, when Satan goes up to the “camp of the saints” and protests, a fire will come down from heaven and destroy the wicked, the

number of whom is as the sand of the sea (Rev. 20:8,9). The wicked will go up to the camp of the Ancient Worthies to manifest that they are disgruntled and want to be kings. Thus there will be two applications of Jehovah's wrath. We are inclined to think Psalm 21 is talking about the second application at the end of the Kingdom Age, as suggested by verses 10 and 11. "Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform."

We know that Satan will be involved with the Gog and Magog at the end of the Gospel Age, but there is more specificity in the different prophecies of the Old Testament with regard to his involvement at the end of the Kingdom Age. In a very definite sense, Satan will be involved personally, as an individual, and not through the beast, the dragon, or the false prophet. He himself will lead the host up to Jerusalem to protest at the end of the Kingdom Age, and they will be destroyed in Second Death, whereas when Gog and Magog are destroyed at the end of the Gospel Age and it takes seven months to bury the dead, the emphasis is not on Second Death. Annihilated momentarily, they will be resuscitated in the Kingdom Age. But there will be no hope whatever of another opportunity for life for those who are expunged at the end of the Kingdom Age. Therefore, we are inclined to think that Psalm 21 is referring to the destruction at that time. Jesus will be instrumental in giving all the instruction, but God Himself, the Author of life, will render the final decision of all who are worthy of Second Death.

"For they intended evil against thee." If verse 11 refers to the end of the Kingdom Age, Satan will be leading a human seed up to Jerusalem, and fallen angels will also be involved. By the end of that age, all of the corruptible human and angelic seed will be exterminated. Thus the pronoun "they" refers to that host, comprising incorrigible humans and angels under the leadership of Satan. "They imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform." At the present time, the "mischievous device" is an unfathomable mystery.

Q: Is the following understanding correct? Not long after the Great Company is off the scene, the fallen angels who have materialized will go into Second Death. The judgment of the remaining fallen angels will take place in the Kingdom, with only Satan being restrained in the bottomless pit until the Little Season.

A: Yes. The usual thought is that all of the fallen angels who attempt to materialize at the end of the Gospel Age will be expunged at that time. By the very act of materializing, they will manifest an unrepentant attitude and incorrigibility in spite of observing Jesus' life down here, his death on the Cross, and his preaching to them during the 40 days following his resurrection but before his ascension. Paul's question "Know ye not that we shall judge [men and] angels?" will apply throughout the Kingdom Age (1 Cor. 6:3). Therefore, while many fallen angels will inundate the earth at the end of the Gospel Age, the same is true of the end of the Kingdom Age. Inferentially, they will be judged as individuals down through the Kingdom Age just like humankind. Mankind will be given a hundred years of opportunity to walk up the highway of holiness except for those who refuse to bend the knee; such individuals will be cut off right away (Acts 3:23). Therefore, the Kingdom Age is a judgment period for both men and angels. At the end of the Kingdom Age will come the determination of those who *outwardly* obey but *inwardly* are not in harmony with God. This class, who will have secret longings not outwardly manifested by deeds, will be expunged.

Comment: Just as God cast Satan and the demons into *tartaroo* at the time of the Flood, so unrepentant angels will not be allowed to return to heaven. During the Kingdom Age, they will be judged by Christ and the Church.

Reply: Only those fallen angels who truly repent will eventually return to heaven, that is, at

the end of the Kingdom Age.

Psa. 21:12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.

The incorrigible fallen angels will be slain. There was a time in the Middle Ages when bows and arrows were the chief weapon of war. At the end of the Kingdom Age, God's prolific arrows will be against the "face" of the approaching enemy, defeating them. "Turn[ing] their back" corresponds to falling backward into Second Death, as illustrated by Eli's falling off his seat backward (1 Sam. 4:17,18). Another example is Dan, who was likened to "a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward" (Gen. 49:17). To fall backward is an unfavorable sign.

Psa. 21:13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

Jehovah will be exalted in His own strength at the end of the Kingdom Age. Suddenly the pronoun "we" is introduced into the Psalm. "So will we [Jesus and the Church in glory] sing and praise thy [God's] power." In the present life, we hope the power of God's Holy Spirit will make us fit for the "inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12).

Comment: Those who receive the divine nature will marvel at this point to think that Jehovah had this all planned out, down to the smallest detail, before the foundation of the earth.

Reply: Even those who eventually get the divine nature, the crown of glory, will not be able to explore the depths of God Himself. Just as technology advances of the last 20 years or so have given us greater insight into certain Scriptures, so partaking of the divine nature—the potential that exists with that change—will afford understanding with greater depth and detail. However, much will still be beyond the comprehension of the Church.

Comment: The end of verse 13, "so will we sing and praise thy power," harmonizes with Revelation 5:13, "And every creature ... heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him [God] that sitteth upon the throne."

PSALM 22

Psa. 22:0 To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.

The Twenty-second Psalm is one of the most important, for it prophetically told of Jesus' death on the Cross and his rising from the dead. The birth, death, and resurrection of Christ are the center of eternity, as it were. One way to illustrate this truth is to use the mathematical symbol for infinity, which resembles a figure 8 lying down (∞). Where the symbol crosses at midpoint represents Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. The hub of a wheel is another appropriate symbol. From the center, or hub, picturing Christ, extend outward all the "spokes," the outworkings of God's divine plan, to the perimeter of the wheel. A circle without end, the perimeter again shows the concept of infinity. The spokes represent God's acts that take place throughout eternity. The center of the infinity symbol or of a circle is a unique demarcation. Spiritually speaking, a cross should be placed there to indicate the critical point of the death and resurrection of Christ.

Verse 1 starts differently than we might normally anticipate, for the *climax* is put at the beginning of the Psalm. Other accounts in Scripture also start this way and subsequently tell of the events leading up to the climax.

Comment: In regard to the superscription “To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David,” a footnote in the Scofield Reference Bible states that “Aijeleth Shahar” means “hind of the morning” and thus is a title, not a musical instrument.

Reply: That is correct, for Aijeleth Shahar is the theme of this Psalm. However, it seems to be in direct contradiction to the subject matter as stated in verse 1, which prophetically expressed Jesus’ utterance on the Cross. We will try to harmonize the thought. A literal translation also renders the meaning as “a hind of the dawn,” which is substantively the same thought, for dawn is early morning.

When we, as Christians, read verse 1, we automatically know that Jesus made the utterance at the time of his crucifixion. Here is another seeming contradiction, for the superscription says, “A Psalm of David.” Many of David’s Psalms speak more of his personal experiences during his lifetime, from which we can draw spiritual lessons. However, it is hard to give verse 1 an application to both David and Jesus, when the overwhelming feeling is that it is an utterance of Jesus. Possibly David was speaking of a down experience he had, where this cry expressed his own feelings. Certainly in the study of the Psalms, we see that David was sometimes moved by the Holy Spirit to utter things he did not understand. Holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21).

Psa. 22:1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

Before we go into the details and circumstance of verse 1, we will read verses 2-5. It is as though verse 1 is serving notice of the importance of the Twenty-second Psalm.

Psa. 22:2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Psa. 22:3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Psa. 22:4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

Psa. 22:5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

Q: Are verses 2-5 more of an interjection by David personally?

A: Yes, they have a particular application to David. In Hebrew, the expression “O my God” is almost identical to “My God, my God” in verse 1 except for a little different inflection.

“I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.” This thought does not seem to be in harmony with Jesus’ actual experience just moments before he was nailed to the Cross and raised on high as the Cross was put in the socket of the hill. To say that he cried in the daytime and in the nighttime does not seem congruous with the hours preceding the Crucifixion.

Q: Could “daytime” refer to Jesus on the Cross and “night season” when he was “not silent” to his experience in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before?

A: We were going to mention those two experiences. (1) In Gethsemane, he said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). (2) On the Cross, he cried out, “My God,

my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). That could be an explanation, but we are more inclined to think this portion of the Psalm applied to David personally. Many times in the Psalms, David made similar statements about his experiences. In this Twenty-second Psalm, only verses 2-5 seem to fit his personal experience.

If verses 2-5 are considered as a parenthetical statement, then verses 1 and 6 are directly sequential and harmonious with what occurred when Jesus was on the Cross. Therefore, of the entire Psalm, only verses 2-5 are particularly applicable to David, but they are sufficient for the Psalm to be called “A Psalm of David.” In the remainder of the Psalm, the Holy Spirit supplies personal information, showing that Jehovah had the ability to foretell the actual expressions and thinking of Jesus, His dear Son, a thousand years in advance.

Verses 2-5 seem quite applicable to two periods in David’s life. The first period was when King Saul was pursuing him. The second period occurred when Absalom, David’s own son, was going to lead a rebellion against him.

Comment: Jesus prayed to his Father, “And I knew that thou hearest me always” (John 11:42).

Reply: Yes, that is one reason why we think verses 2-5 refer to David, not Jesus.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times for help, asking that the cup pass from him, and he was exceedingly sorrowful. His agonizing prayer, showing his emotions, is recorded in the Gospel of John. Even though Peter, James, and John were not far from him, he separated from them to personally prostrate himself before God in prayer, asking that, if possible, the cup would pass from him. Subsequently an angel was sent to help him in his extreme need, and from that time on, his behavior was exactly the opposite. Instead of further agonizing in prayer, Jesus spoke calmly to the apostles, “Sleep on now, and take your rest,” for an aura of serenity and submission to the divine will seemed to come upon him (Matt. 26:45). He continued to be calm and collected, even when he was betrayed by Judas. And when the guards were seeking to apprehend him, he had the calmness of mind and spirit to give advice to Peter after the ear of Malchus was cut off (John 18:10,11). Jesus was thoroughly resigned to the situation and had control over his spirit. Even after he underwent great humiliation, there was such nobility about him that Pilate remarked, “Behold the man!” (John 19:5). The extreme humiliation did not drown Jesus’ spirit. And when he was on the Cross, his spirit was collected for a time.

Now we will treat verse 1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” Jesus had two extreme moments: in Gethsemane and on the Cross when he cried out these words to his Father. In between, his prayer for help was answered. The Apostle Paul tells that Jesus “was heard in that he feared” (Heb. 5:7). “In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him [God] that was able to save him from death, ... [Jesus] was heard in that he feared.” He was heard because of his submission to the divine will even under extreme pleading that God might make an exception and modify the shame of the Cross. Jesus did not ask to be relieved of the death on the Cross, but in reflecting on the immediacy of the Crucifixion, he realized that it entailed being naked and exposed. He did not pray to escape crucifixion, for he had come to earth to die in that manner, but the details accompanying crucifixion were another matter. He was familiar with verses 6-31, so the removal or lightening of public shame was what he prayed for. He asked if the shame could somehow be modified so that he could endure the experience. However, the Father replied, “No, for this is my will.”

The angel who comforted Jesus probably quoted Scriptures to show he would be faithful. That comfort was sufficient for his composure, for Jesus had such faith in his Father’s Word that the

assurance “You will be faithful” calmed him.

Comment: Scofield has an interesting footnote: “Psalm 22 is a graphic picture of death by crucifixion. The bones of the hands, arms, shoulders, and pelvis out of joint (verse 14); the profuse perspiration followed by intense suffering; the action of the heart affected, strength exhausted, and extreme thirst; the hands and feet pierced; and partial nudity with the hurt to modesty are all incidental to that mode of death. The accompanying circumstances are precisely those fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. The desolate cry of verse 1; the periods of light and darkness of verse 2; the contumely of verses 6-8, 12, and 13; the casting of lots of verse 18—all were literally fulfilled when it is remembered that crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish, form of execution. The proof of inspiration is irresistible.”

Psa. 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

“I am a worm, and no man” refers to Jesus’ nakedness on the Cross. No doubt Jesus had a regal stature during his earthly ministry. Even though he was meek and humble in disposition and lowly of mind, his nobility of bearing as a perfect man was very noticeable. But now, on the Cross, it was completely different. A worm is unique in that it has no clothing. Also, we think of a worm as being crooked and curly in its general posture. Accordingly, Jesus was all out of joint. Isaiah 52:14 is pertinent: “As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.”

Jesus was “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” Being familiar with the rigors of Roman crucifixion, Jesus realized what being like a worm meant. For the sake of the family, the Roman centurions usually allowed a sop, a little bib of clothing, for the one being crucified. When many were crucified at the same time on the Appian Way leading to Jerusalem, the centurions permitted the people to put that form of modesty on the victims, but such was not the case with Jesus.

Comment: The word “worm” signifies the type of worm that was used in dyeing scarlet or purple and thus is an allusion to Jesus’ bloody suffering.

Psa. 22:7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

Psa. 22:8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

We continue to read of experiences Jesus had on the Cross before his utterance of verse 1. He meekly submitted to these experiences and did not rant about what would happen to those who mocked him. Instead of saying, “You will pay for what you just said,” he offered no apparent opposition to the challenge. “He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him.”

As the people taunted him, Jesus’ thoughts were, “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head.” Not only when he was being scourged by Pilate’s soldiers but also when he was on the Cross, the people laughed him to scorn and cruelly mocked him, yet Jesus did not respond and was submissive. He manifested perfect control.

Psa. 22:9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts.

Jesus was made flesh. Being perfect, he was a different child than any before him.

Comment: The Scofield footnote for “thou didst make me hope” is, “Thou kept me in safety.” When Herod was killing all babies two years old and under, God preserved the babe Jesus.

Reply: Yes, Jesus was given custodial care by the Heavenly Father in the flight to Egypt. An unusual fact about children is that in the midst of the deepest gloom or direst circumstance, they can somehow have a measure of happiness. Even as an infant, Jesus sensed God’s custodial care.

Psa. 22:10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.

Just as mothers sometimes cling to their children, even singing little songs of encouragement, so the Virgin Mary was probably a very happy woman, knowing she had been honored with the birth of the Messiah. The child, Jesus, would be a reflection of that happiness.

Psa. 22:11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

Verse 11 harmonizes with verses 6-8. Everything was in opposition to Jesus.

Psa. 22:12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

The religious leaders who wanted Jesus to be crucified were now seeing the accomplishment of their desire, for he was on the Cross. After taunting him for a while, they got tired and left, for surely they were not present when Jesus gave personal advice to his mother and the Apostle John. Jesus was on the Cross for three full hours, and the religious leaders and the public had their say before the expiration of that time. When they got the venom out of their system, they left him to die.

Q: Why did Jesus refer to them as “strong bulls of Bashan”?

A: They were making fun of him in a way that we do not like to express.

Psa. 22:13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

They gaped upon Jesus with their mouths like Satan, the ravening and roaring lion. Behind this excruciating experience of Jesus, the chief priests were being goaded on by adversarial influences. To torture Jesus, Satan used the methodology of working through human agents who were ready, willing, and able to do his bidding without knowing the source of the evil.

Psa. 22:14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

We can see the extremity that Jesus suffered on the Cross. “I am poured out like water, and [consequently] all my bones are out of joint.” Jesus’ flesh was beginning to deteriorate in that the water was separating from his body through the wounds of his hands, feet, and back. The white corpuscles, which are mostly alkaline water with some blood mixed in, are separate from the main portion of the blood, the serum. While hanging on the Cross, Jesus’ body was out of shape. The agony of twisting back and forth made the protrusion of his bones very conspicuous. Those who beheld him on the Cross saw the skeleton of his frame showing more and more because he was losing water from his system and becoming dehydrated. Jesus was well aware not only of his personal discomfort but also of his appearance in the eyes of others. Thus he was suffering from two different perspectives.

“My heart is like wax; it [Jesus’s heart] is melted in the midst of my bowels.” The blood was

internally seeping out of Jesus' heart and going into his bowels, and he could feel the weakening of his heart. Not until later, after his death when a soldier made an opening by piercing his side with a sword, did that collection of blood in the pleural cavity of his body pour out. God permitted the experience of this most severe and shameful type of death to come upon His Son. The Father required this suffering on the part of the Savior.

Psa. 22:15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

Even the saliva in his mouth was dissipating, so that his tongue stuck to his palate.

Psa. 22:16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

The term "dogs," which applies to Gentiles, refers to the Romans who actually pierced Jesus' hands and feet. Of course the scribes and the Pharisees, and particularly the two chief priests, Annas and Caiaphas, were the individuals most responsible for the Crucifixion.

Q: Were Annas and Caiaphas part of the "assembly of the wicked"?

A: Yes. In addition, others taunted Jesus. Meanwhile, the Roman guards made sure that they themselves were not disturbed, for they did not want anyone to trample on their authority. The crowds who demeaned Jesus came as close to him as they could, but the Roman guards were in the immediate presence of the Cross.

Psa. 22:17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

Verse 14 gives Jesus' prophetic utterance "All my bones are out of joint." Of course he realized this occurrence, and then, a short time later, he looked down and noticed how truly out of joint his bones were. Not only did he see his bones sticking out, but those who looked upon him also saw this phenomenon.

Comment: Depending on who stared at Jesus, the scribes and the Pharisees rejoiced and others were amazed at the contrast between what he was previously and how he now appeared.

Reply: Yes. Along another line, we think personally that if we had been there, we would not have gone close enough to observe some of the things the others were staring at. The women viewed him from afar. Surely those like Mary Magdalene would have liked to be right at the Cross, but only John and his mother were near the foot of the Cross (John 19:25-27).

When did Jesus carry on the conversation with John and his mother? We think it would have happened later than the verses already considered. Certainly while Jesus was being nailed to the Cross, the Roman guards, especially the centurion, made sure nothing inhibited what was being done. Until the Cross was lifted up into position, they would not want anyone too near. Incidentally, the Cross was quite high in order to fit into the socket and have Jesus' mouth so far above the earth that the sponge dipped in vinegar had to be put on the end of a relatively short reed to reach him and force him to drink. This explanation also gives some perspective of the considerable length of the Cross that Jesus carried from Pilate's abode up to the mount.

When darkness increased upon the land, the feeling of aloneness satisfied the immediate cravings of the dogs and the scum of the people who spat upon Jesus and stared at him. After satiating their lust, or desire, to express venom and taunt him, they would have left, and probably in the interim before his death, he spoke quietly to his mother and John.

Psa. 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

The Roman soldiers at the foot of the Cross parted Jesus' garments among themselves and cast lots for his vesture. They parted the various articles of clothing but kept his unusual seamless vesture intact rather than cut it up into four pieces; that is, it was considered more advisable to gamble, or cast lots, to see who would get the vesture.

There has been a debate as to whether the seamless vesture was on the outside of Jesus' garments when he was normally clothed or next to the skin of his body. Some consider the vesture to be priceless underwear, and they build up a story about its supposed healing qualities because of contact with his skin. They compare the vesture to the handkerchiefs and aprons of Paul and the shadow of Peter, which had healing benefits (Acts 5:15; 19:11,12). We have always considered the seamless robe to be an outer garment rather than an inner one. In any event, the seamless robe, which was whole, represents Jesus' stature as a perfect person, his own personal righteousness. While in the flesh, we need to have the merit of that robe applied to us.

Psa. 22:19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Jesus began to pray to his Father.

Psa. 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

The "power of the dog," as already mentioned, refers to the power of the Gentiles, the Romans. "Deliver my soul from the sword" was a figurative statement, meaning, "Help me so that I will not break down or succumb." Jesus wanted his faith to remain strong and his heart reliance on God to be steadfast like an anchor within the veil. He prayed that the relationship not be broken: "Save me from being broken as a new creature."

"Deliver ... my darling from the power of the dog." The term "darling" means "only" (Hebrew *yachid*). The word "one" is implied, so the thought is, "Deliver ... my only one from the power of the dog." The thought is not "my only begotten Son" but God's beloved Son, God's "darling." Jesus was saying to his Father, "When I presented my consecration to you at the river Jordan, you announced from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son [my darling Son], in whom I am well pleased.'" God also made this statement on the Mount of Transfiguration. In other words, twice during Jesus' ministry, the Father pronounced in an audible voice from heaven His unique relationship to Jesus; namely, while Jesus was not God's *only* begotten Son, he was the very choice Son. *Yachid* is also used in Genesis in regard to Isaac when Abraham was offering him on the altar (Gen. 22:2,16). Abraham had another son, Ishmael, so Isaac was not the only son but was the more beloved son. Abraham showed more favor to Isaac, and the Abrahamic Covenant would take place through the Isaac seed. Thus the word *yachid* referred to the unique relationship between Abraham and Isaac or between God and Jesus, the antitypical Isaac.

On this occasion, Jesus was thinking about himself. He could not understand some of the experiences he was having that were so severe and trying. He was humble enough to ask for a sufficiency of strength and character so that his faith structure in God, his Father and Caretaker, would not be crushed. Jesus' trial was getting near the breaking point, so it would have taken only a little more severity of experience to crush him. However, his character was stronger than he thought at that moment, for an even more severe experience would occur subsequently. God's true saints are tested similarly. Those who are perhaps most loyal will have some experience in their life where they have this testing, and the degree of their

suffering for Christ has a lot to do with the measure of glory they will attain in the Kingdom Age. Peter and Paul are chief characters based on what they endured. Those in particular positions of prominence will have the severest trials, Jesus of course having the severest trial of all from the standpoint of a perfect individual, or man.

Psa. 22:21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Jesus continued to pray, "Save me from the lion's mouth"; that is, "Save me from being devoured by Satan." Jesus did not want his spirit and faith to be crushed, so he prayed for spiritual strength.

"For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." Some translations define a "unicorn" as a wild ox, which seems to fit where the word appears several times in Scripture. Moses used this same Hebrew word, *reem*, when he gave his blessing upon the tribes of Israel. He likened Joseph's power in pushing opponents to the far ends of the earth to the horns of unicorns. "His [Joseph's] glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns (the wild ox): with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh" (Deut. 33:17). The implication is that Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, were the two horns of the wild ox. Of the two sons, Ephraim's natural inheritance would be more numerous. A tame ox is extremely strong, but a wild ox represents even greater strength and power. Manasseh, who was fewer in number, is one of the symbols of the Ancient Worthy class.

Q: If the unicorns are wild oxen, are they similar to the bulls of Bashan?

A: They are slightly different because the words are not the same in Hebrew. Also, the representation is different. A bull is a male animal of various kinds. The bull that was offered on the Brazen Altar was not a wild bull but a domesticated animal, picturing fullness or perfection, and it was not the Hebrew word *reem*.

Comment: A Bible dictionary states: "Unicorn. The Biblical animal was two-horned in Deut. 33:17, where the word is singular and not plural as in the AV. It was possessed of great strength but was too untamable to bend its neck to a yoke to assist man in agricultural labors."

Reply: When the word is singular, it still refers to Ephraim and Manasseh, the two "horns" of Joseph. In other words, Joseph was the unicorn, and the two horns were his two sons.

Spiritually speaking, the wild ox can be used either favorably or unfavorably depending on context. The four horns on the four corners of the Brazen Altar represented the horns of a domesticated steer that was in God's service. The way the horns were situated—that is, being curved to the four corners of the earth—indicated that the power of God's redemption is worldwide, going in all four directions as if the earth were a square instead of a sphere. Thus horns on the altar pictured a steer, even though the steer was not there. The actual hearth of the altar in Ezekiel's Temple will be called the "lion" (Hebrew *ariel*) of God, that is, a symbol of God's justice (Ezek. 43:15). Thus the hearth of the altar represents justice, and the horns symbolize power. That power of justice and redemption spreads out so that it is universal in its ability to reach to the remotest bounds of the earth.

Q: In verse 20, the "dog" is the Gentile, and in verse 21, the "lion" is Satan. What do the "unicorns" represent?

A: Jesus, feeling that his own strength was not sufficient unless God helped him to win the

victory, cried out, “Save me from the lion’s [Satan’s] mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns [that is, from the altar].” Thus the “horns of the unicorns” are favorable in Psalm 22. Jesus knew that the Father always heard him (John 11:42). Now he was petitioning for strength to endure.

Psa. 22:22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Jesus prophetically spoke in strength in this verse. Although we cannot be dogmatic, the words from verse 22 to the end of the Psalm seem to be Jesus’ sentiments after his resurrection, that is, as a result of his victory on the Cross.

We have not yet given the placement of verse 1, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” Probably verse 1 should be inserted between verses 21 and 22 as the climax of Jesus’ testing. He uttered these words in a loud, strong voice (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34) and next gave a triumphant, *very loud* cry, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Then, with his head down as he was expiring, his last words were probably scarcely audible: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). His head falling forward in death, his heart burst with a heart attack, but up to that point, he had not given in to the mouth of the lion. His spirit had not been crushed, even though he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Psalm 22 does not say anything about the conversation Jesus had with his mother and John. Some of his expressions are scattered throughout the Book of Psalms, a few words here and a few words there, but every statement has to be duplicated, for out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established.

Psa. 22:23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

Psa. 22:24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

“Ye that fear [reverence] the LORD [Jehovah], praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear [reverence] him, all ye the seed of Israel.” Jesus continued to speak, now talking about himself, “For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.” When Jesus cried, he sensed victory. He had not broken in spirit, but his heart broke. Thus he felt he was victorious. Isaiah 53:11 is pertinent: “He [Jesus] shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.”

Psa. 22:25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

Jesus will forever loyally pay his vows to God in heaven. He is now sealed. And all who get immortality will have characters so crystallized in Godlikeness that they cannot sin because of their supreme love for God. The gift of immortality seals the matter forever. Henceforth they will praise God and render obedience, whether in the Kingdom Age or beyond, and they will serve God in various capacities. The vow is perpetual, just as the New Covenant, when fully sealed, will be forever.

Psa. 22:26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

Psa. 22:27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

The Pastor wrote very little on this Psalm, which obviously pertains to the Crucifixion scene. Perhaps he felt the application was so self-evident that it would not necessitate much comment. However, he made plenty of comments on Isaiah 53. In any event, we notice that this Psalm is in two parts, the dividing line being verse 22. Verses 1-21 describe Jesus' emotions and inner feelings when he was nailed to the Cross. Verses 22-31 present his comments and thinking after his resurrection. He reflected on what had occurred to him and the fact he accomplished what he had come to do, namely, to save the lost sheep of Israel and to provide the ransom price for both the Church in the Gospel Age and the world in the Kingdom Age.

Figuratively speaking, the expression "all the ends of the world" would be the four corners of the earth, meaning the whole earth. "From one end of the earth to the other end of the earth" is another way of saying the same thing. In any event, the thought means "all embracing"—north, south, east, and west. All who dwell in the earth will be made cognizant of Jehovah and will worship before Him. Verse 27 ends with the word "thee," indicating that the commentary is Jesus' own personal thinking. He is the one who died on the Cross and successfully passed the test, and the benefits of what he did are about to transpire.

Psa. 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.

In Psalm 2:8, God prophetically said to Jesus, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Even though the Kingdom will be Jehovah's, Jesus will be the "governor among the nations."

Although earlier verses describe the suffering of Jesus, Psalm 22 ends on a joyful note. As a reward for his faithfulness unto the ignominious death on the Cross, he inherited the governorship of the world. God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man" Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31). All people on earth will worship Jesus—an experience quite different from his dying on the Cross and suffering many indignities. All will be dependent upon his mercy and kindness as the under-Shepherd administering justice in the Kingdom according to God's plan of the ages.

"For the kingdom is the LORD'S [Jehovah's]." Jesus gives the credit to his Father rather than to himself. He is the one who suffered on the Cross, but he never lost sight of the fact that behind all of the events is the plan of God.

Comment: In the type of Pharaoh and Joseph, only in the throne was Pharaoh greater.

Reply: Jesus will be on the throne because the Father grants him that opportunity. He did not presume to be the High Priest of the world but was "called of God, as was Aaron" (Heb. 5:4). Just as Joseph was the governor of Egypt, so Jesus will be the "governor among the nations."

Comment: God said, "My glory will I not give to another," showing that His glory is unique (Isa. 42:8). In one sense, a person who worships the Son worships the Father, but the highest level of glory is reserved for the Father. Jesus does not come even close to intruding on the glory of the Father.

Reply: Yes. By saying, "My glory will I not give to another," the Father particularizes His office as Creator and Emperor of the universe, even though He gives Jesus a very prominent role.

Psa. 22:29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the

dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

Verse 29 is composed of two parts: (1) those who are “fat” and (2) those who “go down to the dust.” The first part sounds somewhat like an anomaly, for normally speaking, the word “fat” has an unfavorable connotation. However, as here, the Scriptures sometimes use the word favorably. “All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship.” On one occasion, Jesus said, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). During the Gospel Age, the Church is given the favor of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ, but during the Kingdom Age, the world will only be able to eat his flesh. In the type, the Jews could not eat flesh unless the blood had first been drained. Whether the services or eating was in the Temple, at home, or in the field, the blood had to be poured on the ground and could not be eaten. This mandatory requirement pertains to the Kingdom Age. Jesus gave his flesh for the life of the world, but he gave his flesh and his blood for his peculiar treasure in the field, the pearl, the Little Flock, as well as for the Great Company—for the called of the present age. Sometimes the word “fat” pictures those who have plenty, and in the Kingdom Age, the Lord will give the cornucopia, the horn of plenty, to those who pass the test by responding favorably and obediently to his instruction.

“All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.” Depending on context, the word “bow” is also used either favorably or unfavorably in Scripture. Here the usage is unfavorable, signifying Second Death. It is as if the incorrigible will be trodden underfoot and forced to bow in the dust in a final sense.

On the one hand, those of mankind who get life in the Kingdom Age will each sit under his own vine and fig tree and prosper; they will be “fat” and survive (Micah 4:4). On the other hand, the incorrigible will go into Second Death, for none of that class will be able to “keep alive his own soul.”

Psa. 22:30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

What is the “seed”? The pronoun “him” refers to “the Lord” (Hebrew *Adonai*). In the Kingdom Age, Jesus will be the Life-giver in the sense that he will restore those who had a previous life by awakening them from the tomb. When the new earth is established, he will be likened unto a Father, to the Second Adam, and to Noah. From the standpoint of the Kingdom, Noah pictures The Christ, and his three sons are the seed that will fill the regenerated earth. Since Noah lived in both the “world that ... was” and the “present world,” he is a prototype of Jesus’ rule in the Kingdom Age (2 Pet. 3:6; Titus 2:12). Jesus “shall see his seed, ... and ... be satisfied” (Isa. 53:10,11). He will be the Father of the “seed.” We are reminded of Psalm 110:3, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.” The reference is to those who will truly love Jesus and God and desire to serve in their heart. In other words, verse 30 is not referring to those who will serve out of expediency when bowing the knee is made mandatory.

“It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.” For a short time, Jesus will have the unique role of being recognized as the age-lasting Father (Isa. 9:6). His faithfulness has granted him that reward, and he will enjoy the fruit of his suffering.

Next we will consider Isaiah 53:10,11 in more detail and notice some comparisons. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” Jesus’ attention may have been drawn to this particular text when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane and the angel succored him. From that time forward, he was so positive that

every jot and tittle of God's Word would be fulfilled. He had requested three times that if permissible, the cup would pass from him, and during that time of striving, his soul was sorrowful even unto death. But from the moment of his strengthening and going to the three apostles who had been asleep, up until the Cross, he was so composed that he suffered all kinds of indignities without an undue reaction. During all those hours before his impalement on the Cross, he patiently endured hard experiences. Jesus expressed his assurance in several ways. "Could not the Father, if I so desired, send twelve legions of angels to deliver me?" (Matt. 26:53 paraphrase). He said to Pilate, "You could have no power at all against me, except it were permitted from above" (John 19:11 paraphrase). He was in control of his emotions lest they get out of hand and he forfeit the very thing he had come to do—to give his life a satisfactory ransom.

"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Isaiah chapter 53 prophetically records both the sufferings Jesus experienced and the joy and satisfaction that will result from his faithful endurance of the sufferings. Psalm 22, with its two parts, likewise records, first, the sufferings and then the reward and benefaction received.

Jesus will be the Father of the seed in the Kingdom. Instead of creating a new race, he will regenerate the human race. Jesus said to the apostles, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. 19:28). In other words, the regeneration will be done through Jesus in the Kingdom Age.

Psa. 22:31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

In the Kingdom Age, Jesus' earthly ministry and crucifixion will be revealed and seen, through audiovisual representation, as the events actually occurred. His words and actions, as well as the deeds of those who inflicted indignities upon him, have been recorded for future viewing. When mankind come forth from the grave, they will see that which they had never heard or had heard only in part in the present life—they will see and know what was done on their behalf. There will be not only an audiovisual representation but also eyewitness testimony from those who were actually involved in the setting. When that generation comes forth from the grave, those who saw what happened will give a very forceful testimony. These individuals "shall declare his [Jesus'] righteousness unto a people that shall be born" of the age-lasting Father. Thus Jesus will be the age-lasting Father of a reborn, regenerated Adamic race.

As princes in all the earth, the Ancient Worthies will testify initially. As the human agencies, or instruments, through whom instruction will be given to the human race when they come forth from the grave, the Ancient Worthies will be merely the mouthpieces of The Christ, Head and body members. All will have to know that Jesus died on their behalf and that their raising was due to the merit of Jesus' sacrifice. With great respect and worship, those who are rightly exercised will bow before Jesus, knowing that God, through Christ, redeemed them.

Q: Can the pronoun "they" refer to the seed of the regenerated race, who will declare Jesus' righteousness unto the people born in the future to populate other planets?

A: Yes, we have stated this thought in other studies. Eventually, every member of the Adamic race—that is, an individual or two of earth's humanity—will be placed on the various galaxies that are not now inhabited, so that there will be at least two witnesses who can testify to the fact of the divine plan of the ages and their own personal experiences in connection with the reign of Christ during the Kingdom Age. Visual aids, instruction, and the Bible will be made known to all future created beings, whoever and wherever they may come forth. The

Scriptures seem to hint that the people of earth will be distributed throughout the galaxies of heaven. Of course this thinking is conjectural, but there are scriptural suggestions along this line. For example, the earth will “wax old like a garment” (Psa. 102:25,26; Heb. 1:10-12). Certain evidences show that over an extremely long period of time out of eternity, planet Earth will be an everlasting memorial of what took place down here, and that testimony will be made known not only with audiovisuals but also by mortal beings who are transferred to other abodes for that purpose. This thinking is highly speculative, but we think there is some scriptural support.

Consider verse 31 again: “They shall come, and shall declare his [Jesus’] righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he [Jesus] hath done this [died for them].” This verse is the climax of Psalm 22, which started with a shocking, somber, and almost ghoulish picture of things that were done to Jesus in connection with his death. The Psalm ends with the happy note that all will be made aware of the fact that the one God has used as His mouthpiece, instrument, and representative is the very one who died for them. That awareness has led each of us to consecrate, for we realized we were bought with a price. We initially gave our heart to God in appreciation not only of what Jesus had done for us but also of God’s mercy in opening the door to the possibility of our sonship and eventual inheritance of the Kingdom of heaven and being with Him as part of His divine family. In short, all will be made aware of the Crucifixion.

PSALM 23

Psa. 23:0 A Psalm of David.

The Twenty-third Psalm is the favorite Psalm of many for several reasons. Not only is the language used so appropriate and exquisitely expressed, but the Psalm is only six verses long. Thus it is conducive to memorization.

We will give some generalizations as an introduction. Since the Psalm is in the Old Testament, Jehovah is the Shepherd. However, when we, as Christians, read this Psalm, we have difficulty in considering the Shepherd to be only Jehovah, our Heavenly Father. Because Jesus died on the Cross in the Gospel Age, not in the Jewish Age, we almost subconsciously find it hard to separate the Father and the Son. In reality, God is the Author, the inspiration behind this Psalm, even though David wrote it, and Jesus is so much like the Father in character development and in his interest on behalf of God’s people that he died to buy the field to get the treasure buried in it. Therefore, we think of Jesus as the great under-Shepherd and of God as the great over-Shepherd. Jesus is the channel through which much of the Father’s leading comes.

In reading this Psalm, those of us who live in the Western Hemisphere do not fully realize certain things. Here the pastures for sheep are broad and stretch for hundreds of acres. Thus those who live in Argentina, Brazil, the United States, etc., where sheep are largely nurtured for their wool and meat, cannot extract from the Psalm some of the nuances that are more peculiar to the varied landscape of the Middle East with its hills. Although there are plains, they are nothing like those in the United States. The point is that all sorts of conditions in the terrain of the Middle East match the wording and the illustrations used.

Psa. 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Verse 1 is just a simple statement: “Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.” We experience no “want” because Jehovah provides our needs, but what are these needs? He supplies the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, water, and security. He also provides rest from anxiety, fear, and want because “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34).

From a temporal or natural standpoint, sometimes only the bare necessities of life are provided, but certainly from a spiritual standpoint, we are supplied with abundance.

Comment: Matthew 7:10,11 reads, “Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” Psalm 84:11 states, “For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Reply: We need some good news, wonderful and happy experiences, and the sun. And when the sun shines brightly and scorches, God provides the needed shade and comfort.

Comment: Psalm 34:9,10 reads, “O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.”

Reply: Yes, many excerpts from the Psalms could be quoted in regard to not wanting because God is the Shepherd of His people.

The primary slant of Psalm 23 is the benefits we receive from God as His sheep, that is, as the sheep of His pasture. However, to extract the most help and blessing from this Psalm, we need to view it from various standpoints. The simple superscription is “A Psalm of David.” David himself was a shepherd caring for his father Jesse’s sheep. Thus he knew the responsibilities that were laid upon a shepherd, for the sheep were the assets, the wealth, and the income of the family. Not only could they be sold on the market or bartered for other goods, but also they provided food and clothing for the household.

The responsibilities of a shepherd were much like those of a steward over his master’s goods. Being a shepherd was a dangerous occupation because of wolves and other predators—beasts of the field who were hungry and looking for food. Sheep are notable for their lack of a means of defense. Generally speaking, the horns of the males are not much of a defense because they are curled and can only butt. As far as real protection is concerned, sheep are defenseless, especially the females, and they are gentle animals. Moreover, they eat with their heads down as they look for blades of grass and herbs, so they are liable to sudden attacks unless the shepherd is awake, alert, and watching to protect them.

The shepherd’s weapon of defense is his staff, which may be fairly large and relatively heavy and have a crook at the end. The clause “thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” refers to just the one implement. In other words, the one rod had a crook, or curve, for another purpose.

As the Great Shepherd, Jehovah has all the resources of the universe at His command. His sheep need not fear because He can handle any contingency that may arise. As with David, not only did the shepherd have to keep constantly alert, but also the occupation was a quiet, isolated, and lonesome experience with long hours.

Comment: In contradistinction to the eating pattern of sheep, the Israelites who were selected with Gideon’s water test had to be alert and looking around.

Reply: Yes, the 300 lapped the water like a dog, which does not bow its head as much as a sheep in drinking. A dog has a relatively long tongue, so it just lowers its head a little, opens its mouth, and drops its tongue, curving the tongue and lapping splashes of water into the mouth rather than burying its head in the water. A dog looks sideways and straight ahead as its tongue drops like a machine to lap up water.

Psa. 23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” Many write on the Twenty-third Psalm with all kinds of theories as to what is being particularly emphasized in each verse. Some want to make a distinction here that the “green pastures” refer to the tender green herbs of the field. Grass can be dry and coarse, and broad-leaved grass can even be like a razor. The most delicious and tender grass is not fully grown and is found where there is more moisture. A pasture of such tender herbs is the special delight of sheep. Like cows, after sheep partake of grass and herbs, they lie down and ruminate, or chew the cud. The first part of verse 2 indicates that the sheep depend upon the shepherd to know the location of a green pasture in order to lead them there.

Imagine being sheep and knowing that the shepherd will lead us to the places we delight in. Not being familiar with the location of a green pasture, we would be dependent upon his guiding us. Stated another way, the sheep are dependent upon the goodness and the wisdom of the shepherd in leading them to such a pasture. Lying down shows a safe, peaceful repose while the sheep are chewing the cud. They feel secure because they know the shepherd is there to protect them.

“He leadeth me beside the still waters.” Most commentaries consider “still” waters to be the most desirable because they run deep, whereas rapidly flowing water coursing over the rocks is shallow. However, we think the emphasis is on *restful* waters, and not on still or placid waters. If we understand correctly, this Psalm is talking about sheep being beside a stream that is not necessarily deep but that has sound and is very restful. For several years as a young man, I went into the woods alone and sat on a stump by a brook, and the gentle rippling sound of the brook gave me a delightful feeling of peace and rest. In later life as an adult, when I could not find a brook of that type, I went to the cemetery to sit down and get peace and rest without distraction. However, the brook was the most pleasant experience. Therefore, we think verse 2 is saying, “He leadeth me beside the waters of restfulness.” The very sound of the rippling water has a calming effect. The Hebrew has the more personal thought of “He laid me down beside the waters of restfulness.”

Comment: Moffatt has, “He leads me to refreshing streams, he revives life in me.”

Psa. 23:3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.

The shepherd leads the flock; that is, he walks in front, and the sheep follow him wherever he goes. With goats, however, the shepherd is behind them, and the goats go ahead. Of course the shepherd can command and discipline the goats, but his position at the rear is quite different. In the Kingdom Age, Jesus will be *behind* the sheep. Isaiah 30:21 reads, “And thine ears shall hear a word *behind* thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” In other words, the way in the Kingdom Age will be mandatory, and Scriptures show the Shepherd behind the sheep. In the Gospel Age, the Shepherd goes before the sheep, and the sheep follow him. Jesus was at the forefront during his earthly ministry, leading the disciples where *he* wished to go. Thus the peculiarity of the Gospel Age is that Jesus went before them and set the example. The willing-hearted, those who want to do God’s will and look to His leading, are the class being called at this time to enter the fold.

“He [the Shepherd] restoreth my soul.” Many interpret this Psalm as the nation of Israel being led by the Shepherd, but we think the most beneficial application is the *personal* leading. It is true that from a national standpoint, Jesus came to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but the Psalm is more meaningful when we extract the *personal* regard the Shepherd has for the

sheep (Matt. 15:24).

In what way does the Shepherd restore the soul of the sheep? Sometimes a journey is required to get to a place of restfulness. The shepherd satisfies the sheep as he sees their need or want. The sheep continue to nibble away and stand and walk, but when their rumen, or first stomach, is filled, they have to lie down and chew the cud. The shepherd has a place in mind where that can happen and how long it will take the sheep to collect the herbage for further chewing in a lying-down position. Very often terrain has to be traveled to get to the particular place where the sheep can rest and ruminate and thus get the benefit of their day's work.

“He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.” What are the “paths of righteousness”? We understand the Hebrew to mean, “Thou wilt lead me in the *tracks* of righteousness.” If that is the case, we are reminded of advice in the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, where the individual who is searching for the Lord inquires of women, the daughters of Jerusalem. The advice given is to follow in the tracks of the shepherd. “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents” (Song 1:8). In other words, the Scriptures contain examples of those who please the Lord, such as Moses and David, and studying their lives, their behavior, their walk in life helps to guide us.

In talking to his disciples at the First Advent, Jesus often referred to Moses or David by quoting from the testimony of the Old Testament. His followers were familiar with the lives of their forefathers who had pleased God. Sometimes Jesus introduced new stories, illustrations, or parables peculiar to his own teaching, and sometimes he referred to examples of Old Testament times to bring the disciples online with his instruction.

What does the term “for his name's sake” mean? In our Christian walk, we are to bring honor and glory to God by trying to do His will and be an example of the believer. If we fail to do so, then instead of our life being “for his name's sake,” it will be “*against* his name's sake” and thus be dishonoring and demeaning. If we say we are trying to be Christians to the best of our ability and then do something wrong, people are quick to notice and call attention to our shortcomings. We cannot help but have some shortcomings, but in the overall picture, we are endeavoring to the best of our ability to bring honor and glory to the One to whom we made a covenant. Thus “for his name's sake” is bringing honor and glory to God either by word and teaching or by the example of trying to do good to all men as we have opportunity.

Psa. 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” The “valley of the shadow of death” is the present life of the Christian; that is, it is not primarily centered on his dying hours but is the experience of the sheep in his daily life. The terrain in the Middle East, which was the setting for this Psalm, was such that to get to ideal pasturage, the shepherd and the sheep had to go up and down ravines and through rocks where lions and bears, hidden from view, waited for their prey. The sheep were caught unawares if the shepherd was not alert to the danger in fulfilling his great responsibility. Not only did he have to carefully conduct the sheep through these particular areas, but he had to learn how to wield his staff in dealing with the beasts. From past experience and knowing the shepherd's care and concern on their behalf, the sheep sensed they were being protected and had confidence in his ability to lead them. At this particular juncture with the dangerous area, the shepherd probably stopped and watched the sheep go by so that they would safely reach the desired pasture. As Christians, we extrapolate lessons for our spiritual walk and the dangers we face as new creatures. The Adversary and his minions, as well as the world and the flesh, are enemies that

require a sufficiency of faith on our part. Faith develops over time as we obey, for obedience strengthens faith. Stated another way, the exercise of faith strengthens us and gives fortitude and strength of character to endure such dangers. The Shepherd is needed at all times.

Although we cannot be dogmatic about the time this Psalm was written, it was probably composed during David's days as a shepherd. The Twenty-third Psalm is a personal testimony of David's inner feelings based on experience.

Comment: The journey of the Christian as expressed in this Psalm is a reminder of Christian in *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Reply: John Bunyan's earlier life was one of debauchery, but after his conversion, he wanted to praise God and Jesus and thus wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* to show the dangers in the walk of a Christian. Because of his previous experiences, he felt the need to give advice to help others evade what he himself had gone through.

"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The words "rod" and "staff" refer to the *one* staff of the shepherd, not to two instruments. In other words, the shepherd used his staff in two different ways. He did not punish or beat the sheep with the staff, for it was a weapon of defense and protection against any wild beasts, predators, or birds of prey. The crook portion of the staff was used to lift the sheep out of any crevice, hole, or entanglement into which they might stumble. The long rod portion of the staff—that is, the relatively slender trunk, or shaft—was used to gently guide the sheep in a pastoral manner into the proper path. Thus the staff had a dual purpose, the crook being used in one manner and the rod portion in another.

Comment: Christians are chastened (disciplined and corrected) as sons. "But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons" (Heb. 12:8).

Reply: That would be a disciplinary rod, whereas the theme or mood frame of the Twenty-third Psalm is along gentle and pastoral lines. However, enemies of the sheep were another matter, for in that case, the staff was used as a club. With Psalm 23 being addressed to the Lord's flock, the mood frame is of a more personal nature, using the setting of a shepherd to show God's personal interest in us and in our development as new creatures. In reading this Psalm, we do not get the impression of any stormy nature.

Psa. 23:5 **Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.**

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." Although certainly David felt that God prepared a table before him, there is a much more forceful application, for David represents The Christ, Head and body members. During the Gospel Age, a table has been prepared before Christians in the midst of their enemies. In fact, Christians are surrounded by enemies, for they fight or wrestle "not against flesh and blood [only], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). We are as nothing compared to these very powerful and wicked spiritual beings in high places, but God, in His mercy, provides for us to have studies in quietness and peace. Even though we personally do not know what tests we will ultimately pass through before our change beyond the veil, we do know that Jesus has nursed us and, as our Shepherd, has had a particular charge to guard us against our enemies. We are led beside the still waters and in the paths of righteousness.

Q: The church systems of Babylon serve their communicants tables of vomit and abominations. Does verse 5 refer to the various truths that Jesus gives to help us through the present life?

A: Yes. In one sense, Jesus provided truth all down the Gospel Age, but in the Laodicean stage of the Church, he chose the seventh messenger to minister to God's people. Jesus girds himself and comes forth to serve us, saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). As a spirit being, Jesus serves spiritual food through a human agency, providing a table of good things. He serves truths both new and old. From the beginning of the Lord's Second Presence, whether we realize it or not, the understanding of God's plan, with the minutiae of detail, is being disclosed more and more until we come to the perfect day. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). Since we have not yet come to that "perfect day," the light will continue to shine brighter, until the Gospel Age is consummated, with clarifications of Scripture that do not substantively conflict with doctrine learned in the past. In fact, the Great Company class will get more light after the Church class is beyond the veil. Additional details will be revealed for their comfort and edification between the completion and glorification of the Little Flock and the Gog and Magog scenario with Israel.

Comment: At present, we sit peacefully at our dining room tables with open Bibles and concordances.

Reply: Yes, we are protected. Demonic thoughts do not enter our minds during the study. Afterward we may have very trying experiences, just as Jesus was tempted by the Adversary. We have testing experiences as well as periods of quietness with the sunshine of God's favor, in which we partake in peace of the heavenly manna and can grow thereby. In other seasons, the north wind blows with trouble. Mixed experiences are strengthening to the character structure of the Christian in the present life so that he can develop into a tree of righteousness with a strong trunk and stability. Maturity brings a more blessed experience as a reward.

"Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Some commentators have suggested that verses 5 and 6 have a different setting. Verses 1-4 apply more particularly to a shepherd or a pastoral scene, whereas verses 5 and 6 pertain to guests at a table in a household. The scene changes from sheep to personalities seated at a table. As Christians, we have been invited into a banquet house, as it were, where we feed at a table. Jesus, the host, supplies us with bounties. The anointing of the head with oil and the serving of a cup of wine are more pertinent to a household setting. In reading over many years, we have had difficulty finding where a shepherd actually anointed the head of a sheep with oil unless the animal was wounded, for oil has a medicinal value. Wine is a symbol of truth that brings joy and gladness, whereas water pictures more ordinary truth or refreshment. Verses 5 and 6, then, are an abrupt change to a different scenario that can easily be spiritualized. From this standpoint, the table, the food, and the wine picture truth. Spiritually speaking, we are feeding on the truth, and our cup indeed "runneth over" in its fullness. God fills our cup to the brim and even to overflowing with an abundance of goodness. Incidentally, instead of a table in a household, the setting can be considered a rug spread on the ground. When bedouins traveled, they reclined on the ground and partook of their meal, which was served on a rug.

Q: Does the oil picture the Holy Spirit?

A: Yes. The Apostle Paul said that it is impossible for the natural man to understand spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). The joys of the truth are available only to those who have made a commitment, a covenant, through consecration to serve Christ and to be faithful unto death—to the Promised Land beyond the veil. On this side of the veil, we have covenant obligations.

Psa. 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will

dwelt in the house of the LORD for ever.

Comment: Christians apply the precious promises to themselves to build up their faith.

Reply: Anytime we have a down period or are in an unknown area or situation, we should first pray to make sure our anchor beyond the veil is sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:19). Then we should reflect on what God has done for us in the past up to the present. We should think back on how He brought us through certain periods in our life when we were in great danger, spiritually speaking. In that way, past mercies become stepping-stones of faith that the Lord is merciful and that He will continue to be our guide into the new, unknown situation we are entering.

When a soldier, a real veteran, goes forth to fight the enemy, he finds that reflecting on past victories helps him to not fear the future. Similarly with us, reflecting back on past deliverances enables us to commit ourselves wholly unto the Lord, even though the experience looming just ahead may be the shadow of death. Past mercies assure us of future mercy. Past experiences help to tide us over the very trying periods that each of us must go through during certain times in our Christian walk.

“And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” This Psalm does not state that we will be of the Little Flock necessarily, but it does say that if we do not forsake the Lord—if we hang on to Him until death—we will get life on the spirit plane. To be a member of the Little Flock depends on how each of us faces up to our experiences when we are in the consecrated mode of the present age. The Apostle John seemed to include the Great Company class in some of Jesus’ expressions; that is, his Gospel is broader and more embracing of God’s goodness on all of the consecrated who maintain and hold on to the end. To be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, we have to exert an all-out effort and run a race as if only one person will win (Col. 1:12; 1 Cor. 9:24).

Today so few vacancies are left for the body members that a gleaner work is going on, and the calling has gone to individuals in other countries, such as India, Moldova, and Ghana. The richness and abundance in the United States tend to benumb us unless we are especially alert and diligent in trying to make our calling and election sure. Numbers are not coming into the truth with the same degree of zeal that brethren had in the past. The gospel has been spreading westward all down through the age, but now it is reversing and going eastward. The trend is telling us that under present conditions with the abundance and not as much persecution and suffering for righteousness’ sake, it is more difficult to make our calling and election sure, and that has been the problem of the Laodicean period of the Church. “We are in need of nothing” is the attitude. Persecution is necessary, and it will come before the end of the age. The world was different 60 years ago, whereas today everything is corrupt and there is a paucity of the type of zeal that existed in the truth years ago. The bottom line is that without holiness, no man shall see God. “This is the will of God [concerning you], even your sanctification [being set apart]” (1 Thess. 4:3).

Comment: Psalm 84:10 states, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

Reply: That statement can be reworded for the Gospel Age: “I would rather be a member of the Levite class [the Great Company] than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” We should search our heart to make sure that we truly love God and that if the opportunity were again afforded, we would still consecrate despite all of the problems and trials. We have been marvelously blessed, but to win the prize of the high calling requires much effort and diligence. Peter’s instruction, or recipe, consisted of eight steps for making one’s calling and election sure;

namely, “Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness [piety]; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity [Greek *agape*, principled love]” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). The progression is upward, going from one level to another level. These eight steps are to the Inner Court of the Temple, the spiritual condition. In contradistinction, there are only seven steps to the Outer Court for the world.

Our hope is to be shepherded into the Kingdom as part of the elect class. If so, when we awake, Jesus Christ himself will *personally* issue the commendation “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: ... enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). We will be caught up in the air to meet the other saints, but, first, we will see Jesus. The Father’s commendation will come later when Jesus takes each individual and introduces him by name. Jesus will be happy to present each one to the Father, giving a commendation that the individual has been faithful. To make our calling and election sure would be our chief joy.

Comment: “They shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal. 3:17).

Comment: David mentioned dwelling “in the house of the LORD for ever.” As an Ancient Worthy, he will receive a heavenly reward at the end of the Kingdom Age. Therefore, both the David class of the Gospel Age and the Ancient Worthies, including David, will dwell in the house of Jehovah forever.

PSALM 24

Psa. 24:0 A Psalm of David.

Psa. 24:1 The earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

The earth and the fullness of the earth belong to Jehovah. The “fullness” is everything on the earth—trees, grass, air, soil, etc.—in a more physical sense. The “earth” is the terrestrial globe.

In addition, as stated in the second half of verse 1, the world and those who dwell in it are Jehovah’s. The “world” is the cosmos aspect, the civilization. In other words, the earth as a planet belongs to the Lord God, and even the humans, those who live and breathe upon the planet, are His because He is the Creator. Therefore, we should render due reverence and obeisance to Him as our Maker.

Comment: His being the sovereign power is justification for Him to do whatever He wants.

Reply: Yes, He is the Lord of earth. God comes first, as stated in the First Commandment.

Psa. 24:2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

God founded the surface of the earth, the habitable portion, the five continents, upon the seas. Not only is He responsible for having founded the continents, but He established them “upon the floods.” Genesis 1:1,2 reads, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” There was no surface, for the planet was completely covered with water. Not until the subsequent six Creative Days did the earth begin to take semblance. There were no mountains until they surfaced from beneath the water; that is, the earth came up from below the water, and the water drained into cavities, which became

oceans, or seas.

However, verse 2 emphasizes a different perspective. David was saying that the globe is still covered with water but that the land is now continents which float on top of the water. Instead of the water being on top of the earth, the earth is on top of the water. Scientifically speaking, the continents are called to our attention with the term “continental drift.” Over the years, a certain movement of the planet has taken place. The movement is so little that we are not conscious of it, but the resulting changes can be for better or for worse, as God sees fit. As the Lord of hosts, He can instantaneously commandeer inanimate powers and objects, so there is no such thing as an emergency with Him. Since God knows all things in advance, they are under His control or surveillance. Nothing untoward can happen and take Him unawares.

Q: Do the “floods” refer just to the seas, or do they include the deluges that occurred prior to the Flood of Noah’s day?

A: The term includes the earlier deluges. According to the Vailian theory, waters collapsed on the earth prior to the creation of Adam. (Notice that the word “seas,” like “floods,” is in the plural.) These events happened over a long period of time with various collapses of the rings above the earth. The metallic rings, containing more metals and substance, fell first, leaving finally just a pure, invisible water veil, which collapsed in Noah’s day. “Seas” refer to the collapsing of the water into various cavities that were made bare when earthquakes caused mountains to spring up out of the water. Thus a lot of activity occurred before God created the sea and land animals.

The fact that the language is terse is good, for we are not scientists. God is more interested in our spiritual and character development, but nevertheless, He gives us a lot of information about His being earth’s Creator and the Author of our being.

Comment: The crust is the cool part of the earth, but it is thin like an onion skin. Underneath is the molten magma, which is called the “sea of magma,” or the “sea of fire.”

Reply: Yes, it is liquid. We would not be surprised if a solid core is at the very center of the earth, but we are not given that information. Man is able to drill down only 10 or 15 miles into the earth, so much is not known.

Psa. 24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

Verse 3 introduces a change of thought. Psalm 24 goes from God as the Creator of the earth and those who dwell upon it in verse 1, and the physical surface of the earth being founded upon seas in verse 2, to the more important aspects starting in verse 3. In our youth, many of us wondered where we came from, where we would go, and if there was a hereafter. God gives us just enough information to assure us that He is responsible for the universe we live in. Now Psalm 24 will go into more pertinent matters.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?” This question can be taken from both the natural and the spiritual standpoint. (1) Who will properly ascend into the literal Temple of Jehovah? To enter the Temple, one must go up steps. God does not want anything unclean to enter His literal Temple, contrary to what happened in the past. For instance, the unclean entered the Temple of Solomon, going even into the Inner Court and the Holy. But in the future Third Temple, nothing unclean will be tolerated. One will have to go up seven steps of development before really entering God’s Temple, as it were, in the proper spirit. (2) As Christians, we extrapolate from the question “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?” to mean, “Who will be sent into the spirit realm?” Eventually, the Little Flock, the Great Company, and the

Ancient Worthies will all ascend into the spirit realm. In the present life, Christians are temporarily seated “in heavenly [spiritual] places in Christ Jesus” with the hope of the real ascent into the fixed situation of entering the spirit realm in an abiding sense (Eph. 2:6).

The question is raised twice: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?” What does standing in God’s “holy place” suggest? The thought is more than just the ascent to heaven, for it means *entering* a portion of heaven, and it conveys not only entering but also *abiding* in God’s presence, in His holy hill. Of course there are degrees of progress. The Little Flock will be *in* the throne, whereas the bridesmaids will be *before* the throne day and night (Rev. 7:15). Both will be in a place that Jesus prepares for his people (John 14:2). To get to be even in the presence of God, one has to be holy, for without holiness shall no man see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

Psa. 24:4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Verse 3 stated the questions. Verse 4 supplies a four-part answer: (1) “He that hath clean hands,” (2) “he that hath ... a pure heart,” (3) “he ... who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,” and (4) “he ... who hath not ... sworn deceitfully.” We will consider each part separately.

The “hands” represent deeds, works, acts, and activities. One with “clean hands” is free of guilt. With regard to a “pure heart,” what is the problem with our heart at present? From a technical perspective, it is impossible to have a pure heart because on the one hand, the heart is exceedingly wicked (Jer. 17:9). On the other hand, it has pure thoughts. The new creature has a battle in the mind—“we wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12). Those who ascend the hill of Jehovah will not be perfect, but they must have gotten a victory, some control, over the heart. From God’s standpoint, they have warred a good warfare. Because they have fought a good fight of faith, the Lord esteems them worthy to be given an unblemished body and a pure heart with which they can serve Him without trepidation. Having proven they love Him sincerely, they will henceforth be in a vehicle that properly reflects the new creature’s real intent.

Not having “lifted up his soul unto vanity” is the third requirement. The heart is more the devotional aspect, the seat of affection, whereas the “soul” is more the character of an individual, reflecting his will, intent, and real desire. The will, or intent, can be perfect in the present life but not the mind, the heart, or the flesh. God is looking to see if we really love Him.

The hands, heart, and soul are an outward progression, but notice that the fourth qualification is written in past tense: “hath not ... sworn deceitfully.” Since not swearing deceitfully actually starts the progression, it is really the first part, the consecration vow. After we make a vow, a commitment, to do God’s will, the success of being victorious in the first three ascents—hands, heart, and soul—depends largely upon the *depth and sincerity* of our consecration and upon *maintaining* that sincerity, which is very difficult to do. God is looking at us and judging us on that factor. Not only do we have to run this race of ascent and development, but we have to run as if there is only one prize and one winner. To be successful, we have to run, to the best of our ability, with that intent and dedication. Of course we do not all have the same ability, but according as we are able, we must run. The Holy Spirit enables us to do some seemingly impossible things that astound us on occasion.

“Hath not ... sworn deceitfully” suggests the new creature should take inventory of himself from time to time in his prayer life and search his own soul as to the depth of his consecration.

Self-examination has a lot to do with our success, but we cannot judge by deeds, for we are in an imperfect vessel. This quality is mentioned last so that it will stand out as if in bold print. It should be first, so its placement tells us that much of the success in whether or not we make our calling and election sure is predicated upon self-examination and determination to pursue what we vowed to do. We get plenty of suggestions that are violations. There are things we have done as new creatures that we are sorry for, where the flesh overcomes us, but we must have drive and continually pray to hate iniquity. In fact, hating iniquity is mandatory if we are to be successful. It is difficult to hate iniquity because there are many fleshly desires. Some are proper and seemingly very good, but many are not so good.

Comment: We should pray to love righteousness and to hate iniquity.

Reply: Yes, Jesus was successful because he achieved these qualities. Both are necessary. With some today, everything is lovey-dovey, but hard decisions have to be made. There has to be the perfect hatred of evil that David wished for (Psa. 139:22). We may hate murder and violence, but more subtle things, such as pride, must also be hated. Family relationships must not be allowed to interfere with our supreme love for (1) God, (2) His Word, and (3) Jesus.

Comment: Proverbs 6:16-19 reads, “These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

Psa. 24:5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

The faithful individual with clean hands, a pure heart, etc., “shall receive the blessing from the LORD.” He will also be granted “righteousness from the God of his salvation.” Now we have the robe of Christ’s righteousness, but if faithful, we will receive actual righteousness and thus walk with Jesus “in white” (Rev. 3:4). We will then have a righteousness of our own and not a loaned robe to cover imperfections. Substantively speaking, the second half of verse 5 is an explanation of the “blessing from the LORD.” Jehovah called us originally and will grant this blessing to those of the Little Flock.

Psa. 24:6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

“This is the generation of them that seek him [Jehovah], that seek thy face, O Jacob.” Jacob normally represents Israel according to the flesh, but the true Israel of God is spiritual. The King James translators were very reverent and did the real work, which others have built upon with revisions and different versions, trying to use more up-to-date language. Sometimes these other translations are off base and slanted not quite properly.

The King James margin has, “O God of Jacob.” The translators thought this was a case of lapsus calami, that the word “God” was inadvertently omitted by the copyists. We are inclined to agree with regard to those who seek the face of the God of Jacob, that is, Jehovah.

Q: Is the word “generation” used the same way here that it is used in 1 Peter 2:9? “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

A: Yes.

The word “Selah” is used in various ways, so a single definition does not universally apply. It

has been defined as “certainly,” “verily,” “definitely,” “so be it,” etc. At present, we like to use the definition “Just think of that” or “Think on what has just been said,” although that definition is subject to change. In other words, “Selah” points out something very important.

Comment: Verses 1-6 are one unit of thought, for the focus shifts in verses 7-10.

Reply: That is why we said “Selah” is used in many different ways. In the Book of Psalms, the usages are sometimes close together, sometimes far apart, and sometimes not according to subject matter, so the real feeling of that Hebrew word is along the line of, “What was just said is worthy of stopping to reflect upon.”

Q: Does “the generation of them” that seek the face of the God of Jacob apply to the ancient ones who sought after God; to the Church, who are now seeking after Him to be of the Little Flock; and also to the Great Company?

A: That is true in principle.

Psa. 24:7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Psa. 24:8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

The entrance of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem is probably what sparked this exalted theme of David, but of course the fullness of the spiritual application pertains to the city of Jerusalem and the Third Temple yet future.

We will first consider verse 7 as if we were back in Israel at the time of David. We would have heard a choir singing this song. In analyzing the words, we notice something quite striking; namely, David addressed the gates rather than the gatekeepers—the sentinels, or guards, at the gates. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates.” An acclamation was being made to supposedly inanimate objects to act in an aggressive manner to lift up the gates.

In addition, there are variable applications for the Hebrew words, especially for the verb “lift up.” With the repetition of that verb, the initial thought is of lifting up the exterior gate to the city, which was made of heavy wrought iron grillwork to withstand an attack from an enemy. Thus this outer entry did not operate in the normal way but lifted in a vertical manner. It was like a portcullis door with grooves in the sides of the stone masonry. Those within the city used chains to lift the gates up and down in the vertical grooves when they saw that the one approaching was not an enemy but a friend. In other words, this gate was an outer barrier of protection to the city. The Temple that David saw in vision, which would be built after his death—that is, Solomon’s Temple—was within the city of Jerusalem. The Temple of the future—the Third Temple—will be a separate structure north of and above the city proper. David was very desirous to have a house built so that the Ark of the Covenant could be put in a secure inner chamber. However, since he was a man of war and for various other reasons, including typical reasons, he was not given the privilege of being involved in the actual construction of the Temple. Solomon had the Temple built according to the design the Lord had given to David, his father.

In any event, it appears that there were two separate entries. The outer entry was of iron grillwork that served a purpose when an enemy was threatening. It was not necessarily always used except at night, but when it was raised, a second (or inner) entry was revealed behind the first grillwork gateway. Based mostly on our reading of the history of the Middle Ages, the

inner set of doors was very heavy but was made of wood and usually had embellishments befitting the importance of the city. With the location being Jerusalem, special engraving work was on the inner wooden doors and overlaid with some kind of metallic substance, even gold. Stated succinctly, there was a double entry.

“Be ye lift up, ye everlasting [age-lasting] doors.” The Hebrew word *shaar*, meaning “gate,” is one thing, but the Hebrew word *pethach*, rendered “doors,” is different. The reference is to an entry way, an “opening.” *Pethach* can refer to either a door opening, a door entrance, or to an open entrance, which Moffatt evidently was thinking of in translating verse 7, “Raise your arches, O ye gates, raise yourselves, you ancient doors!” Whichever the case, the word is in the plural, and the Hebrew verb rendered “lift up” is applied many different ways in Scripture. Thus the verb can also have the thought of “opening up” as an entrance of reception (or receiving), of “advancing into.” Although Psalm 24 does not state the mechanics with particularity, we believe the outer door is lifted up, and the inner set of doors swings on hinges.

Next we will consider the spiritual application of Solomon’s Temple, which is more important than the natural. David was moved to utter this Twenty-fourth Psalm, and of course the Holy Spirit guided the expression of his thinking with regard to the Temple (of Solomon), which he had in mind when he purchased the plateau of Mount Zion for its future erection.

Why was the gate addressed rather than the gatekeepers? The gate had to be lifted to its highest extremity because the glory and the stature of the conquering general, Jehovah, was about to enter. With the gate fully opened (lifted), there would be no hindrance whatever to His entry of the city. The command was made to inanimate material, but the gatekeeper was the one who responded, not the gates themselves. In other words, the gate, the inanimate, was being addressed, but the gatekeepers did the questioning: “Who is this King of glory?”

To repeat, the gates were to be lifted up to their extreme height, to their “heads,” because of the glory of the stature of the personage who was about to enter. Then came the command “Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.” What about these “everlasting doors”? The Hebrew word for “everlasting” means “age-lasting,” but in this context, it seems to signify, spiritually speaking, that the gates of this house of God have been closed for a long time; that is, they were age-lastingly closed. They have been closed for too long, and it is now time for this wonderful hoped-for entry to take place. The Jewish nation had the hope, the anticipation, of glory coming into the Temple. In the case of Solomon’s Temple, when the king finished his prayer, glory filled the Temple. However, the account does not tell of a visible entry at the inauguration of Solomon’s Temple, but the *invisible* entry of this wonderful personage, whom no man can see, was made manifest by the Temple’s being filled with holy smoke.

“And the King of glory shall come in.” The city of David had a main entry gate, but the house had not yet been built. David composed this Psalm so that when the house of the Lord was finished, this event would take place spiritually. Jehovah will enter the real Temple that this Psalm is talking about, and of course David is a picture of Messiah.

Verses 7-10 describe a simple entry of this glorious personage, accompanied with great happiness and joy. He approaches to open this gate, which has a spiritual meaning that is more important to us than the mechanics of the entry. The real application, which pertains to the portals of our hearts, is the next Psalm: “Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul” (Psa. 25:1). The portal of the heart is to be opened as wide as possible to let the glory of God come in. The Apostle Peter gave a little clue on this type of reasoning when he mentioned that the blood sprinkled at Passover season on the doors of individual dwellings pictured the sprinkling of the portal of our heart. The next Psalm is very important and instructional in regard to character development, whereas Psalm 24 is the official inauguration and entry of the Kingdom. The

Period of the Judges was followed by the Period of the Kings, during which David felt, "We have a city with gates, but we do not have the house of the Lord." However, he was told he could not have the fulfillment of that dream. Psalm 24 is mixed in with several other Psalms that are contingent upon a certain theme which is difficult to express until we go into a verse-by-verse explanation. Then we will begin to see that these Psalms are related, and we will be able to tell which Psalms are David's, even when his name does not precede them, for certain methodology was peculiar to him as a person. The Lord operated through him, for in spite of all his shortcomings, he was a man after God's own heart. Something in David expressed a part of Jehovah's character of being that He enjoyed seeing manifested in this little, tiny mortal down here. God wants to save that type of person not only in the Gospel Age but also in the Kingdom Age and in the ages beyond the Kingdom. All creatures whom God makes in the future will have this effulgence of worship and the desire to please their Creator. Of their own initiative and desire, they will try to think of ways in which to please Him instead of waiting for His commandments. But commandments will be necessary in the Kingdom Age because mortals could not ask for proper things unless they were spiritually instructed and guided.

Comment: Pertaining to the inauguration of the Kingdom Age, the question "Who is this King of glory?" refers to Jehovah, who is "strong and ... mighty in battle." Could this refer to His triumphal return to the celestial city after Jacob's Trouble, when He will stand up and fight for Israel as in the day of battle?

Reply: Psalm 24 has three applications, and the one just mentioned is the third. (1) God entered the literal Tabernacle with glory in the day of Moses, who is a type. (2) God's approval was manifested in connection with the inauguration of Solomon's Temple. (3) There will be an application at the inauguration of the Kingdom. With regard to the "everlasting doors," God moves in the long dispensations. His steps in the three worlds are very long. The first world, a time period of 1,656 years, was the first step. The present evil world, the second step, is an even longer period of time, extending from the Flood until the Kingdom is inaugurated. At the end of the Kingdom Age, which will cover most of the thousand-year day of Christ's presence, the promises will be fulfilled according to God's will. The point is that the doors have been closed for a long time, and God's people in the first world and the second world have been hoping for the fulfillment of His arrangement, which will occur in the fullest sense of the word after the Little Season in the third world. Mankind will then be able to receive Jehovah, and He will recognize them as being completely in harmony with Him (Rev. 21:7). The beginning of the Kingdom Age will be an instructional period; the end will be the final fulfillment. In its fullness, Psalm 24 is a very complex picture. Therefore, it is not advisable to jump from the type to the antitype in one giant leap.

"Who is this King of glory?" The question comes from within. "The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle." The answer comes from without. The command in verse 7 to "lift up your heads," etc., is from without to within, whereas in verse 8, the question and answer are from within to without. Thus a rhythmic methodology was employed. When put to music with the congregation singing with understanding, Psalm 24 will be very inspirational and most glorious.

Comment: Verses 7 and 8 are incorporated in Handel's "Messiah."

Reply: Yes, and it is repeated. Some extraordinary things sometimes come out of the pen of mortals. "The Messiah" was the crowning achievement of Handel's life. He was an interesting personality.

The strong and mighty "King of glory" is Jehovah. Who can withstand the Creator, who is "mighty in battle"? God will be successful in the fulfillment of His plan in just the way that He

desires to see the end product, which will be reached at the end of the Kingdom Age.

Comment: Verses 8 and 10 show that God is *the King* of 1 Timothy 6:15,16, “Which in his times he [Jesus] shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords [that is, Jehovah]; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

Reply: A number of Scriptures in the Old Testament use the title “King” for Jehovah.

Psa. 24:9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Psa. 24:10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

Verse 9 repeats the command of verse 7, and verse 10 partially repeats verse 8. Happiness is prophetically shown on both sides of the equation. What is the reason for the repetition? One purpose is emphasis. Jesus often said, “Verily, verily,” and God used repetition time and time again in the Old Testament. Repetition gives definition and importance to the statement or prophecy. “Selah” at the end of verse 10 indicates the matter is to be considered and meditated upon. It is as if God were saying, “Think of what has just been said in this wonderful Psalm.”

“Who is this King of glory?” The answer in verse 10 is worded a little differently. Verse 8 has, “The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” Verse 10 responds, “The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.” Actually, verse 10 says the same thing in abbreviated form.

Notice that Psalm 24 does not describe entering through the doors but just stops with an exuberant outpouring from the heart of David. The very brevity of the Psalm adds to the height of enthusiasm. Too much repetition can vitiate the meaning or diminish the dignity of an expression by making it common. For instance, choirs sometimes sing “alleluia” 20 or 30 times with different intonations. However, using the expression twice is sufficient, cryptic, effective, short, and to the point.

Q: Does the word “hosts” signify that God has mighty forces, animate and inanimate, behind Him?

A: Yes. The literal expression “LORD of hosts,” as used throughout Scripture, refers to the fact that the inanimate suns and planets in the trillions of universes are more difficult to control than the animate angels. Thus the expression has great force. God can make even the stones cry out, for example. Things that are seemingly inanimate are His servants and do His bidding. Planet Earth is in one of the smallest universes, for our sun is puny in size compared with other suns. As a General, God controls all of them in their orbits. Therefore, the term “LORD of hosts” refers primarily to the heavenly inanimate objects. No angel can move a planet, but God can.

Psalm 24 is an uplifting theme that creates a proper mood of reverence. The first verse of the next Psalm is related to the lifting up of the gates: “Unto thee, O LORD [Jehovah], do I lift up my soul.” Verse 1 is the important application to extrapolate from the previous literal picture. We should worship and honor the Creator and give Him due honor and respect in our heart. In other words, “Open wide the portals of your heart.”

In almost all of David’s Psalms, the first verse mentions Jehovah. The positioning of His name

is more proper in English than in Hebrew. The Hebrew grammar is worded differently, but it is understood in the way that the English reads. Stated another way, the arrangement of the syntax in English is what the Hebrew means, even though the wording may not be literally so. Moreover, the original Hebrew manuscripts contained no vowels, generally speaking, yet there must have been some type of indication of the end of a verse, even if the letters are all compacted together as in the Sinaitic, Vatican, and Alexandrian manuscripts. For example, the superscription “A Psalm of David,” which is in the Hebrew, indicates a new Psalm. Therefore, what follows starts a new Psalm, and the word “LORD” is used in the first verse.

Do not we always first give cognition to God in our prayers? “Our Father which art in heaven” is an example. Invariably when we approach God in prayer, even if we are drowning in the ocean, we use His name. In an emergency situation, we might quickly start the prayer with “O my God.” Such recognition and honor shows reverence and respect for the Creator and belongs in the house of God.

Q: Are the expressions “Lift up your heads” and “Be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors” done in intellectual recognition as in “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock” (Rev. 3:20)? There is a head and heart realization that Jehovah is the King of glory.

A: Yes, that is an important basic instruction, but we notice that God is there to lift up our head when we are in periods of depression. Jesus spoke a parable of two who were in the Temple (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee prayed, “I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” In other words, “I thank you, O Lord, that you have enlightened me so that I can praise you. But look at the publican over there who is dejected and cast down.” The Lord then commented that the publican, the sinner, was more righteous than the Pharisee, who thought he was righteous. Thus the lifting up is comforting, helpful, joyous, and strengthening. We want to be lifted up—to mount up with eagles’ wings. There are down periods in our Christian walk when we are depressed. The Lord answers the penitential tear.

David wrote various kinds of Psalms, with both ups and downs, but one theme that seems to pervade all of his Psalms is praise for God. David’s character was to praise Jehovah. Not only are his Psalms sweet, but they are uplifting.

Comment: Jehovah’s being the “King of glory” is emphatically stated. He is the glorious One.

Reply: He said, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another” (Isa. 42:8). Even Jesus, as great as he is, is subordinate in glory to the Father, for the Head of Christ is Jehovah (1 Cor. 11:3). Glory and honor are given to both the Father and the Son, but in the proper order.

PSALM 25

Psa. 25:0 A Psalm of David.

The fact that Psalm 25 consists of 22 verses alerts us to the fact that this is an acrostic Psalm, meaning that each verse is in sequence with the Hebrew alphabet, which has 22 letters. Six other Psalms are also acrostic. While verse 1 is supposed to be the equivalent of our letter “a,” verse 2 is like our “b,” etc., a couple of letters are at variance with the Hebrew alphabet and thus do not follow the strict a, b, c, etc., order. Actually, these blunders go way back, even past the ninth-century earliest Hebrew manuscript in existence, for they are in the Septuagint (Greek) version, which has the same wording, basically speaking, as the English and Hebrew Bibles. The only difference is that Psalm 25 in the King James is Psalm 24 in the Hebrew.

Of course the acrostic composition pertains to the mechanics of the Psalm, not to the spiritual meaning. In our judgment, certain Psalms are acrostic so that they can be more easily memorized. These Psalms are prayers of very serious reflection. Psalm 119 is also an acrostic Psalm but in a little different style. It is impossible to arrange the English to harmonize acrostically with the Hebrew because our grammar and phrasing are different. These Psalms are especially helpful when one is in trouble and wants to be lifted up.

Psa. 25:1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

David realized that the “soul” is more important than the heart, the mind, and the reins. He was saying, “Unto thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my *whole being*,” rather than expressing a particular emotion.

Psa. 25:2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

In the Psalms, David frequently testified that he had many enemies, and conversely, he had many friends. When he slew Goliath, he was the most popular man in Israel, but he certainly had enemies when he was being pursued by Saul and the king’s sympathizers, who hunted him like an animal. He also had enemies in his old age, especially in connection with his son Absalom, who used a daily strategy to endear himself to the populace. Absalom intentionally positioned himself in the Temple and other places that were conducive to conversing with the public. His appearance and mannerisms befit those of a king. Meanwhile, David was getting old, and in this period of his life, he had much fewer friends. Thus David had more enemies at the beginning and the end periods of his life. As Christians, we have similar experiences, but instead of Saul, the Adversary is behind our experiences. Usually when we are considering or have just made our consecration, troubles beset us to try to shake our faith and wean us away from the Lord. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus likened the Word of God to a seed (Matt. 13:3-9). When seed was sown, birds (Satan and the fallen angels) came and devoured much of it so that it would not prosper. The devouring occurred because the seed fell on the beaten path, where there was not a sufficiency of tilled, soft soil for it to take root. Thus a rock surface prohibits endurance.

Comment: Jesus was severely tried at the beginning of his ministry during the 40 days in the wilderness following his baptism and also at the end of his ministry in the Garden of Gethsemane in connection with the Crucifixion.

Psa. 25:3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

While David had his own personal experiences, he was thinking of others who, like him, were somewhat similarly tried. He had a spirit of magnanimity. David pictured Jesus, especially at the end of his ministry. Even though Jesus knew his hour of death was approaching swiftly, he took time to counsel the disciples at the time of the Memorial, and he considered his mother when he was on the Cross. Thus he thought of others, in addition to his personal agonizing.

David was an outgoing good king. A king who is magnanimous and thinks of his subjects, as well as himself, is the type of ruler the people like to have. These traits in David’s character will be manifest in Jesus’ rulership in the Kingdom Age.

Comment: Temptations and special trials often come to brethren in the pre-Memorial season, as they did to our Lord.

Reply: Yes, and faithful Christians often have experiences of being disenfranchised shortly before their death. Brethren should reflect on an individual's ministry as a whole and on his or her usefulness in the past. At some time in their consecrated walk, all of the Lord's true disciples must go through a feeling of being alienated from the brethren.

Psa. 25:4 Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

Psa. 25:5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

David was praying, making these petitions. When someone asks in such a meaningful way, we can be sure that God, in His providence, sees that the prayer is answered somehow. The only problem is for the petitioner to discern when the answer comes. Thus one must watch, as well as pray. We should try not to be absent-minded in our focus of attention. The Apostle Peter instructed us to be diligent in adding to our faith virtue, knowledge, etc. (2 Pet. 1:5-7).

Psa. 25:6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.

Psa. 25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

In verses 6 and 7, David used the word "remember" three times. The Lord counsels us to remember His promises, and now David was encouraging the Lord to remember him. David was saying, "Remember me, O LORD, with thy loving-kindnesses, but do not remember the sins of my past, of my youth." The implication is that this Psalm was not written when David first gave his heart to the Lord but somewhat into the adult period of his life.

What were some of the sins of David's youth? The fact that David was 30 years old when he began to reign in Hebron reminds us of Jesus, and he was a type of Jesus in his experiences in life and with regard to his enemies, who were jealous. Saul's enmity seems to have been primarily of a jealous nature, for when the people praised both Saul and David, the saying was, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David [has conquered] his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). David's military conquests far exceeded those of Saul. Without the right heart condition, the soil of Saul's heart prospered jealousy, for he regarded David as a rival with the public.

"According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD." David was calling on Jehovah, indicating that He was inherently good, kind, tender, and merciful and having pity on those in need who asked for help.

Psa. 25:8 Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

Jesus was accused because he was seen eating with and being thronged by publicans and sinners. However, he was not purposely looking for the fellowship of sinners; that is, he did not go to them, but they came to him. Jesus explained to the scribes and Pharisees, "They that [think they] be whole need not a physician, but they that [know they] are sick" (Matt. 9:12). In other words, those who thought they did not sin or need a spiritual doctor did not particularly flock to his fellowship. Those who came to him recognized their sin and hungered for communion and forgiveness. Furthermore, he said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and *him that cometh to me* I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). And he invited, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden [with sin, grief, or a trial], and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). One's initiative is a very important factor. The Lord is looking for freewill

spontaneous offerings, not peer pressure.

Comment: The sinners in verse 8 are qualified in verse 9. The sinners whom God will teach “in the way” are the meek.

Comment: Jesus said, “Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:7).

Reply: How interesting that the holy angels rejoice over even one sinner who repents! This text indicates the intense scrutiny with which they observed Jesus’ ministry. No doubt they were very much surprised at some of the details he experienced. Even though they knew, to a large extent, that he was to be crucified, they did not know in advance what the Heavenly Father would permit to occur.

Psa. 25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Verse 9 is basically a couplet, expressing the same principle with only a tiny difference. The key words are “guide in judgment” and “teach his way.” The Lord guides His people largely by providence, by happenings, by allowing experiences to befall them, and He teaches them by written instruction in the Word. Both experiences and counseling are needed and are exceedingly helpful in getting a lesson across.

Comment: It is interesting that even today the Jews regard Moses and David as two of the greatest Biblical characters, and both were meek (Num. 12:3). When Jesus came along, he said, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” yet the Jews missed him, their Messiah (Matt. 11:29).

Reply: Yes, the parallelism is there. “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). How wonderful that the great Creator of the universe made this statement and that Jesus has a humble disposition, for power usually corrupts. However, power will not corrupt one who is taught by the Lord’s counsel and providence. Generally speaking, those who suddenly inherit power or wealth are not prepared for it, and their character structure crumbles.

Q: Does the term “the meek” refer to the earthly phase of the Kingdom?

A: No. Since Jesus gave that counsel to his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, it should be applied first and primarily to the true Church (Matthew 5–7). The Ten Beatitudes are the “Ten Commandments” that Jesus gave to his disciples. If his followers are to be kings and priests, the Beatitudes have to be thoroughly learned, but of course those of mankind who prove worthy of life in the Kingdom will also have learned these important principles. Therefore, while these chapters in Matthew may have a double fulfillment, the primary one is for the Church. We are counseled to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath (James 1:19).

Isn’t it surprising that in spite of all the responsibilities David incurred as king, he thought so constantly along these lines? It was like living in another world, yet at the same time, he was a king over subjects.

Psa. 25:10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

All those who do as God suggests—all those who keep His covenant and obey His instruction

and counseling—are rewarded. A study of David’s Psalms shows that he frequently begged God to help him, and then, in the same Psalm, he turned around and advised other people. As prospective kings and priests, we practice in this life for our future work—and hopefully do what is right along the way.

The paths of Jehovah are mercy and truth for those who keep His covenant and testimonies. The worldly mind does not perceive that the covenant and testimonies pertain to the inward man. The old man must perish so that the new man within will prosper. For those who make a covenant of consecration with the Lord and then keep that covenant and His testimonies—for those who keep their vows and obey God’s instructions—how blessed is the reward! God’s mercy and truth will be realized when the prize of the high calling is won.

Comment: From another standpoint, the “covenant” was the Law, and the “testimonies” were the prophets.

Reply: The Christian is under the Sarah feature of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is a covenant of faith. In contradistinction, the Law Covenant is primarily a covenant of works. The covenant of faith is determined to a large extent by its being a *living* faith, for the covenant is manifested by works but is based on faith.

Psa. 25:11 For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

Verses 11-14 are simply stated, but we want to know the method in which David was offering this Psalm. His seeking pardon becomes of intense interest because he was beloved of the Lord in the overall sense. If possible, we want to be in the same category, but we have a higher standard in the Gospel Age.

The clause “For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity” reminds us of Moses’ reasoning with God: “What will the other nations, who disobey you and cause problems, think if you not only do not forgive the Israelites but also destroy them as a people because of their stiff-neckedness? For your name’s sake—lest your name be besmirched in any fashion—it would be to your interest to pardon the Israelites and continue to deal with them. Then the mouths of the other nations would be stopped, for they might otherwise say that you brought the Israelites out of Egypt but could not bring them into the Promised Land.”

In verse 11, David was pleading, based on God’s character and reputation for mercy, for the pardoning of sinners who seek His forgiveness. David made the plea for the sake of God’s name. He admitted that his own sin was great—his iniquity was not a small matter—but he was pleading for mercy. He felt assured that he would obtain mercy, for God had said He is a merciful God, ready to forgive those who seek a pardon.

Psalm 79:9 uses a similar expression: “Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name’s sake.” Characteristically, there is this pleading because Jehovah pardons those who sincerely seek forgiveness.

Psa. 25:12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.

“What man is he that reverences Jehovah [who looks to Him for help]?” From experience, David could state that God would teach such individuals in the fashion that He would choose. There are different ways of teaching, such as by example, instruction, and providence. Regardless of the method, the response would be favorable because if one truly reverences Jehovah but has fallen and is looking for recovery, there is definitely hope. “For a just man

falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief” (Prov. 24:16).

Comment: David also learned by chastisement.

Reply: We would call that providence.

Comment: “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10).

Comment: Psalm 37:23-25 reads, “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”

Reply: Jehovah orders the steps of a man who is seeking to be good. The reference is to one who not only is in a nontransgressing mode but also is seeking righteousness. God will hearken to the prayer of such a penitent.

Psa. 25:13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

What is the thought of the clause “his soul shall dwell at ease”?

Comment: The text comes to mind “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

Reply: That Scripture is appropriate, for “in goodness” is a marginal synonym for the phrase “at ease.”

“His seed [posterity] shall inherit the earth.” Like some of the other Psalms, verse 13 reminds us of Matthew 5:5 from the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

Comment: The rendering in the American Standard Version is, “His seed shall inherit the land.”

Reply: Yes, that is the thought here. The word “earth” needs clarification, for it can refer to the land, to Israel, or to the planet. The seed will prosper in the sense of having control over the land, the makeup of society (Hebrew *erets*).

Psa. 25:14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

Those who reverence God are more prone to be instructed and to know more about Him than those who are indifferent to His Word. Christians in this age have a twofold advantage. Before consecration, they knew the way of the world, the flesh, and the devil. After consecration, God rewards them by covenanting with them and adopting them into His family through Christ.

Q: Leeser uses the term “secret counsel,” but could the word “mysteries” be substituted?

A: All three terms are more or less synonymous. Extrapolating the principle for the Christian, we would say the mystery, or secret, is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables [so that they will not know at present]” (Mark 4:11).

“And he [God] will show them his covenant.” Verse 14 makes sound sense, but of course in

reading the Word of God, many apply Scriptures to themselves as promises when they have never made a personal commitment, a real covenant, to serve God for the rest of their life. Those who truly reverence God and have made a commitment to serve Him to the best of their ability are the ones who will be informed and instructed. This whole Psalm talks about different kinds of instruction.

Psa. 25:15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

“Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD.” Again we are reminded of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount. “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single [toward Jehovah], thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6:22). Having a singleness of eye, or purpose, helps one to avoid being double-minded (James 1:8). David used the term “mine eyes [plural]” to indicate singleness of purpose.

“For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.” Both the world and the devil entrap us in various ways in our Christian walk. For one to be trapped in a net is a claustrophobic experience because it is almost impossible to extricate a foot that becomes entangled. Fish caught in nets at sea and lifted out of the water must go through a trauma. And many animals, including some of the wildest, panic in a net. If the cords are strong enough, the net seems to bind the animals even tighter as they struggle. But here David was saying that God would pluck his feet out of the net because his eyes were ever toward God. It was a case of cause and effect.

Q: Does plucking David’s feet out of the net mean stopping him from tripping the snare and getting into trouble in the first place, or does the expression mean that God would extricate him from the entanglement?

A: It is profitable to view the verse both ways—as being prevented from going into the net and also as being rescued out of the net. When an animal is ensnared in a net, the situation is almost hopeless, but God is dealing with humans who can worship and reverence Him.

When David prayed like this, there was a constancy in his manner of thinking and worship. As king, he had other things to take care of, but some things, like prayer, can be done in spirit in an unceasing manner. Paul’s counsel to “pray without ceasing” did not mean to literally pray for two or three hours without interruption (1 Thess. 5:17). Rather, he was referring to an attitude of life in which prayer is a marked habit of conduct. David’s thinking and meditations were on God almost all the time. Whenever he had a free moment, his thoughts gravitated to God. We use the illustration of a compass, which always has an attraction for the North Pole. A compass is a good guide, but it must be read properly and turned correctly, for the mechanism has a proclivity to point to the north. Verse 15 gives insight into David’s character.

Psa. 25:16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.

Psa. 25:17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.

At this point, David was in a down period. In desperation, he called on God to have mercy on him. “I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged.” David’s words remind us of Jesus’ saying in the Garden of Gethsemane, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). Similarly, a Christian has moments of depression, which are a part of his character development. In Jesus’ case, his faithful endurance of the experience was crystallization of character. Jesus sought three times in prayer to have the cup removed, but what he thought was the way out was not God’s will. His Father said no three times and then sent an angel to comfort and strengthen him. The sending of the angel should not be considered spurious, for it is in the main text of the Sinaitic manuscript, even though some

publications say otherwise. Another party, whose comments are in Greek and Latin, verifies the inclusion of this statement in the Sinaitic, and he personally acquired the Sinaitic version to examine. We, too, have a copy of the Sinaitic manuscript.

I was troubled by the thought that this Scripture about the angel is spurious, for it shows that after asking three times, Jesus was in complete control of his emotions. Henceforth he could think clearly and soberly. Even though people did all kinds of things to him, his calm statements made under duress showed that he had received an assurance, some kind of answer. The Scripture troubled me so much that even though I had read that the Sinaitic does not contain it, I laboriously translated the Sinaitic myself. The verse is there without abridgment; it is not spurious.

From the standpoint of David's own life, at first he had a hard time accepting Absalom's turning against him, and he tried to read providence in a favorable sense toward his son. Others had to awaken him to the fact that Absalom was really intent upon obtaining the throne at the cost of his father.

"The troubles [plural] of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses [plural]." A person may receive a lot of experiences and dig by the way things are said or the looks he is given or the actions of others that show disapproval. Verse 17 is describing depression. Even the Apostle Paul experienced depression. In one case, he received help from Aquila and Priscilla. These are the winds of adversity, whereby the roots of a tree grow. If there was no wind and the atmosphere was calm for a long period of time, then any wind that subsequently came along would uproot the tree, no matter how large it was, for the roots would not firmly hold to the substrata of the earth. Thus wind experiences are needful for the Christian, but the Lord delivers the righteous, those who love and serve Him, out of their distresses.

Psa. 25:18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

Just the mere expression of saying we are sorry to God is powerful, and the sincerity of our words brings a favorable answer from our Heavenly Father. "Forgive all my sins [plural]." In verse 11, David said, "Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." He interspersed his pleadings to be heard with requests for forgiveness for what he had done.

Psa. 25:19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

Psa. 25:20 O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

David's enemies hated him "with cruel hatred." In verse 19, he was setting up an argument that reminds us of Moses' type of reasoning. Then in verse 20, David said to God, "I put my trust in you. Everyone knows that I talk a lot about how great, wonderful, and glorious you are. If my enemies put me to shame, it will be a reflection on you." How extraordinary that this tiny being down here was talking to God, a *tremendous* spirit being whom the heavens cannot contain (1 Kings 8:27).

Comment: Cruel hatred comes from the devil, the one who incited the people to crucify Jesus.

Reply: Yes, the medley of people chanted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Of course the devil was largely instrumental in stirring up that hatred, but the chants were led by the two chief priests, Annas and Caiaphas. The crowd took up the refrain based on the example of the priests, but the Adversary was behind them.

If David failed while he put his trust in God, his enemies would do one of two things. Not only

would they think David's God was not powerful enough to sustain him, but they would consider his failure a victory on their part. David's reasoning with God was proper rationale, for the earthen vessel is weak and needs help. Any victory that would result would show God's mercy, and it would also show why God loved David in the first place. David's inner man was a lot different in certain respects than his outer man, particularly with regard to one or two manifest transgressions. A normal person who looked at David should have said, "Goliath was threatening the nation of Israel for 40 days and constantly issuing a challenge, yet no one did anything until David stepped forward and killed Goliath." That act of faith in defense of God's name endeared Jonathan to David. Many people who observe a Christian are quick to point out something he does wrong but fail to acknowledge ten things he does correctly. It is hard to render proper judgment, but the Lord knows just how to do it, for He knows our frame and our real intent and how to balance the two—the pros and the cons, the pluses and the minuses.

Psa. 25:21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Why did David make this statement? His enemies were guided by personal hatred and were not thinking on the Lord, whereas David could truthfully say his eyes were ever toward God. He was always praising God in his Psalms, and he could honestly say he had integrity and uprightness in his intensity of purpose. He was praying that the effort he had made would be kept strong. "Keep me strong. Do not let me weaken in my purpose. You know that I have worshipped and put my trust in you constantly. In my own strength, I could lose out, so I beseech you to strengthen me because I am weak."

Comment: David's enemies were deceptive.

Reply: Yes. He was the target, and his enemies greatly outnumbered him (verse 19).

Psa. 25:22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

From talking *personally* about his own experiences, David suddenly brought in the *nation* of Israel. Verse 22 is an addendum. Notice how short it is: "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." Only verse 1, which is introductory, is shorter: "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul." The brevity of verse 22 suggests it was an afterthought with regard to the nation.

Verse 22 is also an addendum from another standpoint. Psalm 25 is an acrostic Psalm, alphabetically arranged in a certain fashion, as are six other Psalms. Verse 22 is out of sync, for the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet does not introduce it. The Psalm ends with verse 21, and then verse 22 is tacked on. Some have suggested that this verse was added as a result of the Babylonian captivity. Israel did not get the lesson of their sins during the Period of the Judges and the Period of the Kings. Not until the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in 606 BC did the lesson sink in. Of course Psalm 25 was written much earlier than this circumstance.

It was seen that just as David, an individual, had sinned and was pleading for forgiveness and deliverance, so Israel as a nation did the same thing on a couple of occasions. Accordingly, it seems that somebody added verse 22—someone other than David—but no explanation is given. When the nation was in Babylonian captivity, many of the Jews wept. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof" (Psa. 137:1,2). Instead of songs of praise, they wept. Therefore, although verse 22 is very fitting at the end of Psalm 25, it distorts the acrostic nature of the Psalm because it was apparently tacked on later.

Comment: Moffatt arranged this Psalm out of order and then offset verse 22 at the end.

Reply: Basically speaking, his doing that corroborates the thinking just presented.

PSALM 26

Psa. 26:0 A Psalm of David.

Psa. 26:1 Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

Although the thought is not contained in Psalm 26 and cannot be really proven too well, the background seems to be at the time of Saul when David had many enemies against him. Even when David obtained the throne, a number of these enemies were still a problem.

“Judge me, O LORD.” In order to make progress in the narrow way, Paul spoke of the need for each Christian to examine his heart from time to time. The usual practice at the time of making a New Year’s resolution is to reflect back on the previous year. Self-inspection is very helpful, for it makes the Christian more determined in his walk.

“For I have walked in mine integrity.” David was not saying he was innocent of all wrongs, but generally speaking, in examining himself—and he asked God to examine him as well—he felt he could assert that the main goal of his life was to walk faithfully in the paths of righteousness. His heart’s desire was to have integrity of purpose. If he was wrong, he was asking the Lord to reveal anything that might be untoward. What a wonderful spirit for one in his position in the Jewish Age! As Christians in the Gospel Age, we should be doing the same—especially because a higher standard has been set before us. We can see how wonderful David was in his purpose of life. He must have read the Book of Job very astutely because he echoed, as verbatim sentiments, expressions and thoughts that Job had used. Job felt the same way—he did not say he was perfect in all that he did, but his intent was perfect.

“I have trusted also in the LORD.” First, David said, “I have walked”; that is, he examined himself in his walk, in his dealings day by day. He inspected his heart. Meanwhile, he trusted in God’s mercy, for he realized that God was very patient in His dealings with saints of the past, as well as with Israel. He is a God of patience with the untoward as He tries to lead them in the paths of righteousness. Of course when the Israelites were stiff-necked, as in the Period of the Judges, they received stripes, or judgments, to bring them back in the way as a people.

“I have trusted ... therefore I shall not slide.” The Apostle Paul said, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2:1). If Christians are not of strong purpose or determination, if they are lax, the tendency is to let things slip a little and thus slide backwards. He advised the Christian to watch his steps because those slippings have to be accounted for, and if they accumulate, they lead to disaster.

Comment: Psalm 18:36 is a cross-reference: “Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.”

Psa. 26:2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

Verse 1 begins, “Judge me,” and verse 2 starts, “Examine me.” Judgment is usually the last thing the old man in us wants, but when the new creature desires to do and obey God’s will, a self-examination mode or fixity of purpose is most needful for success in the narrow way. The opposite of asking God to judge and examine us is to presume upon God’s mercy. In discussing that mercy, Paul asked, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How

shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:1,2). In the present life, a struggle is going on in our minds between the old man and the new creature. The thinking of the flesh is deceitful and very wicked, and the new creature loves the Lord and wants to attain the prize of the high calling. Thus David was asking God to prove him, to judge him.

"Try my reins and my heart." In this examination, David asked God to try his reins and heart. There is, of course, a distinction between the reins and the heart. In our body makeup, there is a connection between our kidneys and our heart. While scientists and doctors cannot put their finger on the attachment, it has been recognized from time immemorial that the kidneys affect the heart and that a health relationship exists between the two. The reins are the secret attachment between the heart and the kidneys. Sometimes we say that of the two organs, the kidneys are more important, but why? The Scriptures contain substantive evidence in that when the sin offering was put on the altar, the kidneys were included but not the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 states, "The [natural] heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Sometimes it is difficult to make a distinction between the natural heart and the spiritual heart because the relationship is nebulous. The old man reasons on emotions, and the heart, being the seat of emotions, is not as reliable in judgment as the will and the conscience. Of course the conscience has to be educated, but with an educated conscience, the kidneys make the decision. Thus the kidneys are the will of the individual. God can examine the will and see imperfections that are not present in the heart. Meanwhile, the heart may be emotionally moved but not properly directed. The direction of affection can be a little contaminated because we have a natural heart and a spiritual heart, and it is very difficult to separate the two. The conscience helps to make the distinction, but since the will wants to obey God regardless, the kidneys are a more important organ.

A person has two kidneys, a left and a right kidney, and the secret connection between the kidneys and the heart is likened to the reins of a horse. A bit is put in the horse's mouth, and by pulling on the reins, the rider turns the horse, for the bit hurts the animal if it resists. Turning the horse's head means that the animal goes to the right or to the left as the rider dictates. Therefore, reins are similar to reigns, that is, governments or control. This subject is interesting but difficult because of our lack of knowledge of the human anatomy. The reins are more particularly related to the kidneys than the heart because they direct the pulling of the horse to the right or the left. The conscience, the will, and the heart have an interplay, but the kidneys, representing the will, the purpose, and the integrity of the individual, are more important.

The caul above the liver affects the liver, which cleanses the blood. The caul, which is like muscle fat, affects the health of the liver. Similarly, the reins are related to the kidneys, which are the driving force, spiritually speaking. The "straps" between the kidneys and the heart control the direction of one's affections, whether those affections go toward the flesh or toward the spirit. The subject is complicated. If we were writing on it, we would take several hours to carefully choose the words. In speaking extemporaneously in a verse-by-verse study, we find it hard to express our thoughts succinctly, but we trust that what has been stated thus far shows the relationship of the kidneys to the will. The caul above the liver and the kidneys were both offered on the altar in the sin offering, so both are important, the liver affecting the blood and the kidneys filtering out waste material, the urine.

Comment: In pugilism, one is not allowed to throw kidney punches because the kidneys are extremely sensitive and susceptible to damage.

Psa. 26:3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

First, David said, "Judge and examine me." Now he added, "For thy lovingkindness is before

mine eyes.” In other words, Jehovah, the God of mercy and long patience, was pleading David’s case. Although David wanted to be judged and examined, he was saying, “When you judge me, remember your loving-kindness and have mercy on me, for I have walked in your truth.” When we ask for forgiveness, we tell the Lord the innermost desires of our heart and affection and our direction of thought, which is to do His will.

Comment: In Psalm 25:6,7, David said, “Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD.”

“I have walked in thy truth.” In his deportment in life, David had not walked in the counsel of the wicked, sat in the seat of the scornful, etc. Yes, he had temptations, and his words and actions were not perfect, but when his life was viewed as a whole, his main goal and the multiplicity of his acts were in harmony with doing God’s will to the best of his ability.

Psa. 26:4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

The clause “I have walked in thy truth” in verse 3 is coupled with the first clause here, “I have not sat with vain persons,” the counterplay being, “I have walked; I have not sat.” “Vain persons” are people with unsavory or dark unrevealed motives we cannot discern. The motives may be fraudulent from what they pretend to be. For example, many years ago while I was working for the railroad, an individual in the office would flatter his superiors to their face and then curse them behind their back. He talked out of both sides of his mouth to curry favor. We should be true to truth and not be double-tongued or double-minded.

“Neither will I go in with dissemblers.” Here the old man in others is appealing to the old man in us. Their old man invites us to join them, for they are dissemblers, dividers, troublemakers. Immediately the new creature has to ask, “Is this person justified as a troublemaker? Is his criticism constructive or destructive?” For instance, King Ahab, who regarded Elijah as a troublemaker, asked, “Art thou he that troubleth [the whole nation of] Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17). All the grievances and warnings that Elijah expostulated were proper criticisms, for they were of the Lord. To discern whether an individual is a dissembler, we need to find out the motive in back of his grievance. If the motive is not wholesome, the dissembling is dangerous, and we should not be a party to it. We have to be instructed in order to make right decisions, and that instruction is a lifetime work. God chooses certain ones in the body of Christ who may ultimately be put in judicial positions of such importance that it takes years for them to be schooled like Paul, the chief of the apostles. Therefore, we would assume that in the Kingdom Age, those individuals will be put in a position of more significance and authority than other apostles or disciples who are of lesser experience, even though all in the body will be faithful. In other words, all of the 144,000 are faithful, but not all are equally schooled. Some can make their calling and election sure in short order, but God has a purpose for where each fits into the body of Christ in the Kingdom Age. With some, that position requires great strength along a certain line, so their schooling is different from the schooling of another person. We are not able to determine the position or the length of schooling either for others or for ourselves.

Psa. 26:5 I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked.

David loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Psa. 45:7). To be faithful, we must have perfect hatred as well as perfect love. Verse 5 is somewhat repetitious of verse 4, but the repetition is important.

Psa. 26:6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

In the Tabernacle services, each time before the priest entered the Holy, he had to wash his hands and feet at the Laver. Apparently, David had that thought in mind. In talking about the congregation (verse 5), he was thinking of the Tabernacle arrangement. When he wrote many of the Psalms, he knew that the Tabernacle, a temporary dwelling, would be replaced by the Temple, a more permanent arrangement. In fact, he was so involved in the thought of the Temple that he lived in a world of fantasy that was profitable. Thus dreams and imaginations can be good, but we must be careful, for the old man has a lot of imaginations that are harmful.

Here David was thinking of the Court, which was a platform in the Temple arrangement and hence level ground. He walked on level ground in his integrity (see verses 1, 11, and 12). This picture seems to have been embedded in David's very nature, as we see when we examine some of the Psalms. To realize that he was thinking about the Temple helps us to understand some of his expressions as we go along.

Comment: David felt he could now embrace God's full arrangement at the altar.

Reply: Yes, he could grasp the two horns of the altar. Although the literal Brazen Altar of the Tabernacle was 7 1/2 feet wide, the horns were quite large, and a person grasped the cup that was around the horns. Therefore, one could go up to the altar and plead his case by putting one hand on the cup of one horn and the other hand on the cup of another horn. Figuratively, that action was as though he was putting his hands on the horns of the altar, which were too big to hang onto. Symbolically, one could then present his case.

The altar was usually considered the place, or judgment, of last resort to which one could go to plead his cause to be spared from death. Thus "will I compass [embrace] thine altar, O LORD." One could not literally embrace the altar, for it was too big. As Christians, we embrace the "altar," Jesus' ransom sacrifice, his blood. We plead through his merit for the cleansing of our sins, the washing of the Word, and the ironing out of wrinkles by discipline. As Christians, we want to be washed from the heart; that is, we want to be washed with the water of God's Word from His holy Laver. David was thoroughly familiar with the Tabernacle arrangement.

Psa. 26:7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

With his multiplicity of expression in the Psalms, David praised the Lord more than any other prophet of the Old or New Testament except for Jesus. He constantly gave thanksgiving and praise. Even when telling of his grief, he ended up with thanksgiving for God's arrangement for forgiveness, which he could grasp with the enlightenment he had in the Jewish Age.

Verse 7 has the terms "publish," "voice of thanksgiving," and "tell." With the preservation of the Book of Psalms, God gave David the privilege of publishing his "voice of thanksgiving." Likewise, Job wished that a book could be written, and Elihu fulfilled that wish by writing the book as a form of repentance. A number of little strands of information in the Psalms seem to go back to Job. Not only were the Psalms preserved in the Bible for the Christian to read, but it is likely they will be sung in the Third Temple arrangement in the future. Some of the Psalms were used in Solomon's Temple, but many more are suitable for the Third Temple.

David's desire to "publish with the voice of thanksgiving" and to "tell of all thy wondrous works" seems to suggest that he was looking forward to the time when he would be called forth from the grave and could continue to praise God. He will have further opportunity to praise God in the Kingdom.

Psa. 26:8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour

dwelleth.

“LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house [the Tabernacle arrangement] ... where thine honour dwelleth.” David was familiar with the “house,” the Tabernacle, particularly when it was brought to Jerusalem and placed in the tent on the Temple platform. He was familiar with the design of the Temple, he saved a tremendous amount of money for its construction, and he made friends with Hiram, king of Tyre, who supplied artisans to work in wood (the cedars of Lebanon) and stone. King Solomon subsequently capitalized on the friendship between David and Hiram. David wanted very much to build the Temple, but he was a man of war (1 Chron. 28:3). Jehovah figuratively dwelled “between the cherubims” in that the Shekinah light was between the wings of the cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4). In addition, “the LORD ... *sitteth* [enthroned] between the cherubims” (Psa. 99:1). Thus He *dwelled*, He *sat*, and He *traveled* between the cherubim, for the Ark of the Covenant was a chariot (1 Chron. 28:18).

Comment: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psa. 91:1).

Reply: Yes, we are under the shadow of the cherubim wings (Psa. 57:1; 63:7). In addition, we figuratively dwell under the cherubim that were woven into the white linen curtain ceiling of the Holy and the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. It is easy to extrapolate whole sermons just from a few verses because they are so pregnant with thoughts, truthfulness, and wholesome ideas and themes.

Psa. 26:9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

Verse 9 reminds us of verse 5, “I have hated the congregation of evildoers.” Verse 9 is helpful to us as new creatures because our hope is to dwell with the Heavenly Father in the spirit realm. No matter what the choice may be on His part, we are trusting that our whole destiny rests in His hands, and we want to dwell with Him where He sees that we fit best. We hope to be of the elect class.

Psa. 26:10 In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

“In whose hands [the hands of sinners and bloody men] is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.” We can see how circumspect we should be that we are not wrongly influenced by such things as friendship, family relationship, money, popularity, and flattery. All kinds of mischief-making can steer us off course. The old nature is deceitful and harmful in its reasoning. The flesh reasons with the spirit, and the fight goes on throughout our entire life. The more resolute we are, the more successful and the stronger we are as new creatures.

Psa. 26:11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

David spoke of his integrity earlier (verse 1), so he was continuing to speak about his purpose. “Redeem me.” David wanted forgiveness. While Jehovah judged and examined him, David wanted God’s loving-kindness to redeem him—to rescue him and be merciful unto him.

Psa. 26:12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

David’s foot stood in an “even place,” that is, in the Inner Court of the Temple, let alone in the Outer Court (see the commentary for verse 6). Both courts were level with no obstruction. Antitypically speaking, when we are in God’s house, we are in a holy environment. The Heavenly Father’s angels are around us, protecting us. No stumbling blocks are in a holy environment. For David, that holy environment was the Tabernacle, the habitation of God’s

house, where His honor dwells (verse 8).

PSALM 27

Psa. 27:0 A Psalm of David.

Psa. 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

The rest of Psalm 27 pertains to David's sentiments in verse 1. Apparently, he was speaking about his enemies in warfare, for he fought against the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Edomites. Strange as it seems, even some of the giants were still in the land at this very late date. David had the privilege of finishing off the giants. The Scriptures contain no specific details about these particular wars, but they must have been outstanding in that the Israelites were few in number compared to the enemy.

David gave credit to Jehovah for the victories. As a result of these victories, his faith was strengthened in his own personal experiences. He knew God was with him, and now, having the custody of the Lord's people, he knew that Jehovah was the God of Israel. It is interesting that we do not hear too much about the covenant God made with David. We hear of the covenants with Adam, Noah, and Abraham and the Law Covenant and the New Covenant, but there was also a Davidic Covenant, which stipulated that there would always be a king in regard to the coming of Messiah in the Kingdom.

When Messiah's lineage is traced and compared in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, we find that it goes through both David and Solomon, even though the latter lost the prerogative. The two lineages come together in Salathiel and Jechonias (Jeconiah, Coniah, Jehoiachin). At that time in captivity, the two lines united and then went down to Messiah. The lineage bypassed Zedekiah and went through Jeconiah, who was the king before Zedekiah.

Psa. 27:2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

The expression "to eat up my flesh" was almost like a colloquialism meaning to eat up David's flesh figuratively, not literally. David's enemies had an intense hatred and desire to humiliate and kill him, but God delivered him out of all opposition both in national warfare and with personal enemies.

Psa. 27:3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

"Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident [that God will take care of the matter]." A literal shepherd earlier, he was a shepherd of God's people when he became king.

Psa. 27:4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

What a wonderful desire David had, yet he was not privileged to build the Temple but just to set the stage for it! This verse is quoted fairly frequently. The "one thing" David desired was that he might "dwell in the house of the LORD all the days" of his life, so that he could "behold the beauty of the LORD" and "inquire in his temple." As Christians, we have made a similar vow, for our hope is to have a spiritual reward, especially in the Little Flock, and to be with

Jesus. We desire to dwell with him and see the place he has made for those who faithfully fulfill their covenant of consecration.

What would David “inquire” in Jehovah’s Temple? As with David, so with us, for questions arise that we would very much like answers to. Questions may pertain to the destiny of an individual, for example, or how a moral problem should be handled or who our guardian angel is.

The presiding Ancient Worthy in the Third Temple will be a rotating office during the Kingdom Age. We are inclined to think that the first prince will be David. Because God made the covenant with him, it seems fitting for David to be the first prince to represent the carrying out of that promise. Isaiah 55:3 refers to the “everlasting covenant ... even the sure mercies of David.” Some, including the Pastor, have thought that as a man, Moses was even greater than the Apostle Paul. However, God chose otherwise—that Paul will have the highest position in the Kingdom Age. Of course the positions in the Church have to be filled by individuals who lived and were faithful after Christ’s resurrection. Jesus is the Head of the body members not only in importance but also in time. He was first in the offering; the bullock was offered before the Lord’s goat. God chooses whomever He wants for a particular position. No man born of woman was greater than John the Baptist in that generation, yet he did not get the opportunity to run the race for the high calling because Jesus had to be first (Matt. 11:11). Even the least member of the Little Flock will be greater than John in the Kingdom.

“That I may dwell in the house [above, that is, in the permanent residence] of the LORD all the days of my life.” David longed to dwell in the Temple, in contrast to the temporary Tabernacle situation, so that he could behold the beauty of Jehovah.

Psa. 27:5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

Verse 5 is setting up a prayer for us in our time of trouble. Similarly, Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Matt. 6:9). The Lord’s Prayer is the most wonderful prayer ever composed. So many thoughts are compacted in just a few words; it is so concise yet so comprehensive.

“He shall hide me ... in the secret of his tabernacle,” which is in the Most Holy. Spiritually speaking, we are pictured as seated in heavenly places in the Holy of the Tabernacle in the present life with the hope of entering into the Most Holy beyond the veil of death (Eph. 2:6). Both the Holy and the Most Holy are secret as far as the world is concerned, for the “mystery” is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

Q: Are the “pavilion” and the “tabernacle” synonymous?

A: Somewhat. The Holy and the Most Holy are like a continuum, one being a pathway into the other. We are already in the Holy situation. Here David wrote in a figurative or symbolic frame of mind that is realized by the true Church in the present life, as well as in the next life. Of course the rock, the anchor, is within the veil, that is, in the Most Holy (Heb. 6:19). That anchor is like an anchor around a rock on the seabed below the ocean waters; it holds securely while the storm rages. Thus we can consider the rock to be in the Most Holy, in the place of utmost security.

Comment: Verse 5 is not referring to the great Time of Trouble, which the Great Company and the world will experience, for the Church will not be here at that time (Luke 21:36).

Reply: Yes, this Psalm is a prayer for us in the present life. Although David wrote about his own experience, it has a prophetic application for the Christian.

Q: What is the thought of “he shall set me up upon a rock”?

A: In the wilderness, a large rock provides shade. One climbs on top of a literal rock in order to see ahead, to look into the future, figuratively speaking. A rock is helpful from a defensive, an offensive, and a knowledge standpoint. Our Rock is Christ Jesus, the Head stone. When we are set on a rock, our vision is greatly enhanced. We are given supernatural understanding and can understand things of the spirit, which the natural mind cannot comprehend. The Davidic class are in Christian warfare in the Gospel Age. Our duty is to Christ, our faithful Captain. Thus the “rock” can be applied in a number of ways. Jesus gave a parable about a house built upon a rock versus a house built on sand (Matt. 7:24-27).

Psa. 27:6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

David was a remarkable person, always praising God. His nature, his very being, poured forth genuine praise repeatedly. While the Ancient Worthies behold us in a figurative sense, their lives are a witness and an example to us as to what pleases God, and we are strengthened thereby. “We also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1). We usually think of the “cloud of witnesses” as the angelic host because they can actually see us now, but it can also be considered figuratively as the Ancient Worthies.

Jesus will not judge “after the sight of his eyes, neither [will he] reprove after the hearing of his ears” (Isa. 11:3). In other words, he will have before him a photographic account to both see and hear the actual incident that is being investigated and judged. Today one is convicted by a “smoking gun,” actual evidence. Before a sentence of Second Death is pronounced on anyone, God will be consulted. Even Jesus—with all his knowledge, judgment, feelings, love, concern, and insight and his being able to read the intent of the heart—will not determine that particular judgment in *muddled* situations. There are other situations where, because of extenuating circumstances, a tree can be judged by its fruit. Back in the type, the hard cases went to Moses, and in the antitype, they go from the Church to Jesus. But some cases will go to God Himself through the Holy Spirit.

Psa. 27:7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

The implication is a verbal prayer—that David could be heard when he cried aloud with his voice. In many cases, such a prayer is more effectual. Here David prayed, “O LORD ... have mercy also upon me, and answer me.”

Psa. 27:8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Psa. 27:9 Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

“My heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.” Verse 8 is especially touching, for it is a *personal* insight into one reason why David was a man after God’s own heart. The Psalms give us the *innermost* thinking of not only David but also Jesus at the time of his crucifixion. In the Gospels, we hear only the outward cry of Jesus, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me?” whereas almost all of Psalm 22 and buried in other Psalms is his intimate thinking.

Psa. 27:10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

David was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned for a little more than 40 years. Thus there is the possibility that his parents were still alive when this Psalm was written. When a mother or father passes away, one has a feeling of loss. Evidently, David's father (Jesse) was faithful, for the Prophet Isaiah wrote, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa. 11:1). At any rate, the “forsaking” may refer to the time when David's parents would de cease.

Psa. 27:11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

For instance, when the rebellion of Absalom occurred, there was confusion because David had natural affection for his own son and Absalom had seemed so promising. Subsequently another son turned against David, as well as other enemies, including one who had the audacity to curse him. In one case, God sent Joab to wake up David to a realization of what was happening with Absalom (2 Sam. 19:1-8). David hearkened to the advice.

Therefore, here in verse 17, David was asking for clarity of vision. “Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path.” David was kind by nature, but he had parental and social problems when he was feeble in his old age. Incidentally, especially in our modern society, many people take advantage of the elderly and treat them with disrespect.

Comment: The Lord appreciated David based on the principle: “The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psa. 25:9).

Psa. 27:12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

One such enemy was Shimei. Another was Doeg the Edomite, the betrayer and spy.

Psa. 27:13 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Verse 13 proves that David firmly believed in a resurrection.

Psa. 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Addressing himself, David ended the Psalm with this upbeat sentiment. “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage.” While David was praying, he got an answer. Earlier he was discouraged, but now came an answer that strengthened him.

Comment: We all need to learn this lesson of patiently waiting on the Lord. Jesus said, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19).

Reply: Patience is usually the last test. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13). Having put on all the armor, we are to stand firm and not put it off.

Comment: When we pray, we need to have faith and trust that our prayers will be answered. We are to wait on the Lord until the answer comes.

Reply: David's faith shone through here, and that is our hope—for maturity of character.

Comment: Along another line, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3).

Reply: That is a good text, although it applies to the Great Company class. The promises sustain us.

PSALM 28

Psa. 28:0 A Psalm of David.

Psalms 26, 27, and 28, all composed by David, are interrelated.

Psa. 28:1 Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

Comment: David frequently called Jehovah "my rock," and in the New Testament, Jesus is the Rock. The dual application is a snare to Trinitarians.

"Be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit." David was saying in effect, "We would be goners if we did not have God on our side. The battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil would overwhelm us if we tried to subsist on our own." Therefore, we need the constant watch-care of God and Jesus.

Psa. 28:2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

"Hear the voice of my supplications [prayers] ... when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle [the Most Holy]." When we think of a building down here, it can be said that God's particular presence is in the Most Holy. On special, rare occasions when God's advice on behalf of the nation was desperately needed, the high priest went into the Most Holy, where he was given an indication or answer. Lifting up the hands toward God's holy oracle corresponds to looking toward Jerusalem in prayer as Daniel did three times a day (Dan. 6:10).

The Tabernacle was up in Shiloh for more than 500 years. In time, the custom was that wherever the Ark was located, the Tabernacle was there, even if it was not assembled. The Ark was in one home for 20 years and in the home of Obed-edom for three months (2 Sam. 6:10,11; 7:2). The heart desire of David was for the Temple to be completed before his demise, but it was not built until Solomon's reign. However, during David's lifetime, he was blessed with the fact that the Tabernacle did arrive in Jerusalem. Eventually, it got to the city of the Lord and was on the side, awaiting a permanent house. Meanwhile, a tent was erected for the Ark, and David acted as a priest for a while before the courses of the priesthood and the Levites were established. David assembled the gold and other materials for the Temple, but it remained for Solomon to have the privilege of assembling the component parts of the structure.

Q: Could the "holy oracle" be considered the Ark?

A: Yes, and wherever it was, it represented the Most Holy and the Tabernacle proper.

Q: When the Tabernacle was in the wilderness, the high priest's breastplate was used for the

Urim and the Thummim. Depending on which stone(s) shone more brightly, the high priest received an answer from the Lord. Thus the breastplate could also be considered a holy oracle. Was anyone in place in David's day to use the breastplate for the Urim and the Thummim?

A: We do not know with particularity because the account is silent, but subsequently a voice from between the cherubim spoke to the high priest. Many vicissitudes and humiliations happened to Israel not only during the Period of the Judges but also in the Period of the Kings. And goods were stripped from the Temple on different occasions during Israel's long history. At any rate, the holy oracle was identified with the Most Holy in one way or another.

Psa. 28:3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

“Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity.” Many whom God was choosing during the Jewish Age, as well as in the Gospel Age, were overcome. This “drawing away” is also called falling away, slipping, backsliding, etc. The process happens gradually. The particular advice of our day is not to forsake the “assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). We are given proper instruction from the Word, but we have to be reminded. Perhaps someone stops going to meetings without a real reason. The old man will find every kind of excuse, and usually the first excuse is that we are tired and need to rest. That may be very true, but little by little, one can be drawn away.

Here in verse 3, David was speaking about being drawn aside by mischief makers, “workers of iniquity,” who cleverly entice the consecrated with what seems very important at the moment. The devil works through family, friends, strangers, and various other ways to draw one away. The Bible furnishes some helpful pictures, one being Proverbs 7:6-27, where a noble, young man with great promise was going down the street when a woman, a harlot in a house, succeeded in sidetracking him. The man had no evil intent, but the incident shows how the Christian can be enticed from the outside, let alone from within. The wicked and the workers of iniquity “speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.” Enticement, a reasoning of some kind, is suggested.

Job received counsel from supposed comforters and friends. When they originally came to see him, they respected him and had good intentions, but the longer they were with him, the more they felt he had sinned. After a while, they actually became his enemies. Thus the devil can deceive even the Christian's best friends into not thinking the best of him. Whoever is the center of the Adversary's attention needs God's help mightily.

Psa. 28:4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

“Give [to] them according to their [wicked] deeds, and ... render to them their [just] desert[s].”

Psa. 28:5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

Everyone back in David's day will have an opportunity in the Kingdom to accept Jesus. In other words, every member of Adam's race who lived before Jesus' First Advent is guaranteed an awakening from the tomb and an opportunity to walk up the highway of holiness because of not having heard, seen, or known about the Messiah in the present life (Isa. 35:8).

While David uttered the words of verse 5 in a current sense, we see that they are actually

prophetic. It is quite possible to become incorrigibly hardened in sin in the current life, even though one does not go into Second Death. When such individuals are awakened from the sleep of death and given a second chance in the Kingdom Age, they will not be able to change their character. Usually such people do so many horrendous things that they will not be able to repent. When they have to retrace their steps and suffer what they did to others, they will not be able to bear the corresponding experience. Some of the most sadistic people who torture others are the worst crybabies when someone tries to torture them. That is also true of bullies. Also, individuals with supersensitive feelings are usually not the best examples because of that weakness; they do not have strength of character.

The wicked who lived before Christ will be given one full, fair opportunity, but even if they were given seven opportunities, the incorrigible still would not get life. However, once Christ came on the scene, that is, from the First Advent through the end of the Gospel Age, it is possible for one not consecrated to incur a destiny of Second Death through extraordinary circumstances. Judas, who was not begotten of the Holy Spirit, is an example. Because he betrayed Jesus with a sufficiency of knowledge, he is called the “son of perdition” and went into Second Death (John 17:12). What more knowledge could anyone have in the Kingdom Age? Judas saw Jesus and knew about his thinking and teaching. He even sat next to Jesus at the Memorial supper. The people in the Kingdom will not be given a deep intellectual understanding of truth. The determining factor in their judgment will be their obedience in doing God’s will.

Therefore, what David was saying about the wicked getting their just deserts means that eventually that class will get as retribution what they had practiced on others. This will be accomplished in a forceful and demonstrative manner. It is harder to take persecution from a person who is devious. Persecution done by innuendo is the hardest to be strong against in our heart because we cannot answer it. A clever and devious enemy can do things right in front of our face, and we have no opportunity to express our innocence because of the way the innuendo is worded. If we try to express our innocence, the individual will say, “That is not what I was thinking. You have an evil mind.” If we live long enough, we will meet a few of these individuals.

Of course Christians—those who make a vow of consecration, a commitment to serve God—are on trial for life in the present age. Those who willfully disobey will go into Second Death.

Psa. 28:6 Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

David rejoiced, for his prayers were answered. In verse 2, he pleaded with God to hear his supplications. Now he said, “Blessed be God, for He has heard the voice of my supplications.” Repeatedly in the Psalms, when David was in a down mood and felt the need to pray—even while he was still expressing and confessing his need in prayer to the Lord—he got an answer and felt a strengthening. As the hymn indicates, we would more readily have the same experience if we carried everything to God in prayer.

Psa. 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

David could never be accused of a lack of praise and an expression of thanksgiving. He was most unusual. When we think of all the Psalms he wrote, the one theme that stands out is his praise of God and his thankfulness. We think God will honor David in the Kingdom by having his Psalms put to music, and they will have great meaning at that time.

The clause “with my song will I praise him” indicates that in a few of these Psalms, David

personally was the soloist. He is called the “sweet psalmist [singer]” of Israel, so he must have had a beautiful voice (2 Sam. 23:1). With ill-tempered King Saul, just hearing David play on an instrument and his voice in song had a temporary calming effect. Saul, a giant of a man, was humble in the beginning, as manifested by his hiding (1 Sam. 10:22). But later, when he became ill-tempered, he was an enemy—not only because of his size and strength but also because of his jealousy. Jealousy or envy of one kind or another is a root of much evil.

Comment: Saul’s son Jonathan was the opposite. He was exceptionally generous, fair, and loyal in spirit toward David.

Psa. 28:8 The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.

Psa. 28:9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

Comment: Jehovah is “the saving strength of his anointed.” As the Lord’s anointed, David was strengthened and preserved.

Reply: David was anointed along natural lines, but he was also helped by the Holy Spirit. For instance, his slingshot was so accurate that the stone hit the giant Goliath in the forehead when he laughed and the visor of his armor went back. And with his bare hands, David slew a lion and a bear on different occasions to protect the sheep. He was strong, but the Lord added to that strength. Those were examples of how the Holy Spirit operated supernaturally in Old Testament times. Where God’s people were inhibited in the Jewish Age was in understanding many of the deep prophecies of the future.

Comment: David was talking about himself in earlier verses and then changed in verse 8 to “*their* strength.”

Reply: Yes. In addition to David personally, the plural pronouns “their” and “them” in verses 8 and 9 indicate a communal sense of “the anointed.” With David representing Jesus, the Head, and the Church, his body, “the anointed” class is The Christ.

In verse 8, the verb “is,” used twice, is supplied. The statement would be equally true with all three tenses—past, present, and future.

“Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance.” Natural Israel is God’s inheritance along one line, and the Church is His peculiar inheritance along another line (1 Pet. 2:9).

“Feed them also, and lift them up for ever.” The Ancient Worthies will come forth needing a perfection of development, but they are a proven class and will not fail, having trusted wholly in Jehovah. When given perfect bodies, they will learn quickly what they did not understand in past ages.

PSALM 29

Psa. 29:0 A Psalm of David.

With just a cursory glance over the content of this Psalm, we notice it is somewhat different from the three preceding Psalms, which in one way or another all contained references, interspersed with other verses, to the Tabernacle or the Temple of the Lord. Now there is a change. Psalm 29 is not tied in with the prior three Psalms, which had interconnecting similar words and thoughts. Here David was more or less praising Jehovah.

Psa. 29:1 Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

Verse 1 states the appropriateness of an individual's giving glory and strength to the Creator—not only giving his voice but also making a commitment to render praise. David was not afraid to give audible glory to God in the presence of others. His outgoing nature praised God not only in secret but also in public.

Incidentally, almost everyone can be categorized into one of two personality types. A person tends to be either an introvert or an extrovert. An extrovert is so outgoing that he is prone to assume leadership or to dominate conversation or whatever activity is occurring. The danger with an extrovert is exercising too much influence and thus becoming domineering and too strong in his views—a trait that can lead to pride and the person's downfall. The tendency is to have a sectarian spirit—a party or personality spirit.

The introvert is just the opposite and needs to be encouraged, for he is prone to be silent. Thus he needs encouragement and help to bring out whatever talent may be latent in him. Some introverts are just as highly skilled as any extrovert, but by temperament and nature, their thinking is too inward. As a brother used to say many years ago, "We should be humble, but we should not be a rug on which people wipe their feet." An introvert has to be on guard lest he be too submissive, which is a dangerous quality that could affect his destiny.

"Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength." To whom does the term "O ye mighty" refer? The mighty are those in leadership positions—priests, kings, judges, etc. David was now addressing the higher echelon of society. The mighty should be humble enough to recognize that they are but lumps of clay like anyone else. We come into this world with nothing, and we leave it with nothing. Each person is an individual personality, but attention needs to be called to the leadership responsibility of the mighty.

From another standpoint, of those called in the present age to make a commitment to serve God, those who make the high calling will be "mighty." They will be responsible for the stewardship they occupy. Thus anyone who assumes leadership in any stratum, even if in an earthly domain, has a degree of responsibility for those underneath his influence because all are fallen.

We are the product of God. We would not be here as individuals had we not been born, and we could not have been born unless God created Adam. Therefore, as products of the Creator, we are responsible to worship and reverence Him, and this would be true whether or not we are spiritually minded. We have a responsibility to fellow man as well as to God, our Creator.

Psa. 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Verses 1 and 2 start the same way: "Give unto Jehovah." After we give due reverence to God, the next responsibility is like cause and effect, for in order to give due respect to our Creator in a truly proper sense, we have to listen to Him to learn how to please Him in doing so. David was using natural reasoning. Not only are we the subjects of a mighty Creator, and not only are we responsible for giving Him due respect, but why not give Him what *He* wants rather than to give Him respect according to *human* thinking?

Thus the Psalms are encouraging. David was very outgoing but not domineering. By his example in praising God, he was suggesting, not pressuring. He did not say, "You *must* do such and such." David's type of leadership is capable of directing us in the proper paths. To show

due honor is to know one's own place and littleness in connection with the great Creator. David's use of the term "in the beauty of holiness" suggests that a better way, a holy way, is more acceptable to God than our own way.

Psa. 29:3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.

Verse 3 refers to the natural creation of God. He is the *Creator*. Initially, Psalm 29 is different from the preceding three Psalms, which inferred that God was in His holy Temple. Here David continued to use natural reasoning like the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans. He showed the responsibility of the created being toward His Creator. Nature alone should tell us or begin to enlighten us as to our responsibilities. "The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters: the God of glory *thundereth*." David was saying, "Whether on sea, on land, or in the storm, God manifests His greatness. The voice of the God of glory is like thunder."

"The LORD is upon many waters [great waters—see KJV margin]." Where is the noise of the great waters? It is in the waves in the ocean. A roar can actually be heard, especially when the waves crash against rocks. The Great Creator made land boundaries by dividing the seas (Jer. 31:35). Under unusual circumstances, a tsunami is an exception, but afterward the sea returns to its normal boundaries.

Psa. 29:4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

Verse 4 is self-explanatory. We have already stated that the power of God is seen in a thunderstorm and in waves hitting the shore.

Psa. 29:5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

The voice of Jehovah breaks the cedars of Lebanon, which are giant trees comparable to the California sequoias, the redwoods. The thunder and lightning of a storm can be so severe that even in Lebanon, people can fear that the wind will wrench apart and break these giant trees. As another example, thousands of good-sized trees were broken like matchsticks at Mount Saint Helens following a volcanic eruption in recent years.

Jehovah's "voice" breaking the cedars means that a thunderclap follows the lightning. Thus lightning strikes a tree, and then wind and the violence of the storm break it apart. We *hear* the wind, we *hear* the thunder, and we *hear* the breaking of the tree. The three sounds are called the "voice" of God; that is, His power is manifested audibly.

Psa. 29:6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

Psalm 114:4 reads, "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." When the trees on a mountain blow in the wind, they look like waves in the ocean as they bend. They "skip" because the wind ripples them. As a result, the smaller trees on little hills look like little lambs running along, and the larger trees on mountains look like rams, that is, large male sheep. David was an eyewitness of some of these phenomena to be able to speak of them so poetically. He probably saw the large cedars of Lebanon on the mountains of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. In fact, in his later years, he engaged Hiram, the king of Tyre, to have cedars of Lebanon cut for the Temple. David and Hiram were friends, so we surmise that Hiram invited him up to Lebanon for a visit, where he witnessed the wind with the trees. Mount Hermon is the highest peak of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range.

The theme continues in Psalm 114: “What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?” (verses 5 and 6). What about the reference to the Jordan River? When Joshua was about to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, the priests were standing on the east rim of the river. As soon as they put their foot forward, the waters began to subside, and the priests walked over on the dry riverbed. A cutting off of the waters up above had been miraculously timed to coincide with this event. The priests took the Ark of the Covenant to the middle of the river and stood there until the entire nation had crossed the Jordan onto the plain of Jericho. Then, as soon as the priests had taken the Ark to the far (western) side of the river, the waters returned. There are other instances in recorded history where the waters have temporarily slowed, although the riverbed was not dry. This phenomenon happens when something changes in the upstream cliffs of the gorge through which the Jordan River flows. Perhaps David actually witnessed such an instance, which reminded him of the previous incident with Joshua. With regard to the Israelites’ entrance into the Promised Land, the *timing* of the incident made it a miracle. The people were waiting 2,000 cubits from the water. God prepared the stage so that as soon as the Ark went forward—the moment the priests started to step down into the river—the waters ceased.

David presented natural reasoning about God’s glory and dealings with Israel. In time of war, trees were sometimes used to save Israel in a battle. On one occasion, the Israelites went out with a very small force to fight an enemy that greatly outnumbered them. However, God caused a wind to blow over the tops of the cedars that sounded like horses and chariots. Hearing this sound, the enemy thought a great multitude, much larger in number than their own forces, was preparing to attack, and they fled in fear. God has done all kinds of miracles with sound and sight. On another occasion, the Lord caused light to shine on the water in a way that looked like blood, and the enemy thought they saw a sea of blood (2 Kings 3:21-24).

When we read in Scripture about so many hundreds of thousands of fatalities, the account sounds like a fairy tale, but these things really happened, and they will be played back in the Kingdom. The events were wondrous and astounding. Little Israel came out of Egypt with 600,000 battle-worthy men, and they got weapons when the waters of the Red Sea covered Pharaoh and his hosts and washed their weapons onto the Sinai shore. Thus Egyptian weapons and munitions equipped the Israelites for battle when they went up toward the Promised Land. When such events are seen on film in the Kingdom, fiction will pale by comparison. A present-day example is the film of the planes hitting the Twin Towers on 9/11, the buildings falling subsequently, and the people running down the main streets of Manhattan. The awesome reality of what happened could never be duplicated by Hollywood. Perhaps some of the films will be withheld until after the Kingdom Age, for God wants people to give freewill offerings that are inspired from within the breast. Wonderful blessings are coming.

God “maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.” A marginal reference for Sirion is Deuteronomy 3:8,9, which states that the Sidonians called Mount Hermon “Sirion” and the Amorites called it “Shenir.” Thus God made Lebanon, even Sirion (Mount Hermon), to skip like a young unicorn (perhaps a rhinoceros). The point is that God makes the mountains seem puny. The mountain ranges of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon are like peanuts when compared with the Creator, who made the mountains and spread out the heavens with His hand. David was talking about the natural might and greatness of Jehovah.

Psa. 29:7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

Comment: Earlier David mentioned thunder, the breaking of trees, and the power of God’s voice. Now he spoke of the dividing of the flames of fire to describe an earthquake and subsidiary events, including flowing lava. When a giant volcanic eruption occurs, the lava

usually flows in multiple streams; that is, the flow divides as it spreads out. It is not one long river that people can run away from.

Psa. 29:8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

Shaking the wilderness of Kadesh can also refer to earthquakes. Some of the old books on Egypt, Sinai, and Israel contain eyewitness accounts of flash floods in the desert. Not only did the water race through the wadis, but rocks and large boulders came down with the water. As the water coursed down, the rumbling sound could be heard for many miles. When natives who lived in the wilderness, sojourning with their tents, heard a peculiar musical-type sound, they fled as fast as they could up the side of a hill to as great a height as possible because they knew a flash flood with boulders was coming, and its speed could exceed that of a freight train.

Psa. 29:9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

“The voice of the LORD [that is, the voice of thunder] maketh the hinds to calve.” The types of buildings we live and work in prevent us from hearing thunder as in former times. Those who were out in the open or who lived in the country could actually feel the ground shake. The sudden shock of the noise is so awesome that it causes deer that are ready to calve to bring forth their young in fright. Although this phenomenon of bringing forth in birth applies to other animals as well, deer are especially sensitive to sound as a means of defense. A deer’s only defense against a predator is acute hearing that serves as a warning and the ability to run faster than most creatures. Thus it is more awesome for a beast to hear thunder than a man.

Some have said that no other manifestation of nature can cause such reverence as God’s voice being the sound of thunder. Speaking with the voice of thunder calls everyone to attention, for the sound penetrates. To confirm the thought of thunder, let us go back to verse 5: “The voice [thunder] of the LORD breaketh the cedars.” Thunder is associated with lightning, which tears down mighty cedars and sturdy oak trees. Oak is an exceptionally strong wood that man cannot snap, but lightning can twist and rip it apart from the roots. The ancient cedars of Lebanon were known worldwide as large, mighty trees, yet God’s power can break them asunder like a matchstick.

“The voice of the LORD ... discovereth the forests.” What are some thoughts on this part of the verse?

Comment: Leeser renders verse 9: “The voice of the Lord causeth the hinds to start and maketh bare forests: and in his temple every thing speaketh (of his) glory.”

Comment: The American Revised reads, “The voice of the LORD ... strippeth the forests bare.”

Reply: A volcanic eruption can also uproot trees, but the thought here is that the trees are broken asunder. Sometimes an earthquake and thunder are coincidental but not necessarily.

Comment: Job 37:2-5 describes thunder: “Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth. He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth. After it a voice roareth: he thundereth with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard. God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.”

Reply: On rare occasions, thunder sounds like a bowling ball. The sound rolls along like an

invisible giant bowling ball going from one end of heaven to the other as if following a path. The point is that Psalm 29 is talking about literal phenomena. The power of God can be either visibly or audibly observed, and thunder gives some iota of the glory and power He possesses.

“In his temple doth every one speak of his glory.” Here is a play on words. From one standpoint, the whole universe is God’s temple. The only way we can comprehend the vast universe is by what we observe in our own solar system. Spiritually speaking, there will come a day, perhaps billions of years from now, when all of God’s creation in the part of the universe we see will be inhabited by His holy creatures on the various planets of the solar systems. At that time, the universe will be God’s holy temple, and all will be in harmony with Him. At the present time, earth is the only inhabited planet in the universe, for this planet is where the human creation started. Adam was the first human being more than 6,000 years ago, but subsequently, since Christ, God has been developing a spiritual temple.

Let us make the connection by reading parts of Psalms 26, 27, and 28, which contain an overall theme not usually observed. Psalm 26:8,12 reads, “LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.... My foot standeth in an *even* [flat] place [in the court of the Temple]: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.” Psalm 27:4-6,11 states, “One thing have I desired of the LORD ... that I may dwell in the *house* of the LORD all the days of my life ... and ... inquire in his *temple*.... [He shall] hide me in ... his *tabernacle*.... And ... therefore will I offer in his *tabernacle* sacrifices of joy.... Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a *plain path* [in the courtyard, a level platform of the Temple].” Psalm 28:2,6,7 says, “Hear the voice of my supplications ... when I lift up my hands toward thy holy *oracle*.... Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my *supplications* [while I am praying in the Temple]. The LORD is my strength and ... with my song will I praise him [in the Temple].” Although the Temple had not yet been built, David was speaking prophetically. These Psalms are prophecies, but before we can consider them as such, we have to be familiar with the wording. The Psalms are *packed* with information. Psalm 29:9, the verse under consideration, reads, “In his [God’s] *temple* doth every one speak of his glory.”

Psalms 26 through 30 are all related and have a future application, but we cannot consider the spiritual aspect until, first, we are familiar with the natural picture. The same principle applies in studying the Tabernacle of Moses. One cannot go into the spiritual significance without first knowing about the literal Candlestick, Incense Altar, Table of Shewbread, etc. Unless we read the Bible thoroughly and constantly, we cannot comprehend the higher spiritual lessons. God used David’s natural reasoning to teach spiritual truths that even David could not know at that time because they were not then due. The Apostle Peter tells us that holy men of old and angels desired to know these things, but they were not given the information (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Some have correctly said that the gospel is in the heavens. The plan of God is in the Mazzaroth, the zodiac (Job 38:32). And the gospel is in David’s Psalms.

“In his [God’s] *temple* doth every one speak of his glory.” When David wrote the Twenty-ninth Psalm, the Temple had not been built. Thus the question would be, How could everyone speak of God’s glory in a nonexistent Temple? The answer is that the faithful ones of old, the Ancient Worthies, had God’s Holy Spirit of friendship, not sonship like the consecrated of the present age. Therefore, when God wanted the faithful ones of old to speak of things that were only meant to be understood spiritually, they were mechanically moved. Seeing this strange mechanical mode come over the prophets, the people realized the utterances were of particular importance whether or not they could comprehend the meaning. In other words, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the utterances of the Ancient Worthies were overruled at times so that they spoke prophetically.

Psa. 29:10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.

“The LORD sitteth upon the flood.” A seated position is one of authority, kingship, or control. If something is in a turbulent form, in chaos, and one sits on it, the disturbance is quelled. Therefore, when God wants to exercise His authority, He can just sit on the situation.

Verse 10 goes from the natural to the spiritual picture. For instance, Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat, and the boat began to take on water from the fierce storm. When he awoke and rebuked the wind and the waves, a great calm ensued. The disciples were astonished that he could speak with authority and there was a great calm. Actually, Jesus merely spoke the words, and *God's* power brought the fulfillment, for He is the Creator and everything He has made is controlled by the slightest whisper from His mouth. Another example was the coin in the fish's mouth. Jesus told Peter to take up the first fish, and money would be in its mouth to pay the taxes. God sent His angel to work the miracle on Jesus' behalf.

“The LORD sitteth [as] King for ever.” God can handle any disturbance anywhere. When He made planet Earth, it was covered with water, both above and below. Out of that chaos, God determined Seven Creative Days. For each day, He said, “Let such and such happen,” and all will be done within a 7,000-year period. God's Word went forth, and the action was performed.

Comment: The word “chaos” does not exist in Jehovah's vocabulary. What appears to us to be chaos is under His control.

Reply: A law of physics is that matter can be neither created nor destroyed by man, and that is true of man's soul as well. Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [God] which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). The soul may be asleep, but it cannot be destroyed by man.

Psa. 29:11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

“The LORD will give strength unto his people.” With verse 11 following verses 9 and 10, we can aptly insert the statement “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). David was drawing conclusions. He set forth statements of truth in many ways in the Psalms and then drew a little lesson from each one. He had down periods but almost always ended with an up period.

Comment: Jesus said, “My Father ... is greater than all” (John 10:29), and the Apostle John wrote, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Reply: Abraham Lincoln said, “One with the Lord is a majority.” He was a great man.

“The LORD will bless his people with peace.” The important term is “his people.” If we are numbered among God's people, He will give us strength and peace. Even if we are fallen in our habits, we can serve Him with a clean and a pure heart.

PSALM 30

Psa. 30:0 A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David.

The preface, “A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David,” indicates that this Psalm is to be sung in the future and probably was sung in David's day. There is a difference of opinion as to what is meant by the term “house of David.” We believe it refers to the incident

when David bought the threshing floor of Araunah in Jerusalem on what is now called the Temple Mount. That property had been handed down to Araunah from his forebears, and David bought the field to make an altar unto God in order to stop the plague that was caused by his sin in numbering the people (2 Sam. 24:10-25).

Even though David repented, he had to pay a price, and God gave him a choice of three punishments: (1) three years of famine in the land, (2) a three-month flight before pursuing enemies, or (3) a three-day pestilence in the land (1 Chron. 21:12). David left the choice up to God, and a three-day pestilence, the judgment of least duration, followed. When the resulting plague killed 70,000 men, and the Logos, the angel of Jehovah, came as a visible being to destroy Jerusalem, David wanted to still the pestilence. He beseeched God, "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house." God then told the Logos, who was standing by the threshing floor of Araunah, "It is enough: stay now thine hand." Desiring to thank the Lord for His mercy, David wanted to "buy the threshingfloor [on that very mountain so that he could] ... build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people." When Araunah offered the plot to David, as well as the oxen for a burnt sacrifice and instruments, David replied in effect, "When I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God, the sacrifice must cost me something. I will buy the threshing floor and the oxen for 50 shekels of silver." There David built "an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel."

In any event, Psalm 30, a prophecy, was composed by David at the time in his life when the Ark of the Covenant was in the environs of Jerusalem and he wanted to find a place where the Temple could be built. The threshing floor pertains to the purchase of the Temple site.

Comment: Another name for the Jebusite Araunah is Ornan, as stated in 1 Chronicles 21:15-28, which records the same incident with the threshing floor.

Psa. 30:1 I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

Verse 1 is in harmony with the preface, for David was expressing his feelings with regard to the stopping of the plague that was punishment for his having numbered the Israelites. Of course God overruled David's emotions, and the Holy Spirit operated on him so that his feelings were peculiarly adaptable to a spiritual connotation.

This verse is an expression of praise that came forth from the lips of David, the reason being that God had lifted him up and not made his foes to rejoice over him. In a fashion, Psalm 30 seems to be co-related to the immediately preceding Psalms. As king, David was now sitting on the throne and taking cognizance of his domain. In spite of all his past problems, he was triumphant and exalted, but in a moment of relaxation, he had begun to think and act like an *earthly* monarch, for he had numbered his people—an act that displeased the Lord.

Comment: David was warned by one of his generals not to number the people.

Reply: Yes, in spite of Joab's warning, he proceeded and thus sinned before the Lord.

After the plague of punishment ended, David turned his attention to bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. He erected a large tent, and the Ark was temporarily put in the tent. Meanwhile, David had in mind to build a house. The time setting was near the end of his life.

Psa. 30:2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

In verse 1, David praised God for not allowing his foes to rejoice over him. In verse 2, he began to review a prior experience. When he cried out, God eventually healed the wound, the sorrow. This same format is used in many of the previous Psalms. Verse 2 is relatively self-explanatory, but as we proceed, we will see that something else is being subtly suggested—something good.

As David wrote about his personal experience, God was choosing the words that came out of his lips. The words faithfully recorded his emotions and feelings, but they were also well adapted to another theme David was not aware of and from which we can extrapolate lessons.

Psa. 30:3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

“O Jehovah, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.” David was expressing an emotional feeling, for he did not want to enter the grave without the hope of a future life. The experience was so grievous that he bordered on going into death, expressed as the grave (Hebrew *sheol*) and the pit. The word *sheol* is usually translated “hell,” which, in the normal vocabulary of 1611, meant to bury or hide. However, it has incorrectly come to mean “hell” as a place of eternal torture. When properly understood, the word signifies the hidden state below the ground, the grave, where one is covered over. For example, potatoes were helled.

When we think of verse 3 in the light of some of the previous Psalms and the next Psalm, we see that seeded information has been included that is peculiarly adaptable to Jesus’ experiences starting with the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). This seeding of information suggests Divine Providence and another lesson with regard to David’s being a type of Christ. Moses said to the Israelites, “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me” (Deut. 18:15). David, a man after God’s own heart, was raised up to be a king, and in many ways, he pictures experiences that Jesus had. If we keep these thoughts in mind, we will see a dual application for Psalm 30.

Psa. 30:4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Verse 4 suggests there was one whose soul *actually* went down into the pit, whereas David felt that he *bordered* this experience. He had sunk to the lowest hell, as it were, in his personal experience, but he survived because Jehovah healed him and kept him alive so that he did not go down to the pit.

Psalm 16:10, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” obviously refers to Jesus. His feelings are expressed not only here but also in numerous other Psalms. This theme is *pervasive* in the Psalms, but it is usually recognized as being in only three or four that have obvious consecutive verses. With his perfect memory, Jesus read the Psalms when he was down here as a human being, and the mood swings came to his mind, as recorded by David.

Incidentally, since God dealt with Jesus Christ, the Head of the body, it should not be a surprise if, to some extent, his faithful followers have similar experiences in their personal daily lives. He was a man of sorrows at the end of his life, but he was popular with the multitudes earlier.

The word “memorial” is a King James marginal reference. “Sing unto the LORD, O ye [Gospel Age] saints of his [of Jesus], and give thanks at the remembrance [memorial] of his holiness.” Verse 4 signifies a mood swing as though God were advising the saints *after* Jesus’ resurrection. His soul was not left in the tomb. As the Psalm continues, it becomes more apparent that Jesus was saying, “Remember that I suffered but that God brought me forth victorious.” Jesus began the race, and he is the finisher of the race (Heb. 12:2). “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (Matt. 10:24).

Psa. 30:5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

God’s “anger endureth but [for] a moment; ... weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Immediately we are reminded of the use of this text in chapter 1 of the *First Volume*. The Pastor applied the text to mankind, but that does not mean we cannot extrapolate the principle to ourselves. With the human race, the “night” began with the fall of Adam and will not end until Adam is raised from death. With many of us, reading that chapter in the *First Volume* and seeing the hope for mankind and God’s mercy on their behalf engendered in us a feeling of God’s love. However, although verse 5 applies to mankind in principle, we believe it particularly applies to the body members. A further extrapolation is to the world of mankind. The verse applies first to Jesus; then to the church of the firstborn, especially the Little Flock in the final analysis; and finally to mankind.

Q: The Apostle Paul said, “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). However, when Jesus became sin, didn’t he bear the full brunt of Jehovah’s anger?

A: Our experience will not be quite as severe as that of Jesus, for his experience pertained to paying the ransom price. He had a momentary absolute feeling of being cut off when he cried out on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That was even more severe than the Gethsemane experience where his soul was exceedingly sorrowful. The ransom price included negative aspects, as well as positive ones such as “In him was life” (John 1:4). Life begets hope and expectation, whereas being cut off was Adam’s negative experience. Jesus had to have Adam’s experience in fullness for a moment, whereas many who make their calling and election sure will not have that experience and will even finish their course with joy. Because they are being called to a particular function for a particular purpose, their experiences will suit them for that part of the body.

Psa. 30:6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

Notice the continuing mood swings. David felt strong and confident, he was purposeful and determined, and then he felt weak and prayed for help. In his earthly ministry, Jesus said to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11). When Jesus prayed, he communed with God. On two outstanding occasions, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Before performing a miracle, he usually in some way gave cognition to God as being the authority. Just before raising Lazarus from the dead, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 11:41,42). Otherwise, if he had not made such statements, the people might have looked on him as God.

Psa. 30:7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

The thought is reversed: “Yes, LORD, thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled, but by thy favour thou hast made me stand strong.”

Psa. 30:8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

Psa. 30:9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

Q: Does verse 9 express the doubt Jesus had when he asked if the cup could be removed from him?

A: Yes. When Jesus agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was losing confidence. “What if I fail?” was his fear. He experienced the feeling of having done something wrong: “If I fail and go into the pit and do not get a resurrection, the dead will not come forth from the tomb.” In Gethsemane, Jesus lost his confidence because God wanted him to feel the sense of guilt that Adam had when he partook of the fruit in the Garden of Eden. When the woman proffered the fruit, Adam realized what she had done. Then he committed suicide, as it were, willingly partaking of the forbidden fruit, whereas Eve was deceived by Satan. That extraordinary feeling of guilt came on Jesus as a necessary part of the corresponding price.

“What profit is there in my blood?” Jesus was giving his blood for the life of the world, but if he did not have a resurrection—if he went down in the pit and remained there—all was lost. His experience in Gethsemane was so agonizing that he was on the ground in the most beseeching fashion imaginable.

Psa. 30:10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

Psa. 30:11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

Psa. 30:12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

Verses 10-12 again express opposite feelings. The experiences went back and forth. We have similar experiences, but they are not quite as acute as the ones Jesus had because we are not that strong. Not only are we made of the earth, earthy, but being born in sin and shapen in iniquity, we would be failures if we had Jesus’ experiences. We are not tested above that which we are able. Jesus was tested almost to the extreme limit to show that under no circumstance at any time in future eternity would he ever harbor the least thought of being like God. He will be satisfied with the calling and reward he received. To the contrary, Satan was not satisfied.

Comment: David’s sentiment in Psalm 84:10 is similar. “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

Reply: Yes, David showed his humility. He would rather be a lowly doorkeeper than to dwell, stand, or sit in the company of the wicked.

David’s natural temperament was along the lines expressed in this Psalm, but what Jesus went through is almost unbelievable because it was so extraordinary. Thank God for His mercy! This theme of Jesus’ experiences being prophetically inserted in the Psalms continues.

Psa. 31:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

The King James Version properly attributes this Psalm to David. The “chief Musician” was probably Asaph.

In reading Psalm 31, we find that many verses can be applied to David’s personal experiences either in his flight from Saul or in other circumstances throughout his life. To us, however, this Psalm is quite puzzling, and we differ with almost all scholars. We feel Psalm 31 is somewhat like some of the Psalms just previous in that it refers to many of Jesus’ experiences in the last week of his earthly ministry, particularly from Gethsemane to the Cross. Nevertheless, certain puzzling verses seem to openly contradict that application. Even though verse 5 harmonizes with the dying utterances of Jesus on the Cross and all scholars agree with the similarity, they do not apply this Psalm to his experiences during the last days of his ministry. Therefore, we are forced to give our slant on much of the Psalm to show that some of the assumptions that are made can be questioned. We will start with verses 1-5, which are quite straightforward, but as we continue, other problems will arise that we will try to sort out.

Psa. 31:1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

Psa. 31:2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

A “house of defence” is like a fortress. If verses 1 and 2 are applied to David, we do not know specifically what juncture of his life, what experience, he was referring to, but when we apply the verses to Jesus, they clearly refer to his last experiences on the Cross. It will help to review some of those experiences.

While affixed to the Cross, Jesus had a conversation with a thief, his mother, and the Apostle John. His prayers to the Father reveal his innermost thinking. The Old Testament prophetically tells what was going on in his brain, even though many things were not necessarily audibly expressed. Therefore, verses 1 and 2 were Jesus’ thoughts while on the Cross. He did not want to cave in to the experience, and he had some control. He did not feel forsaken here, but he knew he would die and was undergoing excruciating pain. Even the slightest movement for the three hours from noon until 3 p.m., when he died, caused suffering. However, his peace of mind was another matter. He could think rationally and respond clearly to others. When the thief said, “Remember me when you come into your kingdom,” Jesus replied, “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise [in the future, in the Kingdom]” (Luke 23:43). He had clarity of thought, whereas many who were crucified, especially those who took the drink that was proffered to somewhat dull their pain like an opiate, had muddled thinking. Also, Jesus addressed his mother and the Apostle John with sane words, showing he was in full possession of his thoughts while enduring extreme pain. Not until Jesus said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” did he have real anguish of spirit, for generally speaking, the three hours on the Cross were not all mental anguish. He did have other thoughts such as how he appeared as a spectacle (Psa. 22:6), but he thought with sanity. When perverts looked at and taunted him with words such as “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,” he remained calm as a lamb before its shearers is dumb (Matt. 27:40).

From the standpoint of what Jesus experienced on the Cross, we can see how verses 1 and 2 applied to him. However, there was a period of time when his speech was so slurred that some standing next to the Cross thought he was calling for Elijah (Matt. 27:47). They could not

intelligibly understand his remarks at that time, but the Holy Spirit interpreted the groanings of the Spirit (Rom. 8:26). Thus prayer requests are very clear to the Heavenly Father. No matter how audible requests sound, He can read the heart.

The words “Bow down thine ear to me” remind us of what happens in real life when a person is dying. The voice gets weaker and weaker, so when the person is going to speak, we put our ear very close to his lips to hear the dying words, which may be a request, an expression, or what the person is feeling. We have to bow down to hear. Thus, prophetically, Jesus was in such a weakened state that he was close to expiring on the Cross, and it was exhausting for him to say anything intelligibly. He was asking the Father to hearken to his request. In praying that he would “never be ashamed,” he was asking that his resoluteness of spirit would not fail. Jesus came here to die as a ransom for all. Therefore, if he failed to faithfully and completely comply with God’s will, if he gave up or gave some manifestation to that effect to the enemy, they would rejoice in having broken his spirit. Such is the sadistic nature of man! “Deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.”

Psa. 31:3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name’s sake lead me, and guide me.

Psa. 31:4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

Like Jesus, we do not want to fail, especially in a trial in a public arena, for a failure would bring a reflection on the One who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light or on the cause of the Christian religion. Verse 3 becomes more pertinent when we read verse 4, “Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.” With his feet and his hands having been nailed to the Cross, it was as if Jesus were in a net and could not escape. The scribes and Pharisees had set this “net ... privily” by plotting to put him to death. When Judas came along and said he would betray the Master for a sum of money, his offer was perfect for their nefarious scheme of getting rid of Jesus. Thus he ended up affixed to the Cross and could not come down.

Psa. 31:5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

Jesus’ supposed statement on the Cross “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” is spurious, as proven by the earliest manuscripts (Luke 23:34). Actually, some of the chief priests knew what they were doing. Those truly responsible for plotting Jesus’ death were a lot different from those who simply remained silent and did not defend him or come to his aid. The former knew what they were doing, for they acted out of pure jealousy, and Satan was using them as most willing servants.

Comment: Psalm 69:27,28 reads, “Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.”

Reply: Yes, Psalm 69 verifies the thought that some of the religious leaders were fully culpable and knew what they were doing. We believe that those who were most responsible for the Crucifixion will not have a chance in the Kingdom. Fortunately, however, a number of the scribes and Pharisees will come forth from the grave, and at that time, they will see themselves thrust out of the Kingdom, as Jesus prophesied (Luke 13:28). In addition, many of the priests believed on Jesus after his awakening from the tomb and became disciples (John 12:42).

Jesus made the statement of verse 5 after he had said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” For that brief moment, Jesus had complete isolation from God, which was a

horrifying but necessary experience for him, but afterward he sensed complete victory (Luke 23:46). Peace was gradually restored to Jesus so that he could cry with a loud and triumphant voice, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Then, as he was dying, he bowed his head and said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." In other words, after he uttered the triumphant cry with his last ounce of strength, he was thoroughly weakened, his heart burst, and he died. Thus he died with the sense of God's presence.

Thus far in Psalm 31, there is no particular problem in applying the verses to Jesus. As we proceed, we will answer the most serious objection.

Psa. 31:6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

Jesus' statements in the Psalms are not all prophesied in the sequence in which they occurred. Thus the Psalms tell the *assortment* of his thinking on the Cross. The thoughts are recorded not just for the benefit of the few Christians who have lived down through the Gospel Age but for the everlasting posterity of all beings who will ever be created. All will be given divine infallible instruction, and that instruction will be seen, heard, and understood with much greater clarity than we can do at the present time.

Comment: In verse 6, Jesus was saying, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity."

Psa. 31:7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

Psa. 31:8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Psa. 31:9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.

Jesus had up and down experiences on the Cross, just as he did in the Garden of Gethsemane. Severe dehydration takes place with crucifixion. When nails went through his hands and feet, we usually think of the blood coming out, but dehydration was also taking place. Not only does the blood flowing out weaken the body, but the plasma is draining and thirst occurs. In addition, Jesus got chilled in that weakened condition. He had hot and cold experiences, just as a person with a highly infectious disease has a fever and trembling simultaneously. Incidentally, "disease" is the lack of ease.

"Yea, my soul ... [even] my belly." Many Scriptures equate the belly with the soul from the standpoint of anguish. Whether there is only a tear or deep sorrow, the stomach is affected in various ways.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, when he came to give his life a ransom for many, the poor and the sin-sick came to him, and he sat down and talked with them. It is nice to know there were hearing ears because that attitude portends that in the Kingdom, such individuals will be inclined to righteousness, even if they did not become disciples in the present age. In spite of the evil, Jesus had some satisfaction in seeing large multitudes follow him. The 4,000 and the 5,000 who were fed with loaves and fish are a mathematical equation showing the number 144,000. The class who were willing to go three days without food to hear Jesus speak picture those in the Gospel Age who are willing to satisfy their spiritual hunger to the neglect of their bodily cravings (Matt. 15:32).

"Thou hast set my feet in a large room." Jesus was sustained by meditating on the good versus

the adverse experiences. The goodness of God in the past, even while he was the Logos, gave Jesus the victory. God tested Jesus almost to the breaking point, but by his knowledge of God, by his very close relationship, by his love for God's methodology, etc., Jesus was faithful (Isa. 53:11). With "largeness" being the good thoughts, Jesus succeeded—and that is true with us as well. If as we mature as Christians, we become crystallized in character, then no matter what test comes upon us, we will get the victory by God's grace. He has promised not to test us above that which we are able.

"I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly." Part of Jesus' agony was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and part was on the Cross. The fact that he did not have any food for at least 30 hours and that the blood and plasma flowed from his body hastened the process of derangement of mind and flesh. He was being consumed as a sacrifice.

Psa. 31:10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

Verse 10 is a test verse. "For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing." Most translations give the thought that Jesus' entire earthly ministry of 3 1/2 years or his whole earthly life of 33 1/2 years was "spent with grief," but that is not what the Hebrew is saying. Instead Jesus' life, which was in a large place with hope, was coming to a close. He had never died before. When changed from the Logos down to Mary's womb, he was reduced in size, but his life was kept intact. Thus Jesus was speaking about his dying on the Cross; namely, "My *end* is spent with grief and with weeping of the eye." Even if we apply these verses to David, the usual thought would not be correct, for like Jesus, David had his joys.

"My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed." Jesus *bore* the iniquity; it was not his own. He bore the sins of many; he became sin. Isaiah 53:4-6 expresses the thought: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jesus did not sin, but he had to sense the feeling of guilt.

This aspect was an integral part of the corresponding price. Usually in truth circles, only the life-rights concept is considered. The Greek word *antilutron*, which includes the thought of "against," stresses the negative side (1 Tim. 2:6). However, Jesus had to be positive in giving his life as well as to experience the guilt. The guilt was part and parcel of the ransom price—Jesus had to take the place of the sinner (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). If we get over the hurdle with this understanding, it is not difficult in the rest of the Psalm to see that while David wrote about his own experiences, the Holy Spirit overruled the choice of words to have a much higher prophetic significance pertaining to Jesus.

Psa. 31:11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

Psa. 31:12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

"I was a reproach among all mine enemies." Isaiah 53:3 prophetically records the reaction of Jesus' disciples at the time of the Crucifixion: "We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Even though Jesus had repeatedly told them about his coming death, they could not understand. He told them he would be betrayed, spat on, crucified, etc., yet they fled when the events occurred. However, when the resurrection took

place, what an explosive difference!

That is where Satan made his mistake, for he thought Jesus' being shamed as a curse on the Cross would completely end his influence. But when Jesus arose from the dead, the disciples were hysterical with joy. Nothing could silence them as they fearlessly went through the city, telling about him. Satan miscalculated—instead of being defeated, Jesus triumphed over the grave because he gave his life faithfully. Probably the early Church was the most fruitful period of the Church percentage-wise in producing members of the Little Flock. Even though the Harvest at the end of the age is larger in numbers, the results are not the same.

“I was a reproach” applies to Jesus, but as the verse proceeds, there seems to be a little incongruity with that application. Therefore, Bible commentators do not apply this Psalm in its entirety to Jesus. The way out of this dilemma is to correct the translation. The Hebrew can be rendered either “I am the reproach” or “I am become a reproach.” Both renderings are *present* tense, one being the present indicative tense and the other being the present passive tense. As further proof, verse 12 says, “I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.” In other words, the present tense should be consistently used.

There is another difference too. We are familiar with what Jesus said on the Cross, for the apostles told what they heard him say at that time. However, Psalm 31 was written from *God's* standpoint, so it tells what Jesus thought, felt, and experienced but did not express audibly when on the Cross for three hours. During that time he had numerous thoughts, whereas only a few sentences of his utterances are recorded in the Gospels. To get a fair representation of his experiences during the three hours, we need the prophetic utterances in the Psalms. For instance, while on the Cross, Jesus had a consultation with his mother and the Apostle John, and two different accounts cover two different times when Jesus had back-and-forth conversations with the thieves.

Here in Psalm 31, Jesus was telling of his current experiences on the Cross. His disciples, his unconsecrated friends, his relatives, and others of the public all misunderstood what was happening to him. He was saying, “They see me on the Cross as a curse and do not understand.” As stated in Isaiah 53:3, “We [his disciples] hid as it were our faces from him.” The women stood afar off (Matt. 27:55). Even though Jesus had foretold his crucifixion, shock and surprise seized the disciples when he was on the Cross. Thus Jesus was prophetically saying in Psalm 31 that all forsook him—disciples, relatives (especially his two unconsecrated brothers), neighbors, acquaintances, and public throughout Israel. Previously, the common people had heard him gladly but not now (Mark 12:37). In addition, his enemies despised him, and some were jealous. Psalm 31 expresses what Jesus taught, felt, thought, and said. How wonderful that Jehovah recorded a thousand years in advance the actual feelings and thoughts of Jesus on the Cross! Jehovah, our Father, is as high above the heavens as He is above the earth, not only intellectually but in every other noble and majestic way. We trust God because we know He can read our thoughts, and when we are penitent and ask forgiveness, we know He hears us.

The rest of verse 11 should also be present tense: “They that see me without flee from me.” When the guards came with Judas to the Garden of Gethsemane, nine of the disciples fled. Only Peter and John followed Jesus.

The mood of this Psalm changes later. Hebrew verbs are difficult to interpret accurately because the translator has to understand the mood as though he were actually there on the scene. With the Hebrew language being short and more to the point, thoughts are expressed inferentially by mannerisms, body language, and tone of voice. Depending on the inflection and tone of voice, the same words can be interpreted as a question or as a statement of fact.

Comment: Psalm 69:7,8 is a parallel text for verse 11: “Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children.”

Reply: The “mother’s children” were Simon and Joses (Matt. 13:55).

Jesus also thought, “I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.”

Comment: Moffatt has, “I am forgotten like a buried corpse, flung aside like a discarded pot.”

Reply: Especially in regard to Temple worship in Jerusalem, broken pots are being uncovered that were brought with sacrificial offerings and then discarded, being purposely broken.

Psa. 31:13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ last hours record the disciples’ words but not, for instance, the words of those in the household of Caiaphas who knew Jesus. The Apostle John was an in-law relative of Caiaphas. While Jesus was being tried, Peter was questioned, “Aren’t you his friend? You speak like a Galilean.” And again, “Didn’t we see you with Jesus?” Thus a lot of other people knew about Jesus who are not named or mentioned in detail in the Gospels, yet hints are given that many were involved. A *multitude* came with swords and staves to apprehend Jesus. When he was taken to Herod’s palace, others accompanied him. Some of the people were fearful. Yes, they liked Jesus and saw injustices being done, but they were silent for fear of reprisals. Jesus walked through the streets with the Cross past women who knew him. Verse 13 gives us a little feeling of how the whole nation was affected. His enemies rejoiced.

When Jesus was on his way down to Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees had warned him, “Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee.” Jesus replied, “Tell that fox [Herod], Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:31,32). Thus Jesus was warned that a conspiracy awaited him at Jerusalem. Not only did two of his brothers advise him not to go to Jerusalem, but his disciples were reluctant and these Pharisees also warned him. In one way or another, many tried to disparage his success in coming to give his life as a ransom for many.

Psa. 31:14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.

On the Cross, Jesus thought about both current and past conditions. It is remarkable that he maintained his sanity. Normally the drink of gall and vinegar stupefied one, but Jesus merely tasted the drink and continued to actively think and review his life (Matt. 27:34).

Psa. 31:15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

“Deliver me [in death] from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.” Jesus was asking that his life be cut short in death, whereby the pain would cease and he would finish his course in the hope of a resurrection.

Psa. 31:16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies’ sake.

Jesus’ face was not shining while he was on the Cross, but he was hoping that all of these experiences would be erased. “Save me for thy mercies’ sake.” Jesus was the minister through whom salvation would be brought to pass, so if the minister failed, then the One who sent him

(that is, God) would also fail. This same principle was illustrated when Moses, who is a picture of Jesus, asked God, “What will your enemies say if all of the Israelites die? You brought them through the Red Sea, but are they now to all die in the desert?”

Psa. 31:17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

Psa. 31:18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

Q: In verses 17 and 18, was Jesus prophetically praying for retribution to come on his enemies?

A: Yes, because he realized that the ringleaders, the two high priests and certain others in the Sanhedrin, were truly wicked.

“Let the lying lips be put to silence.” Pilate and his wife got retribution in the present life. Judas received retribution of Second Death, and others will be silenced the same way.

“Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.” Those who have incorrigible guilt, such as Judas, will be put to shame when people look on their destiny. Others who are not culpable to that degree will be put to shame in the general resurrection. “There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out” (Luke 13:28). Some of the scribes and Pharisees will experience shame plus have to walk up the highway of holiness. Thus there are different degrees of sin and retribution.

David hated with a “perfect hatred” (Psa. 139:22). Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity, whereas many love righteousness but do not hate iniquity (Heb. 1:9). They try to separate the sin from the sinner even when the connection is obvious. Jesus said we can judge a tree by its fruit, but to judge one as incorrigible, the fruit has to be more manifest (Matt. 7:17-20). An example of an incorrigible person is one who tortures people to death. For a person to kill another in a fit of anger is different from one who uses abnormal ghoulish practices in putting someone to death. Even stabbing a person multiple times could be the result of fury, but to torture others and prolong death with premeditation are indications of incorrigibility.

Comment: For “Let them be silent in the grave,” the King James margin has, “Let them be cut off for the grave.”

Reply: Yes, that would be the thought of Second Death in this context, for Jesus was speaking.

Comment: In reading the Psalms, we get a clearer view that Jesus’ supposed words “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” are spurious (Luke 23:34).

Reply: Yes, not only do the words express a wrong principle, but they are not in the oldest manuscripts. Being imperfect, we might say something similar because of our lack of knowledge but not Jesus, who was perfect. For example, Stephen said, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60).

Comment: Under the guise of medical science, some Nazis performed fiendish experiments and even gloried in the suffering of the patients.

Reply: Yes, and torture chambers have been discovered in a palace in Iraq.

“Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.” Such individuals will be put to shame when they see that Jesus is King. Their acts have been preserved for posterity. Imagine the shame when pictures of the individuals who connived to put Jesus to death are viewed by future generations on other planets! Even if these individuals get life, they will have to see these pictures over and over.

Psa. 31:19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

The sentiments of Jesus in verses 19-21 probably occurred subsequent to the Crucifixion, for a mood change occurred here. Jesus was thinking at this point, not talking. With his resurrection and glorification and the revelation of truth in the future, a great change will come about. People will then look on the Crucifixion as a marvelous display of Jesus' love. As a lamb before its shearers is dumb, he did not reprimand those who inflicted punishment but quietly submitted (Isa. 53:7). The people will think, “What a wonderful Savior for him to die on the Cross that way for me!” Satan thought that nothing could erase the stigma and shame of Jesus' dying on the Cross, whereas the opposite is true. When Jesus was raised from death, his disciples were delirious with joy and could not contain themselves. They ran through the streets, declaring his resurrection and not caring what others thought.

Verse 19 seems to be exceptionally appropriate for those who are called during the Gospel Age. “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men [that is, before the Kingdom]!” God had in mind the calling of a certain class of people, who would be especially blessed before He manifests His goodness on behalf of mankind in the Kingdom Age. “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” (John 3:16). The Church is the pearl of great price, a peculiar treasure, but Jesus also bought the field (Matt. 13:44-46). God loves them all and wants to bestow life on all created beings who are submissive to His will and wish to give freewill offerings. In the present life, not many want to make that sacrifice, for the price has included separation from family and friends during the greater part of the Gospel Age (Luke 14:28). To be a Christian cost a person employment, burial rights, etc. Today, in the Laodicean period of the Church, people are basically satisfied with their own pleasures and activities. Not until the real trouble comes will the focus of attention be on true Christians, resulting in their death. The test of the doctrine of the Trinity will occur suddenly in a surprising fashion.

Of all people, we should feel most blessed in our present situation. David felt the same way in his day, for he, as well as others such as Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sensed the calling of an Ancient Worthy class. Moreover, they seemed to sense that the coming of Messiah was quite a ways off. Not only did God deal in a special fashion with those who trusted in Him, but they sensed that God had something good in reservation for them. When Jesus came, he brought to light life and immortality, which is so exceedingly great that no language can adequately explain its fruition (2 Tim. 1:10).

Psa. 31:20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

We are trying to read the Psalms for our benefit, extrapolating blessings for us now. Verse 20 reminds us of the *parousia*, the secret presence, beginning in 1874, when Jesus returned invisibly to earth's atmosphere as a glorious spirit being. In the present life, Jesus hides us “in the secret of his tabernacle” (Psa. 27:5). Because of present truth and the knowledge of the Tabernacle, we like to think of the “secret” place as the Holy of the Tabernacle, where we are seated with Jesus in fellowship, one with another, enjoying the light of the Candlestick, the Shewbread, and the

Prayer Altar.

Comment: Psalm 32:7 reads, “Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.” Faith in Jehovah and His protection is the hiding place of Christians. This principle also applies to those of faith in other categories: the Ancient Worthies and the Holy Remnant, for example.

Comment: Psalm 46:4,5 states, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.”

Reply: Those verses will have a more forceful application in the future stressful time to come on the Church. That time will be especially hard for Christians dwelling in the Laodicean period because they have had soft living in this country without persecution, hunger, and being outcasts. For those who are cultured under that environment, the trouble will be more acutely felt. Today, at the end of the age, we are living in a gleaning harvest, as opposed to an abundant harvest in the Pastor’s day.

Psa. 31:21 Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shown me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

Comment: The RSV and the NIV have “a besieged city” instead of “a strong city.”

Reply: Yes, that is a good perspective, for Christians and the faithful of past ages had to be prepared for what God’s providence would permit to come upon them, and they had to trust in His protection and sufficient grace for that experience.

Q: What is the “besieged city”?

A: In the more rural sense, Christians are the flock of the fold with Jesus as their Shepherd, but they can also be considered a “city” in the sense of cacophony; that is, they are in the midst of discordant noise and distracting sounds that interfere with meditation.

Psa. 31:22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

Verse 22 is a change of venue to past tense: “I said,” “thou heardest,” and “I cried.” Past mistakes are realized and acknowledged, so that the David class now see things in a different perspective.

Comment: When Jesus said on the Cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” he subsequently realized that he had not been cut off and that God heard the voice of his supplications.

Reply: Yes, Psalm 31 is a Messianic Psalm, referring to Jesus. In many cases throughout the Psalms, God used the emotions of David to prophetically show Jesus’ sentiments. Jesus never anticipated that extreme feeling of being forsaken.

Psa. 31:23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

Verse 23 is advice to “saints” of all ages, past and present: “O love Jehovah, all ye his saints.” Of course the saints of past ages were friends of God; they were not begotten to sonship.

“The LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.” There is a little sarcasm here. At present, the “proud doer” may be center stage and dominating the platform in the public eye, but everything he does wrong will just add to his future misery because he will have to retrace steps that are taken in the wrong direction. Meanwhile, faith sees the permission of evil as something temporary.

Psa. 31:24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Psalm 31 ends with a warning (verse 23) and an encouragement (verse 24). The risen Lord is speaking in verses 22-24. Having been delivered from his past experience, he is giving advice. He tells the faithful to “be of good courage,” for they will need courage in the days ahead.

The terminology of this Psalm benefited Ancient Worthies in the past and has benefited Christians as well. Although the Lord’s Word is a guiding light that shines more and more unto the perfect day, it shines with a sufficiency of light for the ones living at any time during this time-period transition—the called of past and present ages (Prov. 4:18). One reason we have more light today is that the deceptions are more subtle. Therefore, more light is needed to perceive the Adversary’s method(s) in trying to deceive and discourage the Lord’s people.

PSALM 32

Psa. 32:0 A Psalm of David, Maschil.

Psalm 32 is different from the previous Psalm, which was a prophecy of the experiences and example of Jesus. There is a relationship between the two Psalms, however, but it is of another nature. Psalm 31 pertains to the Head of The Christ, whereas Psalm 32 pertains to the body members. Of course all of the consecrated are considered prospective body members, hoping to be of the Bride class unless proven to the contrary when God makes the actual selection.

Psa. 32:1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Verses 1 and 2 mention four different types of sin—transgression, sin, iniquity, and guile—which we will consider one by one. Guilt and forgiveness are contrasted in each case.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven.” Transgressions can be daily trespasses or offenses. What is the difference between a transgression and a sin? A transgression is unintentional. Not purposed, it is due to other factors such as ignorance. It is where a person takes a wrong turn or crosses the line, the boundary, of God’s thinking as to what is the proper course. We want to keep on the right side of the fence. Of course the wrong side sometimes appears greener, but the Lord makes clear which is right and which is wrong.

“Blessed is he ... whose sin is covered” by the robe of Christ’s righteousness. But what is the hope? Although the sin is covered, it will not be blotted out until the change to a new spiritual body in either the Little Flock or the Great Company. Stated another way, the new body will be without sin. Mortality will still be a factor for the Great Company class in the next age, so although everlasting life is practically assured, any transgression throughout eternity will bring death. After the present life for the consecrated, evil will never again be permitted. Should any sin occur in the future, the only one to be damaged is the individual himself. In contrast, those of the Little Flock will possess immortality and cannot die throughout eternity.

The four positive terms are “forgiven,” “covered,” “imputeth not,” and “no guile.” In the

statement “transgression is forgiven,” is the thought that a single transgression is forgiven or multiple transgressions? The reference is to a *condition* of transgressions from time to time and not one particular act. God can read what is in an individual’s heart and knows what statements and acts are due to ignorance. “He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psa. 103:14). God knows that we were born in sin and shapen in iniquity and that we are liable to wrongdoing, but we must be very careful not to develop wrong habits that are dangerous. The Apostle Paul asked, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid” (Rom. 6:1,2). We are not to take advantage of the robe of Christ’s righteousness. Wrong acts that are repeated without any change damage one’s character.

“Blessed is he ... whose sin is covered.” The Hebrew indicates that sin is missing the mark. A runner in a track race has to stay in his own lane so that he will not inhibit another runner or be disqualified. A Christian will miss the target if he does not properly develop. “For this is the will of God [concerning you], even your [own] sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). In order to be sanctified, one must be active and do good to others, but the bottom line is to be a copy of God’s dear Son, the forerunner in this race. The Christian must be focused: “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3:13). Personal sanctification is the primary consideration rather than trying to see how many other people can be saved. Evangelists take pride in the size of the congregation, but the question is, What is the quality of those who comprise the congregation?

Psa. 32:2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

“Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity.” The danger of “iniquity” is that an enticement or some type of deviation may look more attractive than the path the Christian is running and thus may turn him out of the way. The Adversary and the world offer many enticements, one of which is false love. It is thought that loving everyone is a proof of development, and hatred of iniquity is put on a back burner. The Hebrew word for “iniquity” is *avon*, which reminds us of cosmetics, the putting on of something that is not real. Iniquity is a fake or substitutionary methodology. The Adversary often patronizingly suggests that he is the Christian’s friend. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world if he would render worship. Thus the Christian is enticed to do wrong in one form or another.

“Blessed is the man ... in whose spirit there is no guile [deceit].” As an illustration, when Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” (John 1:47). In continuing the theme of guilt and forgiveness, verse 2 compares iniquity and guilelessness (or sincerity). In other words, the individual honestly recognizes and faces his mistake.

Q: What are the distinctions in the different ways of receiving forgiveness?

A: The word “covered” has to do with Adamic sin, but other types of sin can be completely forgiven. For instance, when we ask forgiveness and consecrate, our past sins are forgotten. If we sincerely repent of sins that occurred *before* consecration, the slate is wiped clean. Our problem in being in the flesh is that there are four types of sin. Yes, we must keep wearing the robe of Christ’s righteousness, but we must also wash the spots and iron out the wrinkles. God takes care of other sins through chastisement. The point is that we will not be sin-free until we receive the new body.

Comment: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Reply: An individual may miss the reward of the Little Flock because of a careless remark that

damages the character or reputation of a person the Lord especially approves and is dealing with. A crown can be lost just that easily if the remark is not properly taken care of by the individual before his demise.

Q: Does the following sequence occur? Forgiveness occurs before consecration, we are covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness at consecration, and iniquity is subsequently imputed when we get stains on our robe and fail to remove them.

A: Yes, that is aptly stated.

Psa. 32:3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

We should keep in mind the fact that David was speaking about his own experience, from which we, as Christians, try to extrapolate spiritual lessons.

Comment: Moffatt reads, "So long as I refused to own my guilt, I moaned unceasingly, life ebbed away." If the consecrated do not confess their guilt, they are adversely affected inside.

Reply: That is the thought of verse 3 but expressed a different way. When David committed the sin with Uriah, it took a little time before he openly acknowledged it before the whole nation with a Psalm. On another occasion, God issued a chastisement for David's sin. We are given the privilege of remorse, repentance, and confession. If these steps are not taken, retribution is necessary in the current life, for willful sins cannot be carried over to the next life. Stated another way, all willful sins will be punished on this side of the veil. Otherwise, the individual will not get life.

Q: Won't David have to face Uriah in the Kingdom?

A: Yes. David will come forth with a perfect body and will be considered perfect. However, the Ancient Worthies need further instruction in righteousness. The Pastor used Samson as an obvious example of one who will need such instruction. Sins are forgiven in the current life because of faith and confession, but sins that cause needless injury to someone else are another matter.

Psalm 32 is a lesson in the different types of sin that we all have to confront in the flesh. God tries our heart and judges us and weighs our sins as in a scale. In mythology, transgressions are put on one side of the scale, and good deeds are put on the other side. However, more than good deeds are needed. The subject should keep us humble.

Psa. 32:4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

David's bones were affected day and night. Trouble, whether major or minor, affects the conscience. If one's conscience is seared, it is no longer troubled, and the individual is in a bad state. Discipline and hard experiences are needed to iron out the different degrees of transgression.

Sometimes the greatest characters committed the worst sins, but their love for God opened the door to their own character in revealing the deeds. For instance, Peter denied Christ three times, but the denials became a blessing, for they awakened him to a zeal throughout his entire life that was second only to that of the Apostle Paul. In fact, his zeal was just as strong as Paul's, but he did not have as many talents. A person is rewarded according to the multitude of talents to which he is obedient.

“My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” This is a reference to David’s tears. He cried repeatedly in his anguish of spirit.

Psa. 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

“I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.” David was talking to himself. Some sins are privately acknowledged, and other types are publicly acknowledged.

“I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Again David used words that are part of the vocabulary of the penitent: “transgressions,” “iniquity,” and “sin.”

In most places, the word “Selah” has the same definition: “Amen.” In other places, it takes on a slightly different connotation. The word is like a reaffirmation of what has just been said. “Selah” is mentioned three times in this Psalm (verses 4, 5, and 7). David was indicating that sin and forgiveness are an important subject.

Q: Is iniquity the residue and the guilt of sin?

A: Yes. There are concomitants of sin.

In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, one son asked for his inheritance before the father died (Luke 15:11-32). That son wasted the inheritance and subsequently came to his senses. When he came back, he got a reward that seems to picture those who are forgiven. They have done something wrong, but their repentance is *real*. Many people commit sin and ask for forgiveness, but just to say, “Forgive me,” is not enough depending on the nature of the sin. The degree and intensity of the repentance must match the degree and intensity of the sin. In the present life, we should be slow to speak and quick to hear God’s instruction. If we are to be kings and priests in the next age, we must be practicing physicians now. A good doctor tries to be as skillful as possible in giving advice or performing surgery. If he is not capable, he will refer the patient to a physician who is more skilled; that is, he is more interested in the welfare of the patient than in the gratuity for his services.

Psa. 32:6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

What is the “time when thou [God] mayest be found”? Right now—the quicker, the better! If possible, sins should be taken care of immediately. In addition, sins of a more serious nature should be dealt with before one deceases or gets hardened in the sin. The conscience needs to be kept tender by frequently going to the throne of grace for forgiveness.

Comment: We should also go to the ones we have offended. If we do not make things right, our prayers will be hindered.

Reply: When sins are publicly done, they need to be addressed lest they be harmful to the individual committing the sins, as well as to those who see the sin. To wink the eye at serious sin brings culpability. We have a lifetime schooling in these issues.

“Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.” Almost all of the consecrated will have “floods of great waters” in one fashion or another. An example of an overwhelming “flood” is committing suicide. This act is averted when one comes to his senses

of remorse. Satan wants to overwhelm the individual so that he will give up the narrow way and take his sacrifice off the altar. The Adversary reasons, "Enjoy yourself in the little time that is left because you will not get life." Sometimes a brother who is contemplating suicide is given the wrong advice by other brethren. By not pointing out the danger to the new creature, they incur responsibility for the result.

Comment: Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to sift him.

Reply: That warning may have tipped the scale so that Peter emerged from the experience and was reinstated to favor.

Comment: When David's sin was pointed out, he repented before the nation. Unfortunately, some would rather commit suicide than go through the humiliation of repentance. David had two options: (1) as king, to admit his sin and humiliate himself before the nation in manifesting his desire for forgiveness or (2) to take his life and end the matter.

Reply: Judas took the latter option. When he realized he was responsible for the death of a just person, he should have immediately run to Jesus and begged for forgiveness.

Verse 6 is speaking about the individual who properly takes care of smaller matters before the real trial comes. The principle is, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10). Conversely, he who is unfaithful in that which is least is unfaithful also in much. In other words, the individual will be unfaithful when the flood time of trouble comes. Sometimes that flood of trouble occurs when one is on his deathbed.

Faith becomes very, very important. One cannot attain love unless he has faith. With faith, hope, and love, the faith continues. As the first and *continuing* step of one's life, faith builds up into hope, which builds up into love. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Faith trusts in God's mercy, even when a person has done wrong. Faith is his only hope; it is like holding the horns of the Brazen Altar in the Court.

Psa. 32:7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Verse 7 is characteristic of David. The great majority of his Psalms express up and down emotions. He transgressed; he was forgiven. He was sorrowful; he was glad. Thus we get a little insight into David's character. Since he was faithful and a man after God's own heart, we think of him, in the final analysis, as being like his namesake in the jewels of the high priest's breastplate: Judah, which means "praise." Even when he was king and fighting wars, he studied God's Word day and night. David was an extraordinary person.

Psa. 32:8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psa. 32:9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

God will instruct, teach, and guide with His eye. We are reminded of the hymn "Precious Promise," which contains this beautiful sentiment.

Precious promise God hath given
To the weary ones who try
Treasure to lay up in heaven,
"I will guide thee with mine eye."

When temptations almost win thee,
 And thy trusted watchers fly,
 Let this promise ring within thee,
 "I will guide thee with mine eye."

When thine earthly hopes have perished
 In the grave of years gone by,
 Let this promise still be cherished,
 "I will guide thee with mine eye."

By and by the heav'nly treasures,
 Moth and rust could ne'er destroy,
 Thou wilt find laid up in glory,
 Guided to them by mine eye.

(Refrain)

I will guide thee, I will guide thee,
 I will guide thee with mine eye;
 In the way which I will show thee,
 "I will guide thee with mine eye."

The three key words are "instruct," "teach," and "guide," and in some respects, the old man, the old creature, in us is like the horse and the mule, which are in need of instruction. The new creature has to browbeat the old creature, constraining and directing it in the right way. We have to be guided, so God gives us the instruction, which we are to obey in curbing the old nature. The Pastor, who was superb in giving instruction in devotional aspects, mentioned this difficulty, calling it the "civil war within." He likened the battle between the new creature and the old creature to the Civil War between the North and the South, when strong feelings threatened the nation with severance into two parts.

We are not to be "as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." The old creature is not to be like the dumb animals that are guided by their natural instincts. The battle, the conflict, follows the Christian unto his dying day, even in old age. We must drive a stake through the heart of the old creature.

The mouth of the horse or the mule "must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee." The animal pulling a plow or a cart is not like a trained horse where the rider has a bridle, stirrups, etc. Normally, an animal that is not thoroughly broken in and submissive to the master's will needs blinders on the side of its eyes, a bit in the mouth, and a bridle to prevent impulsive reactions. Such an animal also has a tendency to bite at times. Therefore, the implication in verse 9 is, "Lest they come near [to bite you]." If not curbed, the old creature will bite and harm the new creature, causing suffering for a while from the injury.

The lesson is that we should not be like the horse and the mule, needing chastisement and forcible providence to guide us in the way. We should obey willingly. We should be so in tune that we are instructed by just the thinking and the eye of the Lord. Sometimes we do not see that eye, and then we need some providential experience to wake us up as to what to do. The point is that we should be guided by God's eye, rather than by the more forceful bit and bridle. We must learn one way or the other—by the easier way or by the harder way. The Word and God's providences instruct us. Stated another way, the happenings in the lives of Christians are the means whereby the sanctified are instructed.

Q: Does being led by the bit and the bridle picture the Great Company?

A: That would be true if the leading were *habitual*. The bit and the bridle are used only when necessary. God guides His people by His Word and His providences. Sometimes even the obedient need to be guided by providence, that is, when they cannot reason. When they cannot find a Scripture to tell them what to do, they pray for guidance. When the confusion is great, even the obedient have to be guided by providence, and God helps them.

Psa. 32:10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

The previous Psalm had a partial application to David and an important application to Jesus. Psalm 32 is a change in venue, for it treats the body members of The Christ. This instruction also had a partial application to David, but it is primarily for those of the Church class if they want to make their calling and election sure. In addition to the flesh, their battle is with the world: "Many sorrows ... [come from] the wicked [from willful sinners]." Verse 5 mentions "transgressions," and verse 1 states, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Thus we can see that this Psalm has a unique application to the body members, whereas the previous Psalm has a unique application to the Head.

Psa. 32:11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

"Ye righteous" refers to the body members but in the larger sense of the Little Flock and the Great Company, who comprise the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23). In the present life, a civil war is going on within us and about us. The conditions for attaining the Little Flock are difficult to comply with, for we must be "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10). Without the robe of Christ's righteousness, our conscience would condemn us to the point of discouragement, leaving the door open for the Adversary, who would pose as a friend. He would suggest that our consecration was never accepted in the first place and would thus provide us with a way out. The individual then does one of three things; namely, he goes back into the world like a sow into the mire, joins the nominal Church with its vomit, or commits suicide. Satan will "help" the individual in any one of these ways. Only by God's grace and strength can we make our calling and election sure. Prayer is very important in fighting the good fight of faith.

"Shout for joy." On the one hand, David, the "sweet psalmist of Israel," must have had a sweet voice. On the other hand, he danced and shouted when he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. A brother who had a talented voice called attention to the fact that sometimes a shout of joy is better than a sweet melody. There is something wonderful about an untrained, unrestrained expression of joy. Of course if we should suddenly find ourselves beyond the veil, hearing "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," the hair on our head would rise with great joy. However, that joy can also occur down here on certain occasions.

"Be glad ... , rejoice, ... and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." This advice applies primarily on this side of the veil. We rejoice when we are in an up mood, and we cry when we are in a down mood.

PSALM 33

Psa. 33:1 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

"Rejoice in the LORD [Jehovah], O ye righteous: for praise is comely [becoming] for the upright."

Psa. 33:2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of

ten strings.

“Praise the LORD with harp.” The ten-stringed harp, or psaltery, which is related to the Ten Commandments, is played on this side of the veil, in the present life. When we expand on the thought of the “ten strings,” we have the Ten Beatitudes, as declared by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:3-11,16). The basic picture is predicated upon the Ten Commandments, but in the Gospel Age, it is transferred to the New Testament and the gospel Jesus preached to his followers. Accordingly, we are to sing and obey his commandments.

The usual interpretation is that the ten strings represent ten doctrines. We will not fault that thought but want to emphasize that the primary basis of the harp, the psaltery, is the Word of God, within which are ten strings, or prominent themes, that the Christian plucks. Ten themes can be derived from the Ten Commandments. Thus, in addition to the sermon about the harp with its ten strings picturing ten doctrines, other sermons can be given. Usually the doctrines are preached in a sequence of development, whereas the Ten Commandments were given as a unit, and all of them must be obeyed, with an emphasis on the First Commandment and obeying the sabbath.

The point is that the subject of the ten strings is larger than the ten primary doctrines that are usually considered, for it is the Word of God, the Ten Commandments as preached by Jesus. Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law [the Ten Commandments, the ten strings] ... but to fulfil [to magnify that law and give it a higher application]“ (Matt. 5:17). The higher application is predicated on what the lower application pictures as a type. Without going into further detail, we will summarize by saying that Psalm 33 shows the importance of God’s Word—for instance, “the word of the LORD is right” (verse 4) and “by the word of the LORD were the heavens made” (verse 6). The emphasis is on *God, His Word, and His commandments*. In the Gospel Age, Jesus gives instruction that we are to apply as new creatures, as opposed to the Jews under the Law of Moses. Unless a Jew has accepted Jesus as his Messiah, he is still under the Ten Commandments, for the Law was not destroyed when Jesus died on the Cross. Stated another way, the Jew is loosed, or free, from the literal Law if he accepts Christ. Jesus gives the Christian the same commandments but in a unique way. The Sermon on the Mount is a big subject. Here in Psalm 33, the emphasis, in simplicity, is on the Word of Jehovah, the Heavenly Father.

Psa. 33:3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

The Christian is to sing “a new song,” and in his singing, he is to rightly divide the word of truth, the Word of God, meaning he is to sing *tunefully*, having a knowledge of the difference between right and wrong (2 Tim. 2:15). The ability to distinguish between right and wrong is the product of a mature Christian, not a baby. All of us were babes in understanding principles when we consecrated, but we grow according to our desire and capacity. In other words, we are to keep endeavoring to know, and we believe that *God measures the effort we make to discern and learn*, even if our ability to obey is imperfect. He looks at our heart intent and is interested in the thrust of the desire of His creatures. In trying to make our calling and election sure, we are measured not by our degree of knowledge but according to the degree of talents that we have and faithfully use. A Christian may have only one talent, but if he is faithful to that one talent, he gets the reward of the Little Flock with one city in heaven. The last stone on the high priest’s breastplate represents the tribe of Naphtali, which means “wrestling.” This class want to know and struggle and may not be successful on this side of the veil, but God is watching to see if they are *always* wrestling. That thrust, that drive, may be in only a one-talent person, but if the individual does all he can with the little he has, he will be judged accordingly—according to what he hath, not according to what he hath not. The Pastor said one is judged according to what he has *used*, but we think of the *effort* rather than the product, of *trying to do* rather than of

having accomplished the ideal. Whether we have one talent or ten talents, we are responsible for our use of them and will be rewarded as God sees fit and provides an opportunity. For example, a Christian may have ten talents but an opportunity to use only five of them because providence has not favored him beyond the five. Thank God, He is doing the judging, for He knows the weaknesses and the strengths of His people and can measure accordingly. Those whom God chooses to be in the Little Flock will be “Amen,” “Selah,” even if we find we are not of that class. His judgment will be perfect in granting immortality. How great is the skill of the Measurer in looking at the heart!

Q: Is the “new song” the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:3)?

A: Yes. There is perfect harmony in that song, for it is a duet of the Old and New Testaments.

Q: Does the song of Moses and the Lamb also indicate that when the Ancient Worthies of the Old Testament are transformed to spirit nature at the end of the Kingdom, they will sing with the Little Flock of the New Testament? Will they sing together when they are united?

A: That is a nice thought we have had, which is apt to be true. Certainly the Ancient Worthies will join the Little Flock up above, and we know that had the Ancient Worthies lived in the Gospel Age, they would have been members of the Little Flock. We believe there will be 144,000 of each class.

Psa. 33:4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.

Psa. 33:5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

God “loveth righteousness and judgment”; the earth is full of His goodness. When we view the earth, God’s goodness is manifested in various ways. The natural creation is one form of His goodness, examples being the beautiful scenery (trees, grass, waterfalls, etc.), the food for animals and humans (crops of wheat, rye, barley, etc.), and the variety of flowers and their different fragrances. The beauty is designed for man’s pleasure, enjoyment, and instruction.

Comment: God causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust, and the sun to rise on the evil and the good (Matt. 5:45).

Reply: Yes, that is also true, and He provides beautiful sunrises and sunsets. If His provisions are so bountiful even in an imperfect earth, which is still under the curse, what must they have been when He originally planted the garden in Eden?

Comment: Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28,29).

Psa. 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

Comment: This verse is another proof that God is the sole Creator.

Reply: Yes, He alone was the Author of creation, including the heavens.

Q: Do the heavens (plural) refer to the terrestrial heavens and not the other universes?

A: Yes, the reference here seems to be to our particular solar system, which was made by

God's "word," whereas the other planets were made by His fingers, and He placed and spaced them in the universe with His hands. Once the basic planets were made, the surfaces of the earth and their molecular composition, etc., were so composed that just by His word, He could direct, mold, and shape them according to His desire. Incidentally, verse 6 is not referring to Jesus as the Word because he did not do part of the creating. Of the many Scriptures that could be quoted as proof texts, two or three in the New Testament are misunderstood as showing that Jesus cooperated with and helped God in connection with creation.

David was referring to the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. In a beginning, the earth was void, and water covered the surface of the earth. The planet was in a crude state without mountains or definition of land terrain. On each of the first six Creative Days, "God said...." (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26). The basic planet itself was one thing, and forming or preparing the unfinished surface of the earth, making it habitable for man, was another thing.

Q: What is meant by the term "breath of his [God's] mouth"? Was God breathing the breath of life into the hosts of the heavens?

A: What took place back there is illustrated by some of the new technology in the last several decades. For instance, we can open or close a garage door and lock or unlock a car door from a distance by a small handheld device. Similarly, but on a much higher level, God can organize and operate anything He wants to with His own mouth—after it has been designed and made to receive His commands.

Psa. 33:7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

By the breath of His mouth, by His word, God gathered the waters of the sea together and laid up the depth in storehouses. How powerful is His word! Not merely were waters gathered together into ocean beds, or cavities, but waters were made into the ice caps of the North and South Poles. The water is frozen into what appears to be plains, mountains, crevasses, etc., in a "heap" form. God's control is such that things can be done with His voice and instruction, as stated very simply in chapter 1 of Genesis.

Q: Are the "storehouses" clouds?

A: Yes, that is one of many forms. The ice caps are also "storehouses," as are minerals in the land surface—different elements for the benefit of mankind. In addition, seeds grow in the earth. Things were made when God spoke, but they were made from things that previously existed. Take Adam, for example. God made Adam—his flesh, bones, etc.—of the dust of the earth, which already existed. In other words, God has things in abeyance that will obey Him. As another example, He can put a camel through the eye of a literal needle. All He has to do is speak, and genetically the camel will start to reverse the direction from which it was born. From a little tiny dot, the animal grew into a big camel. With His voice, God can just turn the button, as it were, and reverse the process so that the full-grown camel will get smaller and smaller and smaller down to a "protozoan" form that will go through the eye of a needle. After it passes through the needle, God returns it to the camel. Today's medical books sound as if bacteria, corpuscles, etc., have intelligence. In describing the cell, man uses language to the effect that one cell fights another, especially when an infection is present. White corpuscles rush to the scene of the inflammation like an army, but the medical books do not give the credit to God. They do not state that an intelligent Creator is in back of that activity. Incidentally, technology is the only thing that is advancing except the truth, which shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

If we dig down in the soil or in the side of a mountain, we see distinct layers, some of which are thick and some very thin. If a tree is cut down, various annual rings are seen, some thicker and some thinner. Climatic conditions such as plenty of water will cause the ring of that year to be thick. Thus to some extent, we can study the past by observing nature.

Psa. 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

The words “fear” and “awe” are somewhat synonymous, yet they are different. We stand in awe of what God has done. Therefore, when He gives moral instruction, we have to change our previous thinking and knowledge to harmonize with what He is saying, for He is the Author of intelligence. Stated another way, we have to unlearn some of our understanding in order to please and obey Him. This type of awe is different from the awe of nature, from beholding the majesty of God. This other type of awe is a fear, a trembling, at God’s Word. In other words, we should tremble to change Holy Writ from what God really intended. As Jesus said, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18,19). There are different degrees of danger in adding to or subtracting from the Word of God, and one degree is Second Death.

By blabbering too much with regard to God’s Word, we may lose our crown. We are culpable if we say something that offends Him, so we must depend on His mercy. Surely during our lifetime, we must have said something that was not in harmony with His Word, attributing the statement to Him. We think God judges according to our level of development up to a certain standard, but as we develop, we should be getting more and more careful in our statements.

Comment: If we have a viewpoint that we want to tell others, we should be sure it is stated in one or two other places for additional witness(es).

Reply: Yes, that is how we try to come to a conclusion. For instance, if we feel a Scripture should be interpreted a certain way, we should look through the Bible to see if we have other easily understood Scriptures to support that reasoning.

Comment: David, who was pointing out the natural creation here, said elsewhere that the heavens declare the glory of God. When we fly in a jet and look down and cannot see the people, we realize that we really are a speck of dust in comparison with the earth. And even the earth is a speck of dust when compared with the universe.

Reply: All nature, let alone the Word, teaches there is a God, a wonderful God. Of course the Word of God is much better, for it “talks” to us about His plan. How amazing it is that the Almighty God gives us insight into His own thinking! When man looks at creation, natural faith should say, “There is a God.” And if there is a God, one should reason that additional information must be available. Over the centuries, the Bible has been the most published book in the world.

Psa. 33:9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

God commanded nature, the elements, and it was done. He was not telling an angel what to do but did the commanding Himself.

Psa. 33:10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices

of the people of none effect.

Jehovah can bring to naught the counsel of the heathen by upsetting their plans when He so desires. Satan has plans and machinations, but if God sees they are injurious to His plan, He makes them null and void. For example, He can cause an earthquake. He can say aye or nay as He pleases. It is strange that Satan's mind, which was so brilliant, could become so corrupted and deranged.

Just by speaking, God can do things with physical nature, but He can also do things in regard to intelligent beings. Of course the elements can do God's bidding, but they cannot worship Him and His character. God can operate among other intelligent beings no matter how strong, wealthy, or influential they are. He can either bring their ideas to naught or prosper them.

Psa. 33:11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

God's counsel stands forever. In other words, He has made laws. Consider nature, for example. There are laws of gravity, laws of the ebbing and flowing of the tides, and laws whereby the planets do not collide.

Psa. 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

From David's standpoint, that "nation" was the nation of Israel (Amos 3:2), but we apply the second half of verse 12 to ourselves. If we continue to obey God and acceptably serve Him in the way that He leads, we will come into an "inheritance."

Psa. 33:13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

Jehovah looks down from heaven and beholds all the sons of men. We are accustomed to feeling we have the truth. On the one hand, it is true that we have been blessed with an understanding of God's plan, and we certainly appreciate that blessing and are trying to be faithful to our calling, which was a miraculous revelation. Each of us can reflect back upon when the Lord first opened that door of opportunity to us. On the other hand, God's love, interests, and concern are very broad, covering all the children of men and even the animal creation, but we mostly perceive what is directed on our behalf. In spite of the poverty that is in the world on this fallen, cursed earth, remnants are still available of what used to be God's fullness of favor on Adam and the framework of His custody as the Creator of the universe in looking out for the welfare of His creation—and particularly now the New Creation.

Notice, God beholds "*all* the sons of men." Thus a general providence is over mankind, and we have always believed that when the Kingdom is established, no one will be able to say at any time, "Why didn't the Lord recognize my prayer for help in knowing Him?" Probably God has answered such prayers, but because the individual had to take a costly step to go in the direction of His providence, the step was never taken. We believe that in foreign countries, as well as in the favored lands where the gospel went from the Eastern to the Western Hemisphere in the early days of Christianity, God has, through various agencies, granted an opportunity when people called out to Him in sincerity and fullness of heart for direction. However, they have not understood His providence, which is what we are studying now in the second half of Psalm 33—how God's interest on behalf of all the sons of men is manifested.

Psa. 33:14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

Again the word “all” is used. “From the place of his habitation,” God is looking down on tiny planet Earth. He looks down “upon *all* the inhabitants of the earth,” but His particular treasure is those who dedicated their lives to Him and His service, desiring to please Him. They have made a personal commitment in a vow that they will render the remaining days of their life in accordance with His will.

Earlier we mentioned the animal creation. Now we are talking about sentient beings, who are capable of worship. If, by the exercise of faith, they hearken to the instruction of God’s Word, they will be led by His Holy Spirit.

God’s position is unique in that He beholds everything. Nothing can escape His cognizance. This capability is exaggerated by the hyperbolic statement that He knows even the number of hairs on our head. The eyes of Jehovah “run to and fro throughout the whole earth,” seeking a class (2 Chron. 16:9). God has blessed us in that we have heard His call and have come to Jesus, who is the way of communication with the Heavenly Father.

Psa. 33:15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

“He [God] fashioneth their hearts alike”—the hearts of “all the inhabitants of the earth,” the hearts of “all the sons of men.” Verse 15 shows the broadness of God’s mercy and thinking. We are thrilled about what is happening in *our own* little circles and in thinking about how God has blessed us, but something else is going on. Verse 15 tells what the Creator has done on behalf of all the created. We are *among* His creation, but that creation is *broader* than just us. As the New Creation, we are just a fragment or a small portion—a very Little Flock indeed—compared to humanity as a whole.

“He [God] considereth all their works.” God is looking at humanity in a broad sense, as well as in a more concentrated sense.

How does God fashion the hearts of all men alike? Everyone has a conscience. The conscience may be blurred or blunted at birth, but it does exist. The marvelous thing about the conscience is that even though it has been marred by the fall of Adam, it can be made healthy. If the conscience heeds the divine counsel, it can be corrected and educated; it can grow and improve in health and become more sensitive and knowledgeable in making the distinction between good and evil. In Scripture, the ability to make that distinction is called “maturity.” No matter how intelligent or unintelligent an individual was prior to consecration, all Christians start as a baby, but they can grow up into adulthood. The ideal is to grow from babyhood, to childhood, to adolescence, to an older teenager, to a young man, and then to a strong and mature adult.

God gives every individual something else that He will not violate: freedom of will, freedom of choice. Instead of making us like robots that would grovel at His feet and always do His bidding, God is looking for people among the great host of humanity who are yearning and panting for Him as the hart pants for water brooks (Psa. 42:1). He looks for those who are searching for something superior out of the muck and mire down here. God will not mar man’s freedom of choice. Thus we are responsible for how we use the free will we are endowed with.

Everyone who is born is under the death sentence. God recognizes the human race as a whole as fallen, as being underneath the Adamic penalty. Nevertheless, a remarkable change came over us as Christians. Along with freedom of choice, God has given us *His Word*. Since Tyndale and Luther’s day and particularly since the publishing of the Bible societies from 1799 onward, people have had *God’s Word* in the tongues of earth if they are hungry.

Still another blessing is nature. The heavens declare the glory of God in an *international* language. Nature is the testimony of the existence of God, the Creator. These are all blessings to fallen mankind, so that if they have the desire, there is no excuse for not worshipping God. No one in the Kingdom Age will be able to say he did not have an opportunity, even if he was in a foreign land. There have been great conversions down through the Gospel Age. A lot was going on even in the Eastern world. In fact, the Renaissance and the blessings of history were transferred from the Eastern world to the Western world about the time of the Dark Ages. From an elite class, the blessings trickled down to the public. Thus much has happened, but man has been distracted by the Adversary. Satan has dulled the already numbed senses. But thank God, at least there is the opportunity of consecration in the present age. What a person does with it is another matter.

Comment: The Interlinear Bible phrases verse 15, “He forms the heart; he understands all their works.” God understands us because as the Creator, He made us.

Reply: Yes, the word “fashioneth” in the King James Version means that God is the Maker, the Creator. He certainly knows us better than we know ourselves.

Psa. 33:16 **There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.**

Not only does God look on “all” in a broad perspective, but He looks on particular individuals, such as kings, who are in positions of influence in the various fields: financial, educational, religious, etc. The Creator has a *tremendous* insightful capability over His subjects. “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: [and] a mighty man is not delivered by much [or great] strength.” Amen!

Notice that verses 14-16 change from the thought of a host to individuals: a “king” and a “mighty man.” Almost immediately we think of Goliath the giant, who was a huge monster next to David, a pygmy in comparison. David was actually tall, for the fact that he could put on the armor of King Saul, who was head and shoulders over the whole nation, shows that he was almost the same height (1 Sam. 9:2; 17:38). And Goliath was head and shoulders over this mighty king! In addition, the giant wore armor and was well protected from man’s standpoint, yet by God’s providence, a *little stone*, picked up from a brook and sent forth from the slingshot of David, slew this mighty man, this great monster, with *one blow* in a concentrated spot. With God, nothing is impossible! From a small person, He can work mighty wonders.

Comment: For verses 16 and 17, the RSV has, “A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save.”

Psa. 33:17 **An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.**

Neither in pulling nor in riding is the horse a sure hope for safety and strength. After David spoke in such broad terms, why did he now bring up the horse?

There are different groupings of Psalms. Psalm 33 is tied in with Psalm 32, the horse being mentioned in both. “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee” (Psa. 32:9). David used the horse along one line in Psalm 32 and along the line of safety in Psalm 33.

Q: Psalm 20:7 reads, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the

name of the LORD our God.” Do “horses” picture doctrines?

A: As new creatures, we interpret “horses” as doctrines. However, to practical human beings in daily life, “horses” are anything that is of help. For instance, Israel looks to the United States and England for its survival; that is, the nation looks to sources other than God for safety. The United States and England are her current “lovers,” for anti-Semitism is strong in other countries.

To make the horse obedient, man uses blinders on the eyes, a bit in the mouth, and reins to turn the head. Man wants to take advantage of the horse’s strength to do his bidding. God pictures the horse from another standpoint, likening the Christian to the horse. The principle is that the Christian ought to recognize his own defects, have a desire to correct them, and hearken to God’s voice of instruction and direction. Psalm 32 and the beginning of Psalm 33 are directed to God’s obedient children, to the New Creation, whose edification is desired. Then, beginning with verse 13, several verses of Psalm 33 discuss the universality of God’s interest in all mankind down through history, let alone in the Kingdom Age.

Christians are not to be like the horse or the mule that needs to be harnessed. For instance, when a horse pulls a wagon, two rails keep him from going sideways, blinders focus his eyes ahead, and reins give direction. God does not want that type of creature, spiritually speaking, but He does initially train the Christian that way. He demands certain things in the beginning and then watches us. The ideal situation is that we are guided not by the reins, the bit, the bridle, or the whip but by God’s eye and voice. We hear His voice recorded in His Word.

There is an inherent beauty in the coordination of a trained horse—so much so that God, when speaking to Job, devoted a lot of attention to the fact He had created the horse, this wondrous creature (Job 39:19-25). Therefore, it was easy for one to be enamored with the horse, especially in an agrarian society.

Comment: Verses 16 and 17 are like a couplet. Horses were used as a gauge of strength. With two opposing armies, whichever army had more horses was considered to be the stronger. However, just as no king is saved by a multitude of the host or a mighty man by his own strength, neither is one saved by the possession of horses. In modern terminology, one army may have a thousand tanks, but the opposing army, even if it has no tanks, will be the victor if the Lord is on that side.

Reply: The first week after the victory of the Six-Day War, all Israel recognized Divine Providence. Then a month later, a year later, the victory was attributed to the brilliance of the Israeli Air Force. Mankind can easily forget God’s mercy.

Psa. 33:18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

Psa. 33:19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Verses 18 and 19 tell what God does on our behalf. The eye of Jehovah is “upon them that fear him, [and] upon them that hope in his mercy.” The eye of the Lord, not the horse, will deliver our soul from death. Now the theme is getting back to the New Creation—after the insertion of a few verses on the universality of God’s interest to keep us humble. Some in the nominal Church say that one must join a church, an organization, for salvation, but we join an individual, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, our hope of salvation (John 14:6). We have access to the Heavenly Father through Jesus, not through an organization.

The purpose of Jehovah's eye being "upon them that fear him ... [and] that hope in his mercy" is "to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine." The Apostle Paul said that just as there are different parts of the human body, so God has a particular purpose for each individual. Therefore, everyone who makes his calling and election sure will be put in the position in the Kingdom for which he is best suited to bless mankind.

On the one hand, God has an eye, and on the other hand, we have an eye so that we can look for direction based on His Word. Thus the instruction, the direction, in the way to go is in the Word. The eye and the ear are so closely attuned that sometimes the one does the work of the other. For instance, we hearken to the voice of the Lord. Perhaps the direction will come from the voice of a messenger who gives a talk from the platform or from a comment by one of the brethren. The ear hears that talk, comment, or conversation, which comes miraculously but in such a humble way that we have to be looking for it. The ear listens for audible instruction, and the eye not only does the reading but looks for Divine Providence.

Also, the nose is important for smelling something rotten. The sense of smell is usually sensitive in the early development of a problem, and if we heed the "odor" in the beginning, we are spared a lot of trouble later on. If we smell something amiss, we should avoid the evil environment, for example. From a negative standpoint, there can be one nail in the coffin or two nails, but the third nail is usually decisive, sealing one's doom.

This is a Psalm of moral deportment—showing what is required in the behavior and conduct of a Christian.

Psa. 33:20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.

"Our soul waiteth for the LORD," and that waiting is manifested by patient endurance. Prayer is usually the tool that is exercised while we are waiting.

Comment: We wait with patience for Jehovah to either fight for us or give us clear direction.

Reply: As an illustration, a picture on one of the Bible Student journals showed a man with his hand on his chin, and the road divided equally to the right and to the left. He was trying to determine which way to go, but many people run to a decision without weighing matters. When we are perplexed by a serious decision that is before us, we should, if possible, wait on the Lord and petition Him through prayer and look for Providence to know with certainty which path to take. We should wait patiently for the answer and not be too hasty. As a caution, we should wait for the *Lord's* direction, not for someone else's direction. Sometimes wise people go to foolish people for advice, and they consider the wrong advice to be providential. Decision making is a lifelong exercise, and many mistakes are made along the way. Hopefully, we learn from our mistakes, and they become stepping-stones.

Psa. 33:21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

Since Jehovah is our God, we wait for Him and His direction.

Psa. 33:22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Verse 22 is an excellent prayer because the three mighty steps to be taken are faith, hope, and love. Love is the graduating stage of entrance into the Kingdom, and a good hope—a good exercise of faith in our hope of the high calling—maketh not ashamed and will be rewarded if it is sincere, real, and full (Rom. 5:5). But we have to be careful and sober lest we be self-deceived.

In proportion to our *real* hope, as opposed to wishful thinking, we have to examine the sincerity of even our worship. Our question should be, What are we worshipping? Do we want the praise of fellow man? Works are sometimes regarded as the way to salvation, but works just prove a living faith. God is looking for our faith, hope, and love, which He calls our “sanctification.” “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification [becoming a likeness of the Master]” (1 Thess. 4:3).

Comment: Verse 22 reminds us of Jesus’ words, “According to your faith, be it unto you,” showing that we have a responsibility (Matt. 9:29).

Reply: Faith leads to hope, and hope leads to love. It is very interesting to study what the apostles Paul and Peter said about the fruits of the Spirit. They had different definitions and a different number of steps.

PSALM 34

Psa. 34:0 A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

This Psalm needs some explanation lest we get bogged down later, especially with regard to the Hebrew. The first point is that Psalm 34 is an acrostic Psalm; that is, the verses successively go through the Hebrew alphabet, which consisted of 22 letters in David’s day. When examining this Psalm in the actual Hebrew, we find that 20 of the 22 letters are in sequence (a, b, c, etc.), but one letter is missing and another letter is different. Nevertheless, we assume this is an acrostic Psalm, for external evidence shows that when originally written, it was in proper sequence with all of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but something happened.

The oldest complete Hebrew Bible dates back to AD 1000, yet the Hebrew Old Testament was written thousands of years earlier. Moreover, there are only about six different Hebrew manuscripts, some in Europe and some in Russia, none of which are dated prior to AD 1000. Since no older Hebrew manuscripts are available today, it is plausible to conclude that something amiss happened between the original copy, which does not exist, and the AD 1000 manuscripts.

However, the aberrations in the Hebrew manuscripts are not that significant and just mean there is an explanation. For example, whether the manuscripts were written on vellum or on skins, the Hebrew letters can flake off over time with the drying of the parchment. As an illustration, with the letter *waw*, which is a little hook with a long cane-like drawing, if a piece falls off, it changes to another letter in the Hebrew. Consider the manuscripts we have today. The Sinaitic is the oldest complete Greek New Testament manuscript extant today, but it dates back to approximately only AD 300. Obviously, there was a prior Greek manuscript, from which Emperor Constantine had 50 copies made. Paul and other apostles wrote original letters, so the manuscripts had to be compiled from different sources. Of course the oldest manuscript would have the fewest aberrations. As time went on, other problems occurred such as copyists writing in the margin, adding words to the main text, etc.

Psalm 34 was written by David “when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.” When David was fleeing from Saul, he and some of his men were hungry. Needing food, they went to a place called Nob, and the only available food was the shewbread on the table in the Holy. Every seven days the bread was changed, and new, fresh bread was put out. David went into the Holy and took the old shewbread. It is essential to have this background information in order to understand the Psalm, which omits any explanation of the circumstances except for what is in the superscription. The Psalm merely records David’s

emotional experiences.

When we go back and read the account in 1 Samuel 21 about David's going into the Holy, the name of the Philistine king in Gath, to whom he later went, is Achish, not Abimelech, but that is no problem, for with the Philistine kings, Abimelech was a common title like Caesar or Pharaoh. We recall that Doeg the Edomite snitched, telling King Saul of David's whereabouts when the latter was fleeing for his life. That very day David went over to Gath, which was the nearest place where Saul could not continue his pursuit. In other words, David went into enemy territory, which Saul could not enter because he was unprepared for battle.

How did David change his behavior before Abimelech? The Hebrew manuscript of AD 1000 says that he "feigned himself mad in their [the Philistines'] hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard," but the Septuagint indicates that something else happened (1 Sam. 21:13). However, since even in the Hebrew, a pronoun was changed because of the flaking of a letter, we think the superscription was intended to read as follows: "A Psalm of David, when his behavior changed before Abimelech." The point is that the Lord changed David's behavior. To repeat, we believe that when David fled into enemy territory, God produced epilepsy so that he would act like a madman and temporarily be out of his mind as a means of preserving his life.

Another point. It was said of David when he appeared before Achish, "This is that David who slew Goliath" (1 Sam. 21:11 paraphrase). At that time, he even had the sword of Goliath, which was given to him when he entered the Holy for the shewbread (1 Sam. 21:9). Seeing David, the servants of King Achish said, "This is the man of whom the girls and the women of Israel sang when they danced in the streets, 'David slew ten thousand to Saul's one thousand.'" Yet when King Achish saw David, the latter looked and acted like a madman. The king's reaction was, "Why did you bring this man to me, no matter what he did previously. Get him out of here." Based on this short interview before the king, David was not put to death.

David could not have faked this mental illness, whereas if God produced that behavior in him, it was so real that no sane person could accuse him of faking. The old Septuagint version is helpful and gives a different account. Incidentally, in the Septuagint, the Hebrew was converted into Greek, but different versions of the Septuagint have come down to us, just as there are different English versions of the New Testament. This explanation justifies our statement that David did not feign the madness, although the translators thought he did and reflected their thinking in the various translations.

Some who want to criticize the Scriptures and the authenticity of the Old Testament point out this incident among other seeming discrepancies. For those with the right heart condition and motives—for those who believe God and that the Bible is His Word—there are reasonable explanations in each case. With the slight change of one pronoun in the superscription, as we suggested, this incident with David takes on the proper perspective.

Psa. 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

"I will bless the LORD at *all* times." Whether in joy or in sorrow, we are to look to Jehovah for help and deliverance. It is necessary to bless God's name in every experience—during times of trouble and during times of apparent victory.

"His praise shall continually be in my mouth." When we are delivered from a wrong act, from an act of disobedience, wherein the flesh is overcome for the moment and we are in despair, our first reaction should be to confess our fault. David followed this procedure throughout his life, even repenting publicly in some of his Psalms. His Psalms of confession, as well as the Old

Testament Scriptures themselves, will be an everlasting testimony for thousands and thousands of generations. Both the faults and the mistakes of those whom God honors and their victories will be known in the Kingdom and beyond so that all will begin to see why, in spite of what was done, God delivered them. The inherent honesty of the Word sets it forth as being the truth. For instance, Jesus said, “If it [this statement] were not so, I would have told you” (John 14:2). His statement manifested a confidentiality, an honesty, and an openness that is very becoming to us when we read the Bible.

If we bless God at all times, His praise is continually in our mouth. In many Psalms, David made the second half of a verse a synonym for the first half but changed the wording slightly. We praise God for our persecutions, for all who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). Thus, if we do not suffer persecution somehow, we could be an illegitimate child (Heb. 12:8). Silas and Paul rejoiced, sang hymns, and praised God in prison after having just been beaten with many stripes (Acts 16:22-25). They were thankful the Lord had permitted them to suffer. On the Mount of Beatitudes, Jesus said, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ [or for his name’s] sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10,11). When we suffer for good behavior, we get a reward. The Christian is happy because he has laid up some treasure in heaven by his faithfulness.

David wrote verse 1 as a result of his deliverance from Abimelech, or King Achish. He was saying, “This is another example, or incident, of what God has done for me.” David habitually praised the Lord for all circumstances, of which this incident was one.

Psa. 34:2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

David was referring to his own experience, but when we, as Christians, read this verse, we compare ourselves to him as soldiers fighting a battle—the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). Depending on the picture, David can represent the experiences of either Jesus or The Christ class.

Psa. 34:3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

As a leader, David wanted to share his experiences with others. He was getting such wonderful benefits from his experiences that he was encouraging others to likewise “magnify the LORD” at all times. Jesus used the expression “my peace” (John 14:27). Of course his “peace” had a lot of ups and downs, especially near the end of his ministry, but as with the Christian, trials are a part of the peace in that afterward, when we reflect back on our experiences, they work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness. That is the peace Jesus gives to all who will make their calling and election sure. Stated another way, those who attain the elect class will have the peace that Jesus had. The subjects of peace and love are deep and need to be understood from *God’s* standpoint. In the darkness of a trial, we sometimes see light in a way that we have never seen or perceived it before. The revelation shines out of the darkness.

Comment: The Apostle Paul said, “Now no chastening [trial, persecution] for the present seemeth to be joyous [while we are going through it], but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). The peace and joy come later, not at the time we are going through the trial.

“Let us exalt his [Jehovah’s] name together.” Of course in the Gospel Age, those who honor Jesus honor the Father (John 5:23). In his epistles, Paul almost always remembered God first and then, several verses later, Jesus, the Son.

Q: Because of the doctrine of the Trinity, the nominal systems have lost sight of God the Father, or Jehovah, whereas in the Old Testament, He is frequently mentioned by name. Based on verse 3, what is the responsibility of the Christian to recognize Jehovah by name, as opposed to just calling Him “God” or “Father”?

Comment: We have been begotten by the Holy Spirit to adoption as sons. Therefore, it is more desirable and tender for us to say “Abba, Father” rather than “Jehovah” (Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

A: Yes, if we are sons, we honor the Father. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

Comment: Similarly, we affectionately call our earthly father “Dad” and do not use his proper name.

Psa. 34:4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

David had fears, but they were momentary, for when he took the matter to the Lord in prayer, he was heard and delivered from all his fears.

Psa. 34:5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

“They [the humble-minded—verse 2] looked unto him [Jehovah, the Creator], and were [en]lightened.” The class who hunger and thirst after the truth are blessed by looking to God. In their quest, hunger, and desire, they are blessed and rewarded with revelation, the light of truth. Their thirst is assuaged.

“Their faces were not ashamed” because God answered their prayers. We believe that those who sincerely search for God with honesty and humility—wherever they are on this globe—are given at least two opportunities to hear the truth. For those who do not recognize the opportunities as a providential answer to their prayers and thus do not respond, a recollection of the opportunities will be brought to their remembrance in the Kingdom Age. When we sincerely pray for something, the answer could be no, but we should watch for the answer, for it may not come in the form we expect. And sometimes the answer comes many years later.

Comment: A word-for-word translation has, “They were filled with light.” We are reminded of Moses, whose face shone as a result of his communication with God.

Reply: Yes, Stephen’s face also shone. “And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him [Stephen], saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15).

Psa. 34:6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

The beginning of this Psalm gives the circumstances under which it was composed. With Saul in hot pursuit, David unwittingly fled into Philistine territory. He realized he was deep in the enemy camp, and God helped him. “This poor man” is David himself, as verified by verse 4, “I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.”

David cried and was heard in connection with that cry, but why did he use the expression “this poor man”? It signified that he was a mortal, for he was greatly humbled in this experience. We feel that the Lord caused the trauma to come on David for the sake of his own safety. He realized his circumstance, and the original Hebrew shows that he did not fake the madness. He

could not have feigned scrabbling on the doors of the gate and letting “his spittle fall down upon his beard” so realistically that the Philistine king would dismiss him as a madman (1 Sam. 21:13). Under normal circumstances, we do not believe David could have achieved the nature of the drooling that is described. Therefore, just as God caused a madness to come on King Nebuchadnezzar so that he became like an animal and had claws like those of an eagle, so God brought a temporary madness on David. “This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” In other words, David was dismissed in safety by the Philistines, and he went elsewhere.

Psa. 34:7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

No doubt the Logos was this “angel of the LORD [Jehovah].” Not only was he was the spokesperson of God, but also we believe he was the major guardian angel back in David’s day, the one in charge when different things were to be done. For instance, when God wanted to declare commandments to His people or to perform certain tasks, the Logos was chosen for the commission depending on the importance of the occasion. Next in line was Gabriel. As far as the other angels are concerned, we know very little about the echelon of authority in the spirit realm except that the Construction Chambers over the King’s Chamber in the Great Pyramid indicate different levels and so do the Scriptures.

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him.” The ones who are of particular importance are “them that fear” Jehovah. In the previous Psalm, the wording is more general, showing a guardianship over the world of mankind during the Kingdom Age. For example, Psalm 33:8 reads, “Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.” However, here in Psalm 34, the term “them that fear him [Jehovah]” refers, first, in a literal sense to David and other Ancient Worthies. Second, when we, as Christians, read the term, we realize that much in the Old Testament was “written [particularly] for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world [age] are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). For instance, that is true of the religious ceremonies and the Tabernacle pictures, or shadows, which inform and instruct us in many things we would be unaware of by just reading the Gospels and the epistles in the New Testament.

Comment: Verse 7 is one of the precious promises often quoted to prove that a protection is provided for the Lord’s people. “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear [reverence] him.”

Reply: That is true, but the principle also applied in the Jewish Age. A good illustration is when the Prophet Elisha and his servant were in a city surrounded by horses and chariots and a great host of Syria, the enemy. In fear, the servant said, “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” Elisha replied, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them [the Syrians].” Then Elisha prayed and said, “LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see.” And God opened the eyes of Elisha’s servant to see that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire providing protection round about Elisha (2 Kings 6:14-17). In other words, the servant was given a glimpse of a great multitude of angels, spirit beings, in the heavens.

One lesson is that every consecrated Christian of this age has not only one guardian angel but at least two angels. That way, when a particular saint down here has a difficult problem his guardian angel cannot solve, that guardian angel has access to the throne of God and can go there for advice. In the meantime, another angel keeps that saint out of Satan’s machinations, for if the saint were left exposed and unguarded, goodness knows what might happen. Depending on the importance of the individual saint and the type of ministry he is entrusted with, three or more guardian angels might be assigned—or even a score of angels. Jesus said in

the Garden of Gethsemane, “Do you not know that if I wanted, I could pray to my Father, and in a moment’s notice, He would give me more than 12 legions of angels for protection?” (Matt. 26:53 paraphrase). All consecrated Christians have invisible spiritual support from the outside.

We have always felt there is a cordon of spirit beings around the private ecclesia meetings where the saints meet together to study God’s Word. That way no foreign thoughts from the Adversary can intrude upon the meeting. An intrusion occurs only when God permits it for a special wise purpose. For instance, the Lord may permit a sudden surprise to come over His people to prove them—to see whether they will remain faithful to Him and His cause under that situation. Such a trial has been permitted at the end of the career of many of God’s people down through the age where they are suddenly apprehended, taken away, and put to death.

However, in this case, when “the angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him,” there was *deliverance* at the hand of the angel. Why was the verse stated this way? It suggests that in, say, 99 out of 100 circumstances, God delivers us where we would otherwise be overcome. But in that one instance, which is the exception, He might see that we need some correction, so He allows us to be exposed for a brief time in order to test us. However, generally speaking, if God did not have His forces encamp around the saints, they would be in such horrendous straits that they could not make their calling and election sure. They would not be able to think clearly and coherently because of the power the Adversary has over the world. Job is an example of a circumstance where God removed most of the protection and said in effect, “Let the trial occur.” God allowed the Adversary to personally try Job.

A poem by the British poet William Cowper, who was a Christian, appeared in a recent issue of *The Herald*. He suffered so frequently from depression, on and off, that he felt he could not endure the experience any longer and contemplated suicide. He signaled for a carriage and then told the driver, “Take me to the river Thames,” his intention being to jump off the bridge and drown. But while he was in the carriage, a storm arose and a deep fog, and the carriage went on and on and on. Finally the driver requested that Cowper get out, and the driver continued on. Upon exiting, Cowper realized he was at his own front door. Thus, after that long ride in the fog, when driver and passenger did not know where they were going, he ended up back at his own home. In other words, God frustrated the original purpose. Cowper could see that God’s providence had interrupted him and forbidden him to commit suicide, and that shock awakened him, giving rise to his last hymn, as follows:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Cowper’s testimony shows that God mercifully interrupted what would have been a wrong act. The experience was permitted for the development of his character. When accidents, intrusions of the mind, and other trials occur, there is a reason for their permission. Even Jesus had intrusions of the mind from Satan when he was fasting for 40 days prior to beginning his ministry. Did Jesus ask Satan to come into his mind and suggest that he jump off the pinnacle of the Temple? Did Jesus ask for the thought of changing the stones into bread? No! Satan was allowed to enter Jesus’ mind and tempt him. God did not forbid the temptations. Rather, He proved His own Son. Therefore, God sometimes allows experiences for reasons we do not understand, but He has a reason and the experience will work out for good. However, we must use prayer and sometimes fasting and exercise patience and endurance, and then He will provide a sufficiency of grace during the experience. Only later will the reason be seen.

The point is that unusual things do happen in our individual lives. Most of us can look back on our Christian walk and see some instance when God, in a particular fashion, came into our lives

in a rather startling incident. When we get into a depression mode—especially if we are alone—it is good to look back on past occasions when God’s providence helped pull us through.

Psa. 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Verse 8 is self-explanatory.

Comment: From a negative standpoint, Hebrews 6:4-6 reads, “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have *tasted* of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have *tasted* the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Psa. 34:9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

With regard to the statement “There is no want to them that fear him,” we usually say, “Our bread and water are sure.”

Comment: Spiritually speaking, God provides the Bible, the Holy Spirit, etc., so nothing is lacking for making our calling and election sure. No Christian will have an excuse, for everything that is needed is available.

Reply: That is the point. We suffer no want because the angel of God encampeth round about us. But that does not mean that according to the flesh, we might not have some hard experience to show us our need for and dependency upon divine grace and mercy.

Comment: We are told that God will give us what we pray for, but we are also given guidelines for our prayers.

Reply: Yes, the Apostle James says that the reason we do not get the answer we sometimes want is that we ask amiss (James 4:3). Also, what we pray for might be good, but perhaps we are not worthy of it. And brethren may want an understanding of a matter for which the understanding is not yet due. God reveals His truths to His people when the due time comes. Daniel was “beloved of God,” but he was denied certain understanding, for the words were “closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Dan. 12:9).

If we please the Lord in our efforts to serve Him, we will experience no want unless there is a reason. That reason is either to benefit us as new creatures or to be part of our suffering for Christ. It is a privilege to suffer for Christ. If we can interpret our sufferings from that standpoint, so much the better, but sometimes we do not know the reason for our suffering until much later.

Psa. 34:10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

Notice, “the young lions do lack, and suffer hunger,” but those who “seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing,” for they shall be provided good provender, spiritually speaking, for whenever they live and, materially speaking, for whatever is needful, as God sees fit.

What is the thought of “young lions”? First, we will consider the natural interpretation. The Scriptures usually associate “young lions” with hunger because of their voracious appetite that cannot be satisfied. The same is true of baby birds, which squawk continuously while the mother or father bird goes off to get food for them. The parents are kept busy until the young

grow and can begin to nurture themselves. Thus in nature, the young—whether human or animal—are especially hungry, and their hunger is a sign of good health. Spiritually speaking, the Scriptures say, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). Here, then, the “young lions” are a *favorable* connotation. After all, Jesus is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5). And the righteous are “bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). In verse 10, the thought seems to be of the growth of spiritual babes. When we are young in the truth, we have the hope of being kings and priests in the next age if we are faithful.

Newcomers in the truth sometimes make wild statements, but they do not realize what they are saying. No doubt we ourselves did the same as babes. For example, when new in the truth, we wanted to be baptized right away, for we expected to get to heaven quickly, perhaps within a year. And the tendency is to witness to everyone within earshot, but if we continued in that mode for very long, we would wear out. We are in a marathon race, not in a hundred-yard dash. Generally speaking, the Christian has a long journey, which is one of toil and endurance. It is a speed race only in the sense of wanting to get a particular prize. From that standpoint, we should run the race as if there are a lot of runners and we want to win it. This “first love” usually burns out unless one is a very unusual person, such as Jesus and the Apostle Paul (Rev. 2:4). It is hard to comprehend all the sufferings Paul went through, yet he continued to praise and thank the Lord.

Comment: From a different perspective, young lions often go hungry because the older lions eat first on a kill, leaving only the leftovers, if any, for the young. Also, the inexperience of the young lions in hunting causes them to expend tremendous amounts of energy for meager results, and thus they often go hungry. They are less skillful in capturing the prey. From a negative connotation, therefore, young Christians expend a lot of energy but have a tendency to run before the Lord. The King James translation of verse 10 seems like a contrast, which is paraphrased as follows: “Whereas the young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.” The impetuous nature of the inexperienced young lions makes them go without.

Reply: Yes, we are familiar with that characteristic of young lions. Older lions, the parents, frequently get the first share of the prey. However, we are thinking from a scriptural standpoint, which talks about the young lions in the den, not out in the field where the prey is. “Will a young lion cry [growl—NIV] out of his den, if he have taken nothing?” (Amos 3:4). The implied answer is no. The young lions are in the den as cubs, an earlier stage, when they have this extreme hunger. Sometimes the sounds of the young lions betray the location of the lair to the hunter. In fact, if the adult lion knows he is being followed, he will not go near the den. Incidentally, in David’s day, lions were at En-gedi and up above at the Jordan River, which is a wild place with beasts even today.

Psa. 34:11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Verse 11 brings to mind the Apostle John’s characteristic address for the disciples as “little children” (John 13:33; 1 John 2:12,13,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21). Evidently, he learned that term from private conversations with Jesus during his earthly ministry. Therefore, Jesus seems to be the speaker here in verse 11 in a rather personal way, indicating that strong counsel is to follow. Of course Christians are the little children of God. Therefore, Jesus was saying, “Come, ye children [of the Father], hearken unto me: [and] I will teach you the fear of Jehovah [the proper reverence and respect for God].”

Psa. 34:12 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

Verse 12 begins the counsel of Jesus with generalized instruction that has a prophetic

application in a special sense to those who are the sons, or children, of God through the blood. We certainly desire life, and being consecrated, we are thinking of the future life, hoping to be granted the privilege of everlasting life with our Lord. However, for those in the Jewish Age, this verse had a practical application, as stated in Proverbs 10:27, “The fear of the LORD prolongeth days.”

Comment: The Book of Deuteronomy contains many admonitions on how the Jew could prolong his days. For example, Moses said, “Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments ... that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever” (Deut. 4:40). “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Deut. 5:16).

Reply: For those who were trying to do God’s will in Old Testament times, the slant of the instruction was along natural lines. The Jews could not earn life at that time because Jesus had not yet come and the entire race was under condemnation, but the Law did promise that obedience to the extent possible would prolong life. Thus obedience had a beneficial effect on the individual. Even from a physical standpoint, obedience was like health to the bones (Prov. 16:24). (Actually, even with us, the reading of the Scriptures has a beneficial natural effect almost like eating good food.) From the standpoint that God was pleased when the Jews tried to serve Him and obey the Law, not only were there natural benefits in the present life, but they were establishing a good character. And that thought brings to mind another Scripture that is important to everyone in any age or condition: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

In composing the Psalms, David not only wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit but also recorded his own feelings and thoughts. “Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart” (Psa. 97:11). The Old Testament is a seedbed of thoughts, and some of those thoughts were not meant to be understood until the Gospel Age and even the end of the Gospel Age and beyond. Thoughts sown way back there bring forth fruitage of light, or information, that is of prophetic or instructional value for a time period way down the stream of time in our day.

In summary, the Word is health to the natural flesh, resulting in a prolonging of life back there and even to a certain extent now, generally speaking. As new creatures, we benefit from studying the Old Testament. However, we are seeking the future life and are supposed to be dead to present hopes, aims, and ambitions, having forsaken Father Adam’s house (Psa. 45:10).

Psa. 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Psa. 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Verses 13 and 14 tell how to prolong life.

1. “Keep thy tongue from evil.” Parallel Scriptures follow. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psa. 19:14). “Let all ... evil speaking, be put away from you” (Eph. 4:31). “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26).

Along another line, when speaking truth with the tongue, we must be careful not to pervert God’s Word and teach something not in the Scriptures that might be dangerous. “Wherefore,

my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). On deep and important subjects, we should not be too quick in expressing ourselves lest we jeopardize our opportunity to receive a crown. The uttering of some foolish statement might displease Jesus, our overall Guardian Angel in the highest sense, and relegate us to the secondary class, the Great Company.

2. “Keep ... thy lips from speaking guile.” This admonition warns against having wrong motives. To question an act or a statement of others is proper depending on the circumstance in which it is done, for it is not judging destiny. However, many Scriptures caution us to be careful with the tongue.

In speech, the lips are used for pronunciation and for making more emphatic and distinct what is being said. Thus the statement that comes forth is more critical—for good or for evil. The point is to be careful and yet not to be like the three monkeys—”Hear no evil; see no evil; speak no evil”—which is the advice of the world.

3. “Depart from evil, and do good.”

4. “Seek peace, and pursue it.” Our feet are to be “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). Where principle is not violated or compromised, we are to “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

Psa. 34:15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry [for help].” Their cry goes forth more loudly when the need is great. In a milder sense, a “cry” is a request, a beseeching of the Heavenly Father for something.

Verse 15 is wonderful for instructional value. In addition, it enunciates a principle that ties together Psalms 31-34; namely, in a constructive sense, Jehovah is cognizant of all our ways. His eyes are upon “the righteous,” particularly those under the blood of Christ during the Gospel Age. We believe David chose the instruments, the mood of the music, and the theme to fit these four Psalms, which were skillfully played with nuances depending on what was being said at the time. In the silent movies of the past, people saw printed words on the screen but heard no sound. Someone sat at a piano in the theater, sometimes without a light, and while looking at the picture and the wording, the person played extemporaneously the mood of what was happening on the screen. The pianist had to be very skillful in order to change and adjust the mood of the playing to fit the action. The Psalms of David contain nuances along this line. We will not go into detail except to say that they are arranged in groups of two, three, or four. Illustrations of a tie-in with four Psalms are as follows. Psalm 31:22 reads, “For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.” Psalm 32:8 has, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.” Psalm 33:13,14 states, “The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.” And now Psalm 34:15 reads, “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.” There are other tie-ins as well. For instance, the horse is mentioned in two of the Psalms—32:9 and 33:17.

David was an exceptionally brilliant and extremely talented person who used everything he could to praise the Lord. His desire was to please God, but with the treasure being in an earthen vessel, he did some things that were wrong. However, he publicly confessed his faults and was very sincere. From this fallen human race, he exhibited the power of God’s mind and instruction. Those who listen and hearken to the Word of the Lord, trying to get in tune with it,

will be greatly rewarded for their diligence.

Q: David's playing had a calming effect on Saul. How was this achieved? Did fallen angels depart from Saul?

A: We do think the Lord made the demons depart, but the playing itself was curative to Saul. When the king got in a down mood, David's playing had a beneficial effect. The same principle operates with a word in season, which "is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11). How good it is!

Psa. 34:16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

What a shocking, scary thought—to be forgotten entirely! Verse 16 should wake up the evildoer. When verses 15 and 16 are considered together, we see that Jehovah's *face* is against those who do evil, but His *ear* is open to the cry of the righteous, whose need He *sees*.

If we are among the faithful of the future and get a spiritual change and dwell everlastingly in God's favor and presence, then a million years from now, we will not be thinking about something traumatic that happened back here. As all those years build up happiness, joy, clean living, and pure thoughts, the problems of the present life will fade from memory. Even when we get into senior years, we start to forget. Some of the tenderest ties on earth may be broken, but ten years later we do not think of those individuals every day.

Psa. 34:17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

Jehovah delivers the righteous "out of all their troubles." There are different types of deliverance. At death the enemy cannot assail anymore, and afflictions cease. The Apostle Paul said our afflictions are grievous for the present, but afterward they yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" to those who are rightly exercised (Heb. 12:11). Being chastened for something we have done wrong or being afflicted for something we have done right—whichever the case, and both are needed—is beneficial if we properly receive our experiences. Paul went through numerous severe threshing experiences, but because he was rightly exercised, he got a crown. Even with all of his sufferings for faithfulness, he said, "I count not myself to have apprehended [in the current life]," but just before he died, he had the conviction that a crown had been laid up for him, which the "righteous judge" would give him "at that day" (Phil. 3:13; 2 Tim. 4:8). In each experience, there is a mini-deliverance, but in our overall experiences, we are hoping for the victory that is obtained at death. Stated another way, the victory is sealed at death, even though many have very sad and sorrowful experiences when they are dying.

Psa. 34:18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

Right away we are reminded of Isaiah 57:15, "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." One with a broken heart has a meek, teachable, contrite spirit. Conversely, one who is proud has a heart of stone or brass.

Psa. 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

We usually view this Scripture from the standpoint of the ultimate victory. When one is beyond the veil and looking back, all the afflictions will be seen as training steps along the way.

Psa. 34:20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

Verse 20 reminds us of Jesus on the Cross. In the type, not a bone was to be broken of the Passover lamb that redeemed Israel, particularly the firstborn, when they left Egypt. Thus verse 20 helps us to know that we have the proper perspective in viewing Psalm 34. The previous verse also refers to Jesus. Many of the Psalms contain excerpts of Jesus' thinking and experiences during his ministry, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and on the Cross. We can consider verse 19 again from this perspective. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD [the Heavenly Father] delivereth him [Jesus] out of them all." The body members of Christ who are faithful unto death also have this experience.

In verse 11, Jesus is speaking: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD." And he continues to speak throughout the rest of the Psalm. In verses 19 and 20, he is telling of his own experiences and how he was delivered. As already stated, there are two kinds of cry—a low-key request and an emphatic cry for help such as "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The Christian also has these experiences.

Comment: A pertinent Old Testament reference is, "They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it" (Num. 9:12). A New Testament reference is, "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:36).

Psa. 34:21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

Psa. 34:22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

Verse 21 tells what happens to the wicked, and verse 22 tells what happens to the righteous, God's servants. Those who harm the righteous class will get retribution either in the present life or in the next age. For example, Pilate tried to save Jesus from being crucified, for he could see the envy of the scribes and Pharisees. Moreover, his wife said, "Have ... nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matt. 27:19). Nevertheless, after the Crucifixion, both he and his wife ended their days in isolation on an island. However, their retribution was quite different from the retribution to be received by those who led the chorus "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and demanded Jesus' death and threatened to report Pilate if he reneged.

"The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants." We are called both "sons" and "servants" by the Heavenly Father. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1).

PSALM 35

Psa. 35:0 A Psalm of David.

Psa. 35:1 Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

Although this is a "Psalm of David," a goodly portion of it pertains to Jesus and some of the thoughts he had when he was dying for the three hours on the Cross. Psalm 35 provides a

glimpse into his thinking and reasoning. In fact, there is a reference to Jesus in many of the Psalms, yet almost all Christians think that is true of only about three Psalms.

No doubt David put his own thinking into Psalm 35, but the Holy Spirit was operating on his mind. The Apostle Peter wrote that holy men of God in Old Testament times spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and frequently they spoke things they did not fully understand (2 Pet. 1:21). Thus the origin of what was spoken was not necessarily theirs. Usually the Lord spoke to them in their inner ear, and subsequently they spoke those words on their own with their own type of animation. At other times, they spoke extemporaneously right then and there before whomever they were addressing.

Here is a petition for help. Jesus was saying to his Father, “Plead my cause.” Although “cause” is a supplied word, it is accurate, for later on in this Psalm, Jesus said that he came to represent the truth. He wanted to present a clear message to Israel, for as a steward of God, he was to preach not only the glad tidings, the good news, but also a message for Israel to hearken to if they wanted to get the fruit of his blessing, that is, the hope of the high calling. In other words, the high calling was his chief message, and restitution was secondary. Restitution is a wonderful message, but it has to be kept in its proper perspective.

“Fight against them that fight [and strive] against me.” At first, we might think David was reminiscing about some literal battles he was involved in, and certainly he had enemies and needed God’s help. But we find as we proceed that David was talking about a higher level—not a literal sword or fight but the fight of faith. He was confronting people who were against him. Verse 1 is introductory. Subsequent verses provide an insight into Jesus’ thinking about his life. He was beginning to enunciate a request that he wished to be answered.

Psa. 35:2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

“Take hold of shield and buckler.” Jesus was talking to God, as if the Heavenly Father were a warrior, a man of war, girded for battle. This was a spiritual fight against the Adversary and those underneath the Adversary’s influence. The scene in Psalm 35 will develop into the Crucifixion. “Stand up for mine help.” Jesus was requesting God to help him.

Psa. 35:3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

“Draw out also the spear, and ... say unto my soul [unto me], I am thy salvation.” Jesus was asking God to step in as a warrior and fight against those who were besetting him round about. Of course Jesus knew that for God to interfere usually meant that He *sent* help, but there are rare instances—three or four in Scripture—where *God Himself* came.

Psa. 35:4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

Psa. 35:5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them.

Verse 5 stands out: “Let the angel of the LORD chase them.” The “angel” of Jehovah, which was normally the Logos, was actually an office—the office of being God’s spokesperson. Therefore, when Jesus was down here at his First Advent, someone up in heaven had to take his place. Not only is Jesus the spokesperson to us down here, but also he is the spokesperson whenever God issues commands that are to be broadcast in the spiritual realm, which consists of many levels. In verse 5, Jesus was asking for help from Gabriel. He wanted intercession on his behalf.

Q: As recorded in Daniel 10:11-13, Gabriel could not come immediately to answer Daniel's prayer because the "prince of ... Persia," Satan, withstood him. Therefore, Gabriel was lower than Michael at that time, for Michael had to intercede. When Gabriel acted as spokesperson for God while Jesus was down here, was more power given to Gabriel?

A: Yes, we would think so. Moreover, there seems to be a strong possibility that eventually, after the Kingdom Age, Gabriel will inherit the position of Logos, for the office of Logos will cease for Jesus personally. As the spokesperson of God, he merely transmitted the information *exactly* as God had spoken. He did not have the liberty to make changes. However, now that Jesus has been exalted and raised on high because of his faithfulness unto death, this office can be occupied by another being.

Comment: Two Scriptures seem to show that Jesus still has the role of Logos at present. Revelation 19:13, which applies to Jesus when he is returning from the destruction of mystic Babylon, states, "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word [Logos] of God." Also, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the *voice of the archangel*, and with the trump of God."

Verse 5 gives us an insight into what happened during the Crucifixion, a subject that is brought up many times in the Psalms. The preceding verses are all introductory, indicating a higher plane of thinking than literalizing the account as though David were talking about the Moabites or another people down here. However, we have to study and meditate on the entire Psalm in order to come to that conclusion. Then, when we go backwards, this thinking fits more and more and gives some insights into things we did not know previously. We hope we are justified in making that statement.

Comment: Before going into battle, David usually inquired of God with questions such as, "Shall I go up against the enemy?" "Will they deliver me into the hands of Saul?" He asked for instructions ahead of time.

The experience stated in verse 4 literally happened to David, but there is too much in the Psalm to apply just to him. The same theme continues uninterrupted, and some things would not particularly apply to him. For instance, "Let the angel of the LORD chase them." We do not think David had this type of intimacy of thinking, even though he was a man after God's own heart. We are trying to lay the framework for what is coming in succeeding verses.

Q: To clarify, does Psalm 35 express how Jesus felt while on the Cross?

A: Yes. He was thinking not only about those who surrounded him at that time but also about his past life and experiences. During his ministry of 3 1/2 years, Jesus' enemies badgered him. Whenever he gave a parable or a little talk, the scribes and Pharisees tried to butt in and show him up as being young and not as learned as they. Their attitude was, "We are the teachers." For instance, they tried to ask questions that would stumble him. Or they said in effect, "You are dishonoring God by making certain statements and speaking way above what you are authorized to do." They repeatedly tried to confuse him and also to diminish his popularity with the public because most of the time, he was talking to the common people of Israel.

Without the rest of this Psalm, we could say that David had this experience when Saul was persecuting and pursuing him. Other Psalms have wording similar to David's prayer for help from Saul, and in them we see clearly that certain statements could not be Jesus talking. In these earlier verses of Psalm 35, we are simply trying to prepare for what is coming in succeeding verses with regard to Jesus.

Q: Does the statement “Let the angel of the LORD chase them” refer to the fallen angels?

A: We know that the Adversary was behind what happened to Jesus, for example, with the cries incited by the chief priests, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Satan was trying to kill Jesus and shame him, for the Law said, “He that is hanged [on a tree] is accursed of God” (Deut. 21:23). When Satan saw Jesus on the Cross, he thought he was successful and did not realize that Jesus’ death was part of God’s plan. Satan thought Jesus’ death and burial would end the matter.

Psa. 35:6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

Psa. 35:7 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.

Notice the *plural* pronouns “their,” “them,” and “they“ in verses 6 and 7 (and also in earlier verses). We are starting to enter into the framework of this Psalm. It is obvious that a company of individuals were plotting to destroy the one who was speaking—David or Jesus—but we begin to get a deeper insight into certain things. Several were plotting the destruction of the soul of the speaker.

The Pharisees held a counsel to apprehend and kill Jesus. When rumors of this plot leaked out, those who heard what was going on warned Jesus not to go to Jerusalem. At first, he seemed to obey them, for he had other reasons for slightly delaying his travel to Jerusalem. The others left for the last Passover, but Jesus held back temporarily. Thus they were rather surprised when he showed up in Jerusalem because the chief priests had planned to capture him in “their net.” At midnight, they went with a little band of soldiery to the Garden of Gethsemane and apprehended Jesus. They thought *they* had captured him, but actually Jesus *allowed* himself to be taken, as manifested by his power when they all fell backward (John 18:6). Jesus said, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels [to save me from this situation]?” (Matt. 26:53). The Crucifixion, then, is the mood of Psalm 35, as we will prove by subsequent verses. Certain details are very helpful in understanding the setting.

The “net” was to take Jesus at midnight when he was not with a lot of people. In fact, in the final analysis, only three were with him: Peter, James, and John. The other apostles, who were farther away down the hill, fled for safety when they saw the band of soldiers coming to Gethsemane, Judas being among them. At first, Peter tried to help by cutting off the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest, but Jesus healed the ear. John and James, sons of thunder, were also nearby. Although the three were powerful characters ordinarily, when they saw the situation—that Jesus allowed himself to be taken—they could not understand. Jesus had foretold exactly what would happen, saying he would be crucified, but the words did not sink in. However, verse 8 will begin to open the door to this scenario.

Psa. 35:8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

Notice that the pronouns now change from plural to *singular*: “him,” “his,” “he,” and “himself.” “Let destruction come upon him [Judas] at unawares.” “Let his net [spoken of in verse 7] that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.” Judas had consulted with the chief priests, informing them that Jesus usually stayed in the Garden of Gethsemane when he came to Jerusalem for the Passover. He had told them, “Jesus and the apostles sleep there, in a private place. I will lead you to him, but I want 30 shekels of silver for performing that service.” Judas still thought that Jesus could not be apprehended; that is, Judas

thought he would get the 30 shekels of silver and Jesus would escape. Of course he would be that much richer as a result, for back there that quantity of silver was a lot of money.

“Let his [Judas’s] net that he hath hid [in a secret conspiracy with the chief priests] catch himself.” For his part in the secret conspiracy to capture Jesus, Judas would get 30 pieces of silver. Judas knew that Jesus would be in that garden at night after preaching to the multitudes during the day.

“Into that very destruction let him [Judas] fall.” Judas planned the destruction. The chief priests were delighted, thinking, “We will get Jesus at midnight and have six hours before dawn to do away with him.” The details were all staged. Annas and Caiaphas would be waiting, and the Sanhedrin would be assembled for the kangaroo trial, the last formal declaration before they took Jesus to Pilate.

It is interesting that Judas literally fell into destruction. He fell headlong into the valley below and died (Acts 1:18). Judas did not necessarily have a noose around his neck. Rather, something unplanned caught him. We will find out more information as we go along—a lot more than is usually spoken of.

Psa. 35:9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

Jesus continued his thoughts. He knew he had come to be crucified. He knew he was to give his life not only as a ransom for all but also on a cross. At the time of his transfiguration, he had begun to speak of his death (Mark 9:1,9; Luke 9:27,30,31). In the vision, Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about his death.

We should keep in mind that Psalm 35 is giving Jesus’ thoughts while he was on the Cross. About a thousand years before the Crucifixion, Jehovah knew exactly what would happen. This Psalm shows that God has deep insight into the future and into us—whether or not we will make the Little Flock. We believe there are times when God purposely limits His own thinking because He has other things to do, but when He wants to know something, He just thinks and it is revealed to Him.

Comment: The Lord can read us like a book from beginning to end.

God does not always exercise His ability of prescience. He is usually thinking of the present and the near future with regard to His people, but He has all kinds of warning signs all around so that nothing untoward can happen without His getting a forewarning. However, if He wants to know something, He just has to sit down and think. He would not need the other agencies, but He has them in operation because He is doing certain things at certain times. Everything is handled well. To assist Him, He has a chief angel between Himself and these other events.

Psa. 35:10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

When Jesus was on the Cross, all of his bones said, “Jehovah, who is like unto thee?” Jesus’ bones cried out with pain in the agonizing crucifixion experience, but he knew that if he was faithful, these very bones, spiritually speaking, would cry out with joy in his triumph over the grave. Jesus was saying in effect, “Although my bones are crying out with pain, they will cry out with joy when I finish my course.” He had not yet cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That final excruciating experience came upon him as a surprise. The purpose of that cry was a corresponding experience in taking Adam’s place. Adam was cut off from the intimate communion and fellowship that he had with God. Jesus needed to have an

offsetting experience for the cold wave that came on Adam, but it had not yet happened. He was on the Cross for three hours, so that experience was still coming.

“LORD, ... [thou] deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him.” At this point, Jesus might have thought of the Scripture “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose [very] 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). Jesus knew God’s principle was to listen when a “poor” person called on Him. God’s people are not necessarily in poverty, but they are “poor” in spirit, health, etc. (Matt. 5:3).

Once Jesus was given assurance in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was composed throughout the remainder of the trial, enduring all kinds of ignominy. For example, Pilate said to him, “Don’t you know that I have the power of crucifixion? Your destiny is in my hands.” Jesus calmly replied, “You could not do a thing unless my Father in heaven permitted you to do it.” Thus Jesus had presence of mind. Observing that peace when he took Jesus out to the crowd and asked what he should do with him, Pilate said, “Behold the man!” In spite of all that happened, Jesus was most unusual and different from others in his composure.

To have these thoughts of Jesus recorded a thousand years in advance is astounding. Even though all the original Hebrew manuscripts are missing, and there are only poor copies of copies dating back to the tenth century, the Septuagint is still in existence.

Psa. 35:11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

Psa. 35:12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.

Psa. 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

Psa. 35:14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

Psa. 35:15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the objects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not:

Psa. 35:16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

There is no account of false witnesses rising up against David, so verse 11 clearly applies to Jesus. Psalm 35 now begins to indicate that Jesus did certain things both during and prior to his ministry of 3 1/2 years, that is, prior to his baptism in Jordan when he became a new creature in a body of flesh. He was very commiserate with people in unfortunate circumstances. During his ministry, he had only the clothes on his back, relatively speaking, but prior to his ministry, he so empathized with those in sorrowful circumstances that he prayed for them and did what he could to help. But what happened? They later became his enemies. During his ministry, he healed hundreds—perhaps thousands—but of those for whom he did miracles, some turned against him. Jesus reflected on this turnaround: “They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.”

There is no expression in Scripture that Jesus smiled or told a joke, but we do hear that he was touched with compassion and wept. We never saw this other side because he was serious. He came to fulfill a mission, not to show off. He wanted to heal and be a blessing, and he laid his

life down, not only at the Cross but daily, from Jordan to the Cross.

“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.” Paul tells us that we should mourn with those who mourn, weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rom. 12:15). This Scripture helps us to know what Jesus was like during his ministry, but there is not much information in the New Testament. However, we are informed that he could get angry and be filled with righteous indignation depending on the occasion. Verse 14 is informative, we believe, about his life prior to his baptism: “I behaved myself as though he [the one coming for help and prayer] had been my friend or brother.” Jesus continued, “I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.” For the first 30 years of his earthly life, Jesus did not just do carpentry work. He did many other things of which we know very, very little. Verse 14 gives us insight that as a young man, before he consecrated, Jesus was so in harmony with the principles of the Old Testament that he commiserated with and prayed for others.

“But in mine adversity they rejoiced.” This statement shows the fickleness of people. One minute they were for Jesus; the next minute they were against him. Jesus was popular with the people when he could heal them, but when he could no longer work miracles, they were his enemies. The populace rejoiced when they thought he was their Messiah and would become their King. But when they saw him with a cross and on a cross, their sentiments changed.

Comment: Job, who pictures the Church, had the same experience.

They “gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not,” for Jesus had other things in mind, namely, to do the will of God, who had sent him. Even before he consecrated at Jordan, he said to his mother at age 12, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). Before he was immersed, he said, “Lo, I come ... to do thy will, O God” (Psa. 40:7; Heb. 10:7). Having studied and meditated on the Old Testament, he put into practice the precepts of the Law. The New Testament concentrates on us as new creatures, but Psalm 35 gives us a little insight into Jesus in the human sense, showing how responsive he was to the needs of others.

Among the public, those who turned against Jesus are called “abjects,” that is, “rejects.” Of this class, he added, “They did tear me, and ceased not.” When people manifested viciousness after having received instruction from him and after having seen his miracles, they were starting to develop an incorrigible character. To go against conscience, especially when it leads to the *deliberate* hurt of the heart of others, is crossing a line. Some of these individuals will be awakened from the tomb but not all, and someday we will prove that not only Judas went into Second Death before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost but also others. Lord willing, we plan to give a talk on this subject soon.

“With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.” At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus attended a wedding feast at which he turned water into wine. But he attended other feasts too: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. At these feasts, there were people who mocked him and made inappropriate remarks. Those individuals are the type of people God does not want in the ages of ages, after the Millennium.

Psa. 35:17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

Jesus’ thoughts on the Cross continue. In Hebrew, the term translated “my darling” is *yachid*, which also means “my only.” This same Hebrew word is used in the Book of Genesis, and we have commented at length on *yachid* in the booklet “God Sole Creator.” Part 1, entitled “Jesus,

God's 'Only,' His 'Darling,'" pages 1-9, reads as follows:

"Of the numerous proof texts for the subject under consideration, a sufficient number will be provided to prove that Jesus is God's 'Only,' His 'Darling.' The following Scriptures are from the twenty-second chapter of Genesis.¹

"Gen. 22:2 - 'And he [God] said [to Abraham], Take now thy son, thine only Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'

"Gen. 22:12 - 'And he [the angel of the LORD—verse 11] said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, ... for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only, from me.'

"Gen. 22:16,17 - '... [God said to Abraham through the angel], because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only:

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven....'

"Verses 2, 12, and 16 all contain the continuing phrase 'thine only son,' yet Abraham had *another* son at the time, an older son whose name was Ishmael. While this particular point has been puzzling and even troubling for a number of years, many have mentally modified the phrase 'thine only son,' and the resulting in-between view has had a calming effect.

"It should be noticed, however, that in each of these instances in the King James Version, the word 'son' in the phrase 'thine only son' is in italics, which indicates it was supplied. The phrase in the original Hebrew text is simply 'thine only.' Aware of this omission, the translators apparently felt compelled to proffer some kind of response to the existence of the short phrase 'thine only'; that is, they felt compelled to add a word in order to explain the meaning—'thine only ... WHAT'? Believing the word 'son' was implied and, therefore, appropriate, they added that word as an answer to the dilemma. However, instead of clarifying the situation, the addition of the word 'son' further complicated it, for Christians familiar with Scripture realize at once that at the time of this incident, Isaac was not Abraham's only son. Ishmael, another son, preceded the birth of Isaac.

"While the root meaning of the Hebrew word *yachid* (pronounced *yaw'-kheed*) basically signifies 'only,' 'single,' and/or 'solitary,' the word can have three or more varieties of application, especially when it is considered in the idiomatic sense. In fact, five eminent Hebrew authorities demonstrate the different varieties of application of this word.² In the case of Abraham's son, *yachid* is an adjectival noun expressing *quality* and *not procreation, generation, or derivation of personal being*. Here in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis, *yachid* denotes uniqueness in the sense of *concentrated affection* or of *being tenderly beloved*.

"It is rather intriguing to note that in two instances in the Psalms, the same scholars of the Authorized Version were forced to render the Hebrew *yachid* in a different fashion in order to provide some degree of sense—even though the rendering 'my darling' would be only partially understood. How much more appropriate and exquisite the sense would be if that rendering had been given to the text concerning Abraham in Genesis 22:2! 'Take now thy son, *thy darling* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah.' (The same insertions should be made in verses 12 and 16.) Although the rendering 'thy darling' still does not fully express the thought of the Hebrew word *yachid*, it certainly brings the Genesis 22 account into better focus and gives it a more understandable application, for Isaac was Abraham's special

darling son and not his only son.

“The King James account of Psalm 22:20 reads: ‘Deliver my soul from the sword; *my darling* [*yachid*] from the power of the dog [that is, from the power of the uncircumcised Gentile and the uncircumcised-in-heart, unregenerate Jew].’ And in Psalm 35:17, the Hebrew *yachid* is again used: ‘Lord [*Adonai*, an affectionate term referring to Jehovah], how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, *my darling* [*yachid*] from the lions.’

“The context of these two verses in the Psalms concerns the Crucifixion scene on Golgotha Hill. Here the Holy Spirit, through the exercise of Jehovah’s omniscient power and precursory skills, documents for the sake of future posterity His foreknowledge of Jesus’ most intimate innermost thoughts while nailed to the Cross of Calvary—a thousand years in advance of the reality. Upon first examination, the expression ‘my darling,’ ‘my *yachid*,’ seems disingenuous, indeed somewhat odd, but this conclusion is far from the fact of the matter.

“To pause now to digress for a moment would be helpful, for it seems almost necessary to engage in or resort to a purely imaginary and speculative characterization as to what transpired on that most momentous occasion, the Crucifixion, when the fate of history hung in the balance. The thoughts of Jesus appear to be in the nature of a heartfelt and soul-wrenching prayer somewhat as follows:

“‘Father in heaven, of this Crucifixion thou hast previously fully informed me, and for this very purpose, am I come into the world to give my life a ransom for many. But I did not fully realize the utter depth of human depravity that would surround me, nor even the full significance of the expression in the Psalms concerning me. I am a worm, completely bereft of clothing and beset about by men of such bestial vulgarity who gaze upon me with roaring, open mouths and devouring looks. I am at this moment confused and feel so, so alone! Did thou not say when I was baptized at Jordan in the presence of John the Baptist, “This is *my darling*, this is *my beloved Son*”? Also, on the Mount of Transfiguration, did thou not voice the same opinion of me and thy pleasure and love for me? Do thou be near and stay close to me lest I weaken in my resolve in the presence of my enemies. Thou art my only hope and stay. Rescue me; hasten my death and departure, from which state thou hast promised a subsequent resurrection. Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit.’

“Resorting to this stratagem gives some feeling or background as to why Jesus used the term ‘my darling.’ In both the New and Old Testaments, he was referring to the wording of the Heavenly Father concerning him. The above explanation, we believe, is not only the meaning and use of the expression ‘my darling’ in Psalms 22 and 35, but also the context or true meaning of the Hebrew word *yachid* in the Old Testament instances quoted thus far.

“In the New Testament, the translators of the Authorized Version are again at fault. In converting into English the Greek account of the same incident concerning Abraham’s offering up of his son on the hill of Moriah, they used similar wording, but instead of stating, as in Genesis 22:2, ‘Take now thy son, *thine only son* Isaac,’ they rendered Hebrews 11:17 as ‘Abraham ... offered up his *only begotten son*.’ And for the same reason, this wording in the New Testament must be rejected—because Isaac was not Abraham’s only begotten son. Did not Abraham also beget Ishmael? One can be sure, therefore, that the Apostle Paul did not consider the Greek word *monogenes* (pronounced *mon-odge’-en-ay*) to mean ‘only begotten,’ as the translators rendered it. Rather, the word should be considered as a Greek idiom for one being *singularly begotten* or *singularly born* (the latter is preferred), that is, *someone remarkable and extraordinary*. Hence the suggestion is here made that the Greek word *monogenes* should be translated in its New Testament usage as follows:

“John 1:14 - ‘... (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the *singularly* begotten of the Father,)....’

“John 1:18 - ‘No man hath seen God at any time; the *singularly* begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared [him].’

“John 3:16 - ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his *singularly* begotten Son....’

“John 3:18 - ‘... in the name of the *singularly* begotten Son of God.’

“1 John 4:9 - ‘... God sent his *singularly* begotten Son into the world....’

“It may be of interest to some that one of the definitions given in Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* for the word ‘*monogenes*’ is ‘unique’ and in Young’s *Analytical Concordance* under the English word ‘begotten’ is ‘chief.’ In any event, sufficient grounds have been presented thus far to demonstrate that while Jesus in a special sense is styled ‘THE SON OF GOD,’ yet there exists no bona fide proof that he was and is the *only* Son of God. Indeed, quite to the contrary, are not the angels in heaven called ‘sons of God’ in Genesis 6:2,4? ‘The *sons of God* [not Jesus] saw the daughters of men that they were fair,’ and again, ‘the *sons of God* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them.’ Also, the allegory that prefaces the Book of Job (1:6) states, ‘Now there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.’ Job 38:7 reads, ‘When the morning stars sang together, and all the *sons of God* shouted for joy.’ All of these sons of God were originally perfect. Only after some fell were those angels called demons. Thus there existed in the spirit realm other ‘sons of God.’

“Genesis 1:26 states, ‘And God [Hebrew *Elohim*] said, Let us....’ In reference to the word ‘us,’ the margin of many King James Bibles states, ‘The plural of majesty, as in Ezra 4:18.’ The Genesis text continues: ‘Let us make man in our image.’ Some erroneously conclude that somehow Jesus participated with God in the creation of Adam. Although Adam’s creation can be treated with more fullness, suffice it to say that this imagined theory is scotched with the concluding words of Genesis 1:27, which read, ‘In the image of God [*Elohim*] created he [*singular*] him [Adam]; male and female created he [*singular*] them.’ Verse 27 is saying that God *alone* created man, not God and Jesus. Furthermore, the Hebrew word *elohim*, though existing in a plural form, very often, as on this occasion, refers to *one* personage or individual, namely, the Heavenly Father.

“Joseph in Egypt had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim, existing in a plural form due to the ‘im’ ending, bespeaks *one personage only* in this framework or context. ‘Ephraim’ was the singular son of Joseph, yet on numerous other occasions, ‘Ephraim’ was the name of a tribe of Israel, consisting of many individuals. In most cases, context is the determining factor.

“It may be pointed out that the word *elohim* refers to angels (plural) in heaven on one occasion and to judges (plural) of Israel in five references. And 240 times the Hebrew word refers to gods (plural). The answer, which should settle the issue, is that Genesis 1:27 states, ‘So God [*Elohim*] created man in his *own* image,’ and Genesis 2:7 adds, ‘And the LORD God [*Yahweh Elohim*, that is, Jehovah God] formed man of the dust of the ground.’ Genesis 2:7 does not refer to Jesus in any sense of the word. It is interesting that the end of Luke 3:38 has ‘the son of Adam, which was the son of *God*.’ In other words, God begat a son on the human plane, as well as other sons on the spirit plane.

“Because in the past, either subconsciously or consciously, Christians realized that God had other sons, a problem inherently existed with this deeply ingrained but *erroneous* thought

concerning *yachid* and the troubling phrase ‘only begotten.’ The revered and enthroned doctrine among both nominal and true Christians is that Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father. However, the Scriptures do not support this doctrine.

“To harmonize ‘only begotten’ with the thought of *other* sons of God forced the conclusion that somehow Jesus’ begetting differed in the sense that he was the only *directly begotten* Son of the Father. However, even this modification was troubling, and only recently was a fuller explanation seen. In this treatise, evidence has been presented to show that Jesus was *not* the only, solitary, single Son of the Father but, rather, the only *singularly* begotten Son. With regard to the supposition that Jesus was the only directly begotten Son, did not God *directly form and beget* Father Adam as a son?

“When the matter is pursued a step further, does not the Apostle John in his epistle (1 John 3:1) state, ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God’? In John 11:52, he said, ‘But that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.’ In Romans 8:16,17, Paul reasoned, ‘We are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.’ James 1:18 reads, ‘Of his [*the Father’s*] own will begat he us with the word of truth.’ Just as God directly breathed into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, so God breathes into the *minds* of those who become Christians the breath of a new life. ‘Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise’ (Gal. 4:28). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, ‘Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God,’ and ‘Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven’ (Matt. 5:9,44,45). Finally, there is the familiar text John 6:44, ‘No man can come to me [Jesus], except *the Father* which hath sent me [first] draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.’

“In summary, not only is God the Father put forth in Scripture as the Creator of heaven and earth, but also He is the *sole* Initiator, Originator, and Creator of all classes of sentient beings.

“¹ The Septuagint reads as follows:

“Gen. 22:2 - ‘And he said, Take thy son, the beloved one, whom thou hast loved—Isaac, and go into the high land, and offer him there for a whole-burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.’

“Gen. 22:12 - ‘And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the child, neither do anything to him, for now I know that thou fearest God, and for my sake thou hast not spared thy beloved son.’

“Gen. 22:16 - ‘... [God said to Abraham through the angel], and on my account hast not spared thy beloved son.’

“² See ‘Reference Books Used’ at end of treatise.”

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We will summarize the first point. When God was going to test Abraham, He said, “Take now thy son, *thine only son* Isaac, ... and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering [to me on an altar on Mount Moriah].” The word “son” was supplied and should not be in that text because Abraham had two sons at that time, Ishmael being born to him at age 86 and Isaac at age 100 (Gen. 22:2). In other words, Isaac was not the sole, the only, son of Abraham in a literal sense but in an idiomatic or affectionate sense. He was Abraham’s favorite son. Additional lines of reasoning were not included in the booklet, but we felt the thinking presented was done in a scholarly way that is almost essential to scotch the other theory.

Now we can begin to understand why Jesus asked in Psalm 35:17, “Lord, how long wilt thou look on?” He was thinking while on the Cross, and the word “Lord,” even though having only an initial capital letter, refers to God. Jesus was meditating and calling to Jehovah, to *Adonai*, to his Father. The Hebrew word *Adonai* has an affectionate meaning like “my Father,” “my Dad.” Sometimes *Adonai* refers to Jesus, as determined by the context. In the New Testament, the word “Lord” has to be studied in context to know whether it refers to Almighty God or to His Son. However, there are times when “Lord” refers to Jehovah in the Old Testament but to Jesus when used by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. When Jehovah was speaking in the Old Testament, the translators often made a distinction by capitalizing all four letters (“LORD”), but when only an initial capital letter was used (“Lord”), the context determines whether God or Jesus is being referred to. That is why Jesus replied as he did to the Jews at his First Advent when they called him a blasphemer because he permitted his disciples to address him with great affection. Jesus said in effect, “Aren’t there two ‘Lords’ in the Old Testament? Didn’t David write in Psalm 110:1, ‘The LORD [Jehovah] said unto my Lord [Jesus], Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?’”

All of the preceding groundwork was necessary in order to understand Psalm 35:17. Jesus was exposed on the Cross, and vicious people taunted him: “If you are the Messiah, come down from the Cross. Then we will believe you.” They spat on him and did all they could to humiliate him. If it can be seen that verse 17 refers to Jesus on the Cross, then it will be seen that earlier and later verses also apply to him, not to David.

For instance, verse 16 reads, “With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.” In one instance, Jesus was at a table with other Jews when the Pharisees noticed that some were publicans, tax collectors for the Romans, whom the religious leaders regarded as half-breeds. The Pharisees also criticized Jesus for eating without ceremoniously washing first. They mocked him for claiming to be the Messiah yet eating with Gentiles. Whenever the religious leaders had an opportunity, they mocked Jesus and tried to trap him with trick questions. When Jesus gave a public talk, the Pharisees who were listening tried to interject snide remarks to belittle him. At the time of his crucifixion, he said, “False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not” (verse 11). Psalm 35 is one of many Psalms that are prophetic of Jesus’ deeds, thinking, or experiences more than a thousand years later.

What about the expression “from the lions”? Satan is the chief lion, but his cohorts are lesser lions. Their intent was to devour Jesus, spiritually speaking, that is, to destroy his character and reputation.

Psa. 35:18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

Still on the Cross, Jesus said, “I will give thee [my Father] thanks in the great congregation [when I am raised from the dead and ascend up to heaven].” The “great congregation” is the heavenly host, before whom he would give thanks for being crowned with the divine nature. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane to again have the glory that he had before coming down to earth, but God highly exalted him. On the Cross, Jesus was saying that if God would help him to survive the Crucifixion without loss of faith, then he would give thanks when raised from death. He wanted to be taken from the terrible humiliation he was experiencing. If we were going to be burned at the stake—if our enemies had lit the fire, and the fire was coming up at our feet and beginning to burn us—what would we do? We would pray to the Father for help to endure the experience without losing faith either outwardly or inwardly.

Psa. 35:19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them

wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

As people went by Jesus while he was on the Cross, one spat upon him, another taunted him, someone else made jokes, another winked the eye at him, etc. A little enclave gathered and laughed at him while he was suffering.

Verse 14 states, "I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Jesus was thinking about his life prior to his baptism at Jordan at age 30. The New Testament says very little about Jesus' early life except for his statement at age 12, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" However, the Psalms provide quite a lot of information about his early life. Jesus was saying, "I am like Job." As a judge, Job went around to the people, listening to their cause, mourning for them, and sympathetically entering into their experiences. Being very kind but strict, he judged the poor, as well as the wealthy, with a proper balance.

Jesus had many thoughts while on the Cross. It is known that when a person is dying, he can mentally review hours of testimony of his life in just a few seconds. He goes into sort of a coma and dreams of all kinds of things, but when he comes to, he knows he was out for only a few seconds. In a personal experience at a very young age, I dove off a platform about 22 feet high and hit an underwater log supporting the wooden bridge. Knocked unconscious and being underwater, I dreamed. Similarly, here, Jesus was having all kinds of experiences. Seeing his body in a grotesque posture and out of shape, he thought, "I am a worm" (Psa. 22:6). He could count his protruding ribs, and every movement brought excruciating pain. All his bones were aching, but he was saying, "When I am helped through this experience, all the aches will bring corresponding joy" (verse 10). Paul and Silas likewise felt that the stripes on their backs were an evidence of their suffering for righteousness' sake, and they counted the experience all joy.

For many years, we hesitated to talk on these Psalms because they are so deep. We were afraid of saying something that might not be right and felt more maturity was needed first, in order to understand the depth of the thinking. When anyone seriously and soberly reviews Psalm 35, we think he will see that it is talking about Jesus' experiences. He received evil for the good that he had been doing all his life.

Comment: Truly Jesus was hated without a cause. Likewise, all who faithfully serve the Lord will be misunderstood and suffer persecution. The Pastor received a lot of opposition because of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Reply: We are studying the Book of Psalms with the hope that the lessons will be beneficial to us as new creatures in Christ. The experiences of the literal David are helpful, and of course the experiences of the spiritual David are even more helpful. A study of the Book of Psalms greatly edifies the Christian who can glean lessons. A Christian who does not experience persecution or opposition sometime during his life is an illegitimate son, that is, not one of the 144,000. All faithful Christians must learn the principles of God's Word, particularly of His instruction in the New Testament. If we suffer for wrongdoing, the purpose is for correction and instruction. If we repent, fasting if necessary, and arise from that stumbling experience, it can become a stepping-stone. The real blessings are persecutions for righteousness' sake.

As a side note, we can see that we are living in the end time. With disengagement taking place in Israel, subsequent events will show us more distinctly what part of the end time we are in. In a more particularized sense, we will see which way things are going to turn.

Psa. 35:20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

In numerous years of studying the Bible, we have differed with many scholars at times, as is the case with this verse. The italicized words in the King James Version, “them that are,” are not in the original Hebrew but were supplied by the translators, and they confuse the meaning of the verse. Offhand, we know of only one translator who renders verse 20 differently, and the Hebrew reads something like the following. “For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against the quiet in the land.”

What is the thought of “the quiet”? Because Jesus was “the quiet” one, the implication is that those who spoke against him were the opposite. He went meekly as a lamb to the slaughter. In other words, the pronoun “they” refers to the opposers of Christ, to those who were taunting him. This whole Psalm is the scene of the Crucifixion but with certain nuances that pertain to his former life before he consecrated, his life after he consecrated, and the climax of his earthly ministry when his enemies were in power. They could now vent their spleen against him in a way they could not do previously. For instance, during Jesus’ ministry, when the Pharisees wanted to trip him up or put him on a lower level, they were careful to address him as “Master” or “Rabbi,” but that manner of address was deceit on their part, for venom, poison, was under their tongues.

Although the word “quiet” lacks the definite article in the Hebrew, “the” is frequently inserted for sense. Thus enemies spoke against Jesus, “the quiet one.” But how did they do this? For one thing, Jesus sometimes spoke to crowds of hundreds or even thousands, so we know that he spoke loudly on those occasions, but he did not lift up his voice with ranting. One who rants pounds his fists and shouts loudly with gestures. Jesus never did that type of speaking, although in some cases, he looked with great anger. He spoke loud enough for all to hear but was under control.

There are several ways to narrow down the meaning. For instance, the word “quiet,” like the word “sheep,” can be either singular or plural depending on context. Therefore, we need other details or clues that surround the incident in which the statement is being made. Consider the statement “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isa. 53:7); that is, Jesus did not try to defend himself with oratory when he was on trial as a traitor to the nation and as a heretic. Sometimes he just made a simple statement, but there was no real endeavor to talk his way out of the situation.

Isaiah 42:1-3 is also helpful: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.” In regard to “Behold my servant,” all Jews leading up to the First Advent recognized that these three verses were talking about the Messiah. The fact that Jesus came as a young man and was born in the city of Nazareth caused all kinds of problems—until people listened to him. Then it was said of him, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46). People went away convinced after they heard his reasoning, and after a while, the common people heard him gladly. They appreciated his common sense and his exposure of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. He called them vipers and whited sepulchers because they bled the people of their revenue and took advantage of widows and orphans. Moreover, they tried to say that if someone made a “Corban,” a promise to the Lord, and then was suddenly faced with poverty and hard times, the person still had to pay (Mark 7:11). The Catholic Church also commonly followed this practice in the past. When a person made a vow or a promise, sometimes a year in advance, and then ran into financial problems due to illness or some other reason, the individual was still expected to pay. The clergy were leeches, feeding on the people, especially the poor.

When prophets like Daniel or Jeremiah read this passage, “Behold my servant,” they knew it referred to Israel’s Messiah, whom they thought would deliver the nation from bondage. Verse 17 of this same Psalm 35 uses the term “my darling,” and although some Protestant scholars would admit that it pertains to the Messiah, they do not see that preceding and following verses also apply to Jesus. The expression is even stronger when “my darling” is changed to “my beloved.” The name David means “beloved one” in Hebrew, and David, like Moses, was a type of Jesus.

“They [the religious leaders] speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against the quiet [one, Jesus] in the land [Hebrew *erets*].” Depending on context, *erets* can mean the whole earth in a broad sense or just the land of Israel in a particular sense, as in the expression “*erets* Israel.” In addition, *erets* can be used in other, less well-known ways; for example, sometimes it means the common people of the land. Although extremely intelligent, Jesus did not graduate from any seminary or Pharisaical school but was one of the people of the land. Even today a PhD degree is a great asset and a mark of recognition in the world. Jesus was ostensibly born of a carpenter in Nazareth, whereas the Jews expected an unusual person as Messiah, who would be a great conqueror with charisma, power, and stature like David’s son Absalom.

Psalm 35:27 talks about a unique individual. “Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of *his servant*,” that is, of a particular individual, the Messiah, the messenger or angel whom God would send. The word “messenger” basically signifies that God would send an agent to instruct the nation of Israel in their need.

The opposers premeditated riddles and hard questions to trap Jesus, but he answered them all, so that after a while, they were afraid to ask him a question. He repeatedly answered with such wisdom that they looked like fools. Their intention was to make him appear as a traitor to the Roman Empire, but he said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” The religious leaders even tried to show that Jesus was an illegitimate child having no legal father (John 8:19).

After multiple similar experiences, the religious leaders felt they had to devise another method to silence Jesus, for their wisdom, parables, innuendos, and deceitful ways were not effective. They had even deviously approached him at times to make a snide remark when a group of the common people were around him, hoping to take advantage of the ready-made platform of publicans and sinners. When they saw they could not trap Jesus, they plotted the most destructive method of all—to kill him. Caiaphas, one of the two high priests, said, “It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people ... [lest] the whole nation perish” (John 11:50). Now their deceitfulness was to put him to death in an ignominious fashion on the Cross. They felt their case would be won if they could manipulate his crucifixion, for under the Law, one who hung on a tree was accursed. Thus when Judas came to them and offered to reveal, for money, the location where Jesus would be at night, they felt the offer was providential and did not realize it was in fulfillment of prophecy in the Old Testament.

The point is that we can proceed through Psalm 35 with the assurance that the scene is now the climax of Jesus’ life when he was on trial and on the Cross. Every effort was made to humiliate him. Once again, “they [particularly the scribes and the Pharisees] speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against the quiet [one] in [of] the land [the common people]”; that is, Jesus did not have the background of a conqueror, as the Jews expected of their Messiah.

Psa. 35:21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

When Jesus was on the Cross, many of his opposers were evidently given the privilege of passing by him and making derogatory remarks, while the chief priests had the liberty of

standing right there and beholding him on the Cross. They gleefully watched as some of the common people walked by him single file and taunted him.

What is the thought of “Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it”? As said in Matthew 27:42, “He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” The religious leaders were saying, “We thought he was a false Messiah, and his crucifixion, which we now see with our own eyes, is the proof. Would the Savior of Israel, the true Messiah, be crucified? When Jesus was popular, we said he was not the Messiah, and now look at him. His crucifixion is exactly what we anticipated, and we are happy. Aha, we have seen it!” They felt Jesus was a hypocrite, and his crucifixion was the proof. Their attitude was, “Look, everybody. Here is the impostor.” They did not understand the necessity for a perfect man to die in that fashion to satisfy justice and offset the sin of the world.

Jesus’ love for the Heavenly Father was so great that he willingly died on the Cross. Moreover, his desire was for the human race to have an opportunity to reverse their depravity. Evidently, the Father had revealed to him that it was needful for someone to take Adam’s place. Clues seem to indicate that Jesus volunteered at that point, saying, “Here am I. Send me.” Jesus would have recognized and anticipated that this act took humility. However, he never anticipated that the Father would momentarily withdraw fellowship, causing him to cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

We are taking a long time on these points because the same principle is in many of the Psalms but is generally overlooked. The Psalms give us insight into what Jesus went through in great depth.

Q: Is “Aha, aha” related to Matthew 27:39,40? “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

A: Yes. “Wagging their heads” is an idiomatic expression signifying a form of sarcasm.

Psa. 35:22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

Jesus’ words to the Father continued: “This thou hast seen, O LORD [Jehovah]: keep not silence.” Then he added, “O Lord [Adonai], be not far from me,” now calling on the soft side of God—His mercy, benevolence, and pity. We are reminded of the time when God passed by Moses and pronounced great words about Himself. Of course Moses did not literally see God, but he heard Jehovah’s own explanation of who He was. “And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he [Moses] said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory. And he [Jehovah] said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.... Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.... And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen” (Exod. 33:17-20,22,23). The “diamond” side of God is the hard, glorious, cutting, adamant part of His character, but there is also the “sardine stone” side, or softer quality (Rev. 4:3). God is easily entreated and approachable, even though He is “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity” (Isa. 57:15). The “sard” side of God’s character is love.

Jesus’ remarks of verse 22 were made before he cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was on the Cross for three hours, and much is revealed about his thinking

during that time. In fact, an overwhelming amount of detail is given, although we usually concentrate on Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52:14 through 53:10. The Psalms are *packed* with information on facets of Jesus' character and thinking that are not revealed in the New Testament. The Old Testament has hidden much information until the due time for its release and exposure. The information has been sown like a seed that is buried in the ground. Over time, that seed gradually grows from a little sprout to a small tree and then to a giant oak tree with leaves.

Psa. 35:23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

When Jesus died, there were unusual happenings in nature such as an earthquake that caused the rending of the Temple veil and darkness that covered the land from noon until 3 p.m. In addition, graves were opened. In fact, Satan made a big blunder here. We can imagine his delight upon seeing the death of Jesus, the only opponent on his level, for Lucifer and Michael were the only two archangels. With Jesus seemingly out of the way, Satan thought there would be smooth sailing. Instead, just the opposite occurred, for the Christian religion and believers were delirious with joy when Jesus was raised from death. All Jerusalem knew of his resurrection, and no one could deny the strange happenings in nature.

As a result, Satan eventually transformed himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). First, he used pagan Rome to kill Christians. He vented his spleen in trying to crush the early Church during the first three centuries, but when Christianity thrived under persecution, he devised the new method of becoming Antichrist, a false Christ, a pseudo-Christ. In lieu of the pagans, he used a false Christian religion to do his bidding. Satan's final stand at the end of the Gospel Age will be along similar lines, for he is weaving himself into the Christian movement.

Psa. 35:24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

Psa. 35:25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

Jesus knew he would die, but if he died under the condition of being derided, he felt God's cause might be adversely affected. He was saying to his Father, "Do not let the appearance of my utter defeat injure your cause."

Psa. 35:26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.

Psa. 35:27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

Verses 26 and 27 compare opposite reactions to his suffering, death, and resurrection and to the truth itself.

Comment: Jesus was asking that the responsible religious leaders be "brought to confusion" for rejoicing at his "hurt." And he continued, "Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me." Thus verse 26 proves that Jesus did not say of those who plotted his death, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Reply: Yes, that text in Luke is spurious in the oldest manuscripts. Those who were responsible for his hands and his feet being nailed to the Cross certainly knew what they were doing.

Psa. 35:28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Jesus' tongue will speak of God's righteousness and praise "all the day long," that is, *forever*.

PSALM 36

Psa. 36:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD.

When Psalm 36 is compared with Psalm 35, we see that the superscription for the previous Psalm is simply "A Psalm of David." One reason for the longer superscription here is that Psalm 36 pertains to David, in contradistinction to Psalm 35, which is basically a prophetic Psalm concerning Jesus. Thus Psalm 36 is a change of venue to the experiences of David and some observations during his life.

Some Bible commentators feel this Psalm is about David's experiences with Saul and his sympathizers, who had enmity toward David. A number of other commentators think the Psalm pertains to the Babylonian exile. We think otherwise.

Psa. 36:1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

In verses 1-4, the emphasis is on a particular class of individuals: the wicked. When we read verse 1, there is a flaw in the pronoun "my," which should be "his": "The transgression of the wicked saith within my [*his*] heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." However, that flaw is overridden by the contents of the verse itself, let alone the following three verses. David was talking about what the wicked say within *their* heart, that is, what the wicked are thinking.

Why do the characteristics of the wicked start with the heart? Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). Of course some people who transgress with their lips are essentially good people, but because of their inherited weakness or the culture and environment they were raised in, they almost do not know any other way of expressing themselves. However, the subject matter of Psalm 36 is those who are *truly* wicked, and for them, the source of wickedness is their own heart, from which the mouth speaks.

Psa. 36:2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

The wicked individual "flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful." The wicked often do not know they are doing wickedness until it becomes so abominable that the roof caves in on their head. Even when some calamity they have caused to themselves or to others becomes obvious, they are not convinced because the wickedness is in their heart. The iniquity has come to the full in these individuals; they are at the point of no return (Gen. 15:16).

Psa. 36:3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good.

The words of the mouth of the wicked, who are hardened in wickedness, "are iniquity and deceit: ... [they] hath left off to be wise, and to do good." The wicked cannot think properly even if they want to, for they have ceased being wise and are satisfied with their own human thinking. Whatever they do is wise in their own sight.

How does a person become truly wise? He studies the Scriptures to see what God says, or he learns from others. In other words, a wise person is a learner. Otherwise, the individual does what is wise or just in his own sight and sets his own standards. This abominable situation is what happens in human experience.

Psa. 36:4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

During the daytime, the wicked do the “mischief” and evil that they had planned, devised, and premeditated during the previous night upon their beds. Wickedness is in their heart day and night. Thus David was describing a person who is confirmed in wickedness—one who is hardened in his transgressions and way of life.

“He setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.” Such an individual has no standards and no conscience that trouble him. Instead of seeing God in nature, he sees what he likes and wants to take advantage of to rob and plunder. He is not in a teachable frame of mind, and his constant attitude, the concept of his existence, is, “Give me! Give me! Give me!”

Psa. 36:5 Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Verse 5 starts another change of venue, for immediately there is a contrast with the thinking and the deeds of the wicked in the first four verses. Verse 5 honors the thinking and actions of the Creator Himself—the One who has created all things. How great is His faithfulness and everything He has done!

Let us start with the heavens. Our spirits are lifted on a nice, sunny day with perfect weather. Of course dark, gloomy days also occur, usually because of rain or a thunderstorm. As Christians, we need dark, cloudy experiences in order to learn lessons. For instance, a father may spank his child for doing wrong. To the child, the experience is hurtful but necessary. Another example is a tree, which needs sun to bring chlorophyll to the leaves through the process of photosynthesis. Stormy conditions can be converted into strength for the tree. If the wind did not blow and storms never occurred, the tree would be weak, for it would not develop a sufficient root system to withstand a harsher experience. Therefore, spiritually speaking, the Christian needs sun, rain, wind, and storms for the development of character.

To study the heavens at nighttime is very inspirational, for they declare the glory of God in a silent international language (Psa. 19:1). From our perspective, the sun goes silently, quietly, gently, and slowly into orbit from east to west, moving like the minute hand on a clock. The heavens are beautiful day and night.

Weather affects our mood to some extent. Just as clouds bring blessings of rain in nature, so we need a mixture of blessings and trials to develop strong characters. Even in a hothouse, fans are turned on to create an artificial wind. Thus we grow in a climate that develops and proves character one way or the other. Incidentally, for 1,656 years after the creation of Adam, the people could not see the invisible water ring that would fall at the time of the Flood, nor did any rain fall. Instead, moisture in the form of dew rose up and watered the earth (Gen. 2:5,6).

Psa. 36:6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.” This statement suggests that there are greater and lesser mountains. Normally, people would say that Mount Everest and Mount McKinley

are great mountains. Basically, verses 5 and 6 are talking about the Creator, who made the clouds, the heavens, and the mountains. At the start of the First Creative Day, the surface of the earth was completely covered with water, and there were no mountains. Through a subliminal eruption way down below the water, God caused the mountains to come forth, to rise up from the deep, to form the seven continents. Thus He made the “great mountains” in nature. Subsequently, and even today, strange things occur. For instance, some mountains are getting higher and other mountains are sinking. We can observe this phenomenon with lesser “mountains” when islands sink into the sea and others pop up. We do not see other miraculous happenings because they develop so slowly.

The rings and the waters covering the earth existed at the same time. The Apostle Peter referred to the water envelope, or veil, that was around the earth (2 Pet. 3:5,6). The people before the Flood could not see that veil of water because it was translucent. To them the heavens appeared the same and without clouds day after day. Between that ring around the earth and the water below, on the earth, God created a firmament, or atmosphere, called the heavens. “And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day” (Gen. 1:6-8). In other words, the atmosphere was between the two sources of water, which were both involved in the Flood of Noah’s day. The waters below flooded parts of the earth in the Middle East when the land sank in that area. Also, waters cascaded in from above, starting at the North and South Poles.

Spiritually speaking, Mount Sinai is an example of a great mountain because the Law was given there. Another is Mount Ararat, where the Ark came to rest after the Flood. The earlier generation before the Flood lived up in that area in Turkey. The lesson of the Flood is one of judgment, for all people perished except Noah and his family, who disembarked the Ark at Mount Ararat, marking the beginning of the second world, the “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). Other “great [spiritual] mountains” are Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, and the Mount of Transfiguration, where Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in vision talking to Moses and Elijah. In addition, Mount Ebal was a mount of cursing, and Mount Gerizim was a mount of blessing.

The point is that the Creator is doing things, and His children, those who have made a covenant with Him, are enabled to get all these blessings and lessons, whereas the world sees only the more dramatic representations such as an earthquake or a volcanic eruption and not the spiritual lessons. Even an atheist can see the Creator’s power in nature but gives different explanations. We need to *meditate* on God’s universe, on what He has made, and on His Word. Moreover, the conscience needs to be taught. All people have a conscience, except for the very wicked, whose consciences are seared and hardened. Like a piece of dry leather, they lack sensitivity. Some of the people in the world have good standards and morals, for although they are fallen and their conscience is blurred, they still have some of God’s image in them (Gen. 1:27). The conscience needs to be educated in the standards of God’s Word, and the unconsecrated are not seeking to train their conscience accordingly.

“Thy judgments are a great deep.” Isaiah 55:8,9 is called to mind: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

Comment: All of verse 6, “Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast,” seems to identify with the Flood, when Noah and family were righteously spared on the great mountains of Ararat in the judgment of the “great deep,” the Flood, and God preserved man and beast out of it.

Reply: God also sent forth a judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah when He caused molten lava from a volcanic eruption to send “fire” from heaven on the two cities. In recent times, the eruption of Mount Saint Helens spewed ash more than two miles into the air, but that ash fell in a limited area, whereas other mountains like Mount Vesuvius sent ash in a wide area in all directions in a much greater eruption.

When man tries to plum God’s wisdom, it is like tying a rope to an anchor and throwing it into the ocean at a depth of six or seven miles. With the rope being of limited length, the anchor stops far short of the seemingly bottomless depth. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so is the ocean bed deeper than the sea.

“O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.” This last part of verse 6 summarizes verses 5 and 6; namely, (1) God’s mercy is in the heavens, (2) His faithfulness reaches unto the clouds, (3) His righteousness is like the great mountains, and (4) His judgments are a great deep. Some have begun to know the Lord through atheists’ arguments on the observation of nature, although, of course, the conclusions are different. As the words of a hymn say, all nature teaches there is a God. Bro. Cox of New England used to sing that hymn with great feeling and joy.

There is a God—all Nature speaks,
Through earth, and air, and seas, and skies:
See! from the clouds His glory breaks,
When the first beams of morning rise.

The rising sun, serenely bright,
O’er the wide world’s extended frame
Inscribes, in characters of light,
His mighty Maker’s glorious name.

Ye curious minds, who roam abroad,
And trace creation’s wonders o’er,
Confess the footsteps of your God,
And bow before Him, and adore.

Psa. 36:7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

A minority of mankind have “put their trust under the shadow of thy wings”—whether referring to natural Israel and the natural promises of God or to spiritual Israel and the spiritual promises of God. Verse 7 seems to be alluding to the cherubim wings that overshadowed the Ark of the Covenant. The wings overshadow those who are under God’s protection or care—those who are shown in the base of the Ark. When Psalm 36 is considered in its entirety, this thought seems to fit in very well.

In *Tabernacle Shadows*, the Pastor explained that the two cherubim whose wings are over the Ark of the Covenant represent the divine attributes of Love and Power. The base of the Ark, the slab underneath on which the blood was sprinkled, represents Justice, and the Shekinah light above and between the two wings pictures Wisdom. “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth” (Psa. 80:1). Sometimes the light, the Shekinah glory, represents not only Wisdom but also God Himself. The slab underneath, upon which the blood was applied, not only represents Justice but also Jesus, who is called “the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:2). We are forgiven our iniquities through Jesus.

Verses 5 and 6 give us an understanding of what brought forth the exclamation “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!” God’s love and mercy are manifest in all of His works. His care is over not only the heavens, the clouds, and the great mountains but also man in providing the necessities of life and the beasts of the field. God’s care is manifested in the beauty of nature—in the textures, the fragrances, and the fruitage of plants, trees, and flowers; in the sun, the light of the heavens in the daytime; in the heavens at night; etc. In their beauty, the stars almost sing a song at night. Not only does nature speak that there is a God, but the Emperor speaks for His creation, both animal and human.

“Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.” To a certain extent, mankind put their trust under God’s wings as manifested, for example, in the surety and knowledge of the tides coming in and going out. The tides are a timetable, as is the sun with its rising and setting. Man relies on the surety of the laws of nature—gravitation, oxygen, the sun, the moon, etc.

Thus God’s care suggests a Creator who is interested in His creation. Psalm 36 is very different in that while it notes a hidden and merciful God, it also notes the anomaly of the permission of evil, the “transgression of the wicked” (Psa. 36:1). The transgressors do not want to know about God. They are not even sensitive to their wrongdoing. Verses 1-4 describe almost incorrigibly wicked men, and the Creator is not doing anything about the matter that can be seen. However, there are people who note the strange anomaly of, on the one hand, the presence of wickedness and evil and of, on the other hand, evidences of a good Creator. Some people believe God will do something about the evil, but they do not know how or when. All whom God calls and draws with the high calling among the children of men must have natural faith to start with, for “without faith it is *impossible* to please him [God]” (Heb. 11:6).

In spite of the anomaly, a class among the children of men have put their trust in an unseen, invisible God, who has not shown a marked distinction between the fate of the wicked and the fate of the righteous. It sometimes seems that they are both the same or the opposite of what would be expected. This anomaly is the breeding ground for faith. Some have said that faith is developed by an atmosphere in which doubt prevails, for doubt allows us to exercise trust in spite of the doubt. As we exercise trust or faith, we are rewarded, and our faith grows a little stronger. We are rewarded proportionately with each step we take, spiritually speaking.

The resulting faith is different in that it is *spiritual* faith, where we are provided understanding of why things are as they are. The term we use for this knowledge is “the divine plan.” God has a plan—He has something in mind—but because the Kingdom is not in operation at the present time, we have to exercise faith that its coming is as sure as the fact there is a God. It is as sure as the terra firma of this planet. Moreover, God’s Word, written thousands of years ago, bolsters our faith, especially now when we see the nations gathered against Jerusalem, which is an evidence of the end time and the nearing fulfillment of that Word.

Let us consider again the two cherubim who represent Love and Power. Psalm 36 has already brought out one of those attributes, but we give it a little different coloring. In witnessing all of God’s works, we see both attributes, but when we look at how He provides water and food (the necessities of life) for the animals and man, we see His mercy. Even insects have a purpose. While they seem to be negative and destructive, they constructively destroy waste material so that the stink and the pollution do not adversely affect the human creation. In this Psalm, David called God’s mercy “lovingkindness.” God’s love and mercy over all of His works can be seen. Also, God’s power can be seen, even by natural man, in the precise timing of earth’s orbit around the sun. With us, God’s power is manifested when we look into His Word and see, for instance, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the opening of the Red Sea.

In the wilderness, God bore the Israelites on eagles' wings (Exod. 19:4). He was particularly pleased with the second generation, not the first generation, the murmurers. In the Gospel Age, the true Church fled into the wilderness on the wings of a great eagle (Rev. 12:14). Thus there is an application of shadowing wings in both the Old and the New Testaments. As we meditate on Psalm 36, its content becomes more and more fulfilling and helpful.

Psa. 36:8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

The pronouns “they” and “them” refer to the righteous generations before Christ, the righteous class of the Gospel Age, and those who will be God’s people in the Kingdom Age. A proof text for the latter category is, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power [in the Kingdom Age], in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth” (Psa. 110:3).

“Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.” The Bible starts with the Garden of Eden and the Fall, and it ends with the Kingdom and the Garden of Eden restored. Restitution will bring success, for what was lost through the Fall will be restored.

All of these philosophical thoughts are in Psalm 36. God was talking through David. In addition to his being granted this concept through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can see what majestic thinking David had.

Psa. 36:9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

Verse 9 supports the thought in verse 8 about drinking of the river of God’s pleasures. The river of Eden was the river (fountain) of life. Just as water to the natural man is like the water of life, so water, spiritually speaking, is frequently shown to represent truth when interpreted in a favorable sense. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the *water of life* freely” (Rev. 22:17). The “water of life” is truth, understanding, and knowledge. Obedience is required based on the privilege of seeing things in their proper light.

Comment: God said through the Prophet Jeremiah, “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

Reply: We are reminded of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5-14).

“In thy light shall we see light.” Light is also a symbol of truth. This portion of verse 9 is a play on words. Notice what the problem was at the beginning of the Psalm; namely, the transgression of the wicked is that there is no fear of God before their eyes. They cannot see things properly because they do not have the “light,” the knowledge, to discern the difference between good and evil. As Christians, we are furnished light and the ability to discern between right and wrong. That ability is a blessing, and it is more blessed if we obey accordingly. God’s people in whatever age—Jewish, Christian, the Kingdom, etc.—see light “in thy [His] light.”

Comment: 1 Peter 2:9 is related: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous *light*.”

Light and water are related to truth from different perspectives. Basically speaking, light is the ability to discern between right and wrong. The problem with the transgressor is that he does

not see his actions as evil. He sees evil as good, for he gets benefits by pursuing the wrong course, the pleasures (or lusts) of life.

Psa. 36:10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

The “upright in heart” have existed in all ages. They heed God’s calling for their respective age and, as a result, get life and benefits.

Psa. 36:11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

The “wicked” were described in verses 1-4. They walk in blindness, which to them is light. They love the darkness, considering it to be their light. They cannot understand.

Comment: Jesus is “the true Light, which [eventually] lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). He said, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19).

Reply: Yes, a class exists that loves darkness. In the Kingdom Age, there will be a class that secretly harbors a love for evil and darkness. These individuals will be impatient for the Kingdom Age to end so that they can return to their evil ways and practices and prosper as they did in past ages (Amos 8:5,6). The wicked flourished by their crimes and illegal actions. Those who were intelligent along a certain line got the bulk of the wealth if they were greedy. It has often been said that if the money of all the billionaires were taken from them and spread out evenly over the rest of the people, it would take only another hundred years or so before conditions would revert to what they were before. Those with greedy desires would again climb the ladder and inherit the wealth in their own way.

As David observed conditions with the wicked, the Holy Spirit took his observations and his faith to overrule the wording of this Psalm. David knew that God, in His due time, would take care of the situation, but he did not have full knowledge and certainly did not understand the permission of evil. Holy men of old spoke (prophesied) as they were mechanically moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21). In the Gospel Age, the Holy Spirit takes their words and gives us the better application on a higher level of understanding (1 Pet. 1:10,12).

David observed this depressing circumstance of society, and he experienced flack from others, especially as he got older. Many people are regarded as second-rate citizens just because they get older and become infirm.

Q: Was the “foot of pride” David’s foot or the foot of the wicked?

A: It is helpful to view the situation both ways because nothing good dwells in the flesh, although the emphasis here seems to be on David’s own foot. Our earthen vessel has evil propensities and desires that must be kept under until the end of our course. For each step in the right direction, a person gets stronger as a new creature. The new creature is walking up the steps to heaven, and the old creature goes downhill until the two are entirely separated. When the body dies and the spirit lives, the victory is obtained either to life in the Great Company or to special life in the Little Flock. All—both consecrated and unconsecrated—are before the judgment seat of Christ, under inspection, sowing a character (Rom. 14:10).

Our prayer should be David’s prayer: “Let not the foot of pride come against me.” Many of our experiences as Christians pertain to decision making, especially in the Laodicean period

when physical persecution for Christ's and righteousness' sake has been lacking thus far. We must try to stay in the narrow way, straying neither to the right nor to the left. David feared that his motives and conscience might be blurred so that he would go the wrong way. That should be our fear too. While observing the evil in others, he feared that the same evil would come upon him secretly and unawares.

The superscription of this Psalm is "A Psalm of David the *servant of the LORD*." The only other Psalm with this superscription is Psalm 18. David concluded Psalm 35, the previous Psalm, with a personal touch, calling himself a "servant": "Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his *servant*. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long" (Psa. 35:27,28). David typically praised God in the Psalms. Christians in the present life are also likened to servants: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his *servants* things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1).

Psa. 36:12 **There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.**

Verse 12 is a reference to Second Death at the end of the Kingdom Age, when the wicked will be destroyed. Those who sow a bad character will have to retrace all of their steps in order to get life, for otherwise, they will fall into Second Death. In the present age, many of the wicked die with honors. Conversely, those who are good may die in dishonor. David's faith went forward. He felt that somehow, somewhere, this situation would be rectified. The Holy Spirit put a different play on David's words that is very meaningful.

This last verse of Psalm 36 is like a climax. At the close of the Kingdom Age, it will be manifested who are the righteous and who are the wicked in all ages—the years before the Flood and the Patriarchal, Jewish, Gospel, and Kingdom ages. We think that quite a number will go into Second Death, especially in the near future during very trying times. Several times Jesus admonished his disciples very pointedly to *watch and pray*. A final sorting out of the consecrated in the Gospel Age will occur in the near future.

PSALM 37

Psa. 37:0 **A Psalm of David.**

Psa. 37:1 **Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.**

The first words of Psalm 37 are the theme of the entire Psalm: "Fret not thyself." The word "fret" includes the thought of being anxious, worried, and overcharged—emotions that affect the nervous system. It is being irritated, dissatisfied, or discontent because of a circumstance or situation. The circumstance can be corrosive and abrasive to the nerves, leading to a restless state. In other words, it is not a peaceful situation. To counteract such negative feelings requires patience and trust, and in order to trust, we must have faith that ultimately the situation will change or be reversed. Fretfulness is usually caused by an outside circumstance in the workplace, the neighborhood, or even in the home.

Comment: A Hebrew-English interlinear Bible says, "Do not inflame yourself with evildoers."

Psa. 37:2 **For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.**

Psa. 37:3 **Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.**

Psa. 37:4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Psa. 37:5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Psa. 37:6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

Psa. 37:7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Comment: These verses reinforce the thought that we should be patient and trust, for the Lord will give us the desires of our heart. Evildoers seem to prosper at the present time, but in due time, God will “bring forth ... righteousness as the light, and ... judgment as the noonday.”

Reply: Yes, and while the ultimate outcome will be reversed, usually what is considered a short time is relative and seems like a long time to us. Notice that the term “thus saith the LORD” is lacking, so David was giving his own advice and counsel based on his experiences and how he had been helped. The fact this advice is recorded in the Word shows that it is good.

Psa. 37:8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

Psa. 37:9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Psa. 37:10 For yet for a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

Psa. 37:11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Psa. 37:12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

On the Mount of Beatitudes, Jesus quoted part of verse 11 as one of the rewards of those who keep his commandments, particularly the attribute of meekness: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). In addition, those who “wait upon the LORD ... shall inherit the earth.” Therefore, one definition of meekness is to obediently wait upon Jehovah for help, advice, and counsel. In making a distinction between meekness and humility, the Pastor sometimes defined meekness as “teachableness,” and he attributed that quality to Peter, who was “converted” later in his ministry (Luke 22:31,32). Meekness is seen in his two epistles, whereas in the beginning, he was quick and impetuous in his response to various situations.

Comment: Meekness should not be confused with timidity, for none of the prophets of the Old Testament could have performed their ministries if they had been timid.

Reply: Timidity is a form of *weakness*, whereas true meekness is a position of *strength*. For example, because of the Israelites’ hard hearts and resistance, God promised to make Ezekiel’s forehead like flint, a very hard stone that will make sparks when two pieces are struck together. “But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee [Ezekiel]; for they will not hearken unto me [God]: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house” (Ezek. 3:7-9).

Comment: Galatians 6:9 reads, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” We need to wait on God and not envy those who prosper temporally.

Comment: David was also saying not to render evil for evil (1 Thess. 5:15).

Reply: That is true, for in “fretting,” one can easily lash back and render evil for evil.

Psa. 37:13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

Psa. 37:14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

Psa. 37:15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

Psa. 37:16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.

Psa. 37:17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

Psa. 37:18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

Verses 13-18 emphasize that righteousness and constancy in right behavior will prevail in the final analysis. The word “conversation” in verse 14 has the thought of “conduct,” although of course there is a relationship between one’s words and his deeds.

Comment: The Hebrew interlinear has “those who walk uprightly.”

Comment: The terminology is interesting: “The Lord shall *laugh* at him [the wicked].” The Second Psalm also uses the word “laugh”: “The kings [civil rulers] of the earth set themselves, and the [religious] rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, ... [but] He that sitteth in the heavens shall *laugh*: the Lord shall have them in *derision*” (Psa. 2:2,4).

Reply: The word “laugh” is like a personalized expression of a characteristic of God. The wicked think what they are doing is worthwhile and rewarding because it produces pleasing temporal results in the short term. For instance, in the business world, some try aggressively to climb up the ladder, slandering and doing evil to others and hypocritically feigning friendliness to superiors, but they have ulterior motives underneath.

Although “LORD” (all capital letters) in the Second Psalm refers to Jehovah, here in verse 13 “Lord” (with only an initial capital letter) can refer to either Jehovah or the Logos. In the Kingdom Age, the righting of wrongs will be made manifest. In the present life, the mind of an average individual, even if he lives to be 100 years old, is really a short experience compared to eternal life, the reward of those who are submissive and teachable in the Kingdom Age.

Psa. 37:19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

Psa. 37:20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

Psa. 37:21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy,

and giveth.

Psa. 37:22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

Psa. 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

The thrust of verses 19-23 seems to be that conditions will change in the future in the Kingdom Age. The Prophet Malachi wrote, “And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered” (Mal. 3:15). At present, generally speaking, the wicked prosper, and the righteous get the brunt of hard experiences according to the flesh. However, conditions will be reversed in the Kingdom so that the righteous will prosper. The thought is not that there will be no evil in the Kingdom Age but that evil will not predominate. Those who manifest evil deeds at that time will either get stripes or be expunged. Some allowance will be made, but it will be tentative and very short with some punishment being administered. The short term in this life seems to be long term to us, but trust is usually coupled not only with faith but also with patient endurance.

Q: Does the clause “they that be cursed of him shall be cut off” refer to Second Death?

A: Yes, and the usual meaning of being “cut off” is Second Death. However, with regard to the Gospel Age, the “cutting off” can be meant in a good sense. For example, Jesus was cut off in death in the midst of the seventieth week, his human nature being sacrificed for a spirit nature and reward. “And after threescore and [seven and] two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself... And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [the seventieth week]: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (Dan. 9:26,27). “He [Jesus] ... was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken” (Isa. 53:8).

Notice verse 20. The perishing of the wicked in Second Death is described as, “The enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.” When the smoke of the fat of lambs pertains to the *righteous*, it is a sweet savor in the nostrils of God, but when the smoke pertains to the *wicked*, the thought is that they will be reduced to oblivion. Many similes can have either a good or a bad connotation; context and the circumstance are the determining factor.

Again David penned the thought that the righteous will inherit the earth. “For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth” (verse 22). That or a similar expression is mentioned five times in Psalm 37 (verses 9, 11, 22, 29, and 34).

Psa. 37:24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

Psa. 37:25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

Psa. 37:26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

Psa. 37:27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

Psa. 37:28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

Psa. 37:29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

“Though he [a good man—verse 23] fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.” We are reminded of the Apostle Peter, who started to sink in the tempestuous waves in the storm on the Sea of Galilee, but he was rescued. And particularly after his denial of Jesus, when he said, “I know not the man,” Peter became crystallized in humility and Christlikeness. His character development shows that Jesus can save to the uttermost those who put their final trust in him (Heb. 7:25). For those who have the frightful experience of falling but then, by God’s grace, are rescued, the effect is to help them crystallize their characters in righteousness forever. Along a different line, even the Apostle Paul was cast down under certain circumstances, but the Lord lifted him up (2 Cor. 1:8).

Comment: Jesus warned Peter that Satan was specifically trying to sift him (Luke 22:31).

Reply: Jesus had in mind that when Peter was converted, there would be a difference in his character (Luke 22:32). Accordingly, after his resurrection, he said to Peter, “Feed my lambs” and “Feed my sheep” (John 21:15-17). Instead of being unstable and impetuous, Peter became like a rock—just the opposite. He became a stable, mature teacher and a wonderful example to the flock.

Comment: No doubt Satan rejoiced at each of Peter’s three denials.

Reply: Yes, Satan rejoiced a number of times and then became frustrated in many cases. For instance, seeing Jesus on the Cross, Satan thought he had triumphed, but the seeming success was short-lived. Imagine Satan’s disappointment and anger when Jesus was resurrected! He knew the human nature was liable to death, but we think his erroneous conclusion that spirit beings cannot die was a factor in his own deflection. Apparently, also, the fallen angels have retained good health and strength, for they did not come under the condemnation of a sentence for disobedience. This false concept encouraged and emboldened Satan to pursue his evil ways, so that now he is incorrigible. When an individual commits willful wrong over a long period of time, his conscience gets seared, becoming like dried leather. Because the conscience is no longer soft, supple, and tender, the person cannot reflect properly in the decision-making process, for conscience is the lever for making decisions.

“I [David] have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” David continued his personal counseling based on his experiences. In broad-brush terms, David’s experience is the experience of the righteous in the overall situation in the present life. However, the time comes when each of the righteous have an abrupt experience in periods of a particular judgment and/or trouble.

Comment: The expression “nor his seed begging bread” must have been a comfort to Christian parents who were going through severe trials in which they might lose their life. They could take comfort that God would protect their children.

Reply: Yes, God would take care of the ones left behind.

Psa. 37:30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

In addition to the apostles, God has always had teachers, exhorters, and comforters during the Gospel Age, for He gives gifts of the Holy Spirit to men (Eph. 4:8,11,12). If one is hungering after truth and righteousness, that need will be supplied, even if he lives in a foreign land. Somehow, somewhere—in some way—contact will be made if the person’s desires for more information are real and not temporary, for God always has righteous individuals who are able

to give some aid and instruction to His people.

Psa. 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Psa. 37:32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

Psa. 37:33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

Psa. 37:34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.

Psa. 37:35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

David's advice seems to be twofold. We can extrapolate spiritual lessons from what he was saying, yet his counsel included factual wisdom along godly lines to those who may get only an earthly inheritance. Stated another way, his common-sense advice has spiritual connotations of a higher reward.

Verse 34 again mentions the thought of inheriting the land (or earth). The Hebrew word is the same in all five instances.

Verse 35 is frequently quoted. The wicked in great power spread themselves "like a green bay tree." A bay tree is a good analogy for the wicked, for its roots crowd out other trees by hogging all the water and nutriments of the soil. King Saul and Doeg, who curried the king's favor, are examples of wicked individuals in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 22:18,22).

Psa. 37:36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

David saw the wicked in great power (verse 35), "yet he passed away." This seems to be a reference to Saul, who died during David's lifetime.

Psa. 37:37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

"Mark the perfect man," but where did David see such a man? Of course we see the perfect man Christ Jesus. Back in David's day, the word "perfect" was used in the sense of a mature upright person, who was more complete.

Psa. 37:38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

David knew from the Lord's Word about "the transgressors [who] shall be destroyed together." Jeremiah gave advice to the people when the city of Jerusalem was under siege. If they wanted to survive, they were to go out of the city to the enemy and submit and be willing captives. The Babylonians were a very cruel and hard enemy. Therefore, for the Jews to comply with this advice, they had to have faith that Jeremiah was a true prophet of the Lord. Those who did not heed the advice and either stayed in the city or tried to escape were generally massacred. In fact, out of millions of Jews, all perished en masse except for a small number (832 people), who were taken captive to Babylon (Jer. 52:29). Hence the "wicked" in this instance were Jews who were not faithful to the Law and the advice of Jeremiah.

From this small seed that was delivered and taken to Babylon, God prepared a people to

receive Messiah. One quite prominent individual whose progeny were greatly blessed was Jonadab (Jer. 35:6-10). They faithfully kept a vow not to drink wine, among other things.

As Christians, we see that the destruction of the transgressors is prophetically mentioned, without much information, in Revelation 20:3,7-10. Jesus will cast Satan “into the bottomless pit ... that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled [that is, until they should be expiring, nearing an end]; and after that he must be loosed a little season ... out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.”

Psa. 37:39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.

Psa. 37:40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

Sometimes the saving of the righteous is in death, for when death occurs, pain and suffering cease and the reward is experienced. This is especially true if a Christian has been faithful unto death since 1878.

From now on, the Psalms will become intensely interesting because they reveal certain information that is not available to those who do not study the Old Testament. These Psalms reveal some circumstances that would not otherwise be known.

PSALM 38

Psa. 38:0 A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

Psalm 38 is unique in some ways because of the information it contains regarding David.

Psa. 38:1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

Unquestionably this Psalm refers to David’s own personal experiences, which he likened to certain similes. Some of his experiences were literal, and some were figurative. The sins were literal. David’s slant in speaking to Jehovah was, “Do not punish me in your hot displeasure.” He was not asking to escape any necessary retribution but was saying, “Do not chasten me in your hot displeasure, for the punishment might be beyond my capability to endure.” In other Psalms, David asked for needed correction and chastening, so we know he was not trying to avoid punishment. He did not want God to punish him out of strong emotions.

Psa. 38:2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

God’s arrows stuck in David, and His hand weighed heavily. God’s hand was also heavy on Jesus especially in the Garden of Gethsemane, taking him almost to the breaking point (Matt. 26:37). Jesus’ excruciating agony of spirit produced a crystallization of his character. However, David’s experiences came because of sin, whereas Jesus’ experiences occurred because he was a sin bearer, that is, the bearer of the sins of others.

Comment: Job spoke similarly, saying, “For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit” (Job 6:4).

Reply: Yes, both here and in other Psalms, there are similarities to Job's experiences. Later on, we will do a little philosophizing on the similarities.

Comment: God was angry with David on two occasions: (1) when he numbered the people and (2) when he sinned with Bath-sheba. Psalm 38 does not seem to refer to either of these sins.

Reply: No, because retribution was inflicted in another way in both of those experiences. Retribution was on the nation for one sin and on David personally for the other sin. Of course David was not perfect, but we are not aware of all the nuances of his character. Based on content, we feel this particular Psalm was written late in his life, and to our understanding, it had nothing to do with Saul but pertains to his final days as king.

The Psalms do not appear in the Bible in the order in which they were originally written. We are reading them as compiled by Ezra, who made some additions and changed geographic words to acquaint the Israelites with places in David's time. In other words, if the geographic names used in David's day had not been updated, the people in Ezra's day, approximately a thousand years later, would not have known what David was talking about.

Incidentally, Jewish sages of the past felt that Moses handed down information concerning the first age, the world before the Flood. Of course everything of civilization was wiped out by the Flood except for what Noah personally brought into the Ark for preservation. In time, Shem became the custodian of Noah's paraphernalia, and a long time later Ezra put the books together when they were found in the library of the king of Babylon.

Combining verses 1 and 2, we see that David was continuing to speak along the same vein. "O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath.... For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore." He felt that his experiences were suited to him by Divine Providence for disciplinary and corrective purposes. God's hand was pressing down upon him.

Psa. 38:3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.

"There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger." David's experience was traumatic, spiritually speaking, yet now he was speaking from a literal standpoint. Job, too, spoke both emotionally and literally. David was aware of God's wrath, hot displeasure, and anger.

"Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin." The term "my sin" can be taken two different ways, but we think it refers to his fallen, imperfect condition as a son of Adam, rather than to one particular sinful act. Accordingly, there was no rest in David's bones because of the sin that was in him.

Psa. 38:4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

Psa. 38:5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

We think of David's wounds as literally stinking. In addition, in speaking about his imperfect flesh, he figuratively likened his experiences to wounds that stink.

Psa. 38:6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

Verse 6 certainly sounds like Job.

Psa. 38:7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.

We do not know what the “disease” was—perhaps it was cancer—but some diseases have an odor attached to them. It is interesting that certain breeds of dog can smell cancer in a person long before a doctor can diagnose the disease. A dog may exhibit disquietude and peculiar behavior and even put his nose on the very spot, yet nothing is visible or manifest to the human onlooker. Later the cancer will be detected inside the person.

Psa. 38:8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

Psa. 38:9 Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

Psa. 38:10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

Verses 8-10 describe David’s physical experiences. The statement “As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me” indicates he was going blind. David had ups and downs even in his old age, but in his youth, God gave him such strength that he could pull a lion’s powerful jaws apart with his arms. Now everything was crumbling for David under the pressure and making him feel more humble.

Psa. 38:11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

As we continue to read, David’s experiences sound more and more like those of Job. We see here God’s methodology in the crystallization of the character of His people, which is not always the same with each individual. In late life, many Christians will say that a particular experience has been permitted as retribution because of something they did earlier, whereas the experience may not be that at all but is a testing, the principle being “the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye [really] love [Him] ... with all your heart and with all your soul” in spite of the trials (Deut. 13:3). One of the severest trials to come on one who is close to the Lord is to feel that the experience is for wrongdoing, and David certainly started the Psalm that way, saying the experiences came because of his “foolishness” (verse 5). Instead, we think he was undergoing crystallization of character.

Three of the brothers we have most respected had experiences where they were seemingly forsaken in their last days. They served as elders for 60 years or so and then were voted out. After serving one group for many years, they were not only put out but also were not even called upon to pray. To our observation and reasoning, we felt the brothers were outstanding individuals who were more extraordinary than the rest of the class. We saw this experience as the Lord’s method of crystallizing their characters. Many go through this experience, and others who are faithful end up very joyous. Some who had God’s approval in expounding His Word end their Christian walk with a very sorrowful experience somewhat like Jesus, who hung on a cross.

Not many know about this facet of David’s character and experience, so that is why we say the Psalms reveal him in a way that 1 and 2 Chronicles and 1 and 2 Kings do not. Those books provide the more *public* perspective of David’s experiences, whereas the Psalms reveal his *innermost* feelings as an individual.

When a person gets old, not only is he looked down upon as a secondary person because of his sheer feebleness and gray hair, but the situation is tenfold worse when, as with David, some of the people who most loved and respected him stand afar off because of the outward appearance and odor. That was the experience of David, who was aware of the reaction of others toward him. He probably understood strangers' standing afar off, but the manner in which his "lovers" (wives), kinsmen, and friends stayed at a distance was a hard experience, yet God had said, "I will bless you and your seed forever. You will be honored in the future" (Psa. 89:3,4 paraphrase). On the one hand, David was given wonderful assurance, and on the other hand, he was beseeching God not to destroy him out of "hot displeasure," anger, and a heavy hand. The lesson is manifested in nature with a tree. Not only do sun and rain prosper the growth of a tree, but also wind and storm are necessary to develop the underground root system. The blowing wind exercises the roots like muscles and strengthens them. The swaying of the tree back and forth through life's experiences strengthens the tree with firmness of foundation. To some extent, our Christian experiences are programmed, although each of us has free moral agency.

Q: How old was David at this time?

A: He became king at age 30, reigned for 40 years, and died at age 70.

As we consider all the things that were happening to David, we can certainly empathize with him. We, too, would have questioned our character and done some internal examination. Psalm 38 is most unusual with regard to David's experiences in his old age.

Psa. 38:12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

Verses 12-16 continue in a personal vein, revealing David's close self-examination. God is telling us what David's innermost thoughts were at this particular moment of his declining years.

David knew that some were seeking his life and laying snares for him. They thought he was deaf, but his mind and his hearing were alert. His eyes, strength, arms, and body were all deteriorating, but his hearing was normal, so he knew nasty remarks were being made about him.

Psa. 38:13 But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.

Psa. 38:14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

David pretended to be deaf because the words of others shamed him so deeply. Probably many of us, during our Christian walk, have a few experiences where we overhear disparaging remarks by others about us. The brethren in the next room do not realize that we can hear, for example. Sometimes the remarks come from those we least expect to speak evil about us. Then we have to pretend we did not hear the comments, and we cannot change our relationship outwardly. Here David had one experience upon another along this line. It is likely that some were conniving and plotting as to who would be his successor.

Comment: David's son Adonijah formed a conspiracy, which included Joab, to take over the throne while David was lying there dying (1 Kings 1:5-7). David could not hear all that was going on because he was bedridden. However, Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and others remained loyal to David.

Reply: Yes, David was incapacitated in his latter days, but his mind was active to be able to tell all of these details. He had clarity of mind but not of spirit in this traumatic experience. His words sound more and more like those of Job.

Comment: In saying, “I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs,” David indicated that he heard, but he left the reproving in the Lord’s hands.

Comment: How Christlike David’s attitude was! As king, he had tremendous power and influence, but he sat back quietly and put everything in God’s hands instead of trying to deal with the situation himself.

Q: Based on verses 1-5, did David feel that the speaking and the plotting against him were happening because God was wroth with him? Is that why he did not take action on his own?

A: According to David’s perception, God’s anger may have been a factor because he did confess that he had done some foolish things. However, now he was infirm. Under severe trials, some do question. Jesus himself asked, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He had done nothing wrong, but as part of the ransom sacrifice, he had to take the sinner’s place. David will be one of the earthly princes down here in the Kingdom Age. As a principle of the development of character through experiences and trials, he will be a better “king” in the next age than he was in the Jewish Age.

Psa. 38:15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

In New Testament terminology, we would say the “new creature” part of David was now speaking. Of course the “new creature” applies to the Gospel Age, but a duality of the flesh warring against the spirit occurred even before the Christian Age. The experiences of the Ancient Worthies and those of the Little Flock are very similar but at different levels of qualification because the standard in the Gospel Age is higher. For example, on several occasions, Jesus went a step higher by saying in effect, “The Law said that, but I say this.”

Psa. 38:16 For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.

Even as new creatures, we realize that in our daily conduct, we sometimes say or do something we wish we had not done. We feel the words or action was foolish and done too quickly without giving sufficient forethought. David’s foot slipped occasionally, just as our feet do. “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again” (Prov. 24:16). The flesh is weak, but we hope the spirit will get stronger and stronger until the perfect day comes.

Psa. 38:17 For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me.

“For I am ready to halt.” Feeling he was ready to die, David said in effect, “Thy will be done.” His experiences were severe, but we know what God thought of David in the final analysis, for the “sure mercies of David” were prophesied (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34).

However, we cannot judge where a person will be in the Kingdom by the manner in which he dies. Over the years, when a brother or sister has died, inappropriate sermons have been given that judge the individual according to the degree of anguish at death. The thinking was that one should die with happiness. Thus sometimes brethren wrongly judge an individual by the experiences he is going through, but what is regarded as the Lord’s disapproval may actually be His approval—exactly the opposite. We can exercise some judgment according to deeds and acts that are done, but outward afflictions are another matter entirely.

“My sorrow is continually before me.” Sorrow is essential for repentance. In other words, sensitivity is essential along that line. Psalm 38 is David’s personal confession with little about Jesus being intertwined. We are privileged to have this remarkable insight into David’s character and condition.

With us as Christians, there are surely some things about our innermost thoughts that we would not like to have revealed because the old man assails us. We are thankful that whatever will be revealed in the future of our thoughts in the present life will be done under *divine censorship*. What God allows, so be it. Thank God that we have the new mind and hope in Christ Jesus!

Comment: David was *continually* and *always* sorry for his failings. His love of righteousness is helpful to us individually. What he revealed about secret sin is both helpful and encouraging.

Psa. 38:18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

Verse 18 is similar to verse 17. With the anguish David felt inwardly, he was saying, “I have learned the lesson.” As Jesus said, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). Like Jesus, David manifested complete submission to Divine Providence in spite of what appeared to be happening in the public’s eye.

For many years, we were fearful to lead a study on all of the Psalms because we felt they were so deep. We questioned our own maturity and hesitated to speak on something we did not know. In fact, several times we refused to lead a study of the Psalms in their entirety. Finally we felt that the study might be helpful to others and that we could impart some understanding by the Lord’s grace. The depth of the Psalms is apparent. Instead of just a few Psalms about our Lord’s experience, there are many—perhaps as many as 15—with a tiny bit of information here and a tiny bit there. When people go through the Psalms, they automatically get in a quick reading mode, whereas much study is required.

Psa. 38:19 But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

Verse 19 seems to be the experience of many Christians before their demise.

Comment: We almost get a sense of vultures circling a dying animal.

Reply: That is a good illustration. When I went out in the pasture in my youth to bring the cows back to the barn, I frequently saw vultures. Since the boarding school consisted of nearly 400 acres, a dead animal of some kind was often on the property and just left alone to decay. Only if the odor got unbearable was the animal covered over.

“They that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.” David’s enemies increased when he was at his weakest point. The devil likes to attack when the strength of God’s people is low and they are feeble.

Psa. 38:20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.

Verse 20 is a good testimony because David was evidently trying to practice the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Comment: The scribes and Pharisees hated Jesus because of the good he did.

Reply: They also hated him because he represented the Father. Because of his words and actions, he incurred animosity.

Psa. 38:21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

Psa. 38:22 Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

Comment: These two verses use three Hebrew words for God: *Yahweh*, *Elohim*, and *Adonai*.

Reply: Yes, the use of the three different words brings out God's attributes. The use of *Adonai* for "Lord" in verse 22 shows that in spite of His being the Emperor of the universe and the Creator, having great power and great glory, He is approachable. "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). How astonishing that such a great Entity has an approachable side! We see this same quality in Jesus, who spoke to the woman of Samaria at the well, for example.

Although *Elohim* is the *Mighty One*, He is also *soft-hearted*. Satan completely misunderstood the situation. When God did not do anything to the human race after Adam sinned and violence entered the earth but was patient and silent, it seemed that man had presumed upon the softer side of the Creator. In some respects, God was like a sleeping Giant, for some people who are large in size and stature are very gentle by nature. And so it appeared to Satan and the fallen angels until God finally incarcerated them in *tartaroo* at the time of the Flood, after 1,656 years.

PSALM 39

Psa. 39:0 To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

Jeduthun is mentioned by name in connection with preparation for the Temple. What instrument he played and what his other functions were can be found in 1 Chronicles 16:42; 25:3 and in 2 Chronicles 5:12.

Psalm 39 is so highly respected by some of the Hebrew sages that it is considered as perhaps the most beautiful of all the Psalms. There are those who have this view both from a language standpoint and from the depth of emotion that reveals David's innermost feelings.

Psa. 39:1 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

Here we are again given a personal insight into David, just as we are given a personal insight into Job. Whether at night or during the day, David honestly and openly revealed his most secret innermost thoughts by recording them. He wrote, "I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." Some translations have "muzzle" instead of "bridle," the principle being the same.

Comment: The Apostle James spoke similarly: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

Reply: Of course a man would have to be perfect in order to perfectly bridle his tongue.

We think of a horse with the bar that is put between its teeth and the attachment of the reins. The large animal, a brute beast, can be controlled by the sensitivity of the corners of its mouth. A bull is similarly controlled by putting a ring in its nose. By a twist of the ring, the most powerful bull will obey commands. Accordingly, David purposed to control his tongue while the wicked were before him.

Comment: One lesson is to follow Jesus' example and reason as little as possible with Satan. Jesus quoted several Scriptures and did not parley with the Adversary. We, too, should just use a "thus saith the LORD."

Psa. 39:2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

Comment: When David was ill and lying in bed, he pretended to be deaf as others conspired against him within hearing distance. Sorrow would have flooded David.

Reply: Yes, that is a reasonable conclusion, especially in view of verses 13 and 14 of the previous Psalm. "But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs." Those in David's presence thought he was deaf because he was practically blind.

Psa. 39:3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,

Psa. 39:4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

What a wonderful insight into David as the conspirators were judging matters by looking at his outward man!

Comment: Sometimes when we desperately want to say something but hold our peace, we can feel what is almost like a physical reaction.

David's saying, "I was musing," shows that his mind was very active while he was lying there in bed. And one generally muses more when reclining on a bed. Sometimes the most exalted themes fill our minds at that time.

Then David spoke, "LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." God remarkably answered this prayer, which is recorded in Chronicles. David certainly knew that God loved him and that the kingship would remain forever in his succeeding lineage.

David was apparently thinking of Psalm 90:10, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." We believe that David was 70 years old at the time he wrote this Psalm. He lived slightly longer and then deceased.

Comment: David wanted to know if he would be brought out of this trial and if God had more work for him to do.

Reply: In spite of David's physical condition, God pumped some adrenaline into him, as it were, and strengthened him to accomplish what he desired to do. Then he died and Solomon

reigned.

Comment: We are reminded of the time Wycliffe was on his deathbed, and many friars and monks came and wanted him to recant. After Wycliffe refused, he was strengthened and got better.

Reply: Yes, and as was written of him later, God answered Wycliffe's prayer following his demise. After his body was interred, his enemies exhumed and burned his remains and cast the ashes into the river Avon, whence they went into the sea and spread throughout the world.

In verse 3, David likened his experience to an agricultural phenomenon. When moist alfalfa is stored in the rafters of a barn, there is always the danger of internal combustion. In keeping his mouth shut, the heat of his thoughts built up until it burst into figurative flames. At that point, David "spake" with his tongue. The Apostle James said it was impossible to control the tongue completely, but what David was experiencing was a little different.

Psa. 39:5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

David said that his days were similar to a "handbreadth" and that his age was as "nothing" before God. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." David's words here sound like those of Solomon in Ecclesiastes and also of Job during his extreme trials. No matter how long one lives in the present life, the time is like nothing compared to eternity.

Comment: Jehovah is the only One who exists from everlasting to everlasting. Therefore, for anyone who has a point of time in creation, his life is like a handbreadth in comparison.

Reply: The Apostle Paul reasoned similarly in comparing the shortness of his own life, ministry, and suffering to eternity. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). He also reasoned this way in stating the nearness of the Kingdom. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13:12). To have that perspective 2,000 years ago is startling.

Psa. 39:6 Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

Verse 6 reminds us of a Greek tragedy, in which an actor had two faces, a stern face and a smiling face. Which face was used depended on the changing drama. Life, with its ups and downs, is like an anomaly, a contradiction. The actors thought from the standpoint of natural men, but there was a lot of truth in the Greek tragedy.

A fictional short story illustrates such a contradiction by telling of a husband and wife who loved each other so much that each gave the treasure of the heart to the other. The woman cut her beautiful, long hair and sold it to buy a watch chain for her husband. The husband sold his watch to buy a hair ornament for his wife.

Another example that is similar to a Greek tragedy is the movie "How Green Was My Valley," in which a minister made a vow that he would never marry. Subsequently he met a most beautiful woman who was very noble and loved him, but he never courted her because he did not want to break his vow.

The point is that life is a mixture of joys and sorrows. It is good that children are happy during

their young years and oblivious to much that is happening.

Comment: “He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.” Many work until age 65 or 70, saving their money for those who have not earned it.

Reply: We believe that at this time, David was heaping up gold, silver, brass, iron, etc., for the building of the Temple. The riches were eventually put in good hands and utilized for the intended purpose.

Psa. 39:7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

David continued the thought of the brevity of life and the realization that his days ahead were not too long. There is a lot of contradiction in our thinking and puzzlement at times. At age 70, David knew it was time for him to die, yet he asked, “Lord, what wait I for?” In other words, “Will my days be prolonged or not?” They were prolonged but only long enough for him to get things started for building the Temple. He gave a tremendous amount of instruction and placed individuals for the work, choosing the right people for the job. David exhibited great wisdom in setting up the courses for the Temple (1 Chron. 23:3-6).

Psa. 39:8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

Psa. 39:9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou [God] didst it.” By coupling together verses 8 and 9, we see the reason that David was dumb and did not speak. Divine wisdom dictated that he be quick to hear and slow to speak (James 1:19). In times of emotion and excitement, it is hard to follow such advice. However, David realized that the experience he was undergoing was of an instructive nature from God—that God had permitted it.

Comment: Various proverbs advise a fool not to speak (Prov. 10:8; 13:16; 17:28).

Comment: If God did not deliver David from his transgressions, he would be “the reproach of the foolish,” for everything would be in vain in a sense. Therefore, even though Christians die like men and are regarded as fools for Christ’s sake, if they are faithful, they will eventually be exalted, and their exaltation will be revealed to those who thought they were foolish. In the final analysis, those who did not consecrate their lives to the Lord in the present life will be seen as the foolish ones.

We believe that David wrote this Psalm late in life and that it was not predicated upon his sin with Bath-sheba, for he said, “Deliver me from *all* my transgressions.” As an older man, he was giving a summation of his life.

The sufferings of Job and David are remarkably similar. Many statements in the Book of Job are almost word for word like some of David’s experiences at this time. However, there is one big difference between the two. Job always maintained his integrity before the three false comforters, who were trying to make him confess, but he felt in his heart that he had not transgressed. He had made vows and kept them. Now David was going through similar experiences but was not maintaining his integrity. In fact, he expressed his sorrow; that is, he repented and wanted to get back into close harmony with God. While Job is mentioned as the most outstanding singular personality in his day—like Moses was later, being the meekest man in all the earth—David was a man after God’s own heart. What Jesus said to the woman who washed his feet with her tears and wiped them dry with her hair seems to be a rule; namely, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the

same loveth little” (Luke 7:44-48). Of course Jesus was not speaking of deliberate sin when he said that those who repent with the deepest of sorrow love the most as a result of the miraculous transformation. Perhaps 99 percent of those who sin do not repent. Consider Judas, who committed suicide after his sin of betrayal instead of running to the Cross and begging for Jesus’ mercy. True repentance sears into the memory a dependence upon God and His will henceforth and thus results in a wonderful transformation. We believe David was remarkable in that almost everyone else who commits some of the same sins succumbs to them and continues to follow that path instead of repenting.

Incidentally, by washing Jesus’ feet with her tears, the woman showed the depth of her grief for the sins she had committed. And then she dried his feet with her hair, which is the glory of a woman. Her sobbing and her actions spoke volumes—they were better than words. No doubt she was a changed woman. We are inclined to think she was Mary Magdalene, although there is no direct tie-in.

In summary, there were similarities between Job and David, yet there were differences. Both were outstanding individuals whose names are highly honored in the Bible.

Psa. 39:10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

David asked to have Jehovah’s “stroke” removed from him, for he felt he was being consumed by the blow of God’s hand. What is the analogy here? Some have felt the comparison is to a gladiatorial contest with two highly skilled opponents. Finally the one who is thrust through with a sword knows his end is near. No longer can he realistically continue the combat, and it is just a matter of time until the victor finishes him off with decapitation or whatever. However, we believe the thought is otherwise, one reason being that, as far as we know, gladiatorial contests were not held in David’s day. The contest between David and Goliath was the closest situation.

Comment: The word-for-word Hebrew reads, “Remove your plague from me: I am consumed by the blow of your hand.”

Reply: In Psalm 38, which is related to Psalm 39, a “loathsome disease,” a strange sickness, is mentioned as coming over David that, to all appearances, was terminal. He realized his condition, but his prayer was answered with the prolonging of his life for a few months.

Q: The King James uses the word “stroke.” A physical stroke can leave one bedridden and even deaf and dumb. Could David have had a stroke that the Lord allowed him to recover from for a few months?

A: We believe the “stroke” had to do with the providence under which he was now laboring in prayer and in deep penitence, trying to get reassurance from God. David wanted the assurance that he still had the love and favor of God. Although people do get mortally wounded in warfare, we feel that the “wound” was what David was experiencing at the moment.

“I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.” The mood of Psalm 39 is that God’s hand was very heavy on David at this time—almost to the breaking point—as it was on Jesus and on many of the faithful of the past. David wanted this experience to be removed from him because he saw that it would eventuate in his extinction. He was praying for some relief so that he could more properly and effectively express remorse for any misdeeds of the past.

Psa. 39:11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.

David said that with the rebukes divinely mandated to correct evildoers and men for their iniquities, God makes the beauty of manhood “to consume away like a moth.” David was speaking of retribution, which brings either a mending of one’s ways with penitence or a consuming away without remorse. In the latter case, the person does not see his responsibility in the sin because his conscience has been seared like leather.

How is a moth consumed? If, for instance, a moth is stamped against a wall, it leaves a mark, a dark smudge, whereas other insects, because of the hardness of their frame, do not leave that type of residue behind. The comparison is that when the very wicked die, people see no memorable or favorable results of their life. Thus their beauty consumes away like a moth. It is sometimes difficult to catch a moth to destroy it because of the softness and the lightness of the wings, which create a draft.

Even with regard to good people who die, time erases the memory. One may think of a loved one for years, but as each year goes by, the thoughts become a little fewer until finally, in many cases, the memory is almost removed. Of course Jesus’ death is the exception, for the beneficial effects of his experiences and sufferings are scarred into our memory forever.

Psa. 39:12 **Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.**

David continued the prayer that he had started in verse 9: “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.” He associated his experiences with some form of either retribution or instruction of Divine Providence, which he wanted to understand so that he could react in harmony with God’s will for him under that situation. The same is true with us when calamity enters our life. We try to analyze the situation right away to see if we are suffering for righteousness’ sake or for foolishness’ sake.

“Hold not thy peace at my tears.” Tears normally command God’s attention, although there are two cases in Scripture where tears in themselves did not bring the solace looked for, namely, with Judas and with Esau concerning the birthright. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, “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). Those who desire solace and relief can go to God or to Jesus, for that is the real meaning of the title “Savior.” Sins are forgiven following repentance. In fact, repentance is almost mandatory for forgiveness.

“Hear my prayer, O LORD, ... hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” From what perspective was David a “stranger” with God? God had been pleading with the nation of Israel, using prophets to warn the people what their course would lead to and saying He would forgive them if they would hearken to His instruction, but the nation did not listen and believe. Therefore, David reasoned in his prayer that just as God’s subjects, the nation of Israel, did not heed Him, so he also felt like a stranger but wanted to be brought back into harmony with God. David was a “sojourner” as all of his “fathers” had been—the preceding prophets as well as the true patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). Likening himself to a sojourner indicated that David believed in the promises of a resurrection and a new life beyond the grave. He subjugated all the affairs of the present life, keeping them low-key, and centered his desire on the future life.

When David held his mouth as a bridle and his tongue from speaking, he found he had to speak anyway. The words came forth like a fire from within his heart, but he did not reveal them to the wicked. When he spoke with his tongue, he said, “LORD, make me to know mine

end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am” (verses 3 and 4). To speak to God was the best thing David could have done. He successfully refrained from speaking when he was hearing the “conspiracy” conversation, feeling that to speak at that time would do more harm than good. But he could not hold back indefinitely, so his words came out in tears as he went to his Maker, to his Confidant, to the Creator Himself, for solace and relief. In other words, the silence was broken with his prayer to God.

Psa. 39:13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

David realized that he was dying and that his days were numbered, but he wanted a little period of recovery first. On their deathbed, many people feel they have lived a wasteful life and wish they had another opportunity. With some, the agonizing is excruciating because of the doubt that exists in their minds. Thus David’s desire for a recovery was normal. He knew he had to die but wanted to mend his ways first and do certain things in regard to the Temple. We believe this prayer was answered in the affirmative but in a different way than he had hoped. David knew he would soon die, but with all his labor in heaping up riches for the future Temple, he wanted some assurance that a benefaction would result therefrom (verse 6). God answered that prayer, giving assurance in two wonderful ways. (1) His son Solomon would accomplish the building of the Temple. (2) Because of David’s faithfulness, God would keep his seed forever. Not only would his lineage not be expunged, but the Savior, the antitypical David, would come from his seed.

Comment: In his current condition, David was concerned that the human vultures who were around him, just waiting for him to die, would take his riches for personal use.

Reply: Yes, this is a very somber Psalm. David was concerned about all of his transgressions and also about all of the good things on his heart and his desire to honor God, for he felt that God should dwell in the most magnificent house ever built instead of in a tent (the Tabernacle). God answered David’s prayer, showing that He pities those who come to Him with real remorse, sorrow, and repentance, begging Him for forgiveness and relying on His goodness and mercy to hearken to their prayers. David received a wonderful response and assurance before his demise. Incidentally, when built, Solomon’s Temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Comment: In Psalm 41:4,5, David wrote, “LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee. Mine enemies speak evil of me [saying], When shall he die, and his name perish?”

Reply: Psalm 40 is also very interesting.

PSALM 40

Psa. 40:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 40:1 I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

Comment: A Hebrew translation reads, “I waited on Jehovah, and he bent down to me and heard my cry.” The analogy is like a father bending down to listen to a little child.

Comment: A Scofield footnote indicates that Psalm 40 speaks of Messiah—that it begins with the joy of Christ in resurrection following his being in the horrible pit of the grave.

Reply: Verse 1 does not apply to Jesus on the Cross, for in the great pain of that circumstance,

his prayer was more one of desperation. Also, notice verse 12, “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” This verse shows that we cannot assign Psalm 40 to Jesus *carte blanche*, for certainly his iniquities were not more than the hairs of his head. To some extent, then, verse 12 puts a brake on the thought of some that this is a Messianic Psalm. However, verses 6-8 do apply to Jesus, for they are quoted in the New Testament as his sentiments (Heb. 10:7-9). Jesus said that the prophets and the Psalms spoke of him (Luke 24:44). Therefore, as we study this Fortieth Psalm, we must proceed a little carefully and not give a blanket statement that it is a Messianic Psalm. Some verses apply to David and others to Jesus.

We believe that seven verses, including verses 1-5, apply to David personally, being a tie-in with the end of Psalm 39, where he was in a down period and begging for God to hearken to his prayer. In verse 1, he said that he had “waited patiently” for relief in harmony with his prayer in the previous Psalm. Now he had gotten the sensation of forgiveness, and God’s hearkening brought joy to his soul. Jehovah “inclined unto me, and heard my cry.”

Psa. 40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

The comparison is between (1) a horrible pit and miry clay and (2) a rock, which is substantial. David was brought up from a deep depression. Pretending to be deaf, he had heard the words of those who were conspiring against him. The Temple was on his heart, and for that reason, he was praying for a little revival of strength. During his 40-year reign, he had stored up great riches to build God a house. Although the actual building was reserved for Solomon, God gave David the privilege of composing many of the songs that will be sung in the Third Temple in the next age. In addition, David made musical instruments for the accompaniment of the Psalms, and he set up courses for the priests and the Levites based on the lunar year. He was a genius, and so was Solomon, his son. However, Solomon accumulated knowledge along natural lines, whereas David was interested in spiritual knowledge.

Comment: The body members also have the experience described in verses 1-5.

Reply: Yes. David’s experience is also our experience as Christians. We have many iniquities and have been called out of the pit. Our feet have been set upon the Rock, Jesus Christ. God brought the truth to light through the ministry of Jesus. Those who are under the tutelage of the Father during the Gospel Age are on a different plane than His servants prior to Christ.

Psa. 40:3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

In the Kingdom, “many” will see David with a “new song” of praise to God in his mouth. In the present age, evil predominates and the righteous are in the minority. In the Kingdom Age, righteousness will predominate, and those who do wrong not only will be in the minority but also will be cut off if they do not change.

Q: Is the “new song” the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:3)?

A: Yes. The song applies to David in the type and to the body members in the antitype. Jesus had that joy during his earthly ministry, when he was in close communication with his Father. The Father always heard him because of his perfect obedience (John 8:29; 11:42).

Psa. 40:4 Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud,

nor such as turn aside to lies.

“Blessed is that man that ... respecteth not ... such as turn aside to lies.” This statement suggests that those who have the spirit of God’s Word can identify, to some extent, the class who turn aside to lies. For their own welfare, they can discern between that which is right and that which is wrong.

Q: Would the “lies” also be false doctrine?

A: Yes. Those who promote false doctrine are trying to prove a lie to be the truth.

“Blessed is that man that maketh the *LORD* his trust” and not another human being. Even though we should respect good teachers, we should always have a reserve, for there is the possibility that a brother can go astray. The Pastor was the wise and faithful servant, and God knew that he would be faithful (Matt. 24:45-47). The next four verses speak of an evil servant who would delay the Lord’s coming, and likewise, God knew he would be unfaithful (Matt. 24:48-51). All seven messengers to the Church were faithful because they were in the right hand of Jesus as seven stars (Rev. 1:16,20). Jesus said that no one can pluck the faithful out of God’s hand (John 10:29).

Comment: A test today is not to believe lies and distortions about brethren who are faithful to the truth. We have a responsibility to judge matters for ourselves and not to just go along with the reports of others.

Psa. 40:5 Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

David was prone to think about the goodness of God. In becoming increasingly familiar with his Psalms, we can see the abundance of wonderful thoughts that he expressed, many of which were his personally, let alone those that have a prophetic or dual application.

Comment: Job said of God, “Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number” (Job 9:10).

Reply: David quite frequently quoted short comments from Job.

Psa. 40:6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

Psa. 40:7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

Psa. 40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Verses 6-8 apply primarily to Jesus, but how would we explain David’s statement in verse 6? “Sacrifice and offering thou [God] didst not desire; ... burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.” Since God instituted the sacrifices and offerings under the Mosaic Law, there was great danger for male Jews who ignored the commandments, for instance, to attend the three major feasts in Jerusalem (Pentecost, Passover, and Tabernacles), and offerings were required when people became aware of their sin. Therefore, common sense should tell us right away that verse 6 is only the minor part of a deeper truth; namely, the sacrifices themselves did not atone for sin but, rather, *typified* atonement for sin. For obedience in the performance of the sacrifices and offerings, one got some compensation, but the real intent was that they pictured

something greater. God was teaching the Israelites as we would teach an infant. We would not expect an infant to play with rattles and suck on nipples all his life, but they are used as an exercise until the young one gets a little older. Baby talk disappears as the child ages and develops. In a similar sense, the sacrifices and offerings were typical lessons to be respected, but the real intent was to look for the fulfillment of what they pictured. Jesus was awakened to the realization that the sacrifices of the Old Testament had a deeper meaning—that there had to be a human offset for Adam’s sin. Jesus came to be that ransom, a perfect life for a perfect life. Seeing what the type indicated, he came to fulfill what the Law was teaching and, accordingly, gave his life as a corresponding price. “Lo, I come ... to do thy will, O my God.” He saw that the sacrifices were teaching God’s will.

Comment: From one standpoint, it was not God’s desire to have any sacrifices, for He desired perfect obedience. The sacrifices and offerings were a stopgap measure or expediency to provide a relationship and communication on a typical level.

Reply: Verse 6 is not contradictory when we see the real intent of the typical sacrifices, the fulfillment, and the higher lesson that was being taught.

“Mine ears hast thou opened.” In the type, the piercing of the earlobe with an awl pictured consecration (Exod. 21:5,6; Deut. 15:16,17). That act was like making a vow of consecration. Spiritually speaking, the Christian at consecration has his ear pierced to the lintel of the door upon which Jesus’ blood has been splattered. Another aspect of the ear is hearkening. Ultimately all will hear the voice of the Son of man and come forth, and those who hearken will get life predicated upon continued obedience. Thus “hearkening” indicates further progress, which involves a period of time, whereas the piercing of the ear represents the initial experience of making a full consecration. A person first makes a vow to try to be as faithful as possible and commits his life to follow in Jesus’ footsteps for the remainder of his days in the flesh. That initial start has to continue and become a daily following of the Lord unto death.

Verse 7 applies in a particular sense to Jesus: “Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me.” He began to see that this verse was talking about him—that he was the antitypical bullock and the prophet like unto Moses whom God would raise up unto Israel and the world of mankind. Jesus grew “in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). A perfect man with a perfect body, he had perfect retention and recall of everything he read and thus could overwhelm others with his knowledge. By extension, all people who get life here on earth in the future will have perfect minds and bodies and thus will have perfect retention and recall of knowledge. However, there will be different degrees of understanding based on the hunger and thirst of each individual throughout eternity. Each person will be able to retain what he puts his mind and heart to do. People will come forth from the tomb with a degree of betterment, but each step of obedience will give health and be a step toward perfection. Those who are obedient under perfect tutorship for 100 years, for example, will all be prodigies, but what they do with that progress is another matter, for a very severe test will come in the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom.

“I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” Jesus’ retention of the entire Old Testament was in his heart.

Comment: At age 12, Jesus said to his parents, “How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49).

Reply: He was not aware of his preexistence at that time, but he could see from the unusual circumstances of his birth that he was the promised Messiah.

Comment: Jesus also said, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34).

Reply: Yes, he made that statement at the beginning of his earthly ministry.

Psa. 40:9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

Psa. 40:10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

Psa. 40:11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

Psa. 40:12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

Verses 9 and 10 apply prophetically to Jesus. He was saying that he faithfully performed the task Jehovah had asked him to do. In trying to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he preached throughout all the land. When, near the time of his decease, certain Greeks said they would like to have an interview, Jesus took their request as an evidence that he had fulfilled his mission to Israel, and now the news was beginning to burgeon outside the homeland to Gentiles (John 12:20-23).

Verse 12 applies to David, for it begins, “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me.” Certainly the verse does not apply to Jesus, for the Hebrew word translated “iniquities” means “evils” and cannot be changed. The dilemma is where to make the cutoff between what applies to Jesus and what applies to David. Although verses 9 and 10 apply to Jesus, they could apply to David as well, for he did nothing but praise the Lord with his Psalms. He continually praised God for His innumerable works.

Even as king, David was not quiet in the congregation. Some are having problems with President Bush, for they feel a religious man should not be in that office. When David was the king of Israel, he was praising God all the time. Not only did the office not silence him, but he confessed his sins. David was very unusual in his declaration or witnessing.

Perhaps, then, verses 9 and 10 apply to both Jesus and David. We would like to apply them to Jesus because he was specifically given a commission to try to save the lost sheep of Israel. In order to fulfill that commission, he had to witness to the whole nation. News of this man, who claimed to be the Messiah, and his ministry had to be well known among the populace.

Having given this introduction to verses 9-12, we will now examine each verse separately, as follows.

“I [Jesus] have preached righteousness in the great congregation [that is, to public Jewry].” Back in the Tabernacle arrangement, the holy nation of Israel, a covenanted people, were shown in the Court. Jesus continued, “Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD [Jehovah], thou knowest.”

“I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation.” Certainly Jesus was always praising his Father. He said to the Jews, “Whatever I am

telling you did not originate with me. As my Father taught me, so I speak” (John 8:28 paraphrase). We are particularly thankful for the Gospel of John, which gives us an insight into that aspect of Jesus. Like Jesus, David did not hide his witnessing within his heart. Thus there can be a dual application here.

“I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.” Without question, verse 10 applies to Jesus—and possibly to David as well. Jesus did not conceal God’s truth but said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). When Jesus came as Messiah, he brought this truth to light. While others of the past praised God, they did not have the abundance of information that Jesus had in bringing life and immortality to light through his ministry (2 Tim. 1:10). Prior to Jesus’ earthly ministry, others used hidden language, for the Holy Spirit of God was talking rather than the individuals themselves (2 Pet. 1:21).

Now a problem comes up. Verse 11 begins, “Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD.” These words seem to almost musically continue on from verse 10, but verse 11 is tied in more with verse 12. In other words, verses 11 and 12 are naturally coupled together. The problem with coupling verses 10 and 11 is that verse 12, which mentions “evils” and “iniquities,” starts with the word “For,” which ties it in inseparably with verse 11. Therefore, we are inclined to feel the separation occurs between verse 10 and verse 11.

In summary, verses 6-10 apply to Jesus, verses 11-13 apply to David, and verses 14-16 again apply to Jesus, as will be seen. Now, keeping the separation between verses 10 and 11 in mind, we will read verses 11 and 12 together and consider them to be David’s thoughts: “Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. *For* innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” In verse 11, David asked to be preserved and protected from the innumerable evils and iniquities that had taken hold of him, as stated in verse 12.

Psalm 40 is peculiar in the sense that we have to go over and over the verses in order to understand the connotation and to make the proper needful separation for a change in application. We know that the next Psalm contains references to Jesus because of certain statements made by the Apostle Paul. The same is true of verses 6-8, for Hebrews 10:5-9 zeros in on those three verses. “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. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.”

As expressed in verse 12, David felt surrounded by the innumerable evils and iniquities that had taken hold upon him—so much so that he could not look up because of the shame and sorrow of being an imperfect person. Similarly, we confess to the Lord in prayer that we are sorry for our sins and would like to do better, but we have “this treasure,” the new mind, in an earthen vessel (2 Cor. 4:7). In contrast, Christ had his treasure in a perfect vessel.

Psa. 40:13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

When David was sick and dying, his enemies tried to break his willpower. Jesus’ enemies tried, to no avail, to break his willpower when he was on the Cross and was thus at his weakest point. Satan looks for the weakest moment to attack the Christian.

Comment: Verses 13-16 are more or less repeated in Psalm 70:1-4.

Psa. 40:14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

Psa. 40:15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

What helps to show that verse 14 probably refers back to Jesus' experience on the Cross are the words "Aha, aha" in verse 15. While those exact words are not in the New Testament, the different translations reveal that the religious leaders gloated over their success in getting Jesus nailed to the Cross. In addition, they gloated because of his nakedness. The Old Testament Hebrew tries to soften the thought because of the embarrassment, but verse 14 shows that Jesus knew he would be crucified. No other being (except God) was like him. He was a hero for coming to earth and doing what God wanted. We believe that the opportunity to come down here and be the ransom price for Adam was hinted at to the other angels, but none of them dared to volunteer because they knew what crucifixion entailed. A strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" (Rev. 5:2). No one was found worthy until a freshly slain Lamb approached the throne. When Jesus ascended up on high, the cry went forth, "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). Jesus' death had more meaning than just pain and the cessation of life. The accolade pertains to *everything* he had to go through—the depths of despondency, the jeering, the tempting, etc. When all of his sufferings were lumped together in a package, they were overwhelming. No one but Jesus could have faithfully endured all of the experiences. The Father knew that Jesus was head and shoulders above every other sentient being in His universe, but lest others think favoritism was being shown because Jesus was His darling, the *greatness* of His Son had to be manifested. What a hero Jesus was! What a Savior! Others had to see that he was unique—that without question he was above everyone else! Jesus was "the bright and morning star" in reality (Rev. 22:16).

Originally, there were two morning stars: the Logos and Lucifer (Job 38:7). However, Lucifer gloried in his own brilliance and beauty and was self-centered, whereas the Logos loved the Father supremely, rejoicing in whatever the Father did. The Logos was willing to be just the spokesperson without adding his own vocabulary. Whatever Jehovah told him to do as the Logos, he obeyed perfectly. That submission helped to prepare his character structure with a firmness that enabled him to withstand all of his subsequent sufferings and persecutions. When Jesus' earthly ministry up to and including his crucifixion is really seen in the future, all who are in the right heart condition will be ashamed. When they look to Jesus and think of self, the contrast will be unbelievable, going from brilliance to darkness.

When we go back to Psalm 35:21, we see that "Aha, aha" applies to Jesus. That expression indicates a terrible leering. Instead of using this terminology, Psalm 22:12,13 prophesied of this same experience of Jesus as follows: "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion." Jesus had to go through the ordeal because Adam felt his nakedness when he sinned. To be the corresponding price, Jesus had to be naked and feel that sensation. As part of the ransom price, he had to be a curse. The inherent life rights he had through perfect obedience are what gives life to the world, but in order to qualify, he had to take upon himself the shame of Adam and the same experiences—the thorns, the sweat, the betrayal kiss, etc.

We will read verses 14 and 15 again: "Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha." "Aha, aha" was

like a perverted Satanic shout of glee. The Pastor mentioned in one *Reprint* article that he felt some of the scribes and Pharisees would be rewarded with Second Death and thus have no awakening from the tomb because the nature of their guilt was similar to that of Judas.

We do not normally like to dwell on this type of theme, but it is necessary when we are going verse by verse. Wherever Jesus was taken in connection with his crucifixion, Caiaphas and Annas, the leaders of the conspiracy, were there like hounds. When he was taken to Pilate very early in the morning, they were there. When he was subsequently taken to King Herod for trial, they were there. When he was returned to Pilate, again they were there. Pilate was willing to let Jesus go, but the chief priests and the Pharisees led the chorus, “Crucify him, crucify him” (Luke 23:21). Ironically, the name Barabbas means “son of the father,” and the real “Barabbas” is Satan, for at one time, he was a son of the Father in a special sense. We see the difference between the true Son (Jesus) and the false son (Satan).

Comment: Both Barabbas and Satan were murderers, insurrectionists, and robbers, as it were (Mark 15:7; Luke 23:18,19; John 18:40).

Up until now, we have always wanted to delay leading a study on the Psalms because we felt that the study was too deep and that it was very little explored by all Bible scholars. However, once the Christian gets insight and a little background, the information about Jesus is so abundant in the Psalms that it is overwhelming. Because the Psalms show his true character, they are worthy of the deepest consideration. What a stalwart soldier he was! Not only was he firm for righteousness, but he hated iniquity. He *hated* the scribes and Pharisees, saying unto them, “Ye hypocrites! Ye vipers! Ye snakes! Ye serpents! Ye whited sepulchers!” (Matt. 23:27,33 paraphrase). We believe he spoke these words with a little oomph, that is, not casually. To try to make friends of and convert manifestly willful, incorrigible characters would be an impossible mission and thus a waste of consecrated time.

Comment: For the second half of verse 14, which reads, “Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil,” the Hebrew translation has, “Let those *delighting in my evil* be driven back in disgrace.” That translation supports the thought that the religious leaders were saying, “Aha, aha,” and deriving immense enjoyment from Jesus’ sufferings.

Psa. 40:16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

En route to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for his disciples and all who would believe on him down through the Gospel Age. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:9,20,21). However, verse 16 is more inclusive, for it pertains to Jesus’ wish that *all believers* subsequent to the First Advent would receive a blessing. In other words, he included believers in the Kingdom Age in his sentiment—he was speaking of both the gospel Church and the salvation of the world.

Psa. 40:17 But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

We can neither prove nor disprove that verse 17 represents Jesus. By reading the various Gospel accounts, we know that he went through three hours of agony on the Cross. Near the end, he wanted “no tarrying,” but he did want some time earlier to provide help for his mother. Under his excruciating trial, he had the presence of mind to think of her future, for she would be left behind without her Son. Thus he was prepared to proffer wholesome advice and

to instruct the Apostle John to take custody of her for the remainder of her days. This arrangement meant she would have to leave home and accompany John. Quite possibly Mary ended up in Turkey. She had married at an early age, so she was still a young woman, relatively speaking, even though Jesus was 33 years old.

Comment: The statement “I am poor and needy” sounds like “I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29).

Comment: Jesus came from a fairly large family.

Reply: Yes, we do not know much about his sisters, but they probably outnumbered the four brothers—James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matt. 13:55,56).

Comment: Jesus committed the care of Mary to John to be sure she would get more and more spiritual comfort as she aged. No doubt this arrangement was providential.

Reply: It is extraordinary that while Jesus was on the Cross, he was thinking of his mother and making provisions for her care. The Father, who could read Jesus’ heart, may have given some kind of providential hint in this direction. Jesus, “the chiefest among ten thousand,” was far above the Apostle Paul, who was far above the other apostles (Song 5:10).

Also, Job was a type of Jesus. In spite of all that Job went through, his attitude, like that of Jesus, showed real faith: “Though he [God] slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

The word “Lord” in verse 17 is *Adonai*. While the expression *Adonai* has a peculiar application to Jesus in Christian thinking, it sometimes, as here, applies to Jehovah.

PSALM 41

Psa. 41:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Psa. 41:1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor.” What is the thought of “the poor”? The term comes from the Hebrew word *dal*, which is translated various ways.

Comment: For “the poor,” the King James margin has “the weak or sick.”

Reply: We can ascertain that verse 1 refers to David from the clue that is given in the last word of verse 3—“sickness.” Of course there are all kinds of sickness, such as pain resulting from an accident, weakness, fainting, discouragement, and “languishing.”

In the “time of trouble,” Jehovah will deliver those who have considered the poor. Right away the scenario changes from those who are the victims of disease, accident, weakness, or whatever the term “the poor” signifies, to those who visit and comfort them in some manner. Therefore, verse 1 is saying that those who do the comforting—the *comforters* rather than the ones who are comforted—will be blessed. God will reward them for their time and effort.

Several illustrations of where the benefactor receives benefaction are as follows:

1. “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matt. 10:42). The

principle is that giving a cup of cold water will bring a reward of some kind in either the present or the future life. This principle can apply to the unconsecrated who give assistance out of empathy for a saint who is sick, being persecuted, or in some kind of need.

2. A Kingdom promise in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats is, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

3. Onesiphorus risked his life to visit the Apostle Paul, who was in an inner prison. Paul wrote, “Onesiphorus ... oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, *he sought me out very diligently, and found me*” (2 Tim. 1:16,17). At the time of the French Revolution, people (even family members) were afraid to go into the dungeon to visit someone because identity with a prisoner would likely result in the visitor’s imprisonment as well. As a reward, Onesiphorus, a slave, was released by Philemon, his master, after Paul wrote a letter of commendation.

4. A number of years ago, a brother who loved the truth and served by visiting the sick who were isolated got sick himself and was paralyzed for at least ten years. As a reward, he was taken in and nursed for the rest of his life by one of those he had helped. Thus, when he was in the same need, he providentially received the same comfort himself. The sister even married him. The promise is that the Lord will reward such individuals in one way or another. In fact, even if an individual eventually goes into Second Death, he will be rewarded before that happens.

The margin of some King James Bibles has “in the day of evil” instead of “in time of trouble.” The original Hebrew does not specifically have the article “the.” However, in both the Hebrew and the Greek, there are occasions where, based upon the grammatical structure of the context in which the expression appears, the definite article is understood. In some cases, the context pertains to God, and those who know the Hebrew language contend that the definite article should be understood: “Blessed is he who considers the poor [those who are sick, spiritually or physically]: the LORD will deliver him in *the* day of trouble.” If the margin has the proper thought, verse 1 would be very consoling to some who have *persistently and consistently* visited the isolated, sick, and infirm as a *method* of service to the Lord. Of course from the prophetic standpoint, we think the day of trouble or evil will take place at the end of the Gospel Age.

To a limited extent, the premise of verse 1 seems to be true, for visiting the isolated and the sick eats into our own time and occurs on inordinate occasions. Even under conditions of duress, some pursue that type of service as almost like a vow. The Lord will reward such individuals in a special sense with a greater measure of commensurate help in their own experience and time of trouble.

Psa. 41:2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

One way the benefactor will be delivered is that God will “preserve him, and keep him alive.”

Q: Does the wording “and he shall be blessed upon the *earth*” indicate that the benefactor does not have to be consecrated in order to receive a benefaction?

A: Yes.

“Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.” As an example mentioned earlier, Onesiphorus, the runaway slave, was kept alive and did not receive the death sentence.

Psa. 41:3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

Verse 3 discusses one who is “upon the bed of languishing” and thus is in need of comfort, whereas verses 1 and 2 give the perspective of the one who does the comforting. Such a ministry is helpful and beneficial to the one who needs comfort, but how is that comfort given? Consider, for instance, someone who is in bed with a sickness. When some people go to visit the sick, their intention is beautiful and wholesome, but they do not know what to do to help. In their dilemma, perhaps they try to straighten the blanket on the bed or pour a glass of water. However, despite a feeling of not being able to help, a sense of camaraderie in such a visitation helps the one who needs comfort. The person who is lying on the bed in a state of weakness is touched by seeing the visitor trying to be of benefit. The effort is described as, “Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.”

The Pastor talked on this subject, giving the illustration of a dove. If kept in the room with the patient, a dove has such empathy that it sometimes dies when the patient deceases. The dove actually mourns, and that mourning sound is a form of empathy.

Psa. 41:4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

Psa. 41:5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?

Psa. 41:6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.

Psa. 41:7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.

Psa. 41:8 An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.

Verses 4-8 certainly pertain to David, who penned the Psalm. As has been stated, the Psalms were purposely grouped together but not necessarily in chronological or sequential order. The context of Psalm 41 seems to indicate that David wrote it in his old age, and verse 9 leads up to the end of Jesus’ life, just before he died.

David was telling the reason for his sickness. He had sinned against Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bath-sheba. There is no question that David was very grieved with regard to what he had done in the earlier part of his ministry as king, which was before he reached middle age if we understand the matter correctly. With the use of whole numbers, he was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned for 40 years, dying at age 70.

“I [David] said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.” A person who is on his deathbed in later life usually does a lot of thinking, taking inventory of his whole life. That is what David was doing now as he returned to that old transgression, which was personal and obviously wrong. When Nathan the prophet had pointed out the sin, David was sorry and confessed and did what he could after the fact, and God forgave him.

Generally speaking, in observing the lives of individuals, we can see that sometimes the death of a consecrated individual has something to do with his past. Although we cannot determine the matter with clarity, there seems to be some reason in the methodology of that person’s death, whatever it is. Here David was reviewing his life and wondering about his past.

In addition, other things came up while David was in this condition of sickness. People were

coming to visit him, and for that reason, he wrote Psalm 41. “Blessed is he [who is merciful] that considereth the poor” was his sentiment. David could discern when one who came to comfort him was a hypocrite and hence his enemy. He told Solomon to take care of certain individuals after his death, so he knew who his enemies were. Through expediency, they offered feigned love and comfort, yet they could not contain themselves and spoke uncomplimentary words in his presence, supposing he could not hear.

David was asking God for some reassurance that the sin with Bath-sheba would not cut him off from all life. We believe the Lord graciously answered that prayer and gave David a little period of recovery because subsequently he was able to take care of matters with Solomon in regard to the Temple. That son was in escrow, as it were, until Nathan and Bath-sheba intervened and reminded David of the promise that Solomon would sit on the throne. Hidden in the Psalms are numerous insights into David’s thinking and character. Like Job, he closely searched his heart.

“Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?” David’s enemies wanted him to die. Generally speaking, time heals some of the most grievous wounds.

Comment: Verses 5-8 are good in the Revised Standard: “My enemies say of me in malice: ‘When will he die, and his name perish?’ And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers mischief; when he goes out, he tells it abroad. All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me. They say, ‘A deadly thing has fastened upon him; he will not rise again from where he lies.’”

“And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity.” In some cases, David’s enemies actually came to visit him while he was sick. “His [the enemy’s] heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.” Ostensibly, David’s enemies came to see him as comforters, but upon leaving, they gleefully told another enemy that the sickness looked fatal (verse 8).

“All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.” How hypocritical to devise the hurt of someone who is lying on a bed of sickness! David’s enemies wanted to destroy not only him but also his influence in the nation.

Comment: From a natural perspective, if a consecrated individual has suffered an illness like a stroke and appears unresponsive, all he can do is to speak to the Lord in prayer.

Reply: Yes, that would be his only outlet, hope, and prayer. Incidentally, when visiting someone in the hospital who appears to be asleep or in a coma, we should be careful of our words, for he may be able to hear. Also, sometimes a person who has lost his sense of reasoning and is confused can speak clearly and soberly in his dying moments. Such cognition is the answer to prayer.

Comment: If God had not granted David a short period of recovery to give instructions to Solomon about the Temple, his death would have thrown the nation into disarray with a jockeying for power. His enemies hoped he would die in that condition so that they could gain more for themselves.

The sentiment of David’s enemies was, “An evil disease ... cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.” To the onlooker, it appeared that David was dying.

Comment: The term “evil disease” indicates that David’s enemies were trying to ascribe some type of divine retribution against him.

Reply: David received retribution for his sins as he went along. For example, the child born of his sin with Bath-sheba died.

Psa. 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Of course verse 9 is quoted in the New Testament as applying to Judas in the prophetic sense (John 13:18). Jesus' "own familiar friend [Judas]," in whom he trusted and who ate of his bread, lifted up the heel against him in betrayal. That is the primary fulfillment, if not the only one.

With regard to the term "mine own familiar friend," Judas, the bosom companion of Jesus, who was the most famous personage to ever live on this planet, turned out to be a traitor. Whatever his motives, and regardless of the fact that Judas did not think Jesus would be put to death, he was fully responsible.

How did Judas lift up "his heel" against Jesus? An hour-long talk could easily be given on this subject. The heel is considered a vulnerable spot. Another perspective that is quite different pertains to the promise to the Church and the promise to Jesus regarding Satan. We feel that Judas was all right in the beginning and that he had the potential of Paul. Judas was no ordinary person, so when his deflection resulted in a vacancy among the jewels on the high priest's breastplate, Paul of the natural tribe of Benjamin was the replacement. The fact that as treasurer, Judas had the money in the first place is significant. Judas held an important and responsible position in knowing how to dispense the money and to buy provisions on behalf of the brotherhood during Jesus' earthly ministry. Thus he took care of all business matters, whereas the other apostles were more in a receiving and listening capacity. We are reminded of the saying that money is the root of much evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Much of the evil in the world is related to gain, monetary or otherwise. Gain along various lines is a chief enemy of the flesh.

Comment: In a discourse, an elder stated that Jesus knew Judas was the betrayer at the time of his selection as one of the Twelve. We found that thought troubling. Verse 9 is a convincing Scripture that Jesus did not know until later on: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I [had] trusted [at one time] ... hath lifted up his heel against me." If Jesus had known from the outset that Judas was the betrayer, he would not have regarded him as a "familiar friend."

Reply: Yes, that is sound reasoning. In addition, Jesus is not God, who can read the heart. While Jesus knew the intent of the scribes and Pharisees when they were trying to trick him with questions, we should not forget that the Holy Spirit was always with him, just as it was with the prophets of old when they were told what to speak. Jesus frequently had close communion with God and sometimes went up into a mountain to pray all night. With the close communion, the Holy Spirit could, if it so desired (and if it was expedient to do so), give Jesus intimate understanding. Jesus could not read the mind in the sense that the Father can. For instance, we are told that no man can come unto the Son except the Father first draw him (John 6:44). Therefore, when Jesus saw that someone was interested in him, he knew Divine Providence had selected that individual to hear him.

God has the ability of prescience and omniscience, but we do not think He exercises that quality all the time with everyone—with all the evil people and all the good people. God is the Emperor of the universe, and whenever He so desires, He can immediately turn on that ability and know the end from the beginning. However, we think that in some cases, He does not choose to do so. That way His mind is not cluttered with matters that are, in some instances, not the best to know about. In this universe, He has set up so many safeguards, both animate and inanimate, that nothing can happen of which He would be unaware. When anything comes to the time zone where something is premeditated or intended, the alarm goes off, as it

were, and His capability of omniscience is exercised. After all, we ourselves do not always have the best thoughts in our minds, especially when Satan interjects improper ones, and since God is of a pure mind, He would not think upon anything indecent. Nevertheless, He is not disinterested in what an individual might do with improper thoughts—that is another matter.

When God wants to exercise prescience to know a person's final state, He can do so at any moment, but He does not choose to do so, generally speaking. We have other reasons for this statement, such as how the drawing process takes place, but such reasons are not the subject of this study. Bro. Russell said the truth is like a magnet that goes through the air with a mechanical or natural force. Truth attracts some individuals, but there are different degrees and different motives of attraction. God has sent out "eyes," or feelers, of all kinds, not just the angels but other agencies as well. For example, if hundreds of thousands of cameras are hidden by man on the streets of London, certainly God has "eyes"—both spirit beings, who go to and fro searching, and "spiritual" mechanical devices. Thus nothing can happen to catch Him off guard under any circumstance.

Comment: Agencies can receive and transmit to the Heavenly Father any communication that is important for Him to know about.

Reply: Yes.

Comment: Jesus gave Judas every opportunity to change his mind, but he knew that Satan was active. For instance, Jesus knew that Satan desired to sift Peter. With a perfect memory, Jesus knew this Scripture here in Psalm 41.

Reply: By the end of his ministry, Jesus would have suspected who the "familiar friend" was, but not at the beginning. The Apostle John observed that Judas occasionally put his hand in the till, so certainly Jesus was also aware at that time, but he trusted Judas initially. Just as it took time for greed to come out in Judas, so those of the consecrated who go out of the truth usually slip out—they slide backwards little by little until they leave the truth. And then, how great is that darkness! Of course there are exceptions when some leave the truth like a meteor, but most gradually leave.

Comment: Frequently when we are going through experiences, we do not notice what is happening until afterwards. Then we look back and see the signs.

Reply: This is what we usually call hindsight.

At the time of the Memorial, Jesus said, "One of you shall betray me." All of the apostles, including Judas, responded one by one, "Lord, is it I?" (Matt. 26:21,22). Then Peter, who was next to Judas, signaled John, who was across the table and next to Jesus, "Who is the betrayer?" John did not know, so he asked Jesus. As Jesus turned his head to tell John, his back was toward Judas, so Judas could not hear. Then John told Peter. The point is that none of the apostles knew definitely that the betrayer was Judas until John asked Jesus. Then Peter also knew. However, when Judas asked, "Master, is it I?" Jesus replied, "Thou hast said" (Matt. 26:25). In other words, "Yes, you are the betrayer."

When Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, James, and John knew who the betrayer was. The other eight apostles were a little distance away, but certainly they realized Judas was the betrayer after the crucifixion and the awakening of Jesus.

Comment: Psalm 55:12-14 also refers to Judas. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me;

then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.”

Reply: That is a good text. Certainly Jesus knew later in his ministry who the betrayer would be but not earlier, at the beginning.

Psa. 41:10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

The speaker for verse 10 could be David, but it is also a continuation of what Jesus was saying. Verse 9 particularly applies to Jesus, but other verses have a double application to both Jesus and David. We will study the remainder of the chapter as it applies to Jesus.

The definition of “requite” is to pay back. The prefix “re” means something done again, going either forward or backward. For instance, to “retract” or “reverse” is to go backward. In what way would Jesus repay? Jesus prayed to his Father, “O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up [in resurrection], [so] that I may requite [repay] them [those who are responsible for my crucifixion].” With so much emphasis on love today, many brethren think that all mankind will be given the opportunity to walk up the highway of holiness, but there are exceptions.

We know that Pilate was responsible for Jesus’ death, but he was reluctant to order the crucifixion. However, the religious leaders pressed him three times, finally saying, “If you do not crucify Jesus, we will report you to Rome.” Not wanting to hear bad news about a rebellion and being so strong for obedience to Roman law, the government in Rome would not even bother to investigate the matter to see if Pilate was innocent. Thus, out of fear for his own position, Pilate gave in to the Jewish religious leadership. Apparently, he thought that scourging Jesus would pacify their perverse, sadistic mood. When mankind are awakened from the tomb and Jesus judges them in the Kingdom Age, he will know what measure of retribution is necessary for each individual. Certainly those responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion will not come forth with a clean slate. Willful sins committed beforehand, for which no retribution occurs in the present life, will receive corresponding judgments in the Kingdom.

Both Pilate and his wife got retribution before their death. His wife had said, “Have ... nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him” (Matt. 27:19). As retribution, Pilate was removed from office and isolated on an island for the remainder of his days. Annas and Caiaphas were the two individuals most responsible for Jesus’ death. Caiaphas said, “It is expedient ... that one [innocent] man should die for the people ... that the whole nation perish not” (John 11:50). His own words condemned him, showing that he knew Jesus was innocent. Rome exercised a rather reasonable rule with Israel and other tributary nations at that time, even choosing Herod, who was half Jewish, as the tetrarch of Galilee.

In praying that he might “requite them” after his resurrection, Jesus was asking for proper retribution in either raising or not raising certain individuals from the dead. In regard to those who were raised, he prayed that he would give the proper type of retribution for past faults.

Psa. 41:11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

Although in the eyes of the public, the Jewish nation, Jesus’ enemies appeared to triumph over him, he knew that they would not, for the Father would show favor by raising him from death. The Father caused the earthquake and the great darkness that came over the land for three hours. Peter quoted Joel to show that these phenomena in nature were fulfilled when

Jesus was on the Cross (Acts 2:19,20; Joel 2:30,31).

Verses 10 and 11 are connected. “O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up.... By this I know that thou favourest me.” The proof of Jesus’ resurrection would be a form of vindication not only at the time but also later, in the Kingdom Age, when he rules the nations. Jesus petitioned God for mercy that his “enemy” would not triumph over him.

Psa. 41:12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

Notice the phrase “before thy face.” After his resurrection and ascension, Jesus would be like the Logos again but in a *higher* role. We are all familiar with the *Diaglott* footnote that tells how the emperor in India was in a closed box on an elephant and had a spokesperson down on the ground. The emperor would speak to the spokesperson, who would, in turn, make the announcement to the people. Not only was Jesus God’s mouthpiece in the past, but he will have that role in the future as well—but on a much higher plane than when he was an archangel. In the Kingdom Age, Jesus will be known as God’s dearest Son, who died on behalf of all mankind, thus proving his worthiness for immortality. Thus Jesus is still before Jehovah’s “face” and will be in the Kingdom Age and beyond.

Many Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the Kingdom Age show Jehovah as the active agent, whereas certain other Scriptures provide a clearer understanding by referring to Jesus as God’s spokesperson. God has given a formal command to Jesus to judge the world. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness *by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained*; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). Jesus’ honor will be recognized by all, even though God alone will do some things Himself.

Psa. 41:13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

In verse 13 is another indication that these verses were the sentiments of Jesus, namely, “Amen, and Amen.” Just as Jesus had a habit of saying, “Verily, verily,” so “Amen, and Amen” is a duplication (John 1:51; 3:3,5,11; etc.). In addition to words, certain phrases were peculiar to Jesus. He openly communicated with his close followers.

Comment: Jesus was also called the “Amen” of God. “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith *the Amen*, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14).

Reply: Yes, that is another evidence to show that verses 9-13 apply to Jesus. Verses 10-13 can also apply to David, but on a lower level.

At the time these Psalms prophetically expressed Jesus’ sentiments, he was no higher in rank than the Logos, and when he came to earth, he died as a human, yet some believe that Jesus created everything—angels, the planets, the universe, etc.—and that God sat on a seat and told him what to do. But did Jesus have that capability as the Logos, as an archangel? Only *God* can create the universe. Before creating Adam, He planted the Garden of Eden on the unfinished surface of planet Earth, but what about the spirit realm? Didn’t God make the spirit realm before He made spirit beings? Were spirit beings created in an empty void? Were they walking around in just air without spiritual trees and other surroundings? Such thinking does not make sense. Just as on the planet down here, there are houses, trees, gardens, fragrances, animals, etc., so the spirit realm has beauty, rivers, gardens, trees, houses, etc. And each comes in its

right sequence. Therefore, how could Jesus as the Logos—and no higher—have made everything? He did not have divine power. Most of the concordances were compiled by Trinitarians, and the New Testament is permeated with Trinitarian thinking. Once Trinitarian thinking is removed, the Scriptures are beautiful.

Formerly, Lucifer had the ability to walk up and down among the “stones of fire,” but he did not have the ability to create (Ezek. 28:14). All he has exercised since his deflection is his name Beelzebub, that is, “lord of the fly” (Matt. 10:25). To a certain extent, Satan has control over the flies and over the wind, as shown when Jesus was in a boat during the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:24). Satan is like somebody who, on the sly, uses switches and powers that are not his. Through familiarity and superior knowledge, he has access to certain power. As an illustration, a person may use someone else’s computer.

And there is another point. When properly confined, bacteria are very helpful, for they eat the carcasses of dead animals. God created bacteria for purposes of garbage disposal. To capitalize on bacteria for ulterior motives is another matter, however, for Satan does not have power over bacteria from the creative aspect. Incidentally, in certain things that we can do, we use a lot of divine power in our bodies in everyday living, whether we know it or not. The Creator has implanted these processes in the natural man.

“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.” The Apostle Paul might have been influenced by this Psalm because he was always very careful to recognize and honor the chain of command.

PSALM 42

Psa. 42:0 To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

Based on the Tabernacle arrangement, while Korah himself perished during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings, his sons did not die. Several say that this preface to Psalm 42 applies to the descendants of the sons of Korah during the Babylonian captivity, but we are reluctant to apply this Psalm or others to that period of history, which is far removed in time from David’s day. Others try to explain the time difference, but if we understand correctly, the content of Psalm 42 belies such an application. The reasons will be given as we come to them in the appropriate verses.

Psa. 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

This Psalm, which is the favorite of many people, is so beautiful that it is difficult to expound on the considerable depth of feeling that it contains. A lovely hymn begins with the sublime words of verse 1, which are a wonderful illustration: “As pants the hart for water brooks, so pants my soul for thee.” We will try to understand this Psalm as best we can with our limited time.

Notice that the pronoun “my” is in the singular, yet the *sons* of Korah are in the plural. The seeming incongruity is due to the fact that the Psalm is *very personal*—in fact, it is a *personalized testimony*. We can apply Psalm 42 to David personally, for certainly he gave evidence, and was a remarkable example, of one who showed this type of adoration and love for the Creator throughout his life.

Various explanations have been given for this verse. Different travelers who are familiar with the hart (the deer) and its habits have used their observations to adapt verse 1 to the time close to the demise of the deer’s life. When we read later verses, there seems to be some evidence for this conclusion, for David wrote this Psalm near the end of his earthly course. Psalm 40 was

also written at that time, when he was on a bed of sickness for a while and experienced depression. Thus there seems to be some substantiality for this perspective.

Writers have observed that especially when deer are the prey of hunters, they seek water as a last extremity. They will exert great energy and even jump off a cliff, if need be, to be able to get into the water and submerge themselves as a last resort for escape. A deer keeps its nose above the water and is completely submerged otherwise. This visual application is helpful, for perhaps an aging Christian is more desirous of and thinks more frequently about his future destiny than those who are in the virility of life and are looking for works and service and other manifestations to show their love for God.

Psa. 42:2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

The singular pronoun is again used and, in fact, continues throughout, as though this heart-rending Psalm was written by one individual. If our judgment is correct, it seems to fit David well and would give a different application to the sons of Korah.

In reading the preface to each Psalm, we find that the translators had great difficulty. At times, they rendered a particular Hebrew word as the preposition “of” for the possessive, and at other times, they rendered the same Hebrew word as the preposition “for,” as in “for so-and-so.” We can empathize with the King James translators because in some cases, the word seems to apply one way and in other cases, another way. Almost any one of the Hebrew prefixes and suffixes can have a half dozen different applications depending on the context.

Here is a personalized testimony, and the sons of Korah were skilled singers who sang as a chorus. Many times an outstanding group of singers is a family of sisters or brothers who find they can harmonize and sing together. We think, then, that the sons of Korah—that family or generation—had a genetic talent for singing and that the preface is referring more to their taking a leading role in voicing or expressing the Psalm than to the authorship and the feelings, which are more those of an individual than of a group.

Psa. 42:3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

The implication is that the individual has been in bed “day and night.” A continuum of being bedridden is here. In a previous Psalm, David’s enemies were hoping for and wanted to hurry his decease. Usually a person who likes to be of service is in a down mood when inactive. The context of the Psalm helps us over hurdles of interpretation, some of which are very appealing but wanting in other respects.

Comment: Of course the Psalms were written by David after the fact. Had he not recorded his thoughts, how much of his life and feelings we would have missed!

Reply: That is the beauty of a study of the Psalms. Interestingly, we find some remarks that are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture, such as information about the Exodus that the Holy Spirit gave to David. Similarly, when the Apostle Paul spoke of the magi who confronted Moses before Pharaoh at the time of the plagues, he gave their names, Jannes and Jambres, which are not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible.

Psa. 42:4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

David sang and danced before the Ark of the Covenant when it was brought from the north down to the vicinity of Jerusalem. Several subsequent Psalms tell how much he enjoyed being in the multitude when they came to the house of God. David worded some of the Psalms to make them apply to the Temple, which had not yet been built. In anticipation of the Temple and the hope that he would have a share in that work, he wrote the music and the words of the Psalms, and God blessed him with the dimensions of the Solomonic Temple. In his enthusiasm and zeal for the Temple, he said, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness [the ungodly]” (Psa. 84:10). The expressions in Psalm 42 fit David’s life well.

Psa. 42:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

We can see the depth of feeling and expression in this Psalm.

Psa. 42:6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

David was giving a particular perspective. With regard to the term “the land of Jordan,” the river Jordan flows through the Promised Land. During Joshua’s day, Israel was on both sides of the Jordan River. The Israelites occupied Transjordan as well as Israel proper.

“Of the Hermonites” refers to those dwelling on both sides of the Jordan on the slopes and in the valleys and ravines of Mount Hermon. Two mountain ranges ran north and south with the Jordan River in between. Mount Lebanon was in Israel proper, and Anti-Lebanon was Transjordan (“Anti” means “on the other side”).

What was the “hill Mizar”? Mizar means “little” or “small,” hence the “smaller hill,” which was probably Mount Zion, where the Temple was built. Compared to Mount Hermon, which is covered with snow year-round, Mount Zion was a little hill. If our understanding is correct, Mount Zion, which can be spelled with a “Z,” an “S,” or a “Ts,” sometimes refers to literal Mount Hermon way up north, sometimes to Mount Zion in the Jerusalem area, and sometimes to spiritual Zion, which is above, from heaven. We think the “hill Mizar” refers to the Temple Mount, for the preposition “from” in “from the hill Mizar” indicates “this side” of Jordan, that is, the west side.

Interpreting these terms from a prophetic sense gives a completely different perspective. Let us consider that David will get an inheritance. At first, during the Kingdom Age, that inheritance will be down here, for he will be one of the Ancient Worthies, whom The Christ will make “princes in all [throughout] the earth” (Psa. 45:16). However, at the end of the Kingdom Age, David and the other Ancient Worthies will get a spiritual reward. Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). “But now they [the Ancient Worthies] desire a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16). The Pastor gave four different pictures to show that at the end of the Kingdom Age, when all mankind are made perfect and thus are like the Ancient Worthies, the latter will get a spiritual reward. From that standpoint, we can see that viewing the land from Mizar, from the Temple Mount, would be viewing the opposite side, that is, the 2 1/2 tribes on the other side of Jordan. The 2 1/2 tribes represent the classes who get a spirit resurrection—Reuben pictures the true Church, Gad is the Great Company, and the half tribe of Manasseh represents the Ancient Worthies. The tribe of Manasseh being on both sides of the Jordan River pictures the two rewards of the Ancient Worthies, first the earthly and then the spiritual.

Thus Psalm 42 seems to suggest a prophetic perspective with regard to the hope of David. However, we do not think David understood much of this perspective, especially in the type, but he did want to see God, as did Job, Moses, and other Ancient Worthies. In due time, they will be rewarded with the opportunity to see God as He is.

Psa. 42:7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

While David was bedridden, he experienced these turbulent emotions. Even the Apostle Paul had problems and a period in which he was especially weak with a fever. During that down period, Aquila and Priscilla were a help to him. We think the truly faithful of the Gospel Age have such moments.

David went from one emotion to the other. What helped him was his faith in God's mercy and loving-kindness. God was faithful, and that anchor propped him up. David was in a down period in some of the earlier Psalms, but then his faith surfaced in the same Psalms, resulting in an expression of the opposite emotion.

Psa. 42:8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

We cannot see any earthly personage other than David having this depth of feeling during the Period of the Kings, which is when the Psalms were written, around 1000 BC. Of course the Psalms were rewritten in the days of Ezra, and on that basis, others try to put some of the Psalms in the Babylonian captivity starting in 606 BC.

Comment: The clause "in the night his song shall be with me" reminds us of the expression "songs in the night" in Job 35:10.

Reply: Yes. Incidentally, Job was the first book of the Bible. We read Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus, but they were publicly displayed in Moses' day, whereas Job surfaced earlier, between Joseph and Moses.

Q: What is "his song"?

A: David was now in an up period in his emotional thinking. He wondered how he could have been so down when God is so faithful and had led him all his life.

Bro. Russell and others have said that when we are in a down period, the best thing to do is to look back and take inventory of how God specifically did something very remarkable in our life on different occasions. As we think of those things, our faith surfaces and takes command. Faith is developed in the presence of doubt—doubt tests faith. Without the doubt, without the down period, we could not develop the muscles of faith. Stated another way, the strength of faith is developed in the down period. Faith is like the roots of a tree. As the wind blows and bends the tree back and forth, its roots get stronger and go down deeper. "The just shall *live* by faith" (Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4). At the end of one's life, a person should have the reward of faith, as well as love. The reward of faith is real trust. Hope is trusting now in something future, but when we get that which is future, the other kind of faith will cease but not the trust element. That is why Jesus will be everlastingly faithful. The divine nature and immortality will be the reward of those with a like spirit.

Psa. 42:9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

Psa. 42:10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Although the superscription does not so state, we are inclined to think that David composed this Psalm. The term “the enemy” is singular, but it can be considered as a collective noun. The pronouns “I,” “my,” and “me” indicate that the Psalm applies to the individual who wrote it, and he is expressing his own personal feelings. Group feelings are expressed through an individual.

The commonality of interpretation of this Psalm, as well as the next one, is placed at a far later date about 500 years after David. It is usually assigned to the time of the Babylonian captivity, but we are inclined to think it was contemporary with David. Some Jews even put the application back in the days of Moses, when the songs of Korah were used. At any rate, the enemy could be Satan, a particular individual, or even King Saul in David’s day.

We cannot be dogmatic about verse 9, but we are now reading a new book of Psalms. The Psalms were composed in five books, and the first book ended with Psalm 41. Therefore, the second book begins with Psalm 42. Some Bible translators feel that Psalms 42 and 43 are connected. A basis for that assertion is a connected clause. Psalm 42:5,6,11 reads, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?... O my God, my soul is cast down within me.... Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?” While the next Psalm is very short, the same expression is repeated in verse 5: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?” Thus the two Psalms seem to be connected. The subject matter of both is more or less along the same line and has the same intonation of expression.

Verse 9 pertains to God. “I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?” In the Old Testament, the “Rock” is usually Jehovah, but in the New Testament, Paul generally applied the term “Rock” to Jesus. God is *the* Rock, and Jesus is a Rock. In the New Testament, the Church is also likened to a rock. For instance, when Jesus asked his disciples, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it [this truth] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Then Jesus replied further, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [this foundation truth] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:15-18). In other words, “What you just said, Peter, is a rock statement.” Just as a stone is a component part of a larger rock, so Peter was part of the “Rock,” which is The Christ.

A paronomasia exists in the Old Testament where God Himself used a play on words, and we have to be on the same wavelength in order to understand to whom the intonation applies. The Christ, Head and body members, must be complete before the stone smites the image (Dan. 2:34,45). In the *First Volume*, the Pastor quoted three Scriptures along that line, one Scripture being a promise to the church of Thyatira. “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev. 2:26,27). Each of the seven churches concludes with the statement “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto [all] the churches.” Clearly, then, all Christians who are faithful unto death will participate in the stone that smites the image.

“Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?” With no background reference, it is hard to narrow down a specific application. The writer figuratively

expressed his experience as being like one in a battle who is wounded by a sword in his back. Each time he heard an unfavorable comment from his enemies, it was like a sword in his bones, a dagger being plunged into his back. Therefore, the writer was not talking about a literal battle with carnal weapons.

We believe that in Psalms 42 and 43, as in an earlier Psalm, David overheard cruel remarks behind his back while he was on a sickbed. His enemies talked in his presence because with his not responding, they thought he was deaf. The reproaches greatly discouraged him and put him in a down period. A sad tendency is that when a person who was formerly an active and vibrant leader becomes sick and crippled, an enemy makes unfavorable remarks. Job had similar experiences when his three supposed comforters kept making cruel accusations.

The Psalms cannot be interpreted in a sequential fashion. The five books were put together later based on manuscripts that, like the rest of the Bible, were recopied down through the centuries. Even the Sinaitic manuscript, which is probably the most ancient complete Greek Bible that we have, is a copy. We do not know if it is a copy of a copy or a copy of the original manuscript. The five books of Psalms were collated in this form for convenience' sake, not for sequence, and the oldest Hebrew manuscript dates back to only around AD 1000. There are older *pieces* of manuscripts but not an older *complete* manuscript.

Psa. 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

The word “health” is another clue that David was suffering from a physical ailment at this time.

PSALM 43

Psa. 43:1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

Psalm 43 continues to refer to Jehovah in using the Hebrew *elohim* for “God,” but it is comforting for the Christian to think of this verse in a secondary sense as applying to Jesus.

“Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation.” Many different applications have been made for this Psalm, as the commentaries will show, but we feel it is definitely connected to the previous Psalm. The “ungodly nation” can be either Israel or an ungodly people, for the Hebrew word is *goi*, and a nation is composed of people. We believe the reference is to an ungodly element, rather than to the nation of Israel.

“O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man [Hebrew *ish*, hence an individual].” With Psalms 42 and 43 being consecutive, if our thinking is correct that they were written in David’s down period of poor physical health, then several individuals were making derogatory remarks, but *one* person at a time. Similarly, when Jesus was on the Cross, several onlookers challenged him: “If you are the Son of God, come down off the cross, and then we will believe you.” The “deceitful and unjust” person figuratively stabbed David in the back and wounded his feelings. His enemies would never have made such statements in his presence while he was king and in good health, but they thought he could not hear them at this time. Again we will say that we cannot be dogmatic about the application, for the Psalm lacks definition, but this interpretation seems reasonable to us. David was asking the Lord for cognition and deliverance from his enemies.

Incidentally, the fact that in the Syriac, Psalms 42 and 43 are one Psalm gives credence to the

thought that the subject matter is connected. Also, not all of the Psalms David composed had superscriptions, so he could well have been the author of Psalm 43.

Psa. 43:2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

The enemy (plural) kept uttering disparaging remarks about David. For a time earlier, David had to flee to Transjordan for safety from Absalom, his own son, who tried to usurp the throne. Many looked very favorably on Absalom, and from a numerical standpoint, it seemed that the nation was against David. Another son, Adonijah, also turned against him. David and Job had many similar experiences.

Psa. 43:3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

As new creatures, we regard the “holy hill” as heaven. For us as Christians, verse 3 is a prayer that after our demise, as a result of having been led by God’s light and truth, we will end up with a spiritual reward.

“O send out thy light and thy truth.” Although “light” and “truth” are synonyms, there is a slight variation in meaning. Usually “truth” is God’s Word, or doctrine, whereas “light” is illumination, that is, the understanding of the Word or a mental perception of the significance of doctrine through a providence from God. Thus light and truth are companions.

Why is the word “tabernacles” in the plural? David was alluding to the Temple and the city of Jerusalem on Mount Zion, but the figurative and higher sense is the next life. The Apostle Paul likened the Tabernacle as two component parts. In the Tabernacle arrangement, we speak of the Holy and the Holy of Holies (plural), that is, the Most Holy of the two holy compartments.

Psa. 43:4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

Psa. 43:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

We have studied Psalm after Psalm after Psalm where David’s mood changed from a down period to an up period. In every Psalm, David’s faith not only survived but succeeded. Thus spiritual faith is developed by overcoming a down experience. Doubt provokes faith and develops spiritual muscles, as it were. Trials are God’s method of developing us as new creatures. Trials also developed the Ancient Worthies, the prophets of old, along natural lines.

Comment: It was as if David was giving himself a pep talk. When depression came upon him, he asked, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?” Then he said, “Hope in God.” He was instructing himself to get out of the down mood.

Reply: Yes. We have “this treasure [the new mind] in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:7). The “earthen vessel” is the old man; the “treasure” is the new man of the Bride class. A conflict is waged between the old and the new natures. Although we are instructed to crucify the flesh, the old man is always there in the present life, and it emerges on occasion. Even the Apostle Paul had a couple of down periods but not many, for he was very unusual.

“For I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.” David was hoping the Temple would be built during his lifetime, so it was natural that he would expect a

literal Temple in the future. He thought along natural lines, yet from other standpoints, he wondered if there was another, a higher, application. Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” and he desired “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:10,16). Some of the unusual individuals of the Old Testament had similar experiences. For example, Job’s hope was to see God, which is impossible down on the earthly plane. One or two places in the Psalms seem to suggest a heavenly reward for the Ancient Worthies at the end of the Kingdom.

The statement “Then will I go unto the altar of God” could refer to either the Tabernacle or the Temple because both had altars outside where sin was expiated publicly. David continued, “Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.” The harp, which is conducive to singing a narrative or an ode, was his favorite instrument. Some harpists pluck a string or two and then make a comment. In Old Testament times, folk singers went from city to city and played instruments publicly for their livelihood while giving a narration and singing a simple chant.

We believe David will have the opportunity both physically and spiritually to “go unto the altar of God” and “unto God ... [his] exceeding joy.” He expressed his longing and desire: “Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.”

PSALM 44

Psa. 44:0 To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

Psa. 44:1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

In this Psalm, David reminisced on the past history of Israel and then prophesied way into the future—in fact, so much so that some Bible commentators think the Psalm was written much later, at the time of the events being discussed. He referred particularly to miraculous events in the days of Moses and Joshua, such as crossing the Jordan on a dry riverbed with the Ark in the center. This event was reminiscent of the Israelites’ coming out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea dry-shod at the time of the Exodus. Although the Psalm does not so state, if it has a connection with the previous two Psalms, we think David was reflecting on his sickbed. While in this condition, he expressed some remarkable thoughts.

Incidentally, David spoke more on the details of the Exodus than anyone else—in some respects, even more than Moses, who was actually there. Through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, David was able to provide many details. When this information is combined with the writings of Moses, we are better able to appreciate how truly unusual the Exodus and associated events were.

Psa. 44:2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

“How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them [the Israelites]; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.” David went back and forth in describing the experiences of the enemy and of Israel, in what God did to the enemy and for Israel.

Psa. 44:3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

“For they [Israel] got not the land in possession by their own sword.” Now David was

referring to some of the experiences of Joshua and the miracles. “Neither did their [Israel’s] own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.” Israel won the battles because God was for them.

Q: What does the expression “the light of thy countenance” signify?

A: The principle is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

Psa. 44:4 **Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.**

Psa. 44:5 **Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.**

The pronoun “my” in verse 4 indicates that an individual wrote this Psalm, and the language, the tenor, being like that of David, indicates he wrote Psalm 44.

Psa. 44:6 **For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.**

David had a sword as well as a bow, although he did not have a sword when he was in flight from Saul and went to Ahimelech (1 Sam. 21:7-9). The high priest gave him the sword of Goliath. David was a mighty man of valor with the bow, the sword, and the slingshot.

In this Psalm, David was first thinking of the past and then the present, and he also spoke of the future, as we will see. The writer had to be David because the one who was talking used the bow and spoke of his personal God: “Thou art *my* King, O God” (verse 4).

Psa. 44:7 **But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.**

Psa. 44:8 **In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.**

A clue that David was continuing to speak is the word “Selah,” which he frequently used in the Psalms. Thus the evidence supports the premise that he wrote this Psalm, and not the supposition of some that it was composed while the Israelites were in Babylonian captivity. Many details do not match the common view given by higher critics, who interpret this Psalm not so much as a prophecy but as history.

Psa. 44:9 **But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.**

Notice the change starting with verse 9. Verses 1-8 talk about what God did for Israel both in the past and at the time of David. Starting with verse 9, David wrote prophetically. “But thou hast cast [us] off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.” David was referring not to just one event but to several defeats, especially as described in 2 Kings, when Israel fought against Assyria and was defeated and taken into captivity. Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Sennacherib were the three sequential Assyrian kings who desolated the northern kingdom so that it was without Jewish inhabitants (2 Kings 15-18). About 130 years later, Judah was taken into captivity by the Chaldeans. The Assyrian activity occurred with regard to the ten northern tribes, and the Judean activity took place later at the hand of the Chaldeans and some other peoples who are described in the Book of Daniel.

Psa. 44:10 **Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.**

Psa. 44:11 **Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the**

heathen.

Clearly the application of verse 11 has to be future from David's day. He went from well-known events of the past to what would happen far future from his day. The northern kingdom was scattered "among the heathen," for the southern kingdom, Judah, was not scattered but went into captivity in Babylon.

Bro. Russell gave a talk in Canada during the last several years of his life, as reported by Bro. Magnuson, who was with him. Part of the talk was about the Prophet David. Although we do not know the content of that talk, Bro. Magnuson said the following. In Canada at that time, whenever a public address was given, it was customary for those in the audience to respond while the discourse was being given, that is, during the address. Bro. Russell was delivering his prepared talk, and when he spoke about the Prophet David in the middle of his talk, a man in the audience said out loud, "David is not a prophet." Bro. Russell ignored the remark and continued with his talk. However, the remark disturbed his trend of thinking, so when he came to the end of his talk, he said, quoting Acts 2:29,30, "'Men and brethren, let me *freely* speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a *prophet*, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him....' *The Prophet David, brother! The Prophet David!*" With those words, the Pastor ended his talk. He kept his composure for the entire talk and then ad-libbed at the end. Thus the Bible plainly states that David was a prophet, but if we were to look up the name "David," we would find nothing in the concordances to show he was a prophet, for that designation is in the next verse.

Psa. 44:12 **Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.**

Verses 12-19 take us down through history to the lamentations of Jeremiah, who gave the history of Israel up until King Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC. The prophet composed the Book of Lamentations after the captivity, telling of Israel's shame. Anybody from Assyria, Babylon, or any of those northern (or northeastern) countries who went through the land of Israel would notice the barrenness of the land and the ruins and desolation and ask, "What is the meaning of this strange land without any inhabitants?" The reply was, "The Israelites lived here, but they were taken into captivity. It seems that their own God has turned against them." A lot of history was being covered, and David was still the speaker.

When the Israelites were in Babylonian captivity, those who survived learned about God. Only 4,600 Jews went into captivity, and they retained the one God (Jer. 52:28-30). Famous historians have noted that when the Jews came out of the Babylonian captivity, they never again believed in numerous gods. Ever since, those of the nation who believed worshipped *one* God. (In contrast, many Christians worship a *Triune* God.) It is remarkable that the Jews never lost their identity. As a people, they have not been assimilated in spite of all their problems and the persecutions.

Of course the Jews multiplied in Babylonian captivity, and 70 years later 50,000 returned to Israel after Cyrus issued the decree. In fact, he even assisted the Jews in their return. However, many Jews chose to remain in Babylon, having become comfortable temporarily in that foreign land. Some of the Jews returned with Joshua (the high priest), Zerubbabel, and Ezra. Then subsequently more Jews returned with Nehemiah.

"Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price." Some of the Jewish captives were sold in the slave market. In fact, Jews ended up in different nations because they were sold like cattle.

Psa. 44:13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

Psa. 44:14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

Psa. 44:15 My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,

Psa. 44:16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The Jews were made a reproach, a scorn, and a derision to the surrounding peoples. All of the Psalms were sung, being arranged for either Temple service or folk songs. In the latter case, a man went through cities earning his living by playing a musical instrument and singing his knowledge of history as a narrative.

Psa. 44:17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

As we read to the end of this Psalm, we see that there is no definition of distinct events but, rather, a history of the nearly 2,000-year Diaspora, during which God turned His face away from Israel. The word “Diaspora” means “dispersion of seed,” that is, the dispersion of Israel throughout the other nations. Thus this Psalm ends with a plea to God for help: “Arise and help us” (paraphrase). That petition has been answered in the sense that the Jews have been gathered back to their homeland. Since we are now in the end time, in the last days, more definition in the fulfillment of prophecy is occurring.

Psa. 44:18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;

Psa. 44:19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

Psa. 44:20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

Psa. 44:21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

Psa. 44:22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Psa. 44:23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.

Psa. 44:24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

Psa. 44:25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

Psa. 44:26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

In Paul's day, the Jews criticized the Gentiles, and the Gentiles criticized the Jews. Through his death, Christ broke down the barrier between the Jew and the Gentile. In chapter 8 of Romans, the Apostle Paul tried to show that there was a new arrangement. The Old Law arrangement changed for Jews who came into Christ, and Gentiles had to overcome their anti-Semitism. Paul both scolded and encouraged the Jews, and he both scolded and encouraged the Gentiles,

showing that Jewish and Gentile Christians are all one in Christ. Paul's doctrine was unity, peace, and rest in Christ, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28).

Like Daniel in his prayer, David was concerned for his people. Daniel, who had not sinned, said, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments" (Dan. 9:5). Daniel was so engrossed in his national identity as a Jew that he had the feelings of the people. David did the same.

PSALM 45

Psa. 45:0 To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.

Whenever this ode or instructional hymn is to be sung in a worship service, the superscription instructs the conductor of the choir and the music that the Psalm is to be played "upon Shoshannim," meaning "upon the lilies" in Hebrew and referring to the predominant musical instruments. The best instruments for "lilies" are the flute and the harp, for the notes are to be softly and clearly enunciated. With each note being in harmony with the theme of the Psalm, the conductor would be saying in effect, "These are my pearl gems." The word "Maschil," meaning to teach, instruct, or understand, signifies that the conductor is to keep in mind the mood or the theme of the Psalm as expressed in the words that follow. The music would play continually as the words of the Psalm were sung.

Psalm 45 is called "A Song of loves," which is like King Solomon's "The song of songs" (Song 1:1). We would not be surprised if Solomon got the idea for his "Song of Solomon" from this Psalm. The connection seems to be borne out later, as we will see when we go into the theme of the Psalm itself.

Psa. 45:1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Notice the personal pronouns on the part of the writer of this Psalm, who was King David himself: "my heart," "I speak," "I have made," and "my tongue." Although the Psalm was planned out, it was composed under the inspiration of God. David could not contain the joy that was in him and the necessity for expression.

In an earlier Psalm, David expressed a somewhat similar emotional outburst: "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue" (Psa. 39:3). We are also reminded of the Prophet Jeremiah, who said in effect, "I tried to remain silent about what is happening in Israel, but I could not contain my thoughts" (Jer. 20:9). In indignation, he spoke about the disarray and the ungodliness he was witnessing.

For verse 1, the margins of some King James Bibles have, "My heart is bubbling [or 'boiling'] over." David had to express his thoughts concerning "a good matter"—something *wonderful*. He continued, "I speak of the things which I have made [written] touching the king." David composed this Psalm when he was in an inspirational mode. Some of us may have had the experience at night while in bed where we have a dream or think on a theme so wonderful and joyous that our sentiment is, "Oh, if only I could tell someone about this!" However, when we wake up in the morning, we find that we have forgotten the dream or that we cannot coherently express the thoughts we had in solitude. Here David had such an experience, and he wrote it down immediately. Perhaps he had forgotten on previous occasions, but this time he

recorded the thoughts right away: “My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” Thus Psalm 45 is the outcome of David’s inspirational feeling. Actually, the Holy Spirit was operating on him. Since his heart was along the right line, he was the best one to honor with this experience.

David’s tongue was “the pen of a ready writer”; that is, the tip of his tongue was the quill of the pen. What a wonderful introduction to this Psalm! Right away we are interested and want to know what joyous message David could not contain. The rest of the Psalm expresses what was on his heart.

Q: Is “the king” Jesus?

A: Yes, as confirmed by verse 2. David wanted to speak of “things ... touching the king [Jesus].”

Psa. 45:2 **Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.**

The beginning of Psalm 45 pictures Jesus as a King. When David wrote, “Thou [Jesus] art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips,” this accolade did not necessarily apply only during Jesus’ earthly ministry, although the examples were numerous. The praetorian guard was sent out to hear Jesus speak at Galilee and apprehend him if he said anything against Pilate or the priesthood, but they returned without him. When questioned by the Pharisees, those of the guard said, “We could not arrest him, for no man has ever spoken like this man. We could not catch him on any word.” An example is his saying, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). How could the guard apprehend someone who spoke like that? Certainly they could not accuse Jesus of being a traitor when he said yes to both Caesar and God, with each in his respective place. Another example of grace being poured into Jesus’ lips was his Sermon on the Mount, with the ten “blesseds”: “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” “Blessed are they that mourn,” “Blessed are the meek,” “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,” “Blessed are the merciful,” etc. (Matt. 5:3-11,16). In addition, he gave beautiful parables.

Jesus is the same being today. He continues to be “fairer than the children of men,” and he still has that grace in his lips. The point is that in this picture here in the beginning of Psalm 45, he is now King, the role he has had throughout the Gospel Age.

Comment: Luke 4:22 reads, “And all bare him [Jesus] witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?”

Reply: The people could not believe that such words were coming from a carpenter’s son.

We personally believe that Jesus did not look like an ordinary person. Even when he was in a carpenter’s apron before his earthly ministry began, the Israelites would have seen that he was different in his bearing, his talking, his thinking, and his deeds. When he was in the Temple at age 12, the scribes and Pharisees could not believe that this youngster knew more than they did. Using a question mode, he was instructing the religious leaders. The questions he asked were so deep that they could not believe what they were hearing. Thus Jesus was different.

“Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.” Jesus was pleasing to his Father. As he was growing up, he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52). People marveled that he was way beyond his years both in understanding and in depth of feeling, character, and deeds.

Psa. 45:3 **Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.**

Psa. 45:4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

Psa. 45:5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

During the Gospel Age, the people who fall under Christ's influence, doing obeisance to him, are the called class, with whom he has been dealing, but the setting here in Psalm 45 goes on into the Kingdom Age. In other words, these verses indicate what he will be doing during the Kingdom Age.

“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.” What is the picture here?

Comment: When verses 3 and 4 are considered together, they sound like Revelation 19:11-16, when Jesus and the glorified Church are seen riding on white horses. “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Reply: Yes, that is correct. In verses 3 and 4, Jesus is riding on a horse during the Kingdom Age. He takes the sword, puts it in the scabbard, and then rides on the horse. “Ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness.” The suggestion is that Jesus mounts a horse and rides as the Leader in an activity that is about to take place.

The term “O most mighty” could have been rendered slightly better. God is Almighty and thus is more “mighty” than Jesus. Therefore, instead of “O most mighty,” the expression could have been “O mighty one” (see RSV). “O mighty one, ride on prosperously” is the thought.

“In thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible [awesome] things.” What is Jesus' “right hand,” and how does it “teach” him awesome and wondrous things? In a few pictures, Jesus is called the “arm” of Jehovah, but those examples do not answer this setting. The punctuation needs changing, as follows: “In thy majesty ride prosperously. Because of truth and meekness and righteousness, thy right hand shall teach thee awesome things.” Because of Jesus' character and hunger for truth and righteousness, his hand is exercised proportionately. The “hand” represents deeds, as opposed to the foot, for example, which pictures one's walk. The combination of Jesus' hunger for truth, his righteousness, and his meek character or disposition guides and instructs the hand, so that he can do unbelievable things. Because of those characteristics, God has chosen him to have this power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants to see that things are done right and that justice prevails. In the Kingdom, the people will say, “Jesus is just the one for the job. He will clean up the mess on earth and establish order and harmony.”

Q: How is the word “teach” being used? It sounds rather unusual that Jesus' right hand, even in a symbolic sense, would teach him awesome things.

A: We believe that David composed this Psalm. Earlier in his life, he tore apart the jaws of a lion and a bear, but he said that God's power accomplished these feats, not his (1 Sam. 17:34-36). When David talked to King Saul about Goliath, the giant had been challenging Israel and cursing Jehovah every day for 40 days. No Israelite had come out to answer the challenge, and then along came David, asking, "What is going on here?" When the situation was explained, he said, "I will take care of this matter in the spirit of God. This cursing cannot be allowed to continue." The fact Saul proffered his armor shows that David was a big man, as were his brothers, for the family consisted of tall and strong people. David put on Saul's armor, but feeling awkward, he discarded it and took a slingshot, selected five stones from the brook, and went out to meet Goliath in the strength of the Lord. He said in effect, "You defied God, so I will slay you and cut off your head." David did just that—he took Goliath's sword and cut off his head.

David acknowledged that he had done what the Law taught; namely, he brought back an ear or another part of the predator to prove to his master that he was a good shepherd and had not run away when the lion and the bear came to devour one of the sheep but had tried to rescue the animal. David had risked his life to protect the sheep, and in doing so, he found that he had more power than the lion and the bear. Of course he knew the power was not his but God's. Because he obeyed the Law and defended the sheep, he found that he had unusual power. To convince Saul to let him answer the challenge from Goliath, David said, "The God who gave me the power to kill the lion and the bear will give me the power to slay this giant, who has defied His holy name." Seeing David's spunk, the people thought, "Maybe he can slay Goliath." Receiving permission from Saul, David went out and killed Goliath in the strength of the Lord.

The principle is the same here in Psalm 45 because Jesus was meek and humble, because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and because he wanted to know the truth. During his earthly ministry, he told his disciples, "Whatever I say to you is not mine, for I did not originate the teaching. My Father taught me these things, and His Word is now coming forth from my lips to you." Because Jesus had that disposition, God chose him to be the Messiah and gave him the power to be victorious in whatever he did. God blessed Jesus' ministry all the way through.

"Because of truth and meekness and righteousness ... thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things." This power in Jesus showed that God was rewarding him. David said of his battles as a warrior, "God granted me the victories against the Canaanites, Amorites, and Philistines. The strength was His, not mine." When we read the detail of David's life, we see that his "hand" taught him.

Consider an accomplished pianist as another example. After he has thoroughly studied music, having diligently and laboriously practiced and gone to all kinds of performances, he finds out that when he plays an oratorio, he knows every note. The music is in his fingertips or in his bones, as it were, through obedience and hard study, sweat, toil, energy, and devotion. God similarly rewards those who love His Word in proportion to their love. Their obedience and performance come out automatically in time.

"Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee." The Pastor explained these verses. The "arrows" are deep truths that penetrate, arrows of conviction. When arrows of truth plunged into us, they changed us from being an enemy of God to wanting to be a disciple, to wanting to fall down and worship Him. All of us were sinners in God's sight and at enmity with Him, but because of our faith and obedience in kneeling in submission and prayer, the arrows of truth, instead of repelling us, caused us to prostrate ourselves and to fall down before Him.

Notice that verse 5 does not mention being trampled under the King's feet. When an enemy is underfoot and being stamped on, he is killed through violence, but when he falls down before one's face, that is submission, conviction, and obeisance.

Who, then, is the "king" in verse 5? He is *Jehovah*. Psalm 45 contains the words "God" and "king," and each time they appear, they have to be considered in context to determine whether the reference is to Jesus or the Heavenly Father. In the context of verses 1-5, Jesus as a King is fighting for a *superior* King, whose enemies fall under him when they are convicted by the sharp arrows of truth in the heart.

Q: Does Psalm 45 apply throughout the Kingdom Age?

A: Primarily yes, although the time applications go back and forth between the Kingdom Age and the Gospel Age. In verses 1-5, Jesus is being sent out on a mission during the Kingdom Age, when he will prosper in gleaning of mankind those who really love God. Even though the number of mankind who go into Second Death in the Kingdom Age is described as the sand of the sea, nevertheless, Jesus will prosper in gleaning out from this evil, dark world all who truly love God. Psalm 45 is a success story of those of mankind who ultimately come into fellowship and become sons of God, turning from enemies to friends. Other Psalms tell of those, both individuals and groups, who are evil in the Kingdom Age, but Psalm 45 brings out the positive and the beautiful. That is why David was bubbling over with emotion and joy.

Psa. 45:6 *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.*

What period of time does verse 6 cover? We can now understand a little more clearly. Jesus will be King "for ever and ever" after the Kingdom Age. He will be recognized as second in authority and rank underneath Jehovah.

Comment: The Masoretic reads, "Thy throne, given of God."

Reply: Jehovah and Jesus will both be Kings forever and ever, but there is a ranking of first and second, respectively. Like Joseph in Egypt, who was prime minister for Pharaoh, Jesus will be God's "prime minister" throughout eternity.

Comment: Only in the throne is God greater.

Reply: Yes, Jesus is beside God's throne in a separate throne.

Comment: Leeser also has, "Thy throne, given of God."

Reply: Yes. Actually, "God" in verse 6 can be applied either way—that is, with "thy throne, O God" referring to Jesus or with "thy throne, given of God" referring to Jehovah—but whichever application is used, since Jesus is slaying Jehovah's enemies, the throne of God is left inviolate. Both statements are true. As to which is intended, the choice is up to the individual.

Comment: Jesus promised the church of Laodicea, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). This arrangement is for all eternity; it is not age-lasting for the Kingdom only. The Church will be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus forever.

Reply: Jesus will not be a High Priest forever; that function will cease after the Kingdom Age, for sin will never be tolerated henceforth. Any sin that occurs in the ages of ages will

immediately be expunged. There will be no mediation, no receiving of forgiveness.

Psa. 45:7 *Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

Because Jesus loved righteousness and hated wickedness, God, his Father, anointed him with the “oil of gladness” above his fellows. The Apostle Paul quoted this verse in Hebrews 1:9, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Over the years, many talks have been given on love, but invariably they do not bring in the fact that the attribute of love has to be counterbalanced with the hatred of evil, or wickedness.

God Himself loves righteousness and hates iniquity. Among the proof texts are the following. “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face” (Psa. 89:14). The attribute of Justice implies a responsiveness to both good and evil. Justice rewards the good and punishes the evil. “Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne” (Psa. 97:2).

In the Book of Revelation, the Heavenly Father is pictured by two gem stones: the jasper (that is, the diamond) and the sard, the famous stone from the city of Sardis in Asia Minor. Because the sard stone will carve easily while retaining a good edge that wears long, it has been used as a carnelian or a cameo. The sard stone represents Jehovah’s quality of being approachable, of hearing and hearkening and being sympathetic. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. That is one aspect of God’s character, whereas the diamond, being sharp and brilliant, pictures glory, sharpness, and brilliance. Just as darkness hates the light, so wickedness shuns light. In a roundabout way, these two attributes are pictured in that fashion. The sard stone is the color of flesh. A person with a heart of flesh is tender and sympathetic to the feelings of others and to their destiny and welfare.

“Therefore God [Jehovah], thy [Jesus’] God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Aaron was anointed over and above his four sons (Leviticus 8). When the anointing oil was poured on his head, he was anointed above the priesthood that God had in mind. The anointing of David is another picture, for he was anointed above his brothers. Jesse had seven other sons, but David, who was out tending the flocks, was selected by God to be a type of Christ (1 Sam. 16:10).

The “oil of gladness” reminds us of Psalm 133:2, which tells that the anointing oil poured upon Aaron’s head went down his beard to the hem of his garment. The Psalm tells about the high level of fellowship of true brethren in Christ, who are familiar with the Lord’s Word. The Holy Spirit has a mellowing effect and an appealing quality that is conducive to peace.

Psa. 45:8 *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.*

The fragrance of Jesus’ garments is a combination of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. When a woman adorned with properly chosen high-quality, expensive perfume is in a closed room or walks by, the fragrance is delightful. Thus we appreciate the influence of Jesus’ garments. Spiritually speaking, they are attractive, and they befit a person of his stature. The high priest’s garments of glory and beauty are an example in the type.

Let us use a much lower picture as an example. Pastor Russell was sometimes criticized for dressing very formally, but he responded that such attire was befitting for the public proclamation of the wonderful message of highest quality of good news from the Scriptures.

Of course much depends on the circumstance, but when one addresses a large crowd in a formal auditorium, he should dress properly, neatly, and cleanly, and without show, as would befit nobility. It is interesting that some very rich people choose modest but high-quality clothes. They avoid extreme trends and flashy colors. Their taste in dress is very becoming for a person of noble bearing or background. Accordingly, when Jesus comes out of the other room, he is dressed proportionately with simplicity but also with richness that is appropriate for his stature and behavior.

Myrrh is bitter. The Church class develop an attribute of character that, spiritually speaking, is based on their myrrh experiences. These bitter experiences develop character, particularly patience. Moreover, based on such development, we look to a certain type of individual for counsel because these individuals have not only head knowledge but also experience. The two qualities of theoretical knowledge and principles, coupled with experience in the affairs and deeds of life, produce wisdom. Accordingly, myrrh is a picture of wisdom.

Comment: The Song of Solomon mentions myrrh. “A bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts” (Song 1:13). “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense” (Song 4:6). “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (Song 5:1).

Comment: A hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes was used to anoint Jesus’ body for burial (John 19:39).

Reply: Aloes is usually associated with burial, yet it has a healing quality. Myrrh has a rather pungent odor and is a fumigant or a purgative. In some countries, it is used to overcome the unpleasant odor of garbage. Also, it is a preservative.

In addition, cassia is a symbol of Jesus’ workmanship, his ability to perform perfectly the Heavenly Father’s will and purposes. In other words, a variety of odors is pleasant and overrides obnoxious vapors. In a spiritual sense, therefore, when Jesus walked into a room, his mere entry manifested a holy presence. Job mentioned that in his former days of prominence as a judge, whenever he walked by, even children sobered up right away. People kept quiet because they saw that he had more wisdom than they, and children were calm. But when Job was suffering, the children mocked him.

Comment: Numbers 24:5,6 reads, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as the trees of lign aloes which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters.”

Reply: All trees, which were made by God, have a function—willow trees, palm trees, pine trees, etc. Each kind has a peculiar trait.

“Out of the ivory palaces [the heavenly abode], whereby they [the fragrances and the garments] have made thee glad.” Jesus did not have the liberty that Lucifer had of going up and down among the planes of being, but as the Logos, the mouthpiece of God, he was given important information to transmit as advice and instruction on different occasions (Ezek. 28:14). There is a history in the spiritual realm with spirit beings, just as there is a history down here on earth with man, starting with the first chapter of Genesis. We have no idea what has happened in the history of the spiritual realm.

Jesus’ previous life in heaven with the Father so influenced John that he twice referred to it.

When Jesus claimed to be the Word, or the mouthpiece, of God, John said, “We beheld his glory”; that is, Jesus acted exactly like one coming from the heavenly abode. He was not just an ordinary personage who appeared on the scene. Everything Jesus did—his bearing, manner of talking, appearance, the way he walked, etc.—bespoke dignity and previous training and influence. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14; cf. 1 John 1:1,2).

We firmly believe that the Garden Tomb north of Jerusalem was the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea. The tomb was never opened from the days of the Hadrian persecution, which occurred about AD 135, until it was unearthed in the 1860s. During all that time, the tomb was covered with earth. In the short century from AD 33 to 130, some peculiar things happened that are in harmony with what the apostles found when they looked in the tomb bed and saw proof that Jesus’ body had been laid there. For example, as originally made, the tomb bed was too short for the one who was to be buried there. At one end, the tomb bed was sculpted out to make the accommodation; that is, the rock was carved out to extend the length of the tomb bed in preparation for the body of a person six or eight inches taller than the individual it was designed for. Moreover, the extension was made in a rough fashion, as though done in haste, and was not finished like the rest of the tomb.

Also, when Jesus spoke to the multitudes during his earthly ministry, we conjecture that he was taller than ordinary men so that he could be seen and heard as he talked. Probably he was six feet tall, or six feet six inches at the most, which was unusual back there. Similarly, Moses was tall, and so was David, who could wear the armor of Saul, who was head and shoulders above his fellow Jews. The Scriptures were purposely written low-key so that we would listen to the *message* from Jesus’ lips, rather than concentrate on his handsome personage.

Psa. 45:9 Kings’ daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

The “queen in gold of Ophir” is the Bride, the Church, but who are the “kings’ daughters”? Notice that both “kings” (the apostrophe is after the “s”) and “daughters” are plural, whereas in verse 5, the apostrophe is between the “g” and the “s,” indicating a singular King, that is, God. Therefore, the term “kings’ daughters” indicates that there are several—a king’s daughter, a king’s daughter, a king’s daughter, etc., or stated another way, a daughter of a king, a daughter of a king, a daughter of a king, etc. Protestant Bible scholars, as well as the Pastor, usually bypass this terminology and offer no explanation. What, then, is the thought?

The word “king” is used in several places in Scripture to indicate not just an individual but a government, so there are different “kings.” Even empires are spoken of as “kings,” meaning powers or countries (Dan. 2:44; 7:17). The point is that while the Church class are all daughters of Jehovah, for He is their Father, they originally came from all nations. Out of all nations, God has been calling a class. As an illustration, before Ruth was called, she was a Moabite, but after she was called, she became a proselyte Jew. Therefore, throughout the Gospel Age, God could see individuals in various nations who, with His training and Holy Spirit and their meekness, humility, and hunger for truth and righteousness, could be changed from their former status to His daughter. Knowing what He could do, He saw a potential that no one else could see. He knew that in obedience to His Holy Spirit, they could become His daughter in a particular sense as the “queen ... of Ophir,” who stands beside Jesus. These individuals would be changed from what they were before to what they are now—the Bride of Christ. They were *plural* originally; they become *singular* as part of the composite *whole*. Expressed another way, the 144,000 members of the Little Flock are part of Isaac. Another picture shows the complete Church as Rebekah.

Psa. 45:10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

Verse 10 is a beautiful picture of our initial start as children of the Heavenly Father through Christ. The “daughter” is the “church of the firstborn,” but when the Psalm is read in its entirety, we can see that the term refers more to the *elect portion* of the church of the firstborn, which is the Bride class, the Little Flock, the 144,000 (Heb. 12:23). When we are initially called, that distinction is not made on our side, but of course the Father can see that there are two classes. In the present life, we are to be generous in our thinking and consider that all of the consecrated are running the same race to be of the “daughter,” but the Psalm makes clear that in the final analysis, the “daughter” is only the very elect.

“Consider, and incline thine ear [that is, hearken].” In order not to miss even one syllable in our consideration of the Master’s words, we bend the ear forward in prayer toward the Heavenly Father (or Jesus depending on circumstances).

“Forget also thine own people [our families and closest friends],” for this is a new relationship, a new friendship, on a completely different level of consideration. We are to forget not only our “own people”—father, mother, brother, sister, etc.—but also our “father’s house [the house of Adam].” All of our lineages go back to father Adam, and originally we were all members of the condemned human race.

Comment: Ruth of Moab is a good example from the Old Testament. She left her own people and accompanied Naomi back to Israel. Thus the Israelites became her people.

Reply: Yes, the things that happened to Israel are for our learning in the Gospel Age (1 Cor. 10:11). God had said to Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3:2). The promises were first made to the Jews, but it is amazing how relatively few hearkened to the spiritual calling. Those who did, especially in the first, or Ephesus, period of the Church, were exceedingly zealous.

Jehovah was speaking through the pen of David, who did not understand the spiritual aspect of what he was saying through the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was frequently called “daughter,” so he would have assumed that was the application.

Psa. 45:11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

“So shall the king [Jesus] greatly desire thy beauty.” In this Psalm, the word “king” sometimes refers to the Heavenly Father and sometimes to Jesus. However, the general theme is the relationship between the Bride and the Bridegroom. The Father is brought into some of the verses.

On this side of the veil, we are aspiring to be of the Bride class. We will be selected in the final analysis if we are sufficiently zealous and obedient. Jesus allows the Heavenly Father to do the more crucial examination and thus determine which of the consecrated become part of the Bride class. Jesus has nothing to say about who sits on his right and left hand (Matt. 20:23). Jehovah extended the original call to come out of Adam’s house. We are prospective sons and daughters of *God*, but the relationship and empathy are so close between Father and Son that it is sometimes difficult to determine with exact distinctness who is being referred to. However, there is usually a clue that helps us to at least indirectly come to a fairly definite conclusion.

Comment: In the type, Abraham (picturing God) asked Eliezer (the Holy Spirit) to seek a bride

for Isaac (Jesus).

Reply: Yes. Just as Eliezer was the oldest servant of Abraham, so the Holy Spirit is older than Jesus. God's Word, His thinking, and His planning are older than the Son. Thus the chain of command taught in Scripture is the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus.

"The king ... is thy Lord." In this case, "Lord" is a reference to Jesus. Context is the determining factor in the Old Testament. God was saying, "So shall my Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, greatly desire and appreciate the beauty of the Bride." The primary reason Jesus came down to earth was to pay the ransom price, but another purpose was to become acquainted with the human race and its problems so that he would be a more sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 2:17; 4:15). Jesus said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto *babes*" (Matt. 11:25). "Babes," little ones, are being called, and not the wisest, strongest, most handsome, wealthiest, etc., of mankind. When we think on this subject and consider the backgrounds, it is startling to realize that God calls the humble, the meek, and the lowly, and that from these will be selected the Church in glory, who will enjoy the promised future role with Jesus as their Lord. God's ways will confound others who are wiser, more noble, and even seemingly more courageous in many respects (1 Cor. 1:27,28). However, true courage is realizing that we can do nothing in our own strength. The divine plan is marvelous, whereby God, who dwells in the heaven of heavens, has this disposition of respect for, interest in, and concern for us as His children.

Psa. 45:12 **And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.**

The "daughter of Tyre" represents the daughter of Satan. The two true "Rocks" are Jehovah and, under Him, Christ Jesus. The false "rock" is Satan, the "anointed cherub," whose wisdom and beauty excelled when he was originally created. God said the following of Satan, the "king of Tyrus":

"Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

"Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

"By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

"Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity

of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

“All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.” (Ezek. 28:12-19)

We will quote two Scriptures to try to prove there is a relationship between the “daughter of Tyre” and Satan. The first text is Revelation 17:5, “And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” The “man of sin” is the Papacy, the *false* Church, but there is also a “man of God,” that is, The Christ, the *true* Church. When Satan beguiled or tempted the true Church, many fell from favor, and he has been active ever since, especially during the Dark Ages, doing his nefarious deeds through the mechanism of the false Church down here. As the “god of this world,” he operated first through the Roman Empire and the Caesars and subsequently through the Holy Roman Empire and a false Church that has deceived mankind (2 Cor. 4:4). From this perspective, just as God had a “daughter,” so Satan had a “daughter.”

Psalm 45 is not usually considered in depth, and for many years, we were careful with regard to doing so, for there is a tendency to give quick explanations without considerable or sufficient thought. We believe that the true Church and the false Church are both daughters and that the “daughter of Tyre” is the “mother of harlots,” the “harlots” being a correspondency to the Great Company class. Thus there is a dual application. Satan is very brilliant, and wanting to be like God, he counterfeited what God did and distorted the original thinking for his personal glory and aggrandizement.

True (Daughter of God)		False (Daughter of Satan)	
<u>Little Flock</u>	<u>Great Company</u>	<u>False Little Flock</u>	<u>False Great Company</u>
Rebekah	Handmaids	Harlot mother	Harlot daughters

The second helpful text is Revelation 3:9, “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” In the Book of Revelation, the literal takes on a spiritual application, so this class of individuals called “Jews” symbolizes those who were falsely claiming to be *Christians*, the people of God. Just as God said of the nation of Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” so Satan has had a false Israel, a counterfeit (Amos 3:2). Notice the term “*synagogue* of Satan,” meaning the church, ecclesia, or arrangement into which Satan has entered to mastermind deceit. He has been successful in drawing a multitude after him. In almost everything he does, he copies Jehovah, who is the height of intellect. When Lucifer was created, God complimented him as being “perfect in beauty” and praised his singing and great intelligence. In fact, Lucifer appeared to be wiser than the Logos, but the Logos was learning the Father’s methods. Being intensely enamored of his Heavenly Father helped the Logos not to be led astray, as Lucifer was by his own brilliance. Lucifer’s attributes became a handicap so that he wanted to ascend and be like God. Therefore, the “synagogue of Satan” is the “church of Satan,” particularly the Roman Catholic Church.

“The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.” In the Kingdom, those who are now of the synagogue of Satan will have to come and worship before the feet of The Christ, Head and body (Rev. 3:9). In other words, those of the false Church will have to acknowledge those of the true Church in order to get life and be forgiven for their false claims and cruel treatment of the true Church. Each pope, for instance, will have to spit out his false words and claims, admitting they were blasphemous.

Q: To receive forgiveness, the three supposed comforters had to ask Job to pray for them. In the Kingdom, will popes have to ask the Church to pray to the Father for their forgiveness?

A: We do not know the exact mechanics, but certainly the popes will have to individually humble themselves if they want to go up the highway of holiness. The books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation all emphasize this necessary humbling aspect. However, rather than go into such Scriptures now, we are merely trying to identify, with some degree of accuracy if possible, the prominent characters in Psalm 45.

“Even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.” The notable and powerful rulers, kings, leaders, and personalities down through history, many of whom have been praised and/or beatified as saints, will have to give cognition to The Christ. *Public sin* has to be *publicly* acknowledged with a *public* asking for forgiveness. Private and public sins are handled differently. One who commits a public sin should publicly amend, retract, or seek forgiveness for the situation as soon as possible.

Psa. 45:13 The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

A comparison is being made with the previous verse—the “daughter of Tyre [Satan]” versus the “king’s [Jehovah’s] daughter.” The King’s daughter beyond the veil is “all glorious within.” In the present life, the flesh is the problem, so when the flesh is removed and the soul is given a perfect spirit body, the warfare will cease, and the true being of each of the Church class will be seen for what it really is. Even though such individuals are fallen in the flesh in the present life, their true desire, as will be seen, is for perfection. The fallen flesh is such an inhibiting factor that the saints cannot really manifest their true being until their resurrection. Incidentally, we have to be careful lest we overly condemn ourselves in some instances and get into an extreme down state instead of running to the throne of grace to ask for forgiveness and help.

Comment: The identity of the “king” varies from verse to verse depending on context (see verses 1,5,9,11,13-15). King Jehovah’s daughter will marry His Son, King Jesus. In the term “*kings’ daughters*,” the “kings” (plural) are the kings of this world—and hence are different from the “king” (singular) in the term “*king’s daughter*,” meaning Jehovah, the “King” over all.

Reply: Yes. The Bride class is called out of the various nations, with the call going westward particularly but not exclusively. Great works, of which we know practically nothing, have also been accomplished in India, China, and Japan.

Comment: The glorified Bride’s “clothing is of wrought gold [the divine nature].”

Psa. 45:14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

Psa. 45:15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king’s palace.

“She [the true Church] shall be brought unto the king [Jehovah] in raiment of [fine] needlework [for the wedding]: [and] the virgins her companions [the Great Company] that follow her shall [subsequently, at a later time] be brought unto thee [for the marriage supper]. With gladness and rejoicing shall they [the Church] be brought: they [the Church] shall enter into the king’s [Jehovah’s] palace.” To define and understand the terms, we have to give some background reasoning.

When complete in earth’s atmosphere, the Church will first come to Jesus, but they will

subsequently be proclaimed before the whole heavenly host. The Father, who dwells in the heaven of heavens, will be at the wedding. The Father and the Son each have a separate palace. Therefore, for the Church to enter Jehovah's palace means they will be there for a particular purpose, namely, the wedding. The Great Company will not be at the wedding but will attend the marriage supper, a later separate event (Rev. 19:7-9).

The Father calls and chooses the Bride, and He chose the husband of the Bride. "Gladness and rejoicing" refer to the acclamation that will be going on with the initial grand welcome of the Bride. When Jesus made his calling and election sure, and received his resurrection and ascended to heaven, there was a ten-day hiatus, or period of silence, down here prior to Pentecost. During that time, he was being feted in heaven with the cry "Worthy is the Lamb" (Rev. 5:12). The Church will be similarly honored in heaven while the Great Company class experience a silence back here on earth (Rev. 8:1).

"They [the Church] shall enter into the king's [Jehovah's] palace" for the formal occasion of the wedding. The Great Company class will see God and have many other liberties and favors because of their relationship with the Bride, the Queen, but to have them present at this point would entail too much time, for when the Great Company are complete, the Kingdom Age will be beginning. The marriage ceremony will be not only a wedding but also an enthronement to sit on a seat of power and reign. Moreover, we do not see the Great Company getting special praise, for they are a *rescued* class.

Q: Will the marriage take place in the Father's palace, and then the reception, or marriage supper, happen later in Jesus' own residence when the Great Company is present?

A: Yes, and in addition to the marriage supper in heaven, there will be a later supper down here—a "feast of fat things" upon the mountain (Isa. 25:6). Not much detail is provided on the memorialization down here at the inauguration of the Kingdom.

Following the completion of the Church will come a three-year period before even the Great Company class are finished. In those three years, a lot of other things will happen. And after the Great Company finish their course, much cleanup work will have to be done. For example, seven months will be required just for the dead in Israel to be buried (Ezek. 39:12). There will not be much of a reign during those seven months in the sense that we think of a reign because every citizen will have to participate in burying the dead to cleanse the land.

Q: Who will be rejoicing in verse 15?

A: Two separate rejoicings will occur at two different time periods. For example, when a new king of Persia selected a queen following the death of the former king, a feast of fat things was held on the palatial grounds with the people of the empire congregating for the two-month festivity. The rejoicing of verse 15 is private for the Church at the wedding. It will occur during the half hour of silence while the Great Company are still down here. When the half hour ends, the Great Company will be informed that the Bride has made herself ready, and they will then have to go through a period of washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14).

Psa. 45:16 **Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.**

The "fathers" are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc.—the Ancient Worthies of old. Instead of being the "fathers" of the Bride class, the Ancient Worthies will be the "children." It was prophesied of Rebekah, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess

the gate of those which hate them” (Gen. 24:60). Jesus, the Second Adam, will be the age-lasting Father of the regenerated race of Adam, and the Church, the Second Eve, will be the mother. Mankind will come forth from the tomb as children of The Christ. Scriptures in the Song of Solomon and elsewhere clarify this subject. The awakening of the human race from the tomb will be a new birth, a new opportunity.

The Church (with Jesus)—that is, The Christ—will make the Ancient Worthies “princes in all the earth.” In Ezekiel’s Temple, a “prince” will preside in a rotating office, sitting in the east gate as a *civil* ruler, but he will not go into the Most Holy, which pertains to the *ecclesiastical* aspect. Church and state will function together in the Kingdom, being in harmony with each other, yet the roles will be separate.

Comment: Instead of being the progenitors of the Gospel Age more-than-overcomers, the Ancient Worthies will become the children.

Psa. 45:17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

“I [David] will make thy [Jesus’] name to be remembered in all generations.” The Bible, the standard of truth, will be a witness in the Kingdom Age. The people will praise primarily Jesus (and only secondarily the Church) forever and ever because the man seen at the beginning of the Psalm riding on a horse with a sword at his side is Jesus (verses 3 and 4). The general mood or main thrust of Psalm 45 is to explain the relationship between Jesus and his Church, between the Bridegroom and his Bride. However, God is brought into the Psalm because He is the Author of the whole arrangement. The Psalm shows due acknowledgment being given to the Heavenly Father, even though the emphasis is slanted toward Jesus and the Church, generally speaking.

The Psalms will be sung in the Kingdom Age. God has arranged not only for a Temple to be built but also for singers, music, and words for the music. The New Covenant will be much like the old Law Covenant, with Jesus being the Mediator instead of Moses. The principles of the two covenants are the same. The Old Testament Law should not be diminished because it is *God’s* thinking. The Gospel Age is an age of mercy to a certain class, and the Kingdom Age will be an age of mercy to the remainder of mankind. At the expiration of those two ages—that is, as the saved of mankind enter the ages of ages—the Law will be the standard forever. No disobedience will be tolerated henceforth.

PSALM 46

The Pastor wrote extensively on several Psalms, of which this is one. However, we think an aspect that is usually not seen applies to Psalm 46. Therefore, rather than to spend considerable time studying this Psalm, we would like to move more quickly because other Psalms are crucial to the understanding of prophecy. Psalm 46 has a bearing on prophecy but in a different way, so we will call attention to something that is usually not recognized.

Psa. 46:0 To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

“To the chief Musician”—that is, to the director of the singing and the playing of musical instruments on the occasion when this Psalm is performed. The phrase “for the sons of Korah” suggests that a special choral group will sing this song “upon Alamoth,” but what is meant by the term “Alamoth”?

For years, a challenge was advertised to see if anyone could find a typographical error in the

King James Bible. A rare error has endured in this superscription for more than 300 years from the time the King James translation was completed in 1611. The superscription reads, “A Song upon Alamoth,” but a note in the margins of some older King James Bibles says, “That is, in the treble voice.” Then “1 Chron. 15:2” is added, but the text should be “1 Chron. 15:20.” However, the corrected marginal reference still does not explain “Alamoth.” 1 Chronicles 15:20 reads, “And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth.” There the marginal note is, “That is, virginal or treble.” The translators thought the song was to be sung by a choir of female voices, but that reasoning does not make sense, even though many Hebrew scholars concur. Women were not allowed in the Inner Court of Solomon’s Temple, so all singers had to be males. Other scholars think “Alamoth” means that boys would be singing, for they have higher, more feminine-sounding voices, but even that reasoning does not make sense because only men could sing in the Temple service.

Comment: Young’s *Analytical Concordance* states, “A term derived from *Almah* ‘a virgin,’ in reference to the higher pitch of her voice when compared with that of an adult male’s.”

Comment: An interlinear translation has, “To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song for the Virgins.”

Actually, the word “Alamoth” means “maidens.” Although maidens are virgins, the term “maidens” is more harmonious. Psalm 46 is normally given only one application, but it is very embracive, for it has *three* applications in a *progressive* fulfillment. Rather than the song being “upon [an] Alamoth,” it is *about maidens*. Since Hebrew prepositions have at least ten different meanings, the context must be understood in order to translate the correct English word. Psalm 46 is “A Song for Maidens.”

The “maidens” are speaking in verse 1: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” These maidens start with the true Church, continue with the Great Company class, and finally apply to the Holy Remnant in Israel. Thus three classes are involved, and each class picks up the strain when the application comes that is pertinent.

Verses 4 and 5 say, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of *her*; *she* shall not be moved: God shall help *her*, and that right early.” With the pronouns “*her*” and “*she*,” the feminine gender is given, corroborating the thought of “maidens.”

Verses 7 and 11 are identical. Thus the Psalm ends twice, as it were, with the theme “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” When the word “Jacob” is used, we usually think of natural Israel, an earthly application. Although Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel,” the word “Israel” has multiple applications: (1) true natural Israel; (2) false, or nominal, fleshly Israel; (3) true spiritual Israel; and (4) false, or nominal, spiritual Israel. The point is that “Jacob” refers to the *earthly* aspect.

We have discussed the mood or framework of Psalm 46, but certain adjustments have to be made as we go along. Now we will start to consider this Psalm verse by verse.

Psa. 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Verse 1 has a peculiar and pertinent application to the true Church, but we know from other Scriptures that the true Church will not enter into the great Time of Trouble. The Scriptures clearly show that the last members of the true Church—whoever they are—will suffer persecution, but that persecution precedes the broader term “the Time of Trouble.” True

Christians have developed such a high degree of faith and trust in God that it will be maintained no matter what happens. They know He is their only hope. Thus verse 1 refers to the spirit that is within the feet members and does not mean they will enter the general Time of Trouble. Of several pictures, we will consider one to prove this point.

When the image is smitten, when the nominal Church ceases to exist altogether, much tumult and violence will result. “And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus *with violence* shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all” (Rev. 18:21). The fall of “that great city Babylon” pertains particularly to the nations of Christendom. Therefore, the true Church has to go off the scene before the fall of the nominal Church. In fact, the fall of the church systems will be an evidence that the true Church is complete and with Jesus. Of those who have a spiritual hope of living with Jesus, only the Great Company will remain down here at that time.

The feet members will need the confidence expressed in verse 1 in order to be faithful when the persecution comes. The persecution will manifest the degree of faith in each Christian—whether one is a man or a child in development. Thus the persecution will be a sorting element among the consecrated.

Q: Is verse 1 talking about every time of trouble that the Christian experiences?

A: The reference is to all times of trouble, but the Psalm is leading up to the particular great Time of Trouble. In the past, the true people of God, including the Ancient Worthies, suffered violent deaths; they were true to their conviction in their periods of trouble. However, the casting of the “mountains” (plural) into the midst of the sea is different. Verse 2 is referring not to the defeat of one nation by another but to worldwide trouble “such as never was since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1). Both are true. God is a refuge and gives those of the true Church, who have developed a strong character, the necessary grace to be faithful in *any* time of trouble. However, Psalm 46 is particularly referring to a specific trouble that is coming on the feet members.

Psa. 46:2 **Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**

The true Church will not fear “though the earth be removed.” This Psalm is *progressive*, for the earth has not yet been “removed.” We are reminded of an explanation by the Apostle Peter: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). In the next verse, he added, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be [since we have the knowledge and expectation that such a crisis will arise]?” We will not fear “though the mountains be carried into the midst [or heart] of the sea.”

Psa. 46:3 **Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.**

When the waters “roar and be troubled” is like explaining the recent Tsunami. Prior to that occurrence, the waves built up, but the waves were nothing until they crashed onto the shore and surged inland, causing great devastation. The same principle applies to an earthquake. Tremors occur first, before the actual rupture of the earth through an explosion that starts the lava flowing. Accordingly, the troubling of the waters of the sea is symptomatic of an explosion of the elements that is about to take place, figuratively speaking. Verse 3 is like an introduction to, or a preparation for, something that has not yet happened.

Comment: Many misunderstand verse 3 by giving a present application.

Reply: Yes, the rupture is yet future.

Comment: Both uses of the word “though” are supplied in the King James. In an interlinear translation, verse 3 is rendered, “Let its waters foam, ... let the mountains shake in a swelling.” The real confidence of the feet members is unshakable, their sentiment being, “Let it happen, for God is our refuge and nothing will persuade us, though the earth implode.”

Reply: Yes. Especially the Hebrew commentators on Scripture say in effect, “No matter what happens,” meaning that their confidence in God will remain constant. In this instance, “Selah” is not an “Amen, so be it” but is like a sealing phrase, indicating full confidence in God. The thought is, “Take note of the preceding remark, for it is important information for the child of God to know.”

Psa. 46:4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” Any mighty river commences with rivulets. Usually the source is bubbling springs that give no hint of how tremendous the river will become; they merely show the early development or the making of the river.

The Pastor usually emphasized that the “river” of God applies to the Kingdom Age. As an illustration, the waters that will go out from Ezekiel’s Temple start as a little stream and then increase and become abundant. The waters will broaden and get deeper until a person has to swim. Therefore, verse 4 is speaking not about the extending tributaries of a giant river at its *end* but about the small rivulets that make up the river at its source, or *beginning*. The focus is not on the “river” but on the “streams,” the rivulets, of that river. As the spiritual class, we are given information about the Kingdom Age in advance, in the present age, before the Kingdom is established. In fact, as we grow and mature, it is as if we are living in the next age because the Scriptures provide much information on the rivulets—here a little, there a little—that keeps increasing. The true Church of God are made glad and happy—they rejoice—knowing that eventually the Kingdom will be a refreshment and a blessing to the entire human race.

Q: Is this “river” a reference in any sense to the river that came out of the Garden of Eden?

A: Yes, verse 4 definitely hearkens back to the Garden of Eden. The Kingdom will be like a Second Eden under the Second Adam and the Second Eve. Restitution includes restoration to a Garden of Eden effect. Out of Eden went forth a river that parted into four heads (Gen. 2:10). Although the four rivers symbolize four classes who will get life, the emphasis here in verse 4 is on the *source* of the river, not on the future results.

Q: Are we enjoying the sources of the river at the present time?

A: We enjoy the sources now with the expectation or realization they will eventuate in a river of truth that will flood the world with righteousness. For instance, the Book of Revelation tells about the river that will come out of the throne of God and the Lamb, and trees of life will develop as a result of that wonderful river (Rev. 22:1,2). But we are going back to the *source* of the river, which is Eden or the Temple from one particular standpoint.

Even though the Time of Trouble has not yet come, the Church class are aware of it and are

forewarned, and they are blessed with the opportunity of availing themselves of a sufficiency of information from the Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit and prayer are absolutely necessary to empower true Christians to go through some of the experiences they will have.

Q: What is the thought of the "city of God"? Future tense is used: "the streams whereof *shall* make glad the city of God." Has that not happened yet?

A: The Time of Trouble has not started, but we are living in the end time, an evidence being that Israel is a nation again. We see the development of nuclear energy, chemical warfare, and disease bombs with the potential to exterminate the human race. The terrorists have the mentality to destroy life. At least Iran is open in its animosity, saying that when the country gets the nuclear bomb, it will be used. Meanwhile, many in the Western world think they can reason with such radical thinking.

In the spiritual promises of the Old Testament, the Temple is the centerpiece of the city of Jerusalem. The city is more administrative, applying to the disbursement and functional aspect of the Kingdom, whereas the Temple pertains to the removal of sin. The problem is with sin and evildoers, which hinder the progress of many in submitting to the truth. They do not consecrate because instead of thinking of the reward, which is the proper aspect Joshua and Caleb had in connection with fighting the giants in the land, they think of the multiple problems that would follow.

What about the expression "the holy place of the tabernacles [plural] of the most High"? There are at least two avenues of interpretation for the plurality of the word "tabernacles." One avenue is that historically, for a brief period of time just before the completion of Moses' Tabernacle, there were two tabernacles in the wilderness. The earlier tabernacle phased out when it was replaced by the more definitive Tabernacle with all of its services. There were also two tabernacles in David's later years. Wanting the Temple to be built in Jerusalem, he brought the Ark of the Covenant to the city and made a temporary tent for it. Meanwhile, the Tabernacle curtains, boards, Brazen Altar, etc., were in Gibeah. However, the setting of this Psalm is the Church class down here at the end of the age.

Comment: Some of the verses in this Psalm are past tense, even though the event is future, and some verses are future tense.

Reply: A lot depends on the translation that is read, for Hebrew verbs, unlike those of other languages, have almost nothing to delineate the tense. The tense is determined by context.

Psa. 46:5 **God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.**

"God is in the midst of her." A feminine pronoun is used for this class of maidens. Leeser states, "God shall help *her* [the true Church] in the dawning of *her* morning," that is, in *her* resurrection, in contrast to the *general* awakening of mankind from the tomb. The Little Flock are a *firstborn* class. In the larger sense, the Great Company is included in the "church of the firstborn."

The "dawning" of the morning refers to when the saints wake up on the other side of the veil, when they get the fruition of their hopes. Then there will be a fullness of light. Resurrection is usually associated with dawning.

Comment: A marginal reference is 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the

day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

Reply: Yes, at that time, when one is resurrected on the spiritual plane, the day star arises in his heart as a reality.

“God shall help her.” How wonderful that the necessary grace will be provided! When the feet members are in the kind of trouble that conditions are shaping up to, the world will not be able to understand their behavior, stand, and position. For example, with the secularists trying to take God out of the vocabulary, other Christians will say to us, “Don’t you want to do something about this situation? How can you call yourself a Christian? Line up with us.” The situation will be very trying. But to all who urge a confederacy, we are to stand apart, not joining in, and “neither fear ... their fear, nor be afraid” (Isa. 8:12).

Comment: Such thoughts are scary for the flesh. We have to continually remind ourselves that these conditions were prophesied and that God will control the outcome. Whatever happens, we need to have the sentiments of verses 1-3.

Reply: What is declining and going down now is not Satan’s empire but the worship of God and Christ. Conditions are even worse in Europe.

Psa. 46:6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

The smiting of the image will start the removal of the kingdoms. The smiting will be the Armageddon crash, like a nuclear explosion, and not a grinding process, as many believe. The wind will completely remove all semblance of what previously existed. The kingdoms of this world will be *removed*.

While the Great Company are not mentioned in this Psalm, they are also maidens, but they are foolish virgins. When the true Church is gone, the Great Company will say, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him [God]: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Hab. 3:17,18). The Great Company will realize their in-between condition—that the true Church is gone but that the Ancient Worthies have not yet been installed as princes in the earth. The Heavenly Father will help the Great Company, who will rejoice and be an inspiration and a help to the Holy Remnant. In fact, that will be their primary mission once the true Church is beyond the veil. Those who are left behind will want to witness, and their work will be to give a message to Israel about the Kingdom. No longer will the normal consecration message be in order.

Psa. 46:7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Here those comprising the inspired Holy Remnant are speaking. Having natural hopes, they will be looking to survive the Time of Trouble. Their names will be “found written in the book” of life for survival (Dan. 12:1), “written among the living in Jerusalem” (Isa. 4:3). With the Ancient Worthies of the past, it seems likely they will have an opportunity for a spirit change at the end of the Kingdom Age.

The turning point for the Holy Remnant will be when they look upon him “whom they have pierced, and ... mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10). That shocking experience will be

very real to them. We often think what our reaction would be if we were a Jew in Jerusalem and saw a hologram of the Crucifixion in the sky. That occurrence will remove all blindness with regard to Jesus' being their Messiah.

Verses 7 and 11 are of the same nature, being like an opening stanza and a closing refrain, respectively. They bring us into an area for which we, as Bible students, have not given much consideration heretofore because we are more concerned with other matters.

“The LORD of hosts [Jehovah] is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.” The emphasis is on the action being taken. The Old Testament does not contain much information on the personality of Jesus as the Logos. Because the Scriptures are low-key on this subject, the Jewish nation never had the problem of a Triune God. From the beginning, they were cultured to worship *one* personality, *one* God. Instead their problem was along a slightly different slant.

Comment: For the Orthodox Jew, Christianity is repugnant because of the claim that Jesus is God the Son, one of the three components of the Trinity.

Psa. 46:8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

Psa. 46:9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

In similar terminology used elsewhere in Scripture, the focus of the last expression in verse 8, “what desolations he [Jehovah] hath made in the earth,” might be thought of by some as applying to all Israel, but that is not the case, for verse 9 indicates the subject matter is an *international* arena. “He maketh wars to cease *unto the end of the earth*.” In other places, the focus is usually Europe, the Mideast, or all of the land of Israel, but David was enlarging the equation to a *worldwide* picture, for which Bible students, whose focus is more immediate, are generally not prepared. However, verse 9 will take place at a time that should be of great interest to us.

The smiting of the image is still localized, for the focus of attention is primarily on the ten powers of Europe, of which the Jehu picture, among a couple of other pictures, helps us to understand what God intends to do in connection with the rise to power and the fall of mystic Babylon. After all, the Papacy is geographically centered in Europe. As explained by the Pastor, we usually think of the image of the beast as being associated with England and Ireland. That statement is true with regard to the initial explanation of the growth and development of Protestant power. Catholic power prevails in Europe, but in England is another budding relationship, for Ireland really phased out of the picture as time went on. Therefore, the Church of England and the United States are much larger in the picture.

Verse 8 is stated in past tense: “Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he *hath made* in [all] the earth.” This scenario begins in Israel, for that nation indicates where we are on the stream of time, and many clues help us. However, now we are getting into deeper waters from another standpoint, for the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, is the center feature of causing the desolations. The Messiah aspect is not in this picture in that sense but comes in later. The wording shows that when the Kingdom starts, all nations will see it as being *God's*. The Lord's Prayer is directed to *God*, which is the proper focus: “Our *Father* which art in heaven, Hallowed be *thy* name” (Matt. 6:9,10). Jehovah will remove from the picture later, but He will be *greatly* involved in the initiation of the Kingdom and the awakening of the world to the fact that a new power has come into existence. He will arise and stand awesomely in the earth (Psa. 82:8; Isa. 2:19-21).

God “maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth,” but how will He do this in areas such as

China, the islands of Indonesia, and Africa? The entire world is in arms, including Muslim countries. For example, the Muslims in Indonesia are putting professed Christians to death by the millions, and terrible slaughter and genocide occur in Africa. These nations are far removed from Israel, the center stage of attraction. Outside the perimeter of Israel, the whole world is armed—a condition that is very unusual. The nations are all trafficking in arms, and depending on the country, the biggest source of income comes from the sale of weapons to people in other nations.

Q: Was Jesus referring to this condition in our day when he said that if God did not intervene, no flesh would be saved (Matt. 24:22)? A lot of activity is going on.

A: That may well be, for the world is getting into nuclear, biological, and mechanical warfare that could very easily wipe out all civilization if done in abundance. Radioactivity is extremely destructive, and there is intense hatred of Muslim against Muslim, as well as Muslim against Christianity.

After the Lord has saved Israel in the Middle East, this other condition will still exist, especially among nations at a great distance. With marine travel, mountainous terrain, etc., separating these other nations, God will deal with them to break the bow, cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot to the end of the earth. But how will He accomplish this? What method will He use to make all wars cease?

Where are the Jews today? We cannot take a true census of Jewry throughout the earth because, for example, the many who live in China have lost their identity. Since Jews are scattered all over the earth, something has to happen to show that God is on their side and is now determined to act. Some severe judgments of nature will cause them to get out of these other countries. We do not think a Jewish army will fight in China and Japan, for numerically and geographically speaking, it is not practical or possible for Israel to do so. Therefore, the Jews in those countries will have to be removed by some other method.

Q: Is what happened to Jonah a possibility in principle? The sailors cast him overboard because the storm was attributed to him.

A: When Jonah identified himself as a Jew, those on the ship could see that problems had occurred ever since he became a passenger.

We think the international news media, the computer network, will quickly go into disarray in the great Time of Trouble, that is, when real war takes place. The current condition of cohesion will no longer exist. Not only will there be great confusion as to what is happening, but also, at the same time, there will be great interest.

In time of war, the news media is usually controlled by its own leaders. For example, after several generations went by with no outside news coming into Russia and other communist countries, the relatively few Christians in those nations thought they were the only ones alive. Therefore, God will identify Himself on behalf of Jacob, His people, in these various nations, and the other inhabitants will realize over a period of time that this strange element exists in their midst.

The cleanup of burying the dead in Israel, the casualties of Jacob's Trouble, will take seven months. The stench from the huge number of dead bodies will be one factor. "Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood" (Isa. 34:3).

Comment: Isaiah 60:1-3 reads, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.”

Reply: On the one hand, when the Kingdom is established and the cleanup process takes place—when the Ancient Worthies, the “princes,” are in place and the government of Israel is beginning to function—other nations will see the prosperity and the unusual and miraculous favor and blessings that are occurring on this people, who were previously hated. On the other hand, other nations will be recipients of disfavor. Therefore, they will want to be healed and to share in the Kingdom blessings. This desire will help start the conversion of the Gentile nations to become Israelites. In humility, their wanting to identify themselves with Israel will be almost like consecration. “In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:23).

It will take a little time for the news to get out of the great deliverance in Israel, and during that time period, God Himself will establish His Kingdom. What will be happening in Israel at that time is another subject. Certain Psalms provide information along that line. The point is that the inauguration of the Kingdom will not be seen internationally, but it will start with the destruction of Gog and Magog. From that day forward, the stone that smites the image will grow. Not only will the stone replace the image, but it will replace all of the other kingdoms of the earth as well.

At the present time, the stone is only the Church class, but after it strikes the image and begins to grow, the stone will be Jewish. That stone will then grow and grow and grow until it fills the whole earth. Following the great Time of Trouble with the anarchy, some years will be involved in the cleanup process and the breaking of “swords into plowshares, and ... spears into pruninghooks” in all the earth (Isa. 2:4). The Scriptures indicate that that responsibility will be primarily Jehovah’s.

Comment: Isaiah 45:20,22,23 reads, “Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.... Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

Reply: Yes, that text is pertinent. Generally speaking, brethren have not delved into this aspect. There is much to learn on the cardinal features of the establishment of the Kingdom.

Q: In what way will the clause in verse 6 “the earth melted” be fulfilled? Will this take place when the stone smites the image? Will that event be the beginning of the reign?

A: The former civil governments will have to be changed. Thus they will “melt” and be replaced by their identity with the stone, which originally, some years earlier, will have broken down Europe. The stone will grow and grow until it fills the earth. In other words, the melting will not occur with the *initial* smiting of the image but with the growing of the stone.

Q: Will the melting be the dissolution of the kingdoms of earth by anarchy?

A: That will be one element of the melting. The people will be dissatisfied with the former conditions and look forward to God’s leadership, which will not deprive them of the common

decency of humanity. So many nations, Muslim and otherwise, have been ruled by despots. The people under these former dictatorships will see that the Kingdom is their opportunity to become identified with this new power, the Lord of hosts. This period, which will take time, is described as beating the swords into plowshares, etc. The armaments will be converted into beneficial agricultural implements.

To summarize, verses 8 and 9 show that *Jehovah*, the Lord of hosts, will make desolations in the earth, cause wars to cease to the ends of the earth, break the bows, cut the spears asunder, and burn the chariots with fire. As stated in the Lord's Prayer, *God's will is to be done on earth*. Reverence will attend the Heavenly Father, for *He* is the Author of salvation. The allusion is to the growth of the stone after Jacob's Trouble. Israel is not identified with that stone at present because the Church is the stone that initially strikes the image, but after that happens, the stone will later become Israel under the New Covenant.

Psa. 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Verse 10 refers to the complete bowing of the knee to the one Deity, to the God of Israel.

Comment: The "still small voice" occurs first, following the wind, earthquake, and fire (1 Kings 19:12).

Reply: Some *years* will be involved in setting up order in the earth. From a definite beginning, that order will grow and grow. After the Lord of hosts has established His authority, then Christ will be the "man" of God's own choosing, for God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus Christ] whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). We will not, at this time, go into what Jesus and the Church will be doing during this interim period. The Lord God of hosts controls every atom in the earth. Having made the earth, He can do anything He wants by master computer or remote control, as it were. He knows the earth inside out and has arranged that all the power of the atom is in His hands. However, the instruction on moral matters is another realm. To teach people love, justice, truth, honesty, etc., is a different equation that will require *power* in order to be successfully accomplished.

Comment: Changing the moral character of the world in the Kingdom Age is a responsibility God has given to Christ and the Church.

Psa. 46:11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Zechariah 9:15,16 states, "The LORD of hosts shall defend them.... And the LORD their God shall save them." The name "LORD of hosts" was commonly used in the Book of Zechariah because it describes His *modus operandi*. He is the God of wrath and order first. Much later He will be seen as the God of love (1 John 4:8). The breaking down has to precede the establishment of the New Covenant.

As we go on, Lord willing, the Psalms will reveal considerable information that is not in other books of the Bible. This information in the Psalms has been overlooked because of the nature of the instruction.

PSALM 47

Psa. 47:0 To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

As we start to read Psalm 47, it sounds right away like a sequel to Psalm 46. Even the superscriptions are similar, except that this one does not say, “A Song upon Alamo.”

Comment: The Pastor said that Psalm 47 was probably written for the occasion of bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. That comment would apply to the type.

Psa. 47:1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

Psa. 47:2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

“O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the LORD most high is terrible [awesome].” The center of attraction continues to be Jehovah. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we can picture David clapping his hands, dancing, and praising God in every way he could.

Q: Does the phrase “with the voice of triumph” express David’s expectations for Jehovah to eventually rule the earth?

A: Through the power and overruling of the Holy Spirit, David spoke in a much larger frame than his mood at the time he uttered these expressions. He was recording his experiences both in writing and to music. Therefore, what his particular experience was back there is a matter of reasonable guesswork.

How interesting that Jehovah of hosts is called “a great King over all the earth”! At the last and most crucial moment, when people wonder if there is a God, He will step in with all His thunder and glory. At that time, He will be seen as the new power. The God of the universe will then be in control.

Psa. 47:3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

The nation of Israel was prophetically speaking. “He shall subdue the people under us [natural Israel], and the nations under our feet.” Of course an application would also fit with the true Church, whom the God of Israel will make kings and priests underneath His Son. The Christ will take over subsequent to the events described.

Psa. 47:4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

Generally speaking, “Jacob” refers to natural Israel.

Comment: The statement Jehovah “shall choose our inheritance for us” shows that natural Israel will have fully acquiesced to His will at that time.

Reply: Yes, that submission is so needful.

Here the Psalms study ceased. Bro. Frank finished his earthly course on March 4, 2006.

Psa. 47:5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Psa. 47:6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

Psa. 47:7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

Psa. 47:8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

Psa. 47:9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.