

# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

God's Spiritual Creation

TIMELY TOPICS

"GIMPERS"

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

THE PARABLES OF CHRIST

WHAT LACK I YET?

ATTAINING PERFECTION

CHRISTIAN YOUTH IN THESE TIMES

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THIS IS YOUR HOUR

# Megiddo Message

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L. T. NICHOLS, *Founder*

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A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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## Editorially Speaking...

Think!

OUR MINDS are most mysterious, an undefined combination of good and evil. The prophet Jeremiah describes them: "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." To direct our thoughts intelligently and to the glory of God means work.

Naturally our thoughts are like a child on the streets after dark, playing at random. When we watch where our thoughts will wander when set loose, we see how low and groveling we naturally are. James calls them "earthly, sensual, devilish." What mire and filth! Why will we prowl around in such garbage cans of life when we can eat at the Lord's table!

God offers us the highest and noblest. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." We must cultivate the power to dictate to the brain the course of our thoughts. We know we shall never gain entrance to the Eternal City if we allow our thoughts to play, dream, or drift.

If we are working, we should keep our thoughts on our work; if our work requires no conscious thought, we should meditate. But never should we allow our thoughts to wander aimlessly.

A worthy writer once said, "Most of us never use one-half the vast reservoirs of personality and will power that we already have within us; the rich untapped resources of achievement we have never drawn upon. And the reason we have never opened up these hidden storehouses of power is because we never thought our way into them."

Our minds will not automatically direct themselves. We must think consciously and creatively to glorify God. But the control of the thought machine is perfectly possible. Nothing outside our brain prevents us from controlling what goes on in it. We know it is a big work to accomplish. It requires greater power than to take a city (Prov. 16:32), even more than to gain the whole world, for Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" The losing of our own soul lies within the compass of our own mind.

It is well to remember that we all have will power enough if only we use it in the right direction. We are compassed about with a whole cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1)—we should take hold of ourselves and follow these examples.

Your thoughts are the molds

which will shape all your life—

As one thinks in his heart, so is he.

And sin's entering wedge is a thought  
harbored close

From which Jesus would want you to flee.

We go through life following our strongest thoughts. Therefore, our character and our destiny are at every moment within our own hands. It is ours to decide what our thoughts will be; it is ours to choose the master whom we will serve. ●●



# God's *SPIRITUAL* Creation

## PRAYER

O God most holy, most wonderful, Thy power and glory is reflected in the beauty and majesty of the world which Thou hast created, and Thou hast given us hearts which respond to beauty, truth and love. We come before Thee with thankful hearts for all the evidences of Thy goodness in the world around us, and with repentant spirits for having failed so often to fix our eyes and thoughts on whatsoever things are lovely and true and of good report.

We thank Thee for the knowledge of the great things of Thy law that have been revealed to us, that we are familiar with Thy flawless plan for the earth and its inhabitants.

Deliver us we pray from the folly of allowing our mind to dwell long on those things which would retard our growth into holiness, things which would feed our fears, or increase our doubts, or deflect us from the high and wholesome purpose to which we have dedicated our lives.

So fill us with Thy love and the will to obey Thy summons that we may find no weariness in well doing, seek no vacation from faithfulness, no discharge in the war against the flesh, no compromise in our allegiance to the truth.

Blessed be Thou, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose great mercy we have been born anew to a life of hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us who are kept by Thy power through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

Help us to so long for that immortal life which Christ will bring with Him from heaven that now we will gird the loins of our minds with truth, being sober, alert, watchful, and passing the time of our sojourning here in the fear of doing wrong. As obedient children may we cease fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts in our ignorance, and may the time past of our lives suffice us to have sown to the flesh, and from this time forth, as He which hath called us is holy, so may we be holy, both in word and deed.

Bless the reading of Thy Word and may we open our hearts to receive a blessing. Grant that no heart may leave this house of worship unchanged or uninspired. Grant Thy richest blessing upon all who worship Thee in sincerity and truth. Thou art the God of our salvation. Upon Thee do we wait all the day. Amen.

## DISCOURSE

This is the first of a series of articles which will discuss the first three chapters of Genesis in the light of true Bible teaching.

THE ORIGIN of the world was one of the first problems to engage man's speculative activity. Who made the world? How did the earth originate? Where did it come from? These were among questions constantly asked by philosophers, scientists and thinking men and women from earliest time. And these queries were often answered according to men's own vain, ill-founded ideas, limited by the scope of human experience.

The Bible, however, provides another answer: God, the mighty, eternal God of heaven, made the world, the earth, and all its inhabitants. "Thou, even thou, art Lord, alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all" (Neh. 9:6). "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isa. 45:11, 12).

God is the unchallenged Creator.

But our problem here is the first three chapters of Genesis. Do these chapters describe the literal creation of the earth? or are they an allegory describing a spiritual creation, in other words, the spiritual and moral progress of mankind? We believe the latter to be the Scriptural interpretation, and in harmony with general Bible teaching. Why?

### A Literal Creation?

Can we as rational beings suppose that a God who has lived through all eternity past, and who is the epitome of love, mercy, wisdom and accomplishment, and with unlimited power at His disposal, should have spent all these æons in splendid isolation, never making a world to reflect His creative ability, any work of nature to bless and sustain any creatures He should chance to create, a man to glorify His name? Yet the first three chapters of Genesis to many people picture just this: the Almighty God making His first venture at creation only 6000 years ago, when in six 24-hour days He created the sun, moon and stars, the earth, and everything upon it (and in a most unrealistic order).

Geological formations, the remains of pre-historic men and animals that have been exhumed preclude any such conclusion.

The physical earth or globe upon which we reside has existed for vast periods of time. Scientists, using radioactive dating methods, now place the age of the earth somewhere between 4,000,000,000 and 5,000,000,000 years old. The oldest surface rock to be tested yet is about 3,000,000,000 years old. And think of the ages upon ages required for rock strata to be formed, for the sand grains to be deposited and developed into rock, then cut away by the slow erosion of water to produce a phenomenon such as the Grand Canyon of Colorado.

God's creative abilities have produced far more than this earth. We are told in Psalm 103:17, 18 that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." Through an eternity past, not simply through the past 6000 years, God has had individuals upon whom He could bestow His mercy, people who remembered His commandments to do them.

We do not know just when life began upon the earth; the Bible does not tell us. The origin of man and his relation to other animals has been the subject of endless controversies during the past hundred years. Life on our planet represents an incalculably long period of creative development which was crowned with the ascent of man.

Since the beginning of the century various fossil bones of pre-historic species of man have been discovered. The earliest known fossil hominids have now been dated by the new potassium-argon method at about 2,000,000 years. A *Homo habilis*, identified from bones found in Olduvai Gorge, Tanganyika, dates back 1,750,000 years. Fossilized remains discovered in Europe indicate an age of about 49,000 years. The earth and all creation is only 6000 years old? No! Positively no!

A clue to the time of existence of the physical earth can be found in the wording of Gen. 2:4: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." The word translated "day" in this verse is the Hebrew word *yom*, which has for one of its definitions, "time unlimited, with no reference to literal days." No, the sun, moon and stars and Earth were not created in six literal days six thousand years ago.

### A Spiritual Creation

One of our nation's top news analysts says in a recent publication, "Anyone takes a chance these days who writes for anything further ahead than tomorrow morning's newspaper." In this statement he expresses the apprehension, the feeling of insecurity which grips the heart of America and indeed the whole civilized world. The future is heavily vested in obscurity. Anything could happen, so it seems. Peace talks and disarmament proposals

kindle a flame of hope. Yet no one is ignorant of the fact that we are now living in an era of thermonuclear power which dwarfs the dangers of the atomic tests of only two decades ago.

What then? Things seem pretty haphazard. Indeed, man's history which is written in war and blood, carnage and cruelty seems to have taught but little, save the means of total annihilation.

Yet amid this apparent chaotic condition, a plan is at work, well devised and skillfully executed. This plan affords vision amid obscurity, design amid confusion, pattern amid purposelessness. This plan, though indiscernible to statesmen, politicians and royalty, is clearly seen by the student of Scripture to be slowly but definitely working itself out in the affairs of men, and even now approaching its consummation. The Author of this plan was writing for something further ahead than "tomorrow morning's newspaper," yet no element of chance is involved; for God Almighty is the author. The plan was set in motion nearly six millenniums ago, and the details concerning its progress and consummation were recorded upon the pages of Holy Writ.

One logical approach to the creation narrative is that it is an allegory, an advance blueprint of a work at creating which is still in the process; a spiritual creation in which, during six days or six thousand-year periods—"one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8)—the Almighty plans a new creation upon earth. The first three chapters of Genesis are an outline of this grand plan of the ages, a plan dealing with the moral perfecting and ultimate salvation of man.

For centuries theologians have literalized this passage to their peril. Even as recent as the flight of Apollo 8, it was speculated that the astronauts who read the Bible from the moon stopped at verse 10 of Genesis 1 to avoid theological conflicts and apparent inconsistencies. In the dark, medieval ages of human reasoning, men would accept any fable prescribed by the church, whether a literal six-day creation program enacted six thousand years ago, grass leaping up the shoulders of the hills before ever a single ray of light left the eternal quiver of the sun, the natural man created in the express image of God, or woman from the rib of man. But in the light of modern science and logical reasoning man has become much less gullible, and such unreasonable fables have only made atheists and non-believers. Today when the ordinary layman is conversant with such a variety of astronomical and geological facts concerning the age of earth and heaven, he pronounces such theological inconsistencies as childish and absurd.

This has placed much of the religious world in an uncomfortable position, with their old, venerated fables becoming the subject of mass derision. Some leaders find it convenient to avoid the subjects altogether. Others, determined to save face, are

at present modifying their literal concept of Genesis; in fact, within the last ten years not a few books have appeared, assuring the reading public that science does not prove the Bible wrong. Of course, new theories are diverse (theologians never did agree), yet some suggest that Genesis can be understood figuratively. However, to arrive at a consistent conculsion in harmony with general Bible teaching is our purpose.

### Literal vs Spiritual

The man who sees simply the natural or literal in the first three chapters of Genesis, who thinks it is a literal history of the physical creation of the earth, sun, moon, and stars, sees that which he thinks conflicts with science and reason, from the study of which he can gain no light or understanding. But the person who has studied the Bible and learned to be governed in his study by God-given rules—to compare spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:13), to allow the Almighty to explain His own words and place His own qualifying terms on every statement—learns that the heavens and earth spoken of can refer to the political heavens and earth, or the rulers and those ruled over. He learns that the stars represent the righteous who shall shine in the glorious firmament of the future; and that Christ is the “Sun of righteousness” at whose glorious Second Advent the darkness, sin and ignorance, shall pass away, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

He thus discerns the divine plan of the ages, pointing to a glorious future for the blest inhabitants of the earth. Consequently he is not forced to believe that the natural earth and heaven, contrary to all science and fact, were made about six thousand years ago in six literal days! Neither is he compelled to believe that the natural man—either the dwarf or the giant—is made in the image of God. Nor must he believe that God made a literal snake that walked about on its tail and talked as fluently as man! Nor does he have to believe that God caused to pass before Adam all the beasts, reptiles, insects, and winged creatures and he named them all at first sight; and that, too, before he had a helpmeet! Neither is he put in such a foolish attitude as to believe that God put the natural Adam under an anesthetic and took out one of his ribs from which He made the first woman, and as soon as the man looked upon her he recognized that she was bone of his bones!

In vain have men tried through the ages to find the four rivers which were supposed to part from the river of Eden. These first chapters of Genesis, to be understood, must be seen as an allegory of a spiritual creation. The infinite Being has caused them to be written that we might understand His glorious plan of salvation. By searching we can find out the knowledge which does not lie on the

surface. However, there is knowledge which we shall never possess until more is revealed. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” God has caused to be written all that we need to know in this our mortal state. But in the age to come, when we are, if worthy, made equal to the angels, immortal and incorruptible, endued with a vigor of constitution that shall never decay, strength of intellect that shall never weaken, and a life which shall never end, we can then grow and continue to grow in knowledge and wisdom, with a mind able to grasp and with capabilities enlarged to comprehend the wonders of creation.

Until such a time we must be content to study what God has revealed in His written Word, always bearing in mind that the wisdom of God is in direct opposition to all the false doctrines of men. There is only one method to gain the wisdom of God—we must be governed by certain rules given by the Almighty, and a very important one is found in Isaiah 28:10, “For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” We cannot expect to understand the Genesis allegory by studying only Genesis, but we must compare its similes with those of the rest of the Bible, harmonizing the less obvious with plain Bible teaching. Only then can we hope to arrive at the truth of God’s Word.

. . . . .

In subsequent issues of the MEGIDDO MESSAGE we shall study the first three chapters of Genesis in the light of general Bible teaching; only in this way can we hope to understand and rightly divide the word of truth. We shall see that the symbols of Genesis, when properly defined and elaborated by the other inspired writers, combine to reveal the beautiful, eternal truths of God’s grand plan of the ages.

To introduce the subject, let us outline briefly:

The Bible teaches that this earth was not created in vain, neither was it created to be destroyed by the inventions of man, nor defaced by an ill-behaved society as we see it today. The earth was created to be inhabited by a race of righteous individuals who will carry out God’s purposes perfectly (Isa. 45:18; Num. 14:21). We pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). And we are confident that this prayer of our Lord’s shall meet its fulfillment in the consummation of God’s grand plan of the ages. The initial chapters of Genesis describe the means by which this Utopian state is to be realized—not through a process of literal creation but of *spiritual* creation, which, in simple terms, is the work of cutting, carving, shaping, remolding the *characters* of men and women until they be-

come fit members of a perfect and eternal society.

In another article in this series we shall discuss **The Garden of Eden** as the place where this work of moral perfection is carried on. As a garden is a tract of fertile land which yields to cultivation, so the Garden of God is composed of men and women in whose hearts His Word takes root and flourishes abundantly. Numerous passages of Scripture define the Garden of Eden in this manner and reveal the error of all creed-bound fundamentalists who still insist it to be literal. Song of Solomon 4:12 teaches the garden to be the Church, and Isaiah 5:7 is explicit: "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant."

**The River and Trees of Eden** are among the many "helps" which are at man's disposal in the garden. There is the river of life to cleanse away all filthiness of the flesh (Ps. 65:9; II Cor. 7:1); also the tree of wisdom, the fruit of which is for meat, and the leaf for medicine (Prov. 3:13, 18; Ezek. 47:12). The trees also symbolize the constant growth in character which is required of all workers in the garden. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon" (Ps. 92:12).

**The Serpent of Genesis** is defined by the Bible as evil men and women, such as the Pharisees of Jesus' day (Matt. 23:33). Broadly speaking, the serpent tendencies form a part of every member of the human family. We are "by nature the children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3). Only by resisting and exterminating the serpent do we become children of God. Religious publications which still carry illustrations of a literal serpent in Eden are relics of medieval thinking. No such serpent has ever been encountered, but the serpent of Genesis will remain alive, active, visible, as long as the conduct of evil men and women goes unrestrained.

The Word of God sown in the hearts of men produces not only the faithful Church, but an unfaithful class as well. **The Cursed Ground**, or unproductive portions of the garden or hearts of men in which the seed was sown, yields only briers and thorns, the works of the flesh. Such ground shall certainly be subject to the curse of the Judge when the harvest is gathered and the wheat is separated from the tares.

**The Heavens and Earth of Genesis** symbolize the moral perfecting of men and women to form a new heaven and a new earth. This is the identical development which goes on in the garden, the same plan of the ages in motion. It is the preparation of a perfect society to populate the Utopian world, only stated in other terms.

We read in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." *Heaven* in Scriptural phraseology signifies *rulers*; and *earth*, *subjects*, people ruled over (Isa. 1:2, 10). By consulting Peter we find the distinguishing character-

istic of this heaven and earth—objects of God's new creation—to be righteousness. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

We "look for," we earnestly pray, we eagerly anticipate such a society to replace the corrupt systems of the present. But when shall we see that righteous government for which we yearn? Peter answers. Our Lord's Second Advent will bring the dissolution of the present arrangement and the inauguration of the "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:10—12).

To the Christian who seeks a place in the new creation, light is indispensable. By no other means could he guide his steps in paths of righteousness through this night of darkness. God provides **Two Great Lights**, the lesser light which gives partial illumination in this night of spiritual darkness, God's Word (Ps. 119:105), and the great light which shall arise in the new creation and dispel every cloud, Christ, the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:1).

These Scriptural definitions of the two lights of Genesis solve the problem of the literalists whose theory necessitates the impossibility that grass existed before the sun. The Bible defines the symbols to signify that people and not literal grass (Isa. 40:6) exist on earth long ages before the Sun of righteousness arises in the new world.

Next we shall discuss **The Man in God's Image**. This figurative man is expressed in God's grand plan of the ages in multiple ways. It is introduced in the allegory by the creation of new heavens and earth, and repeated by means of other parallel figures. That this is not the physical mortal man is evidenced by his natural physical infirmity and moral instability. The man to be made in God's image must be holy even as God is holy (I Pet. 1:16). This man is multitudinous, composed of Christ the Head, and the Church His body (Col. 1:18). To develop the moral likeness of their Maker, members of the Church must become pure in heart and clean of hands. In the words of Paul, they must be "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:24). This is a gigantic undertaking, and one might ask: Do the resulting benefits of a righteous life compensate for the effort involved? The Wise Man states the benefits and leaves us to judge: "Righteousness delivereth from death" (Prov. 10:2). Can any other effort of which humans are capable procure so rich a boon? Those who love life, who seek more of life than the meager taste which this brief existence affords, those who aspire to that richer, fuller, more abundant life where death shall be unknown, gladly yield the requisite righteousness. And when the Church becomes morally perfect it shall be clothed with immortality, death swallowed up in victory. Then it is that the man of Genesis will be seen at last in his completed state,

mentally, morally and physically like his Maker.

When this man has attained the physical likeness of his Maker, he becomes **The Man of Genesis** who **Receives Dominion**. His dominion is not to extend over the literal animal kingdom, but rather "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:7). His dominion shall be worldwide over mankind whose character traits are often comparable to those of the animal kingdom.

God's grand plan of the ages is constructed to appeal to man's highest aspirations. It offers honor, glory, power, might, dominion in the world to come. Jesus said, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26). This is the truth taught in Genesis 1:26.

Lastly we shall cover the subject of **Adam and Eve**. It is a mistake to think that Adam and Eve were the first man and woman created by God, when their son Cain had no difficulty finding a wife in the land of Nod (Gen. 4:16, 17). Contrariwise, Adam and Eve were simply the first man and woman to enter the garden of the Lord, the first to agree to work for eternal life. By their actions, good and bad, they became symbolic characters for all time. Their names are employed in the allegory to represent two classes, faithful and unfaithful. We see glimpses of these two classes in all ages. There was Abel who brought a righteous offering, while his brother's was rejected by reason of the evil designs which he concealed in his heart. Christ's inner circle produced the beloved John, also the betrayer, Judas. Among Paul's disciples there was a faithful son Timothy, also a Demas who forsook him.

The Genesis allegory presents the sad but inescapable fact that many who embark to participate in God's plan of the ages shall never arrive at their desired ultimatum. The fault is not with the plan but with themselves. They covenant to work in the garden and then rest; they agree to resist the serpent's wiles and then yield; they promise to avoid the forbidden fruit and then partake. At Christ's coming this class, the unfaithful Adam and Eve, shall be dealt with according to their works. They shall be expelled from the garden, "driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world" (Job 18:18).

At the same time the faithful Adam and Eve shall remain to bloom in perpetual vigor and unfading beauty in the Paradise of God—this earth made over new.

When at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ and His saints every offensive element is eliminated and naught but a perfect and eternal society remains, God's grand plan of the ages as outlined in Genesis shall be fully consummated. The earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, a righteous

people who are saved with an everlasting salvation (Num. 14:21; Isa. 45:17).

The grand plan of the ages shall not fail, for God Almighty is its Author and Executor—He who is able to declare the "end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." "God is no man to break his word, no mortal to change his mind; he promises, and does he not perform? Does he not carry out his word?" His purposes are as unalterable as the order of the seasons, or the succession of day and night; and when the Kingdom has come and God's will is done on earth as in heaven above, then shall the jubilant populace repeat again the theme of the spheres, "*Blessed be the Lord, . . . there hath not failed one word of all his good promise which he promised.*" ●

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## Timely Topics

**T**HE BIBLE is becoming a "priceless" book on the American market—literally without price. You can scarcely *give* it away!

Or at least this is the report of the American Bible Society. Bible sales are falling off sharply as religion's influence on American life dwindles. Several paperback novels outsell any version of the Bible.

How can this be? Too much skepticism, too much agnosticism, too much atheism. Have we become ungrateful for this ancient Book which only three centuries ago was causing its promoters so much hardship?

Alas! We have forgotten. . . .

We have forgotten the persecution endured by those who wrote, and translated, and copied, and compiled, and preserved this Holy Word of God that *we* might know its treasures.

We have forgotten the Holy One who ordained that it should be, who watched over it and protected it through long, dark centuries:

A Book by 37 or more authors, living on three continents and over a period of 1500 years, yet all proclaiming the same God, the same hope and the same plan of eternal salvation.

A Book containing laws, history, prophecy, poetry and epistles.

A Book of prophecy verified by history, of narra-

tive confirmed by numerous recent archeological discoveries, providing undisputed support of its divine inspiration.

We have forgotten that in the thirteenth century it took a copier about ten months to make a single copy of the Bible.

We have forgotten that John Wycliff of England and his associates spent 22 years translating and copying by hand the first English Bible that their people might read it in their native tongue. Church and state were hostile, and these translators labored under severe difficulties. So bitter were the authorities that after the death of Wycliff, his bones were exhumed and burned with all his copied Bibles that could be found.

We have forgotten that Wycliff's proscribed translation remained the only English Bible until the 16th century when William Tyndale, also of England, printed about 15,000 copies of the New Testament. But during the reign of Queen Mary of England, his Bibles were confiscated by government order and Tyndale and over 300 Bible-loving men were burned at the stake. We have forgotten. . . .

In the year 1611 King James of England commissioned about 50 Bible scholars to translate the Bible into English, producing what we know today as the Authorized or King James Version. Using all available manuscripts and devoting many years to the project, these men came up with a translation more accurate than any that had been produced previously. And slowly, painfully, the Bible became the private property of every family that desired a copy.

By the year 1966 the Bible had been translated in entirety into 240 languages, and parts of it into 1511 languages. More Bibles have been printed than any other book. Since 1816 the American Bible Society alone has printed and circulated more than 600 million Bibles. For years the Bible ranked as No. 1 Best Seller.

But now the trend has changed. Sales are falling off significantly. According to a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, the number of Bibles and New Testaments sold in the United States declined last year to 14 million from 19 million in 1958. And he states: "Even the reduced sales overstates American interest in the Bible." He indicates that a large percent of the Bibles sold today are placed in motels and hotels by the Gideon Bible Association, and of those sold to individuals the larger percentage of sales are by house-to-house salesmen.

He says also: "Do not be deceived by the number of Bibles that are actually bought. They are on the shelf of some cupboard untouched." He says that many buy, hoping their children will learn from the Bible. Skeptics suggest that many look on the Good Book as a good-luck charm, while some buy to salve guilty consciences. Others buy Bibles as a decoration for their living room. Gideons purchase many

Bibles for replacement in hotels and motels across the nation, not because the Bibles have been read so much, but because they have been used to set liquor glasses on, or pages have been torn out for recording telephone numbers. Prison inmates have even been found using the thin pages to roll cigarettes.

Still others refuse to buy. Pocket Books, Inc., described their publishing of a version of the New Testament as the worst failure they ever had. Time, Inc., is at present reported to be delaying publishing a 12-volume illustrated Bible because it isn't sure there will be sufficient orders for it. Salesmen often find that a family that has lived fifteen years without the Bible can't be convinced they need to buy one.

For many persons, whether or not the Bible is really the Word of God is immaterial. Some people collect Bibles for their value as rare books and are willing to pay a fortune for a truly rare Bible. No book interests them more than the Gutenberg Bible published in Germany in 1450 and 1455 which proved the feasibility of movable type. There are 47 copies still in existence, 14 of which are in the United States, and these are in great demand.

But where is America's genuine interest in the Bible? This Book of books directed by a Supreme God who watched over those who translated and copied its hundreds of thousands of words and protected it from those who would have utterly destroyed it, truly it is the Word of God. It has prophesied events to come, and they have come to pass—not once or twice, but time and again. History has proven the matter, and many we have seen with our own eyes. What more do we need to prove that this is God's Word, our only communication from the God of the universe?

How eager all men should be to read it! And with over half a billion Bibles extant in the world today, surely all could be well-informed concerning God's plan for this earth and how they may eternally dwell therein.

But where is the interest? How much is it studied? How well is it understood? How faithfully followed? How strictly obeyed?

In the early centuries when it cost \$1000 to own a copy of the Bible, the book was in great demand; only the very rich could afford to own one. A farmer was willing to give a load of hay for the privilege of reading one of these Bibles for half an hour.

But where is that interest today? A Gallup Poll in 1957 showed that 14% of Americans believed that religion was losing its influence on American life. This year the same poll reveals that the figure has jumped to 70% of Americans who believe the Bible is losing its influence. Mr. Gallup comments that "this is one of the most dramatic reversals of opinion in the history of polling."

This fact accounts for the sharp decrease in  
(Continued on page 16)



What is truth? Pilate's probing question is no less vital today. With so many confusing and opposing interpretations of the Bible, we ask again,  
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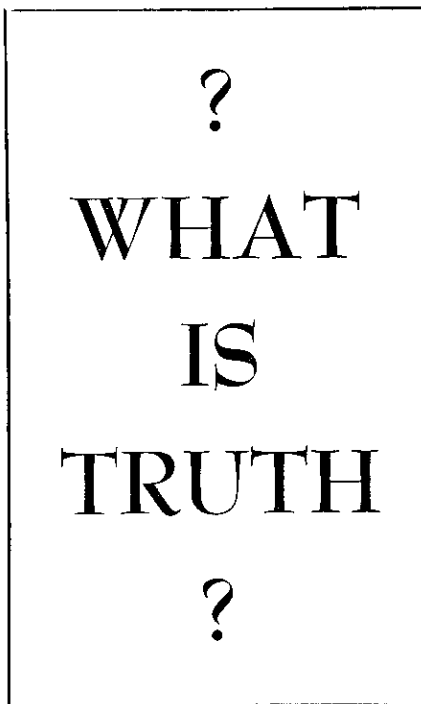
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# “Gimpers”

IN THE American language a new word is beginning its sway—“gimper.” An outgrowth of the war, it actually is expressive not only of military terminology but it possesses implications for civilians as well. The clearest definition of gimper was given by a Captain in World War II when he said: “A *gimper* is a scout who does everything a little better than he has to.”

In other words, “gimpers” are “two-mile men”! People in offices and shops who forever have one eye glued to the clock and who are careful never to work a minute overtime, are “one-mile men,” doing only what they are required to do; whereas those who work with delight and who do not object to a bit of overtime in order to complete their tasks to their own satisfaction are “two-mile men”—*gimpers*.

The man who travels the second mile in all of his human relationships; who is concerned not with clock-watching, but with superior attainments; who transacts all responsibilities with integrity plus friendliness; who meets and fulfills his obligations with an intangible, priceless quality beyond what is expected of him—he is the man who gets ahead.

A “gimper” does everything a little better than he has to!

Brethren, are we “gimpers,” “second-mile men” in the service of our King? Are we joyfully going beyond the call of duty? Can we say as Paul, “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 refuse, that I may win Christ”?

Paul set the pace of a “gimper,” when he said: “I labored more abundantly than they all.” He was not afraid that he might do more than his share. His only concern was to save himself and those that heard him.

When a scribe who had been listening to Jesus’ discussion with the Sadducees noticed how well Jesus had answered them, he put this question to Him, “What are we to consider the greatest commandment of all?”

In His answer, Jesus firmly attested that only “gimpers” would inhabit His eternal Kingdom.

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind, and with *all* thy strength.”

A sincere religion starts with the love which is total commitment of life to God. It is a total love, a love which dominates our emotions, a love which directs our thoughts, and a love which is the dynamic of our actions.

It is not easy to be a gimper, to always go the second mile. It is not easy to forget self and place others where we would naturally desire to be.

A gimper is an individual who has given his all to God’s service without reserve. It means *more* than loving God with the mind, more than the joy of intellectual apprehension; it means also the *willingness* to have our minds *changed* into harmony with His mind, to give up our settled ways, to surrender our cherished prejudices.

It is easy to let ritual replace actual obedience. It is easy to let worship become a thing of the church building instead of a thing of the whole life. It has been said, to worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.

In Matthew 5, Jesus makes the lesson on the “two-mile man.” And through His words He pleads: “Don’t be always thinking of your liberty to do as you like; be always thinking of your duty and your privilege to be of service to God and others. Whatever duty is at hand never serve the Lord as a grim duty, but do it as a service to be gladly rendered.” And Paul adds, “If I do this thing willingly I have a reward.”

There are many ways of serving the Lord—an individual can do the bare minimum and not a stroke more; he can do it in such a way that he makes it clear that the service or task is distasteful to him. He wonders why he ever got into it in the first place. He may *act* the part of a sincere follower and yet refuse to let God’s Word change the thoughts and intents of his heart.

The two-mile man does his work for God with a smile, with a song in his heart for the privilege of being able to work for such a bountiful paymaster. He is determined not only to serve his God but also to *delight* to accomplish the task of going the second mile. He will not do the work stingily but will do it far better than anyone would expect of him.

The true Christian is not concerned to do as he likes; he is concerned only with strict adherence to God’s every command.

All of a man’s being, his moral nature, his emotion, his intellect, his energy, must go into his love of God if that love is to be acceptable to God and adequate for the shaping of his own life. That love becomes thin and empty of power when it is not sustained by good works. It becomes anemic and dies unless there is poured into it the red blood of concrete behavior.

The offering of the full powers of the mind is the last full measure of devotion, the hardest gift to give. That second mile tears from us the last shreds of self. After deep searchings of heart, in the light of God’s Word, does it reveal we are one or two-mile men? Let us reserve nothing with which to serve self, our time, our talents, our energy, and our affections, that we may become God’s “gimpers.” ●●

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

## Jesus Christ

**I**N OUR last lesson we studied Jesus as a man, mortal, not immortal; human, not divine. We saw Him as a babe, a child, a youth, and a young man.

We should observe that Jesus' life was not all on the stage of public attention. His most significant and time-consuming work was personal, private, almost unknown to His contemporaries. Each of the Gospel writers covers a vital eighteen years of His life in the fewest possible words. Yet to remove these years would be to remove all the character and color from the picture of His life. For Jesus these were years of preparation, of opportunity to prove Himself the worthy Son of God and King of the world to come.

A contemporary author describes Jesus' long, silent years of preparation: "It was only when he reached his thirtieth year that Jesus emerged from this obscurity and started on his public mission, which was to last, as is well known, less than three years. There is something strange, something paradoxical in this. . . . It makes human haste seem all the more futile and wretched. For many years Jesus prepared himself for the task that he was going to undertake. For many years, as a craftsman and peasant of Galilee, he remained in daily contact with the earth, the work it demands, and the crops it bears, an experience enshrined in his style of speech, with its strong, simple poetry which lends its fragrance to the whole Gospel. For many years he lived and supported his mother with the work of his own hands [this we assume to be correct], by the sweat of his own brow, for this too is part of the human condition. The consecration of toil and effort was a lesson which those who followed him had to learn.

"Then one day he knew that his hour had come. At that time Palestine knew that a prophet [John the Baptist] spoke at the ford over the Jordan. Leaving Nazareth forever, Jesus set off to join him. This was decreed by Providence; it was not simply the result of an ordinary human decision."\*

When Jesus emerged from the silent years of preparation, He was no longer the youth of Nazareth but the man of God.

We shall now continue our study with the minis-

try of Christ, as He "went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). Our outline of study will be as follows:

### III. As He Came—History

#### E. The Ministry

1. In the Community of Israel
2. Teaching
3. Healing

All this activity was compressed into a short three years, yet the effects of that ministry still touch us today.

### III. AS HE CAME—HISTORY

#### E. The Ministry

**1. In the Community of Israel.** As Jesus grew to manhood, Rome was still in full power. With the single exception of what is now modern Morocco, the Roman Empire encircled the Mediterranean, extending northward to Belgium, south to upper Egypt, and east to what we call the Black Sea. A complex mosaic of provinces annexed by conquest, plus dependencies and protectorates, the Empire contained men of every known race. There was little to unite the Empire except military might.

And military might there was in abundance. Even in the city of Jerusalem, the swords of the Roman authorities were felt, although they were debarred from the sacred precinct of the Temple. "Protection" and "peace-keeping" were their duties.

But all was not peace in the community of Israel. Galilee belonged to Herod Antipas, the man whom Jesus was to describe as a "fox" or "jackal." Judea was governed by a procurator from Rome, called Pontius Pilate. Relationships between the Roman occupiers or protectors and the Jews were anything but warm. Assassinations and riots were frequent, and the farther away from Jerusalem one went, the more openly insurrection threatened. The revolutionary movement was strong in Galilee. "The Galileans," wrote Josephus, "are inured to war from their infancy."

One rebellious outburst after another kept the Romans uneasy on their seat of power. The predominant public problem in Jesus' day concerned the attitude which the Jews should take toward Roman rule. Should they collaborate with Rome or wait, looking for the promised Messiah to deliver

\* Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Life of Our Lord*. 1964, pp. 42, 43.

them? Or should they revolt and trust in God for victory?†

The Roman rulers distrusted this little people; and as for the Jews, their ancient pride made it difficult for them to tolerate servitude. To them, a Roman was more than a foreigner; he was an uncircumcised infidel, a rejected pagan, an impure wretch worthy of nothing but contempt.

Yet the Romans troubled the Jews' religion much less than did an obscure man from Nazareth—Jesus.

**2. Teaching.** If Jesus had no other claim to a place in history, He could be remembered as one of the world's masters of the technique of teaching. "Teacher," often translated "master" in our Authorized Version, was the title which even His enemies remembered Him by (Matt. 22:16; Mark 12:14; Luke 20:21). In the Gospels alone Jesus is called "teacher" more than fifty times. He had something to say, and He knew how to say it—Jesus was in every aspect of the word a **teacher**.

**a. Background.** What type of people did Jesus teach?

At the time Jesus lived, everything in the Jewish community rested on religion. The whole of life was regulated and controlled by it—the religious law, the Torah, made itself felt not only in the sphere of morals and religious ceremonies, but in social relations, education and everyday life. The smallest gesture was accompanied by benediction. Days, weeks, months, years, all were sacred.‡

In this intensely religious country, all was not united. The Jews were profoundly divided among themselves. They split up into sects and clans, which opposed one another even in general matters of doctrine and the correct rules for a God-fearing life. The priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem was the **Sadducees**, embattled conservatives, who took little time for newfangled ideas. They sat in the Sanhedrin, under the watchful eye of the Roman Procurator.

Then there were the **Pharisees**, known among themselves as the "pious," the "pure," the "elect," who leaned to ultra-piety. These people advocated strict adherence to the Law and assiduous attendance in the Temple or local synagogue.

Another strange sect was that of the **Essenes**, who described themselves as the Sons of the New Alliance. These included the monks, who flocked to the isolation of the Dead Sea area and lived as a community according to a rule; also a whole body of devout people who were as attached to the Law as the Pharisees but less ostentatious and more genuine. Their ideal was purity, both physical and statutory according to the Mosaic Law, and this they pursued with fanatical fervor.

Opposite of the passive Essenes was a group of

religious fanatics called the **Zealots**. They were the revolutionaries of the period, ready to rebel at the slightest pretext. They followed a policy of violence and sedition, continually fomenting popular uprisings, occasionally smashing up shops and synagogues. When a raid failed, they could always flee to the desert, which was not far from the walls of Jerusalem.

Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots—these were the principal Jewish groups in Israel at the time of Christ. And in the atmosphere created by their various ideas, Jesus was to undertake His great work of publishing the true message of the plan of God.

**b. Forums.** The forums, or stages from which Jesus taught, were many. He began His teaching in the synagogues of Galilee, but before long the opposition had shut the door against Him and driven Him to the roads, the hillside, and the seashore.

By far the greater part of Jesus' teaching was in the open air. He employed the hillside (Matt. 5:1; 24:3); a boat pushed out from the shore (Mark 4:1); the highway side (Mark 10:17); a private home (Luke 5:19). There were no microphones into which He could speak, and no sound systems to amplify His vocal tones, but multitudes heard and were impressed.

**c. Delivery.** Jesus was a **forceful** speaker. This fact is clear from the large following which He drew. They "wondered at the gracious words" which He spoke. He taught "in their synagogues, being glorified by all" (Luke 4:15), indicating that His teaching was well received.

But Jesus was also **forthright** and **direct**. When He condemned the Pharisees for their outward show and hypocrisy, no intelligent listener questioned what He meant; or when He placed the Samaritans on a par with the Jews, no one missed the point.

Jesus spoke **with authority**. It was customary for the Jewish rabbis of the time to cite authority for their statements, either from accepted Scripture or well-known superiors. But Jesus did not do this: He was authority. He spoke on the basis of the truth He represented; He spoke the words of His heavenly Father. Men could hear Him and be convinced, without further reference.

Jesus' teaching and preaching was **informal**. It showed nothing of the planned character of a Pharisaic oration; it contained nothing superficial or hypocritical. This does not mean that Jesus' words were unsystematic or carelessly put together. He was a man sent by God and chosen by Him for the task, and He was qualified.

Jesus' utterances were for the most part **spontaneous**. Rarely did He prepare a service. Chance meetings along the way (Mark 10:17), unexpected remarks by a passer-by (Matt. 19:3), sudden questions from the disciples (Luke 11:1)—these are typical situations which prompted Jesus to de-

† Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Man from Nazareth*, p. 188.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 47.



liver some of the most profound truths.

All this only testifies to the greatness of the God who was behind Him, and the thoroughness of His preparation during those long, silent years. When men heard Jesus speak, they knew immediately that He was no ordinary teacher.

**d. General Character.** Jesus' teaching was unique in form. There was nothing academic or unrealistic or formal about His statements. The language was bright with similes and simple metaphors, such as everyone could comprehend. References to nature, home life, the market place, and the open road abound. He did not use the vocabulary of a sophisticated hierarchy, and there was no suggestion of the professional priest in His phraseology. He was simply the teacher sent from God.

Nevertheless, Jesus knew how to command the attention of His listeners. His message was arresting; it had a universal appeal; it was immediately intelligible and permanently memorable. Why?

Jesus' chief teaching instrument was the **parable**. The story is the teaching medium which all can understand in some degree. To teach in parables, it is said, is to teach in pictures, and most men think in pictures. There are very few people who are capable of grasping abstract truth; for most men, truth has to become concrete before it becomes intelligible.\*

The great value of a parable is that it draws directly from life and either compares or contrasts with it.

So extensive was Jesus' use of parables that it is written, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them" (Matt. 13:34). Frequently He spoke in parable to the multitude and then explained privately to His disciples the deeper meaning of the words He had uttered.

In interpreting parables, we should remember that it is the meaning of the story as a whole which is central rather than the details of the narrative. To find significance in each detail is to allegorize beyond what the parable was intended to teach.

Jesus' parables are colorful and dramatic, even though they are brief. The situations which they present are lifelike, such as one might meet any day in first-century Palestine. A man robbed on the highway (Luke 10:29—37), an urgent request for needed bread due to a visit by an unexpected guest (Luke 11:5—8), a farmer enlarging his granary to accommodate his increased crop (Luke 12:16—21), a sower casting his seed upon the ground (Luke 8:1—15)—none are too far removed even from our modern life. But the lessons are deep and far-reaching.

And their subjects are broad. Principal among many is the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13:31—33; 22:2—14; Luke 19:12—27). There are lessons on prayer (Luke 11:5—13), preparedness (Matt. 25:1—13), forgiveness (Luke 15:8—10), and the ne-

cessity of putting belief into action (Matt. 7:24—27).† All are themes vital to the preparation of every earnest Christian.

Jesus also made much use of the Old Testament Scriptures in His teaching. As a boy and youth, He had memorized portions of the prophets as He sat cross-legged before His teacher. This memory work stood Him in good stead for His active ministry. It did not remain sterile material in His brain but grew and multiplied as He applied it to His own life and the life of every follower.

The attitude of Jesus toward the Old Testament Scriptures was evident from what He said about them. The biblical personalities which attracted Him most are the very same ones which appeal to us today for their vivid lessons and timely admonitions: Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Noah, Lot and his wife, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, the widow of Zarephath, Naaman, and others.

**e. The Message.** Central to all of Jesus' teachings was the message of the Kingdom of God. This was only normal, as He testified before Pontius Pilate: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37). He taught that He would be the King, that this Kingdom would be on earth (Matt. 5:5), and that its inhabitants would be the righteous (Matt. 5:20; 7:21).

All this led immediately to an unmistakable doctrine of action. "Jesus was a reformer. He came not only to say something, but to do something—to call his nation to repentance, to cleanse the synagogue of its sterile conventionality and the temple of its abuses, to open the gates of salvation to folk who were forgotten or despised, to usher in a new age of righteousness. Whatever else was in his mind, this much was there, and it made him not so much a rabbi founding a school as an active reformer insisting on change. . . . He was actively proposing revolutionary changes in the religious life and practice of his people."‡

Jesus sought to teach with words that would at once penetrate into men's minds and lodge in their hearts. He came with a command and a statement. "Repent," He said, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14).

The imperative of Jesus was **Repent!** The terrible sin of Bethsaida and Chorazin and Capernaum was that they had seen His mighty works and had not repented (Matt. 11:20). Men were confronted with the alternative, "Repent or perish" (Luke 13:3—5). The disciples were sent out to bring to men the summons to repent (Mark 6:12). All this meant a

\* William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus*. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1960, pp. 92 ff.

† Charles M. Laymon, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*. Abingdon Press, New York, 1954, pp. 121—125.

‡ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Man from Nazareth*. Harper and Brothers, New York, pp. 83 ff.

realization that one's actions were wrong, that there must be sorrow for his error, and a changed attitude to life, to conduct and to action as a whole, and a change of action to correspond to the change of heart. Repentance, according to Jesus, "means a turning around and facing in the opposite direction. The picture is that of a man facing in one direction—away from God—and in repentance he changes his direction—towards God."\*\*

Jesus' call to a complete change of life involved Him in stern and relentless denunciation of the Pharisees and religious leaders of His day. Jesus was neither Pharisee nor Essene. He believed firmly in certain teachings of the Pharisees—angels, and the resurrection—yet He denounced their ostentatious habits, their self-righteousness, their holier-than-thou attitude. Nor did He display any regard for the monastic ideal of the Essenes, with its strict disciplines, ascetic self-denial, blind obedience, and quasi-military organization.\*

The late Dr. Fosdick wrote of Jesus' attitude toward outward form: "Legalism might save a nation, but, by itself alone, it never saved a person. Persons, to be made good men and women, must be inwardly transformed. . . .

"You say your prayers, he said, but what about your inward life of prayer in secret where no man sees? You do not break your spoken vows, but what about sincerity? You do not commit adultery, but what about lust? You give alms, but what about love? You fast, but what about penitence?

"All this explains Jesus' constant and weighty emphasis on repentance. He called on men not alone to change their behaviour but, first of all, to change their minds, to recognize their deep, inward sin, to acknowledge their ingrained self-love, their unjustified pride, and to seek pardon and rebirth. Moreover, he addressed this call for penitence not alone to obvious sinners, guilty of gross iniquity, out-and-out thievery and debauchery, but more especially to the conventionally respectable and self-satisfied. It was they who needed most to see how stained with self-seeking their best goodness was, and with how thin a veneer their obedience to many laws covered their disobedience to God's divine intent for their characters."†

Jesus' teaching was fundamentally practical. If men were to follow Him, they had to deny themselves and take up their cross; they must be ready to disown their own families, if need be, when loyalties clashed; they must even be prepared to count themselves "Blessed" when men reviled them, and uttered all kinds of evil against them. Small wonder that the legalistic Pharisees hated Him!

The choice that Jesus offered men was relatively drastic: either to live for "this world" with its passions, its loyalties, its risks, or to make a clear break in the hope of eternal salvation in the world to come.† And Jesus wished His disciples to have no illusions: "Wide is the gate, and broad is the

way that leadeth to destruction. . . . Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life" (Matt. 7:13, 14)—no chance for misundersanding here!

f. **Reaction and response.** The common people were first to respond enthusiastically to Jesus' person and His message. They could see at once that He did not speak "like their scribes"—formally, technically, incomprehensibly—but with vitality, from observation and experience that they all could understand. He spoke not theoretically, but "as one having power," so that they felt the dynamic power of His words.

They sensed also that His attitude toward them was different from that of the members of the proud influential classes. In the eyes of the Sadducees common people were just a rabble; to the Pharisees they were the despised masses who "do not know the law."\*\* By contact, the attitude of Jesus made them feel that His concern for them was genuine. Words like those of the beatitudes had meaning not restricted to the wealthy, the powerful, the educated, or the influential. They had only one condition of blessing: obedience.

Multitudes listened, but only the smallest minority followed and continued to follow. For after His ascension, as the disciples tarried together in Jerusalem to await His promise, only 120 were present.

**To be a messenger you must know the message.**

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## TEST YOURSELF

1. Describe briefly the religious-political situation in Palestine at the time of Jesus.
2. Describe the religious background of the majority of people to whom Jesus preached.
3. What qualifications had Jesus as a speaker?
4. By what means did Jesus do most of His teaching? Give Bible reference.
5. What subject was foremost among Jesus' parables? Find ten parables on this subject.
6. What was the people's reaction to Jesus' teaching?

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\*\* William Barclay, *The Mind of Jesus*, pp. 42, 43.

\* Jean Steinman, *The Life of Jesus*. Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1963, p. 21.

† Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Man from Nazareth*, pp. 97ff.

† Marcello Craveri, *The Life of Jesus*, p. 240.

\*\* Romano Guardini, *The Humanity of Christ*, pp. 8, 9.

*Reprints of these studies are available upon request.*

# The Parables of Christ

Parables	Matt.	Mark	Luke	Lesson
Tares	13:24			No separation until Judgment
Hidden Treasure	13:44			The value of the gospel
Pearl of Great Price	13:45			Necessity of full surrender
Drag Net	13:47			Separation at Judgment
Unmerciful Servant	18:23			Forgiveness and ingratitude
Laborers in the Vineyard	20:1			Reward for service
Father and Two Sons	21:28			Insincerity and Repentance
Marriage of the King's Son	22:1			Righteousness prerequisite
Ten Virgins	25:1			Necessity of watchful preparation
Talents (or Pounds)	25:14			Use of advantages
Growth of Seed		4:26		Marvel of spiritual growth
Household Watching		13:34		Expectancy of Christ's return
Two Debtors			7:36	Gratitude for pardon
The Good Samaritan			10:30	Active benevolence and mercy
The Importunate Friend			11:5	Perseverance in asking
The Rich Fool			12:16	Trust in uncertain riches
Barren Fig Tree			13:6	God's long-suffering
The Great Supper			14:16	A time of compelling
Building a Tower			14:28	Counting the cost
Lost Piece of Money			15:8	Joy over repentance
The Prodigal Son			15:11	Reclaimed opportunity
The Unjust Steward			16:1	Forehanded action
Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19	The finality of God's Judgment
Master and Servant			17:7	Christian duty of service
The Importunate Widow			18:1	Persistence in prayer
Pharisee and Publican			18:9	Self-righteousness and humility
Pounds (or Talents)			19:12	The reward of diligence
House on Rock, on Sand	7:24		6:47	Acting on profession
The Leaven	13:33		13:20	The power of influence
The Lost Sheep	18:12		15:3	Joy over repentance
Candle Under Bushel	5:15	4:21	8:16	Value of good example
New Cloth on Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36	New doctrine and old prejudices
New Wine in Old Bottles	9:17	2:22	5:37	New spirit in unregenerate heart
The Sower	13:3	4:3	8:5	Hearers of gospel classified
The Mustard Seed	13:31	4:30	13:18	Growth of the Kingdom
Vineyard and Husbandmen	21:33	12:1	20:9	Christ rejected and human perversity
Fig Tree and Its Young Leaves	24:32	13:28	21:29	Indications of Second Advent

# What Lack I Yet?

THE ONE outstanding concern in our lives today should be, "What lack I yet?" for every defect must be remedied. Of course, this will not be easy. The battle with self is through valleys, over hills and mountains and rugged paths. But over the top of the last mountain is perfection. And great will be the triumph when we achieve that peak—a rare achievement indeed, for it will bring us eventually to the throne of Almighty God.

In order to improve himself one must know himself thoroughly. This requires realistic reasoning. Our minds can be filled with thoughts of many different varieties, thoughts that touch on jealousy, anger, impatience, fleshly lusts, envy, foolishness, love of approbation, selfishness, self-justification, discouragement, covetousness, bitterness, pride and discontent.

At the close of each day we should take a retrospective view to see wherein we stumbled and carefully, prayerfully, honestly resolve to work to overcome each besetting sin. Perhaps the sin seems very small, almost invisible. But do we realize how a little leaven can leaven the whole lump? A little anger, or a little jealousy, or a little impatience, or a little sensitiveness or a little lust can be the one point which will keep us from becoming perfect and pure.

"What lack I yet?" We must make daily self-examination. Are we able to keep our lips closed until we have our minds under control and speak the soft word that turns away wrath? Without this mastery of ourselves, we may get excited, angry, and lose our composure. We may even find ourselves arguing for the sake of justifying the old man, our own lower nature. Our founder, Brother Nichols, once said, "Show me a man who is ready to argue, and I will show you a man that will not see the inside of the Kingdom." Until we are ready to admit our faults, be willing and obedient, we will not profit by reproofs of instruction.

What lack I yet? We should busy ourselves so completely in self-examination that we will be—

- too busy to lay up roots of bitterness
- too busy for sarcasm
- too busy for excuses
- too busy to envy others
- too busy to brag
- too busy to despair
- too busy to find fault with routine
- too busy to long for the forbidden
- too busy to interfere with other people's business
- too busy to pick flaws
- too busy for any activity that will prevent our making our calling and election sure.

Do we want to be part of the finished temple of the Lord? Then let us now search and find wherein we lack and perfect that which is lacking so that we may become "finished and complete, with never a defect." *The time is short!* ●●

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## Timely Topics

*(Continued from page 8)*

Bible sales. Interest in the Bible is plummeting. As the aforementioned reporter states: "Many Bible purchasers care little what version they buy, for they never intend to read it."

"We are biblically an illiterate nation," says the general secretary of the American Bible Society.

Some people have taken issue with this thought, believing that interest in religion is not declining but growing, and that if all the facts and figures on Bible publishing could be gathered, Bible sales would not have sagged much at all since 1958. But the Gallup Poll seems to be well-grounded evidence of the national situation.

Who can deny that as reverence and respect for God and His Word have plummeted, murders, rape, thefts, riot, divorce, broken families, illegitimate births, immorality, suicide, gambling, insanity and vice of every sort and description have skyrocketed? With nudity shows becoming more and more commonplace and only winked at in our courts, how rapidly is our once dignified America becoming a Sodom and a Gomorrah—a state which Jesus said He would find at His coming: "As it was in the days of Noe, . . . likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, . . . even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed" (Luke 17:26—30). This prophecy fulfilled bears no compliment for a nation founded by religious-minded fathers who sought religious freedom.

Sincere lovers of God's Word will make certain that they are no part of this godless trend. ●●

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## Face the Sun

Don't hunt for troubles—but look for success;  
You'll find what you look for, don't look for distress;  
If you see but your shadow, remember, I pray,  
That the sun is still shining, but you're in the way.  
Don't grumble, don't bluster, don't dream, and don't shirk;

Don't think of your worries, but think of your work.  
The worries will vanish, the work will be done:  
No man sees his shadow who faces the sun.



# Attaining Perfection

**BE YE THEREFORE** perfect." This stark demand of our Saviour is a "hard saying" and one at which most of mankind will scoff. Many teachings of the Bible are new and strange, but there is no feature in God's plan more alien to the natural man than His demand for moral perfection.

Perfection, many will say, does not exist; and to expect to possess it is the most dangerous kind of madness and self-exaltation. The religious world almost unanimously claim that the command has other meaning, that Jesus did not expect us to do just what He said, that His words, taken as a command, are impracticable and utterly impossible. It is well, they say, to set perfection before us as a goal to advance toward, but that high standard can never actually be reached.

We find, however, that perfection is just what the Bible teaches and demands. God is not so pressed for time and material for His eternal Kingdom that He will perpetuate one imperfect character. The glorious realm of His domain will be free from every sin. And for this condition to be realized, every individual there must have fully cleansed himself from all evil. Not one sin can remain, for if even one evil were allowed to each inhabitant, there would soon be the same state of affairs that now exists.

From the very beginning, God's command was "Walk before me and be thou perfect." Jesus later stated plainly and unmistakably, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The apostle Peter repeated the command: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Pet. 1:15, 16). And Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1). And James wrote, "Remember that a man who keeps the whole Law but for a single exception is none the less a law-breaker" (Jas. 2:10, Phillips). God has provided His written Word for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16, 17).

God does not demand an entire life complete and perfect without one sin—this would be impossible. But He does demand ultimate perfection through change. He expects us to "grow up into him in all things" (Eph. 4:15) "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Has it ever been done? Christ walked perfectly in

His Father's will, learning "obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8, 9). He was not born perfect, but had to *learn* obedience. He had to learn to "refuse the evil, and choose the good" (Isa. 7:14). His perfect life exceeds our ability, for once He knew a law of God, He never transgressed it; all of us have stumbled many times. But the process was the same: He was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10).

Zacharias and Elisabeth attained that high standard, for it is plainly stated that they were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

Paul in his letter to the Philippians, said that he had not already attained, nor was he already perfect: "It is not to be thought that I have already achieved all this. I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me. My friends, I do not reckon myself to have got hold of it yet. All I can say is this: forgetting what is behind me, and reaching out for that which lies ahead, I press towards the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12—14, NEB). In his letter from Rome, written near the close of his life, he wrote to Timothy that finally he had attained: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:7, 8).

When the rich young man came to Jesus asking what he should do to "enter into life," the Master answered, "If thou wilt be perfect, . . . come and follow me."

Perfection is the keeping of God's every command—not an impossibility but a goal which can be reached if we apply all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength (Mark 12:30, 31). The thought should arouse us. The demand is real, but it is not beyond us. The old man's style of thinking (our natural mind) is exactly that of the majority of the religious world—that it is impracticable and impossible. But God never gave an impossible command, and He has promised that no trial will be beyond our strength to endure (I Cor. 10:13).

Perhaps we have many times strained for the high levels of perfection, only to have the vision elude us. But we must not get discouraged! Though our natural undisciplined mind tends ever downward, there is in each of us with whom God deals sufficient potential for good—even for perfection. And if we are earnestly striving, He will help and aid us until we succeed. We each can arrive at that longed-for goal—if we will "Go and sin no more." ●

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When in doubt, tell the truth.

# Christian Youth in These Times

## The Plot

THE STARS were coming out, one by one, in the darkening twilight sky of the late summer evening. They twinkled down on a small garden where the birds were twittering their last sleepy good-nights.

Julius and his family were sitting on the wooden benches in their repose where they had retired after their evening meal. It was a hot evening except for the occasional breeze that rustled through the olive trees. They were all quiet now. Even the three younger boys, Reuben, Jotham and Obed, who never seemed to tire of talking, were now sitting on the low stone wall that ran behind the house and garden, swinging their feet and tossing loose pebbles to the ground.

The family had just been discussing the disheartening events of the day. Late that afternoon, Timothy, Julius' best friend, had breathlessly related the mobs' uprising, their attempt to kill Paul, and his arrest by the Roman officials. Their uncle, friend and brother arrested! Saul had always been Julius' idol. When he was a small boy he almost worshiped his Uncle Saul, then a devout Jew.

After Paul's miraculous conversion there had been a painful breach between this loved uncle and his sister's family, a breach that he neither would nor could understand. But Paul's overpowering love for his Master and his undaunted courage in proclaiming and suffering for that love, had finally persuaded Julius' mother and father of the reality, beauty and power of this new religion, and they joined the persecuted sect. Since then they had been bound to this man with ever-strengthening ties of Christian love and fellowship.

It had been quite evident from the small though frequent displays of fury, that hate and mistrust had been building up inside those wicked Jews. The caldron had reached its boiling point and was now boiling over. This fiery, activated leader of the Christian religion which they were furiously bitter against had fallen into their hands as an easy prey and they weren't going to let him evade them.

Julius was startled from his thoughts by a small, sleepy but anxious voice at his shoulder.

"Nofin will happen to Uncle, will it?" Little Ruth who was sitting next to him had fallen asleep

during the family's conversation. He didn't know how to answer her, because his own mind was full of doubt. Although he believed God would spare a good man like his uncle, he didn't see how Paul could slip out of the hands of the crafty Jews. But Julius knew his little sister depended on him to give her a consoling answer.

"No," he said aloud, "nothing will happen to him."

"I'm glad," she murmured happily as she nodded and fell asleep again.

"Well, it looks like it's bedtime for this one," Judith said as she came over and picked up Ruth. "Deborah, could you please put her to bed?"

Julius looked at his mother as she stood there holding the little girl. The moonlight shining through the olive branches flickered on her soft, kind face and dark hair. "What a sweet mother," he thought. "I'm glad she's a Christian, and I'm glad I am a Christian, too."

When his 12-year-old sister Deborah, and Ruth had gone, Tobiah, his father spoke. "We should praise the Lord that we are so blest and have a good home. When others make fun of you, boys, for being followers of the meek and lowly Christ, remember how brave Uncle Paul is and never be ashamed to stand up for what you believe."

"God will take care of you," Judith added, "just as He has taken care of Brother Paul these many years, and I am sure if it is His will, He will continue to spare his life."

Little did they know that this very night, an angel would come to Paul, comforting him and assuring him that he would be protected and continue his journey to Rome to preach the good news.

Julius lay tossing on his mat on the rooftop where the four boys slept during the summer months. Tired as he was, he could not sleep. The other boys were already breathing heavily, for although they didn't care to admit it, they had been having trouble keeping their eyes open.

As he stared up at the sky the sound of voices startled him. "Who would be out at this time of night?" he wondered. The sound was coming from the street. As he listened closer it sounded like a man speaking in a low tone. The voice was a familiar one to Julius, although it was barely

audible. He could not understand what the man said. The thought of who it might be sent a little shiver down his back. Not knowing what to do, he stood up and started for the stairs. He accidentally stepped on Reuben's blanket and thought he felt a toe; but nothing happened, so he crept on down the stairs.

As he crossed the small courtyard the loose ground under his bare feet made a little crunching sound. He reached the wall and edged closer to the gate where right outside the wall, a few feet down the street, men were talking in low voices.

"What will you do to him?" a smooth cultured voice asked cautiously.

"Kill him, of course!" said a second voice rather loudly. This sounded like Jabez who was frequently seen in the crowded Jerusalem streets but who always shied from looking anyone straight in the eye.

"Hush! Stupid, do you want some one to hear us!" The words chilled Julius' blood. Yes, he had guessed right. The voice was that of Lucius, a mean, tightfisted, shifty merchant.

Lucius continued, "The chief priests and elders? Ah, they are our friends. Just think of the money that will be ours if we kill their hated enemy!"

"But isn't it too risky?" from the slippery voice again, "the money—that's true—but—but—"

"Oh, my young friend," Lucius interrupted, "listen to my plan. Very simple indeed."

With his heart pounding in his throat, Julius inched toward the gate. He kicked a pebble accidentally and stood stone still for a few seconds, thinking for sure he had been heard. Then, scarcely breathing, he dropped quietly to his hands and knees. Through a crack between the boards of the gate he could see the three men standing with their backs toward him.

Lucius was saying, "You know that the Chief priest would give a good deal to have that cursed blasphemer in his hands."

"That cursed blasphemer?" thought Julius hotly. "Could he mean Uncle Paul?"

"Tomorrow morning," he continued, "our good friend, Coniah will go to Ananias and the elders. He is an eloquent speaker, you know. It won't take much to convince them of our plan. They will send for Paul under the cover of further investigation of the matter—and the Romans will deliver him right into our hands. See, we will conceal ourselves along the way and then when Paul comes along—" he lowered his voice to a desperate whisper—"we'll kill him."

Jabez spat wrathfully, "That will finish him. We will not let the Romans snatch our arch enemy out of our fingers like that. As for me, I will not taste food until that fellow has been rid from the earth; and with 40 other men who are willing to do the same. Ha! No trouble."

"Do the rest of them know the plans?"

"Partly"—Lucius said, "but we will talk it over

early tomorrow morning so we can get it over with by the time the sun is high."

"Sh-h-h, I heard a noise," whispered the young man, "it sounded like it came from there." He pointed a trembling finger at the gate.

Julius drew back quickly, his heart in his mouth.

"Pshaw!" Lucius exclaimed, "no one is up at this hour. But we should be getting along."

As the men trailed away, Julius discovered that he was shaking like a leaf. He had a cold, sick feeling around his heart and his fists were clenched involuntarily. He had to do something to help his uncle and do it quickly. While he tried to think, he fell asleep.

When Julius awoke, it was quite dark and a few stars were still twinkling in the dark blue heavens. For a while he couldn't remember if he had just had a nightmare or if he had really experienced what he now vaguely remembered. But before long the picture was brought back vividly to his mind. He got up, quickly slipped into his coat and tip-toed toward the stairs. Jotham stirred just as he started down the stairs.

"Where are you going?" he asked sleepily.

"Sh-h-h," Julius answered, "it's still early so go back to sleep."

But his younger brother, not waiting for the answer, was already asleep.

All was quiet as Julius walked down the street. It seemed strange to have the street so empty and void of life, although in this part of the city it was not so crowded nor were the streets so narrow as in the heart of Jerusalem.

During the day the streets were full of playing children and dogs; men and women rushing to and fro at their daily occupations, old men slowly walking around with their hands behind their backs and Roman soldiers galloping through.

Julius knew the way to the Roman barracks so well that he could almost walk it in his sleep. From early boyhood he had loved to go there and see the massive stone buildings and the tall, strong Roman soldiers.

Now, as he hurried along, the thought was racing through his mind: Would he be allowed to see his uncle?

When he reached the barracks, it had grown somewhat lighter and there was a faint glow in the east. He was glad to see that Marcellus was on night guard. Marcellus, the big, kindly centurion was a good friend of Julius'. When Julius was a small boy he had always come to Marcellus to talk over his troubles. He still asked advice, and Marcellus never failed to help him out.

Now he was half asleep, sitting in the entrance with his head in his hands. He raised his head with a start as Julius approached.

"Ho, my young friend! You startled me," he called. "What brings you here at this hour?"

"I have to see my uncle," Julius panted.

"Yes, I heard he had to be rescued yesterday or those Jews would have had him sure. Some trouble-makers they are." He shook his head solemnly.

"I fear they're up to more trouble," Julius said sadly. "I have to warn Uncle Paul about a plot."

Marcellus shook his head again. He stood up and unlocked the heavy door. "Well, I reckon I can let you in. I'll be in shortly myself for a nap as soon as Julian gets out here to take my place. Go down the hall and turn left, his room is at the end of that hall just on your right. Here's a pass in case you are questioned."

When Julius entered the empty hall, its cold sternness struck him; he felt strange and small. A soldier met him and seeing the pass in his hand nodded in a soldierly way and went on, his footsteps echoing weirdly. "That must be Julian," he thought.

Julius came to the room which Marcellus said was Paul's and rapped at the door. A soldier clanked over and unlocked it. He seemed startled to see a boy standing there.

"What would you like?" he said stiffly.

"I would like to see Paul," Julius stammered in Greek.

The soldier opened the door farther and stepped aside. Paul smiled and greeted his nephew fondly. "What brings you here?" he asked. "I expected to see a soldier, not you, Julius."

Julius hesitated only a moment and then came out with the whole story of the plot to take his life. Julius was surprised how calmly his uncle listened. He showed no alarm at all; and when Julius finished, he said, "Thank you for informing me, my boy. The Lord is certainly with us. Maybe you should tell your story to the commandant." With this he asked the guard to take Julius to the head officer.

On the way home Julius was thinking about the whole affair. Yes, it was as Paul said. The Lord was working things out. That was why his uncle could remain calm at all times. He had a dauntless faith in his Master. And he knew that the God of heaven was stronger than all the Jews put together. How joyful Julius felt that he could be used in God's plan to save Paul's life! What a great privilege, he thought, to be a Christian and to be able to serve the one true God. ●●

## The Pinpoint

The light of God sensitizes the soul. With needlelike precision its powerful rays search out small faults within ourselves, showing how great is their base and how basic their part in conflict.

With unerring accuracy the light pinpoints our indifferent tone, our frown of displeasure, our shrug of boredom—their roots sunk deep in selfishness, their tendrils choking understanding, love and truth.

## LETTERS

### Stirred

I am always so glad to receive your help. I really need to be stirred. I am thankful for the time extended me, and I am trying to make the most of it.

I was thinking, that if we replace every bad thought with a good thought, that is a full day's work. We must work harder to make each day better than the day before.

*Rome, Ga.*

*J. R.*

### Thankful

Science has done some wonderful things, some of them beneficial, and others may have been injurious. Do you think God approves of this outer space exploration? I don't see that it will be of any benefit to us, but if God wishes to stop it, He will.

We have much to be thankful for. There is so much injustice that we are likely to forget the good. But we should remember, "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever." I think I should be more grateful.

*Adamsville, Tenn.*

*J. P.*

### Space-Travel

These are big days for the moon-project men. If they would only remember that Gabriel traveled millions of miles further than this, and with much greater speed, and without the need of a spaceship of any kind, their viewpoint would be different. Man is so small in mind and deed, that if they could only see the much, much greater things that our Lord can do, how small a thing this moon-visiting would seem—hardly worth mentioning.

We can also do the greater things someday, if only we now live as He lived while here on earth.

*Mount Brydges, Ontario, Canada*

*M. G.*

### A Lesson from the Locust

I often think of the locusts (we don't see or hear them so much now). They creep up from the ground, a miserable-looking bug, and attach themselves to tree bark, and after a while they crack open and a new life begins. A beautiful green locust comes out and sings for joy at being released.

I feel we are in the bug state at present, in comparison with the new life the Lord will give us someday if we are worthy. He gives us knowledge now to work for such a prize. Let us work while opportunity is present.

*North Rose, N. Y.*

*Mrs. W. S.*

### Looking Forward

You will never know how very much I do enjoy reading the *Megiddo Message*. After I finish reading them, I pass them on to other friends, and they, too, pass them on to some of their friends.

We know the time is so very near for Christ to return to earth again. We are looking forward to this most wonderful time that can come to any human on earth.

*Eminence, Ky.*

*E. K.*

**MEGIDDO MESSAGE**



# Meditations

## On the Word

*"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).*

Every man's heart is a treasury, a collection of good or evil, or a certain percentage of both. As we pass through life we are continually encountering new experiences and new situations. From these we receive impressions one way or the other, and one by one these incidents drop into our mental storehouse. Some impress us profoundly and we keep them fresh in our memory, others we forget.

The effects of every good deed, every good thought, every good attitude we manifest continually is being formed into habit. It becomes a part of the good treasure, or "good store," as Dr. Moffatt renders it. In times of crises or sudden testing, the words we utter, the deed we perform or the attitude we display, is the result of the good store within. Seeing we have been in the habit of doing, speaking, thinking good, we continue to do good in critical times. We thus become good by habit, and habit thus works for us. Goodness becomes a part of our make-up; it becomes second-nature to do the good, to say the right word, to take the proper attitude or to keep the right motive.

In like manner if we habitually do evil, talk evil, think evil, our inner store becomes the evil treasure. As we have been accustomed to wrongdoing, so now the evil habit will work against us. When we are put to the test the inner reserve of evil will manifest itself.

When we realize how habit can work for or against us, we should be careful about storing our minds with good things. In one of her timely admonitions, the Rev. Maud Hembree exhorted her listeners that they should lay up lofty thoughts, patience, honesty of purpose, new aspirations, new desires, a godly character.

If we are not diligent in this work and do not lay up a good store, if we are indifferent, or slow of heart to believe and act, the opposition will certainly do its part and our store will be evil.

If, because of indecision or unbelief, we procrastinate to adopt a proper course in life, we are heading for danger. We shall wake up some day and see that we have a course in life, firmly established and settled; our mode of life will be one of doubt, cynicism, bitterness, and the like—the evil treasure. A way of life that is real and practical must be one that we practice joyfully, and the more

we practice it the more we will display the good things out of our good treasure, and the more it will encourage us to still better living. Whereas the more evil treasure we lay up, the more it manifests itself and moves us to more evil. It becomes a vicious circle.

We hear much today from modern psychologists about the wonders of the subconscious mind, how that it is the residing place of the driving instincts or urges, and can work beneficently to our advantage. It is reported that 75 percent of human action is controlled by the subconscious, and 25 percent by conscious thought. Whatever the proportions, we are dealing with a powerful force in our make-up. It would be well for us if we harness it to work for our good.

We ought therefore to conduct ourselves wisely. An act once performed becomes easier to do the second time whether it be good or bad. Practice makes perfect; not just aimless, indecisive practice, but diligent, constant, persistent practice. Or as an instructor once stated, "*Perfect practice makes perfect.*" We know that practicing a wrong habit will never perfect a good undertaking. Nor will studying fables bring us the knowledge of truth. This is indeed what Paul meant when he spoke of a class of men who are ever learning but never come to the knowledge of the truth. Hence, to lay up the "good store" we must practice the good things, study that which is truth.

The Almighty requires that His people be pure inwardly as well as outwardly. Good fruit proceeds from a pure heart. When a man's inward life is corrupted, when his affections are set on earthly things, the actions proceeding from thence certainly will also be corrupt. It is proof of the absence of inward strength. What words can express this thought better than the ones Jesus uttered in His Sermon on the Mount: "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

We may often ask how much a man has done, but the principle from which he acts, the motive that impelled him to act, is rarely considered. We inquire whether he be courageous, rich, skillful, handsome, a good writer, a good singer, or a good laborer; but how poor in spirit he is, how patient, how meek, how spiritual, are seldom spoken of as things of greater worth. Naturally men respect the outward appearance of men, but God looks on the heart, the inner store.

In the great and final Judgment when the Lord comes to reward His servants, the "hidden things of darkness" will be brought to light, and the "counsels of the hearts" will be made manifest (I Cor. 4:5). Knowing as Paul did the seriousness of our calling, we can perceive the reason for his earnest prayers

and desires for his brethren, that they may be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the *inner man*" (Eph. 3:16).

Each man's inner store is a direct result of his choice of the wisdom by which he chooses to be governed. There is much learning in the world today, much of it good in its field; but the wisdom of God greatly exceeds this. There is a great difference between the wisdom of a man devout and taught by the precepts of God, and the knowledge of a man learned in temporal affairs. One has a store of heavenly things, the other has but the earthly. The former has a treasure which moths and rust cannot spoil, nor can thieves steal it; the other's possessions are subject to rust, decay, or to be stolen or outmoded by the rapidly changing values of this life.

In view of the blessings the good store will eventually bring us (and truly we enjoy the hundred-fold now if we possess it), we ought to be concerned above all else in laying up this good store. It should be our supreme ambition and our constant delight. Our inner store needs strengthening. It needs also to be emptied of all useless care and anxiety, that we be not drawn away by selfish desires or by anything, whether insignificant or precious. All things in this world are not vile and mean, but because of higher obligations the Christian may not pause to enjoy them. With us it should be, giving up the good things for the better.

May we have that heavenly wisdom to learn above all things to seek and to find God; to love Him and delight in His service; and to consider all other things as they really are, according as He declared them to be. ••

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"You claim that Jesus was not three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, saying that it was not a literal three days and nights in the language in which it was written. Can you explain?"

I believe you are thinking of the position taken by some Bible students that days other than the seventh day were called "sabbaths," and that there was more than one sabbath occurring in the week of the crucifixion of Jesus. This theory is proposed to validate the position that Jesus was crucified on a day before a sabbath which was other than the weekly sabbath, with the result that He rose from the dead in the late afternoon exactly three days from the time of His death. I feel that such thinking is straining the facts to the breaking point in order to build a theory.

If Jesus were in the grave three full days and nights, then that period would terminate just before sundown (an exact 72 hours from the time

of His burial). The account in the gospels relates that the women came "very early in the morning" on the first day of the week. There could not be three days and nights between late afternoon on a given day and early morning on another day.

Among the texts providing the background for the full three days and three nights approach are the following: Matt. 12:38—40; 27:63; Mark 8:31; 9:31; John 2:18—22. We make no effort to disprove these statements as to the length of time. We merely point out that the explanation given by Cleopas, one of the two men with whom Jesus conversed the afternoon of His resurrection, showed that a number of factors were included in the three days and three nights forecast, other than Christ's actual stay in the tomb.

Luke 24:20, 21 reads: "And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him, . . . and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done." This statement reveals two things: the three days *included* the time that He was in the hands of sinful men, His condemnation, His death, and the time actually spent in Joseph's new tomb. Also, note that that afternoon was only the *third* day since those things just enumerated were done. This one statement wholly disproves the theory that Christ was in the tomb literally three days and three nights.

In the gospels there are nine references to Jesus' approaching death in which a period of three days and three nights is signified. But we should also note that in each of these instances His mistreatment by wicked men is also included. For example, Luke 24, beginning at verse 1 (actually this statement is post-resurrection). The women came early in the morning the first day of the week bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away, and the tomb empty. Two men in shining garments (angels) appeared, saying to them, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (vs. 1—7). "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." The whole category of events would take place during the three days and three nights.

We should also observe that Jesus was never in the heart of the physical earth. Joseph's new rock-hewn tomb was cut in a sidehill—they were able to roll a stone up against the entrance. But He *was* in the hearts and hands of sinful men. (In the Bible, men are sometimes called "earth." Cf. Isa. 1:2, 10.)

Another point which militates against the theory of exactly 72 hours is that in a number of instances it is worded, "and the third day rise again." Any

fraction of a third day could be indicated.

Another factor that is adduced to establish the theory of two sabbaths occurring the week of the crucifixion is the case of the women resting according to the commandment, then having in their possession the spices with which to anoint Jesus' body very early the first day of the week.

Matthew 28:1 reads: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre." Mark 16:1 reads: "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him." Luke 24:1 reads: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared."

But to have brought the spices in their possession they would not have needed a whole day in which to secure them. They could have purchased or prepared them between Christ's death at 3 P. M. and sundown when the sabbath began, or they could have prepared them after sundown the following evening, when the sabbath had ended.

**"Why does Paul say that we all must be judged, when Jesus says in John 5:24 that if we believe in God we have everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but [are] passed from death into life?"**

John 5:24 reads: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Starting in the way to life by believing in the God who sent Jesus could not assure one everlasting life. If Jesus means us to take Him literally, He would contradict His own statement: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Or again, if every one hearing the Word and making a casual profession of belief is literally passed from death unto life, how about the seed in Jesus' parable of the sower, which fell into stony places, sprung up quickly and withered away? Jesus made the explanation that the man thus represented received the word with joy, but having no root in himself, endured only for a while and then withered away.

He who hears God's Word and believes it has the *key* to everlasting life, but not the life itself, and if he uses and continues to use that key he will not come into condemnation, but is passed from a condition leading to eternal death into a condition that will lead to eternal life.

But no one will be condemned to death, or be granted the right to eternal life, until he has stood before the Judgment seat of Christ and been judged according to his works: "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" (II Cor. 5:10). To actually possess eternal life a believer must continue faithful to the end, for Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

**"In Matt. 25:5 you say *all* slumbered and slept, and so you explain that there was a total apostasy from the teachings of Jesus. Yet, in Hebrews, the 11th chapter, you say *all* doesn't mean *all* when it says 'These all died in faith,' because Enoch did not die. Why couldn't you have an exception in Matthew 25 also?"**

There are other statements in the Bible to bear out the teaching of Matthew 25:5, that all did slumber and sleep. II Timothy 4:4 reveals that a "heap" of teachers would turn away the hearts of the people from the truth "unto fables." Revelation 17:4 reveals that the woman riding on the scarlet-colored beast would hold in her hand the "golden cup," true teaching of the Bible, and it should be "full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication." When a cup is full of a given fluid there is no space remaining for any other substance. Indeed, the apostasy was complete!

**"What is trafficking in men's souls?"**

It is offering men the hope of salvation on terms other than those established by the Word of God. It is proclaiming a doctrine not founded on the Scriptures of truth which say, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11).

**"I do not believe that God would have some living by their own righteousness and some living by the help of the Holy Spirit. God is no respecter of persons. If He gives it to some and not to others, that is unfair, and I don't believe God is unfair. Please explain."**

You speak of God as being unfair if He would give the people of one age the help of the Holy Spirit and withhold that help from the people of another age. I do not agree. He promises the more "abundant honor to that part which lacked" the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:24).


If your position be correct, then God discriminated against all the people up to the time of Christ, favoring those who lived during the Apostolic Age. They then had a much greater portion of Holy Spirit power to convince and establish them than had been given God's people prior to that time.

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*A man has no more character than he can command in a time of crisis.*



## *This Is Your Hour*



*This is your hour—creep upon it!  
Summon your power, leap upon it!  
Grasp it, clasp it, hold it tight!  
Strike it, spike it, with full might!  
If you take too long to ponder,  
Opportunity may wander.  
Yesterday's a bag of sorrow;  
No man ever finds Tomorrow.  
Hesitation is a mire—  
Climb out, climb up, climb on higher!  
Fumble, stumble, risk a tumble,  
Make a start, however humble!  
Do your best and do it now!  
Pluck and grit will find out how.  
Persevere, although you tire—  
While a spark is left, there's fire.  
Distrust doubt; doubt is a liar.  
Even if all mankind jeer you,  
You can force the world to cheer you.*

