

# Megiddo Message

Spring 2010

I know that my  
Redeemer lives!

- Job 19:25 NLT





## Did You Say, “HAPPY New Year”?

*Yes, I certainly did!!*

**A**re we out of step with the calendar? Not with the ancient Hebrew calendar. This year, the evening of April 14 is the beginning of the Sacred New Year, as God instructed Moses to measure time. As the Israelites were preparing to leave Egypt, God told Moses, “This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Ex.12:2). What month was it? “On this day you are going out, in the month Abib” (Ex. 13:4). The month Abib (or Nisan) begins with the first new moon after the spring equinox, which in 2010, occurs on March 21. The first new moon following is on April 14.

I sometimes wonder if “Happy New Year!” isn’t for many people a 21st century oxymoron. (An oxymoron is a contradictory pair of words, like “awfully good,” or “pretty ugly.”) How can the new year be happy when the economy looks still uncertain, and people are suffering, and terrorism looms on the horizon? How can people be happy when so many families are fractured? How is happiness defined by the “new atheism” that calls vice a virtue and virtue a vice? What is the answer to the problems of war and hatred, and cynicism and corruption?

How can those who worship the gods of money, power and lust be happy?

Where is happiness for those whose dominant emotions are fear and hate?

Thank God, our lives do not have to be dictated by the present culture. We don’t have to be part of the fear, doubt and cynicism around us. Why not welcome the new year as God-given and commit it to Him? Why not make everything that happens a step in fulfilling our God-given mission to prepare for the coming Kingdom of God!

Remember, it is not what happens *to* us but what happens *in* us that makes or breaks our happiness.

Even though we have to live in a world of hate and strife and fear, we do not have to let that world live in us. Else we are sure to be all tangled up, half slave and half free. Was Jesus affected by the tumults in the Roman government of His time? Was He worried and anxious about their economy, or their strifes and disagreements? There is no mention of any of this in the Gospels! Jesus lived totally apart from it all. He said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). And, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34). And, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). And who did Jesus say would be happy? It is those who live by His teachings, His precepts, His laws for life. He said, “If you know these things, blessed [happy] are you if you do them” (John 13:17). Obedience brings happiness.

This is why the Christian’s happiness is independent of his environment. Our human life moves on two levels: a surface level and a deeper, sub-level. On the surface level are our encounters with the culture, statecraft, and applied science. On this level, labor, money and “things” concern us. On this level we buy, and sell, and gain or lose. We are alert, active, eager, and the days always seem too few and too short.

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### WE BELIEVE...

- ★ **in God, the Creator** and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we “live, and move, and have our being.”
- ★ **in the Bible** as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ★ **in Jesus Christ**, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- ★ **in the Holy Spirit**, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ★ **in life as the gift of God**, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in humankind** as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in ourselves** as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- ★ **in the promise of God**, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God’s will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

# Megiddo Message

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**BACK COVER**  
**You call Me the way, and walk Me not.**

### MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*); "a place of God" (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

#### Front cover photo:

Spring in Whatcom Park, WA  
taken by Margaret Tremblay

# The Jerusalem Times

Nisan (Abib), 30 AD

Imagine that an evening newspaper called *The Jerusalem Times* was being published in Jerusalem during Jesus' ministry. What might the newspaper have published during the second week of Nisan (Abib) in the year AD 30? What might an up-and-coming Jewish reporter have been writing about current events in Jerusalem at that time?

## HEALER KING ACCLAIMED

Nisan 9



Yesterday crowds waving palm branches went out to meet Jesus as he rode by on a donkey. Some were heard to shout: "God bless the One who

comes in the name of the Lord!" and "God bless the King of Israel!"

Has the healer become a self-proclaimed King?

Reporters questioned some of Jesus' followers about the event, but were unable to learn anything further.

The crowds also are uninformed, most of them being visitors who have come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast.

But the authorities are very agitated. A reporter for the *Times* interviewed Zacharias, a member of the Sanhedrin, who refused to speak on the event other than to say they are aware and that secret agents have been hired to track Jesus' movements.

## AN UPROAR IN THE TEMPLE

Nisan 10

MONEY-CHANGERS OUSTED



Jesus declared the temple a "den of thieves"

About midmorning yesterday, Jesus the Nazarene shocked the city by wreaking havoc inside the temple. He drove out oxen and sheep which had been intended for sacrifice. He knocked down tables, and created general chaos, amid angry shouts from the money-changers.

Actually, the event should have been no surprise. Jesus has many times condemned the graft and outright thievery being practiced by the priesthood. Still, no one expected such vehemence from

the usually quiet, mild-mannered Galilean Carpenter.

In driving out the money changers Jesus declared that according to Scripture, the temple was to be a house of prayer, not a den of thieves.

For some time Annas the ex-high priest and his son-in-law Caiaphas have had a monopoly on the business of supplying beasts for the Jewish sacrifices. Since the temple tax cannot be paid in Roman, Greek, or Egyptian coins because these coins bear the image of their rulers, Jews from abroad must change their money for the Jewish half shekel. It is reported that the graft pocketed by some of the priests in this exchanging amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

As soon as the temple had been vacated, Jesus re-entered the temple and resumed His teaching, as though nothing unusual had happened. He also healed instantly several who were blind or lame. A number of children, intent on listening to His words, were ecstatic with joy, and shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

The chief priests and scribes who witnessed the activities of Jesus in the temple today were indignant. Several expressed the opinion that the temple precincts belong to the Jewish priests, not to Jesus. But the matter is not easily solved, as the majority of the citizenry take the side of Jesus, not the side of the high priest.



Nisan 10

## CAIAPHAS OUT TO GET JESUS



Caiaphas called a special session of the Sanhedrin last night which lasted almost until morning. It is rumored throughout Jerusalem that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss measures aimed at reducing—or at least containing—the popularity of Jesus the Nazarene. The wide acclaim being received by Jesus is viewed by the priesthood as a threat to the authority of the priests and the security of the Jewish nationalist system.

Roman officials were unwilling to comment.

Apparently various solutions have been offered to the problem of Jesus' growing popularity: intimidation—interrogation—strong accusation—humiliation—anything that might turn popular opinion against Him. No one knows what will be the outcome.

Nisan 10

## NEW MANEUVERS AGAINST JESUS

Yesterday morning Jesus was again seen teaching in the temple. But it soon became obvious that among His audience were professional disturbers.

It is reported that after only a few minutes one of the troublemakers took the floor, commended Jesus for His teaching and for knowing everything "right," then asked Jesus if it was proper to pay taxes to Caesar.

To reply, Jesus asked if anyone present had a penny. Jesus held it up. *"Whose image is on this coin?"* He asked. All answered in unison, *"Caesar's."* Then Jesus turned to His questioner and replied, *"Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's."*

The crowd applauded heartily, while Jesus' opponents made a hasty exit and Jesus resumed His teaching.

It is rumored that the scribes and priests will not try anymore to trick Jesus in front of His admirers by asking Him questions.

Nisan 11

## WHO WON?

An incident early yesterday morning is being interpreted as the beginning of a plot against Jesus.

On-the-scene observers reported that as Jesus was teaching in the temple, a group of chief priests, scribes, and elders marched pompously into the room, interrupting Jesus and rudely demanding to know by what authority He was teaching. Where did He get His credentials? Who gave Him the right to teach in the temple?

Jesus replied to His opponents by asking a counter-question: *"Tell me: the baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?"* Jesus' question captured the interest of the observer and put His interrogators under obvious stress. After lengthy deliberation, the chief priests, wanting not to incriminate themselves nor to lose the favor of the people, decided to reply that they could not tell the source of John's baptism.

Jesus was undefeated: *"Neither will I tell you,"* He said, *"by what authority I do these things."* His supporters cheered wildly.

The chief priests, scribes and elders removed to the rear of the room, where they sat down, apparently to cogitate their next step. Meanwhile, Jesus resumed His teaching.



Nisan 11

## JESUS—MISSING

The temple priests cannot find Jesus anywhere in the city. After seeing Him daily in the temple for a number of months, His opponents wonder if He has left Jerusalem just as their plans were taking form.

Some speculate that He has gone into the mountains with His disciples. Others suggest He may have gone permanently—rumor has it that He said He would be going away sometime in the near future. Few really believe Him, but neither can they find grounds to refute His words.

Others speculate He may be hiding in the home of some of His friends.

No other information is available.

Nisan 12

## FUROR MOUNTS

JESUS VIEWED AS VILLAIN

Last evening, Jesus and his disciples were guests in the home of Simon the Leper of Bethany. Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus attended also.

It was reported that during the dinner, Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus' feet with a very costly oil of spikenard, arousing the ire of some of His disciples, particularly one named Judas. Critical of the waste, Judas left the dinner in a dark mood.

The event drew a great crowd of curiosity seekers to Bethany, to see not only Jesus

but Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead some days ago.

The resurrection of Lazarus has drawn attention to Jesus, and is causing anxiety among the Jewish rulers, who see it as a conflict with the Jewish state religion. Suspicion is especially strong among the Sadducees, who deny any possibility of resurrection, and are watching Lazarus closely. A special, secret council will convene this evening, to consider the severity of the threat Jesus poses to the nation.

## LAZARUS STILL CAUSES A STIR



When Jesus called "Lazarus, come forth," to everyone's amazement Lazarus came forth! No one can explain it. But seeing is believing. In fact, this event was witnessed by a *Times* reporter.

As you would expect, this event is still the "talk of the town." And it has made the priests and rulers pretty uncomfortable.

Nisan 13

## JESUS CRUCIFIED!

*Between two thieves*



Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on Golgotha yesterday, a victim of mob hysteria.

Never in modern history has one who had so much public acclaim come so quickly to dreadful condemnation and crucifixion.

After celebrating the Passover with His disciples the evening before—one day in advance of the Passover celebration—He and His disciples withdrew to Gethsemane for prayer. Here He was betrayed to the chief priests by Judas, one of His own followers.

During the night, He was brought into the high priest's house, to Pilate, who sent Him to Herod, then back to Pilate, and finally about midday Pilate, after examining Jesus and finding Him innocent, submitted to public pressure and gave sentence that He should be crucified.

Reporters on scene told how Jesus, after being put on the cross, said concerning His persecutors, "*Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do.*" This hardly seems likely, as the Jews derided Him saying, "*He saved others; let him save himself, if he be the Christ.*" The soldiers also were said to have mocked Him, offering Him vinegar and gall. Others taunted, "*If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself.*"

The extreme punishment is justifiable only if the Nazarene was truly a threat to the established system.



Nisan 14

## TWO OFFICIALS INTER BODY OF JESUS

Two members of the governing body of Jerusalem asked permission of Pilate yesterday afternoon to inter the body of Jesus. The name of one was Joseph of Arimathea. The second wished to remain anonymous.

The body of Jesus was wrapped in a clean linen cloth, and laid in a new tomb hewn out of the rock. A large stone was rolled against the door of the sepulcher. At last report, Jesus' mother, and two other women thought to be close followers of the Nazarene were seen sitting and weeping near the door of the sepulcher.



Nisan 14

## HIGH PRIEST REQUESTS GUARD

Certain of the temple priests approached Pilate about guarding the sepulcher of Jesus the Nazarene. Some who heard Him preaching say that Jesus taught that He would live again after three days. While no one professes to have believed Him, there seems to be a widespread uneasiness about the whole affair.

The further idea has been suggested that His disciples might try to come and steal the body, then claim that He had risen from the dead.

To forestall any such possibility, Pilate ordered that a guard be placed, and the sepulcher sealed with a great stone. "Do your best," he said, "make it as sure as you can."

Do dead men really need guarding? One wonders if Pilate is as nervous as his words suggest.

Nisan 13

## WILL JESUS KEEP THE PASSOVER?

The officials of the temple are wondering whether Jesus will keep the Passover in Jerusalem as usual with His friends. It is rumored that certain of the priests and scribes are plotting to kill Jesus. Some believe He will escape into the mountains for the duration of the feast, while Jerusalem is crowded with visitors.

Nisan 14

## EARTHQUAKE!

About 3 o'clock yesterday an earthquake shocked the entire city of Jerusalem, toppling walls, felling trees and generally frightening a large part of the city's populace. Several injuries have been reported, mostly from falling rocks.

Most mysterious was the fact that the earthquake (occurring in mid-afternoon) was accompanied by total darkness—a condition not usually associated with earthquakes. Jerusalem astrologers are predicting that another calamity will fall upon Jerusalem within the week, that the city is presently in the grip of a host of evil spirits.

The Jewish priests were also stunned by a mysterious tearing of the heavy veil in the temple—torn from top to bottom—exposing the sacred precincts of the innermost sanctuary. The temple was immediately closed. All activities have been cancelled, and all entrances have been barred until the matter can be studied and damages assessed.

Neither High Priest Caiaphas nor Governor Pilate was available for interview at last reporting.

It is thought by some observers that the earthquake and the strange cutting of the temple veil both occurred precisely at the time Jesus expired on the cross. If this report is true, one cannot help but wonder WHO holds control over events in Jerusalem.

Other tourists from outlying regions who are in the city to celebrate the Jewish feast days, particularly the Passover, also associate the strange events of yesterday afternoon with the death of Jesus the Nazarene.

The temple priests and scribes refused to comment.

# TOMB of Jesus Is EMPTY!



**AUTHORITIES COMPLETELY  
NONPLUSSED**

tomb refuse to talk.

Rumor has it that Jesus has been seen alive by a number of persons. Mary Magdalene, one of His closest followers, claims to have talked with Him.

The priests are at their wit's end to explain what happened. The official word from the Roman authorities is that Jesus' disciples came by night and stole the body while the guards were sleeping.

The explanation seems unlikely, but no other is available at this time.

Pilate has ordered a complete investigation of the matter; details of his report should be available within the week.

The tomb where the body of Jesus of Nazareth was interred three days ago is empty. The report has been confirmed by numerous persons of authority. The guards who were on duty at the

If ever *The Jerusalem Times* was printed, if ever it printed headlines that Jesus Christ was risen, such an event has not been repeated in all the years since Jesus' time. Yet the impact of that news still affects us today.

The resurrection of Jesus is the climax of the Gospel, or good news, because it answers life's ultimate question: *"If a man die, shall he live again?"* And it answers that question with a resounding *"Yes!"*

Jesus Himself said, *"I am the resurrection, and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live: And whoever lives and believes in me [whoever is a living believer when He returns] shall never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:25–26). Before Jesus' resurrection, these were only words. Now they are given the backing and assurance of His own victory over death. Now Jesus Christ is alive, and is seated at the right hand of His Father in heaven. He is alive for evermore!

On the resurrection morning, Jesus met Mary Magdalene with these triumphant words, *"Mary....go to My brethren, and say unto them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God, and your God"* (John 20:16–17).

Here is a message with tremendous significance to us. Jesus' disciples can be in the same relationship with God as is Jesus Himself. They are sons. Jesus said the Heavenly Father is *"My God, and your God."* This is the news of the resurrection, and the ultimate relationship. Let it put fire into our bones and hope into our lives. Let it put new oxygen in our blood, giving us power to surmount any difficulty we may encounter. Jesus lives! And because He lives, we too may live!

We have heard this good news. *"Now is Christ risen from the dead"* (1 Cor. 15:20). Is it not really good news to us? And now our living Lord calls us to carry out this good news, to make it real in our lives, to walk worthy of our high calling so that we too may live, so that we too may have the assurance that if sleeping we will have a physical resurrection when Jesus Christ comes, followed by the change to the immortal state and life eternal (Phil. 3:20–21).

This good news makes us eager to obey the law of Christ, to bring ourselves to His standard, that we may be among the eternal sons of the Heavenly Father and inherit a place with Christ in His Kingdom forever.





## THE TWELVE

*When Jesus started out to preach, He called twelve special men.  
And when He said, "Come follow Me," they did so there and then.*

*Invited first to join the group, one **Simon Peter** came.  
With Peter came his brother, too—**Andrew** was his name.*

*Yet more were called by Jesus near the Galilean lake.  
Both **James** and **John** gave up their nets—their all—for Jesus' sake.*

*Then **Philip** heard the Master's call; and **Thomas** heard it, too.  
Thomas was the one who doubted, much like me and you.*

***Nathanael**, whom Jesus named "An Israelite indeed"  
Was also called—and **Judas** too, tho' he would traitor be.*

*Would Jesus take a publican, a tax collector bold?  
He did! And **Matthew** wrote of Christ—He said, "'Twas writ of old."*

*So pleased to be a follower, **James Alphaeus** joined the throng.  
Soon **Lebbaeus-Thaddaeus** followed too, and **Simon** came along.*

*And now I ask, what would you do, if Jesus came your way  
And called your name and said, "Leave all and follow Me today"?*

*For still He calls to each of us. Will we be loyal, too?  
Will we take up our cross and go when He says, "I mean you"?*





# The Heir of the World

*The Heir of the world is coming!  
It is Jesus, the Son of God;  
He is coming in full power and glory  
To rule with an unbroken rod.*

*He has gone to a far-off country,  
To receive His instructions on high;  
But He's coming, oh yes, He is coming,  
To bring peace to Earth by and by!*

*Through Paul the apostle beloved,  
He is mentioned to us of the deed;  
And through and by him 'tis asserted  
That Christ is the only true seed.*

*We know He's the Heir, just and lawful,  
For the record is true and correct;  
And He's holding a clear and clean title  
To Earth—it has not one defect.*

*He's the Great Prince of Peace, and He's coming,  
And we're looking with longing eye  
To behold Him in bright regal splendor  
Descending from God's throne on high.*

*Oh, the peace, sweetest peace He'll establish,  
'Twill extend from pole unto pole;  
There will be no more war, no more bloodshed,  
All lands will be under control.*

*He's the King of the world, and He's coming  
To bind all the nobles of earth  
And establish a just, righteous Kingdom,  
Of beauty, of power and worth.*



# Is Coming!

*He's the Judge, the great Judge, and He's coming  
In majesty soon He'll appear;  
Our eye will behold Him in glory,  
And His voice—oh, so gentle!—we'll hear.*

*Will that voice speak to us the grand sentence,  
“Good and faithful, my servant, well done”?  
Or will it speak words sad and solemn,  
“Depart, for you are not My son”?*

*The sharp holocaust Armageddon,  
Will be waged by this strong noble One,  
It will be of all conflicts the fiercest,  
Not like any other ere won.*

*Will the kings of the earth and their rulers  
Come and lay all their trophies down,  
To the Master give full surrender,  
And hark to His voice when it sounds?*

*Nay, they all will rise up in fury  
To resist with much wrath and contempt  
All His forces for good and advancement—  
But quickly their strength will be spent.*

*All nations will be in this conflict,  
They'll muster their hosts far and near;  
Two thirds will resist and be vanquished;  
One third will submit in great fear.*

*God's people will all find deliverance,  
As the prophet named Joel foretold;  
They'll be kept in His safe, blessed chamber  
Prepared to be sheep for His fold.*

*Oh, the Shepherd, chief Shepherd is coming  
With blessings to fill all the earth:  
To give all who love His appearing  
An e'erlasting crown of great worth.*

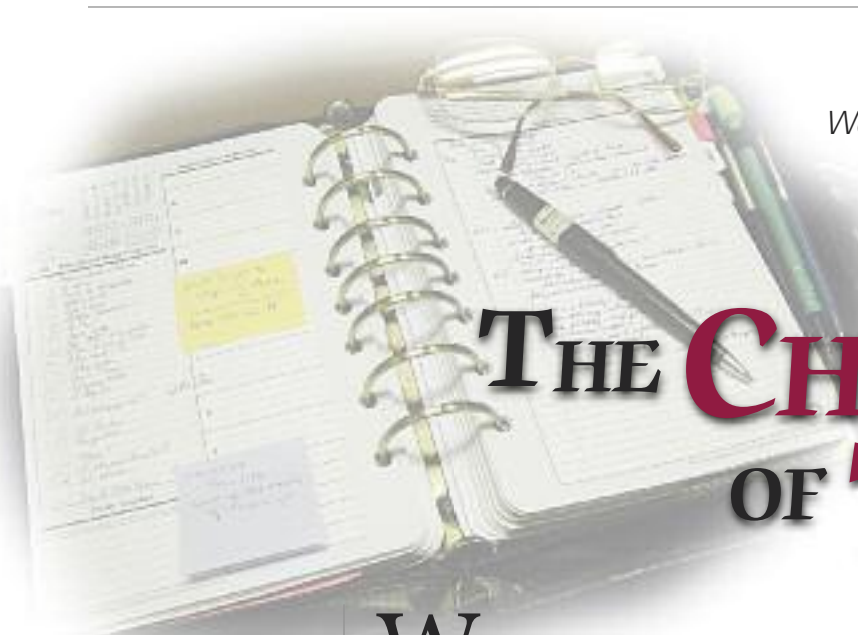
*The comfort, sweet comfort He'll bring us  
Will far more than amply repay  
For the work and the toil and the labor,  
We have spent through probation's day.*

*Oh, the Day, glorious Day of Almighty!  
Its dawning is now almost here;  
The sound of the rumbling chariots  
Seems to fall on the listening ear.*

*We know that that Day is approaching,  
Earth's Ruler will soon, soon appear,  
Oh, let us each one now get ready  
To meet Him with joy, not with fear.*

*Come, Jesus, O come to Your sheepfold,  
And reign on Your throne here on earth;  
We'll own You as King, Judge and Ruler,  
For You are the true Heir by birth!*





*We can't stop the clock, so the only solution is to learn proper time management—with God.*

# THE CHALLENGE OF TIME

**W**e are a time-conscious people. The market is flooded with products—books, programs, seminars, software—all aimed at helping us improve our control of time. Amazon.com lists more than 1500 books on the subject. Notice the direction of these titles: “Personal Time Management”; “Effective Time Management”; “Successful Time Management”; “Doing More in Less Time”; “Time Management from the Inside Out”; “How to Get Control of Your Time and Life”; “First Things First”; “Finding Time, Using Time,” and so on and on.

Why are we as aspiring Christians interested in improving our time management? Because time is life, and life is opportunity. When it is gone, it is gone forever.

Why did the apostle Paul advise, “*Make the very most of your time*”? Because followers of Christ have much to do, and only a limited (and unknown) amount of time in which to do it. No one is more seriously crunched for time. To do what? To attain to the character-likeness of Christ (Eph. 4:13, Rom. 13:14). No one has greater assignments. No one has more to gain—or lose. We will fail or succeed just in proportion to how well we master the art of managing our time.

What better way to start the new year than with a more serious effort to improve this all-important skill!

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of Christian time management is that of giving God a proper place in our time all the time. Our hours get filled with this and that activity, and soon, God—and all that He means to us; all that He has for us; all that He expects of us—is crowded out.

Surely God deserves more than a passing thought as we lay our dizzy head on the pillow at night. But as we think through the day with its multitude of duties and deadlines, isn't it easy to rationalize that we really didn't neglect things spiritual, that we kept a prayer in our heart at least some of the time?

But did we?

With so many demands on our time and energy, how can we offer God our first and best?

We can't stop the clock, so the only solution is to learn proper time management—with God. I would like to suggest three different metaphors for time that should help us.

## 1) “TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!”

Did you know that “Time is of the essence” is a legal phrase with a legal definition? According to Webster's New World Law Dictionary (copyright 2006 by Wiley Publishing), it is:

“A contractual provision that requires prompt and timely fulfillment of obligations under the contract; failure to complete performance under time constraints set forth in the document may constitute a breach.”

Time is like the Energizer Bunny: it keeps going and going. Time marches on, whether we like it or not, creating a sense of urgency. “*Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?*” (Job 7:1). Every second brings us one second closer to the day we die, or the day of Christ's return. In either case, we ought to use that second wisely.

Imagine you're at school taking a very important test, a test on which your whole

**!**  
*What must I change  
in my life to obey  
the Bible command  
to “make the very  
most of [my] time”?*

— Ephesians 5:16 Moffatt



future depends. There's a time limit to the test, but you don't know what it is. At any moment the instructor could walk by and pick up your paper, and that would be it. Your grade would depend on what you had done, and how well you had done it. How would you feel in that situation? Would you be sitting there day-dreaming, or planning your next vacation? That is how life is. We never know when it is going to end, so we have to keep working, as carefully and as rapidly as we can.

If only we could freeze time and finish up one last problem! But no, we have to work with time one moment at a time, as God gives it.

## 2) TIME IS LIMITED

My second illustration is that time is like money. There are so many ways to put it to good use, yet so many ways to waste it.

When we were born, God gave us a bank account, and every day we are drawing out of that account, only we don't know the balance. At any point we may learn that there is little or no money left in the account.

How would you be spending in that situation? Would you squander your last dollar? Wouldn't you find yourself spending every penny as if it were your last?

Life truly is a gift. Due to no action on our part, God has granted us this life. He *gave* it to us. Why not give it back to Him? Why not devote our best to Him and His service? Didn't Jesus say "*Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it*"? (Luke 9:24).

## 3) TIME CAN'T BE RECOVERED

My third illustration is that time is like milk spilled on the floor—it is gone.

How many times have you wished you could rewind your life—even a few minutes or a few seconds—to take back something you said or did? But unfortunately, the remote control of life has no REWIND button. It can take years to correct a few moments of folly—and we may not have those years!

What if we lose a full day? Wouldn't we regret letting a whole day slip by without a thought of God or a prayer of thanks to our Heavenly Father? But just as we cannot freeze time, we also cannot turn back life's clock. At the end of the day, do we have any regrets?

We ought to be living every day as if it were our last. We ought to be prioritizing our lives, with God always at the head, laying up for ourselves a "*firm foundation for the coming age*" so

that we may "*take hold of the life that is truly life*" (1 Tim. 6:17–19 NIV).

Yesterday's time is gone forever. What can we do about it? Seize TODAY!

## SPEND TIME WISELY

Time ticks on, and we must spend it wisely, for we cannot take it back.

What about that test tomorrow? We ought to do everything that our hand finds to do with all our might (Eccl. 9:10) and to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). This includes our work time, our leisure time, our rest time, our home time—all our time. Working hard on the job and devoting our best to God should not be mutually exclusive activities. We can serve God even as we serve our employer—by being truthful, earnest, focused, and diligent.


God is opening to each of us another sacred year. Shouldn't we be anxious to give Him our best?

Just think about the big picture—what God is doing, what He is offering, the great reward He has promised to every faithful one. Think about eternal life with happiness and wealth and all the delights of immortality. How can we hold back? How can we afford to waste either time or energy on feelings of pettiness, strife or discord? How can we find any pleasure in getting even? What is there to attract us among the baubles of this world? Why aren't we anxious to let it all go, and commit ourselves totally to God, in view of the great things He has promised?

Think again about that bank account called "time," the one God opened in our name the day we were born. We don't know how much is left in it, we only know there is less than there was last year at this time. There is less than there was last week at this time. There is less than there was yesterday at this time.


Why not make a new year vow to cut the time wasted in feelings of pride and selfishness? Why not cut the time lost to needless fear and worry? Why not cut the time lost in indecision, rebellion and protest, and go straight for the goal? Why not allow in our minds only what we can consecrate to God, what He can recognize and commend?

Time properly invested in the work of God will pay eternal dividends, even "*glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.*" Who wouldn't gladly exchange everything of here and now for such glory, such honor, such life! ♦



*Time properly  
invested in building  
godly character will  
pay eternal dividends,  
even "glory and honor  
and immortality,  
eternal life."*

—Romans 2:7



*The remote control  
of life has no  
"rewind" button.*

Based on the Biblical account found in Judges 6:11–40; 7:1–22

# SIFTING MEN FOR SERVICE

*God does not sift us.  
We sift ourselves by our  
willingness, enthusiasm  
and commitment.*

Things were in bad shape in the nation of Israel, about as bad in every way as they could be. This time it was the Midianites who overran the land, and held the leaderless people in almost abject slavery. With them were joined two other nations, the Amalekites and the Children of the East. When the crops were almost ready to harvest, these raiders swooped down in great numbers, destroyed all the crops, and drove away all the stock.

Then, as usual, when they were in trouble the Israelite people remembered God and cried for help; whereupon He planned another great deliverance.

First of all Gideon, the leader, was chosen and put through a course of schooling. Then this trained young leader gathered his band of helpers. Now we want to mark keenly how these three hundred men were sifted out of the thousands for service. They were sifted out.

They sifted themselves out. In that army of thousands were just three hundred who had the needed qualifications for the type of service God wanted done.

Look over the gathered thousands: Which are the chosen three hundred? No one knew. They didn't know themselves until the tests

came. They chose themselves by the way they stood the three tests.

Even so is God ever sifting out men for service. The more difficult the service (the higher the grade of leadership needed), the severer the test. The testing both reveals the qualities, and in part makes them.

## THE FIRST TEST

The first quality these men had was willingness. They were all volunteers. When the call came they rallied to the leader's side. How did

Gideon find them? He sent runners through that whole section. They went first to his own family clan, then to his own tribe Manasseh, then to three neighboring tribes. The runners said that God had called upon Gideon to lead a movement against the Midianites and their allies, and he wanted every man to come and help.

A good many did not respond to the summons. Some were simply indifferent. They could not help hearing the call, but there was no response, no change of expression in the eye or face. They went right on in their heavy, dull way as though they had not heard. They were utterly indifferent to the call.

Some criticized. Who was Gideon? He had no skill or experience. And the people had no weapons. The enemy had stolen everything of that sort away. And they were clearly outnumbered. And, and, and! There they were talking, criticizing, and not responding to the call. Such critics seldom respond. Helpers criticize in a very different way. It takes less brain to criticize unwisely, captiously, far less than to help. Almost any harebrain can tear things to pieces. And nothing is more common than just such criticism.

Some ridiculed: "Gideon going to be a national leader? Ha! Ha! Ha! And whip the enemy? Ridiculous! Absurd!" The whole thing was impossible.

These men tried to keep others from going.

But many came. A crowd of volunteers came hurrying from farms and caves, bringing such weapons as they had been able to keep in hiding. They were willing to respond. It was a motley crowd, no doubt. There were **thirty-two thousand** of them.

These men had the first great qualification for service: they were willing, actively willing. They willed to come down to the front and help fight the enemy, and deliver their nation.



Gideon sent out a call for volunteers to help drive out the Midianites from their land, and 32,000 men responded.



Willingness is a great quality. God reckons our service not by our ability alone but by our willingness. *"For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have"* (2 Cor. 8:12). Whatever is given out of a true, willing heart is eagerly accepted by Him. Willingness is a heart quality. It is the heart volunteering. This was the first test.

Thirty-two thousand out of four tribes stood this test. Gideon's army had one great qualification at the start.

## A SECOND TEST

Now these men are put to a second test. The next morning God surprised Gideon by telling him that he had too many men. If the victory were given them with so many men, they would feel that they had done the thing themselves. They would grow so large as to shut God out of their landscape. Each man would feel that he was the essential factor. They would go back to the home folks to tell of themselves.

God seems to know us mortals.

Now He would lessen their numbers, but in doing it He would pick out the best. The men are encamped on the hillsides overlooking a valley. Across the valley to the north lay the encamped armies of three nations. They were a vast host. They were spread out as thick as the grasshoppers of Egypt had been years before; swarming everywhere.

Gideon spoke to his men. He said, "Fellow Israelites, there is the enemy. Take a good look at them." His followers looked, and as they looked some of them began to get scared. They had not realized just what was involved. Their footwear seemed to grow too large. They were shaking in their boots.

Then Gideon said, "Now, every man of you that thinks it can't be done—I wish you would go back home." And he watched. They commenced to move away in squads, in scores, in fifties. Great gaps were left in the mob of men. Here is a fellow standing, looking. He thinks, "It looks pretty bad, sure enough; but then, I suppose, if God is planning..." But—the fellow by his side has gone, and on this other side, too. "I guess I'd better go, too." And off he goes. Fear is very contagious. There is great power in feeling another by your side. And two thirds of them disappear over the hills.

The motto of these disappearing men was this: "It can't be done."

And, true enough, it couldn't be done with

them; but it could be done without them.

There remained ten thousand. These men by their staying said, "It ought to be done. What ought to be done can be done. What can be done we can do. And what we can do we will do."

Here is another man standing, looking at the vast host across the valley. He is thinking that it is a desperate case, but he thinks of God's call through Gideon.

Just then he notices that his neighbor on the left has taken to his heels, and on his right also. That shakes him for a moment. His heels say, "You go, too." His heart says, "No, stay." He obeys his heart. He says, "I'll stay if I stay alone."

That was the stamina in these remaining **ten thousand**. They stood a double test in remaining, the desperate situation seen in the presence of such an enormous army, and the desertion of their fellows. They had not only willingness but courage.

Courage is a heart quality. Courage is the heart fighting. It faces fearful odds and keeps right straight ahead regardless.

Such a man can't be whipped. He doesn't know when he is whipped. And the man who doesn't know when he is whipped, never is whipped. No man can be whipped without his own consent. Courage, is a heart quality. These ten thousand were not chicken-hearted, nor down-hearted. They were lion-hearted, stout-hearted.

It was a keen stroke of generalship on Gideon's part that sent the timid, discouraged ones back home. Nothing is more demoralizing than the presence of such people. And there was no discipline much finer for those who remained than to feel their fellows leaving them.

It is hard to be left by those who have been in touch. It is hard to stand alone. There is no harder test of character than that. And, too, there is no finer thing to make character. Think how the fiber of those ten thousand toughened and strengthened as they stood there, with men on every side hurrying away. This was the second test.

But the men who can stand testing are growing fewer. Thirty-two thousand men were willing. Only a third of them are both willing



Gideon marched his army of 32,000 men to the hills surrounding the Midianite camp where the vast horde of the enemy could be seen.

He told those who were afraid, to leave and to return home. All but 10,000 men left.

and courageous. These men are more than volunteers. They have seen the foe. Their fiber has stood the test, and toughened in the test. They are courageous volunteers.

### A THIRD TEST

But there is a third test. God speaks to Gideon and says, "You have too many yet, Gideon." Too many? Yes, this is to be a quality fight. No common fighting here. God works best with the men who come nearest to having His own thought about things. Numbers do not count. You can't "count" men for service. You must "weigh" them, and feel the firmness of their fiber.

There is a little brook running down the valley. Gideon gives an order to his men to advance a little distance. And he watches them. Most of them as they come to the water stretch out leisurely on the ground and putting their mouth to the water take a good long drink, and another, and another. They seem to say by their action, "Well, there's some hard work ahead, but we must take care of our-

selves. We must not get unduly stirred up over the thing. We're not fighting yet."

But one man comes along with a quick, nervous step, his eye still on the enemy. He is all on tenterhooks. His eyes flash fire. He reaches down with a quick movement and gathers up some water

in his hand, up to his mouth, and hurries on. Then a second comes, and a third, and more.

Gideon is watching. As each of these comes along he calls him off to one side. When the whole number of men have crossed the brook there are just **three hundred** of the hot-hearted, intense-spirited ones.

God said, "Gideon, keep these men; send the others home." These thousands sent back were sturdy men. They would make good fighters in many a campaign, but they would not do for the higher kind of campaign planned for that day.

The little band remaining had stood a third test: they were willing, and courageous, and enthusiastic.

The proportions are worth noticing here. Thirty-two thousand were volunteers. A third of that number are courageous volunteers.

About a thirty-third of these, less than a hundredth of the original, are hot-hearted, courageous volunteers.

This is Gideon's Band—three hundred young men who were willing, and courageous, and hot-hearted, all heart qualities. They stood every test. They had faced a foe that humanly they had no chance to overcome; and because of God's call they were not only willing and stout-hearted but intense in their desire to get at the fighting.



*They surrounded the Midianite camp by night;  
They shattered their pitchers and out shone the light;  
They blew their trumpets with a triumphant shout,  
A cry that was destined the foe to rout:  
"The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!"  
And far afield fled the hosts of Midian.*

The nation knew a great victory over its enemies, and a time of prosperity for years after.

God is still sifting men for service. He will gladly use every one who is willing to be used. When we have stood the first test well, there comes a second. That, stood well, means others. These are our promotion tests. He lets those who stand all testings into the thickest of the fight, and up to the highest heights of victory!

*Lord, let me stand through the thick of the fight,  
Let me be true as the steel of a blade;  
Grant me the courage to do what is right,  
Help me to stand every test unafraid. ♦*



God told Gideon "You still have too many men." Gideon watched as the remaining 10,000 men drank from the brook. Most were careless, putting their faces down into the water. But those who kept their heads up and their eyes alert for danger, Gideon called aside and sent the others home.

Only 300 men were left out of Gideon's army of 32,000. Now the Israelites knew beyond all doubt that only with God's help could they defeat the enemy.



## Did You Say, "HAPPY New Year"?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

But this surface level is not where the Christian sets his heart and affection. The Christian lives on the deeper, sub-level of life. This level remains the same in spite of changes on the surface. On this deeper level are the secret sources of our strength and inner confidences. Here our hope, our faith, and aspirations are the important issues. On this level are our life purposes and our higher commitments. The words of Jesus, the prophets, and apostles all speak to this deeper level of life.

If our religion moves only on the first level, it is only an outward, social rite, a form devoid of religious quality. And, being on the surface, it is constantly exposed to the elements around us.

But we cannot dissociate the deeper level from the surface. What we are in our deeper life determines what we do on the surface. If we have inner peace and contentment deep down where our real life is, surface storms will not shake us. Time will have no tyranny over us. The opinions of others will not affect us. Those who would attack the Bible and the foundations of our faith will not touch us because we give them no access to the deep, sub-level of our lives.

Did you ever notice a lake on a windy day? The surface of some areas will be very rough and choppy, while farther out toward the middle of the lake, the surface may be hardly disturbed by the same wind. What is the difference? The depth of the water. The same is

true of our minds. The more we occupy our minds with the deeper issues of life, the less the surface issues will disturb us.

Our happiness is largely, I am convinced, a matter of choice. If we want to have a "happy new year," we can, but we must be victors over time, not victims of it. We might think of time as simply raw material. It is our task to apply the energy and the art to make something beautiful of it, or it will make something ugly of us. How often we see people after a long time and wonder what time has done to them. Some faces are exquisitely carved, while others are cold and hard, with lines of cynicism or sadness.

"The days of our years" fly away so quickly. What are we doing with them? We can live every day on the surface and be affected by the things around us, or we can live every day supported by those deep, sub-surface qualities of hope and faith in God.

We can live every day as a God-given gem out of eternity. We can be a little kinder than necessary, every day.

Let this new year, if God grant it, be a consecrated year. Then it will be a happy year filled with joyful service to God and to one another as we anticipate the indescribable happiness God has in store for every faithful one. Yes, He is waiting with blessings beyond anything we have ever seen or heard of (1 Cor. 2:9), beyond anything we can ask or imagine! (Eph. 3:20).

I am sincere when I say it: Happy New Year! ♦

**Live every day**  
supported by those  
deep, sub-surface  
qualities of hope and  
faith in God.

### ANSWERS FROM PAGE 19

#### WORDS OF LIFE

1. Pure (Prov. 30:5)
2. Right, pure (Ps. 19:8)
3. Joy and rejoicing of my heart (Jer. 15:16)
4. Truth (John 17:17)
5. Purified your souls, obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:22)
6. According to thy word (Ps. 119:9)
7. Sin against thee (Ps. 119:11)
8. Converting the soul, making wise the simple. (Ps. 19:7)
9. Quick, powerful, sharper (Heb. 4:12)
10. Lamp, light (Ps. 119:105)
11. Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
12. Meditate in it day and night (Josh. 1:8)
13. Firstfruits of His creatures (Jas. 1:18)
14. Shall make you free (John 8:32)
15. Fire, hammer (Jer. 23:29)
16. Richly in all wisdom (Col. 3:16)
17. Live, Apple (Prov. 7:2)

18. Length of days, long life, peace (Prov. 3:1-2)
19. Thousands (Ps. 119:72)

#### JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

1. Of the priests (Jer. 1:1)
2. Anathoth (Jer. 11:21-23; 29:27)
3. Baruch (Jer. 36:4)
4. Bury it in a crevice in the rocks near the Euphrates River. (Jer. 13:1-3). After time passes, Jeremiah is told to go and dig up the belt. By then it is ruined and useless. This is what the Lord said would happen to Judah. (Jer. 13:7-11)
5. He cut up the sheets as they were read and threw them into the fire. ((Jer. 36:1-6; 10-23) God commanded Jeremiah to dictate a second scroll with the same curses—plus (Jer. 36:27-32)
6. Because it was a time of distress; the prophecies of the Lord would come true in Jeremiah's day, and if he had a family they would perish (Jer. 16:1-4)
7. Pashur (Jer. 20:1-2)
8. Seventeen shekels of silver. It is a symbolic act by which Jeremiah showed his faith in the promise of God, that the Israelites would return from captivity and buy and sell land again in Israel (Jer. 32:1-15)
9. Ebed-Melech, with 30 other men, let down ropes along with rags to go under Jeremiah's armpits, and they lifted him up with ropes (Jer. 38:7-13)
10. Jeremiah was given a choice: to go to Babylon and be treated well or stay in Judah with the new governor, Gedaliah. Jeremiah chose to stay. (Jer. 39:11-14, 40:1-6)
11. There would be a time too late to change their ways because the people of Judah were so accustomed to doing evil. (Jer. 13:23)
12. Seventy years (Jer. 25:11; 29:10)



# THE DAY OF RECOMPENSE

By Samuel K. Newray, Liberia, Africa

The day of recompense, the day of the dispensing of the rewards, will come with the arrival of Jesus Christ, who, in the words of the apostle Paul will “judge the quick [living] and the dead at His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:1–2). Every work requires a pay according to what has been done. The good job requires a just compensation; all bad jobs done will be rewarded accordingly (2 Cor. 5:10).

As Christians, we are on the job for the Lord, persevering day after day so that we can receive our future reward. All who have done good work, to the standard set by the Master Foreman, will be rewarded with eternal salvation. This is a recompense of all good works; but all those who have not worked to the acceptable standard, their reward will be eternal death.

This is the Lord’s plan, that everyone will reap what he sows; for no one that plants grapes expects to reap mangoes. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Gal. 6:7–8). Jesus also taught this truth in Rev. 22:12, “Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me to give every man according as his work shall be.” And again, it is said in Matt. 16:27, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.”

The reward will be dispensed when and only when Christ comes. Our Lord Jesus Christ is certainly coming to bring salvation (Isa. 25:9; 40:10), and all faithful believers shall rejoice at His coming. For no student who has studied his lessons well and prepared for the forthcoming examination need be afraid of the teacher who is coming to administer the exam. He is sure of himself and passing the examination, and eventually his promotion to the next class. This is the same with the Christians. All faithful Christians, those who have prepared themselves and are eagerly awaiting the arrival of our Lord, will rejoice at His appearing, and there is no need to fear or doubt about it. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God,

[Emmanuel, “God with us” –Matt. 1:23] we have waited for Him and He will save us. This is our Lord, we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation” (Isa. 25:9).

No one will receive a reward (salvation) until Christ comes. Salvation will be the pay given out by Christ Jesus when He returns to earth to judge everyone according to his work. No one will be saved until He comes.

A righteous life will not go unrewarded. “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed toward His name” (Hebrews 6:10). When He appears, all the faithful servants, those who will overcome to the end, the same will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away. First Peter 5:4 says, “And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you shall receive the crown of glory that does not fade.”

The writer of Hebrews admonished us of the need for watchful readiness in anticipation of the reward when he said, “For you have need of endurance so, that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:36–37). He, Christ, shall come just as He promised; and at that time all who have done well, who have “done the will of God” will be saved.

The day of recompense is drawing nearer, and are we ready? Are we prepared to meet our King in the air with the host of angels? What if He shall come tonight? Will you be ready and worthy of His calling? Will He say to you, “Well done, good and faithful servant”? Are you worthy of the crown?

Let us examine ourselves, remaining steadfast, strong and of good courage as we await our crown of righteousness.

The victorious apostle Paul, after he had persevered to the end, said, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7–8).

Let us watch, for His coming is near at hand! ♦

As Christians,  
we will be judged  
and rewarded at  
Jesus’ coming—  
not before.



## WORDS OF LIFE

Fill in the blanks.

1. "Every word of God is \_\_\_\_\_, He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him."
2. "The statutes of the Lord are \_\_\_\_\_, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is \_\_\_\_\_, enlightening the eyes."
3. "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the \_\_\_\_\_; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts."
4. "Sanctify them through thy \_\_\_\_\_: thy word is truth."
5. "Seeing ye have \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."
6. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto \_\_\_\_\_."
7. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not \_\_\_\_\_."
8. "The law of the Lord is perfect, \_\_\_\_\_: the testimony of the Lord is sure, \_\_\_\_\_."
9. "For the word of God is \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discern-er of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
10. "Thy word is a \_\_\_\_\_ unto my feet, and a \_\_\_\_\_ unto my path."
11. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_ in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."
12. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall \_\_\_\_\_, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."
13. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of \_\_\_\_\_."
14. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth \_\_\_\_\_."
15. "Is not My word like a \_\_\_\_\_? says the Lord, and like a \_\_\_\_\_ that breaks the rock in pieces?"

16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you \_\_\_\_\_, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
17. "Keep my commands and \_\_\_\_\_, and my law as the \_\_\_\_\_ of your eye."
18. "My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ they will add to you."
19. "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than \_\_\_\_\_ of gold and silver."

## JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

1. Jeremiah was of what distinguished line?
2. What was Jeremiah's home town?
3. Who was Jeremiah's scribe?
4. What did the Lord tell Jeremiah to do one time with his linen belt (girdle KJV)? What happened to the belt? What was the lesson?
5. How did King Jehoiakim systematically destroy the scroll Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch at God's command? What was God's response to that defiant action?
6. Why did the Lord command Jeremiah not to marry or have children?
7. Who ordered Jeremiah beaten and put in the stocks?
8. How much did Jeremiah pay for his cousin, Hanameel's field? What was the purchase symbolic of?
9. Who was responsible for rescuing Jeremiah from the pit where he had been left to starve to death? How was he rescued?
10. What became of Jeremiah after Jerusalem was taken and burned by the Babylonians?
11. Explain Jeremiah's warning about the Ethiopian's skin and the leopard's spots.
12. How long did Jeremiah prophecy the captivity in Babylon would last?



*Jeremiah being rescued from the pit where he had been thrown to die*

ANSWERS ON PAGE 17

Wasn't the transfiguration experience to strengthen Jesus, as well as His apostles, for the ordeal that lay ahead?

## THE PURPOSE OF JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

***"The transfiguration tells us that Jesus, once His work on the cross was finished, would receive back His glory and share it with us. This was the purpose of the transfiguration, see Luke 9:31. Otherwise, why were Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus about 'His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem'?"***

Before we discuss the meaning of Luke 9:31, let us see what was the purpose of the transfiguration. Jesus spelled it out in detail before the event. It is recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (Matt. 16:27; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Jesus said, speaking of His second advent, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt. 16:27). He said this to "His disciples" (Matt. 16:24), which we may presume to be the twelve and some others. Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. 16:28).

How would this be, because His kingdom was yet future? In parable He had compared Himself to a "nobleman" going into a "far country" to receive a kingdom and return "after a long time" (Matt. 25:19).

In the original Greek, there is no division into chapters, and so the narrative continues after Matt. 16:28 with Matt. 17:1, that "after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John His brother" (three of the disciples who would have heard the previous statement), and "led them up on a high mountain by themselves," where He was transfigured before them (Matt. 17:1-2). How were "some" of His disciples going to see Him "coming in His kingdom"? They would see it in the form of a heavenly vision which was to be given them on the mountain only days later.

How do we know it was a vision and not a real experience of Moses and Elijah appearing in person? When the disciples and Jesus came down from the mountain, "Jesus commanded them, saying, 'tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead'" (Matt. 17:9).

Peter, James, and John were favored with a preview of the scene of Jesus coming the second time in glory. His face "shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him" (Matt. 17:2-3).

How, then, are we to understand Luke

9:30-31, which says Moses and Elijah (in the vision) appeared to be talking with Jesus about His death, which was then imminent?

Can't we believe that the Heavenly Father gave Jesus this vision to strengthen Him for the ordeal that lay ahead? The Disciples, who faced many years of carrying on His work after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, also needed the strength and inspiration of the vision. Can we even imagine the exhilaration they felt as they saw Jesus in "His glory and the two men who stood with Him"? (Luke 9:32). They were not seeing a crucified Savior but one who was glorified. The vision was so reassuring to the Apostles that Peter's immediate desire was to have it continue. "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles"—He was wanting it to continue. Besides, both Peter and John, writing years later, mentioned this mountaintop vision, and the courage—and surety—that it gave them. Peter, writing his Second Epistle, said, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (see 2 Peter 1:16-18). John also wrote of it, that "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Can we think that in the midst of all this glory, Jesus was talking about "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem"?

Think about it: If this is a correct translation and Jesus was about to "accomplish" His own "decease," doesn't this statement come perilously close to telling us that Jesus was about to commit suicide?

We need to ask: Is there any other possible meaning? The Greek word translated "decease" is literally *exodus*. The word can mean "death," or "a departure," or "the conclusion of a journey"; a "marching out, military expedition," or "way out of a difficulty," or the end or closing of something (see *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by Arndt, Danker, and Bauer).

What departure was Jesus about to make? He was approaching the conclusion of the first phase of His career, the mortal phase. In a short time He would indeed be facing crucifix-



ion, three days later He would be resurrected, and then forty days after that He would be taken by angels to heaven where He would be glorified in His Father's presence. After many years He would return to Earth as its glorified King. The transfiguration vision was giving Him a total picture, with emphasis on the climax, His glorious return accompanied by clouds (of angels, as He Himself predicted, see Matt. 16:27). The imminent events at Jerusalem would be the beginning of this transition.

What about the word translated "accomplish"? It is the Greek *pleroo*. In the New Testament it occurs 67 times, and only this once is it translated "accomplish." Most often it is translated "fulfill," or "fulfilled." This alternate rendering would be in harmony with Scripture, telling us that Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension would be fulfilling the Old Testament Scriptures, as the Gospel writers said many times (see Matt. 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54, 56, etc).

### WHO IS TAKING THE KINGDOM "BY STORM"?

***"What is the meaning of Matthew 11:12, 'And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force'? I don't get much meaning from it. I can't imagine how the kingdom could suffer from violence, because if I understand correctly, the world then will be at peace and no violence will even 'be heard in the land' (Isa. 60:14)."***

You are surely correct about the absence of violence in Christ's kingdom. Genuine, worldwide peace will be the result of subduing the forces of evil in the Battle of Armageddon. The promise is, *"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places"* (Isa. 32:17-18). At last the promise the angels made at Jesus' birth will be fulfilled: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"* (Luke 2:14).

So what could Jesus be saying here? In speaking about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus referred to an event still future, and it seems likely that much of His audience would have missed the point. For those who rejected Him as the promised Messiah, anything about the

Kingdom would have gone by them because in their view the Messiah had not yet come, and it was He who should bring in the kingdom. Those who accepted Him as the Messiah viewed the Old Testament prophecies as fulfilled because He had come. But there were a few others, with greater insight, who saw in those prophecies a bigger, grander picture encompassing two advents of Christ, the second advent bringing to pass the prophecies of a worldwide, eternal Kingdom. These individuals were *"making [the Kingdom] their prize"* (Knox Translation) and were forcibly going for it because the first advent of Jesus had confirmed their faith that the plan was going forward. In their view, the Kingdom was sure, and they wanted to be part of it! Several translators have picked up this thought. For example:

*"Ever since John the Baptist's time, the kingdom of heaven has opened to force; and the forceful are even now making it their prize; whereas all the prophets and the law before John's time could only speak of things that were to come."* –Knox Translation

*"And from the time John the Baptist began preaching and baptizing until now, ardent multitudes have been crowding toward the Kingdom of Heaven,"* verse 13 continues: *"for all the laws and prophets looked forward [to the Messiah-implied]."* –The Catholic Living Bible.

*"For ever since the appearance of John the Baptist the gospel kingdom is as it were invaded, and people of the most violent passions enter into it with zeal."* –Daniel Mace New Testament (1729)

*"And from the days of John the Baptist until the present moment the kingdom of heaven has been continuously taken by storm, and those who take it by storm are seizing it as a precious prize."*

–Williams

The *New American Commentary* explains that the passage is difficult to understand because the words *"biazomai* and *biastes* ('forcefully advancing' and 'forceful men') can be taken as either positive or negative terms."

The parallel passage in Luke 16:16 has a more positive tone: *"The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it"* (Luke 16:16).

A footnote in *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible* offers some relevant thoughts: *"Gr. biazō, to use force, to force one's way into a thing. The idea here is that before John the kingdom could only be viewed in the light of prophecy,*

*The only way to enter the Kingdom is by "storming" it!*

*No one will be in the Kingdom who is not passionate about attaining it. Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds" that of "the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*  
—Matthew 5:20

but now it was preached, men pressing into it with ardor resembling violence or desperation. They appeared as if they would seize it by force (Matt. 11:12; Luke 16:16). It expresses the earnestness that men must have in getting rid of sin,...and in standing true when relatives oppose them (Matt. 10:34–39)."

The New Testament in modern English, translated by J.B. Phillips, is a paraphrase, but offers a similar rendering: *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven has been taken by storm and eager men are forcing their way into it."*

Whatever Matthew 11:12 may mean in literal terminology, it expresses a total commitment. It is a snapshot of a runner bent on winning the race, who is using every ounce of his energy. It pictures the soldier on the battlefield, so determined to win that he has regard for nothing else, even his own life. This same level of zeal kept the apostle Paul pressing through his entire career, all the way to the finish line where he could say, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith"* (2 Tim. 4:7–8), and was sure of the crown of life. Paul had this same spirit when he wrote, *"Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3:13–14). It was the resolute, determined spirit in every one of the Apostles. It is the spirit that will keep every winner going all the way to the end of the race. It is the same spirit we need today.

Only the *"eager souls"* who are *"taking it by storm"* and *"seizing it as a precious prize"* will secure a place in Christ's coming kingdom.

### HOW ARE WE GOD'S "WORKMANSHIP"?

***"If we are God's 'workmanship, created in Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:10), doesn't this show that God does the work in us? The 'good works' are not ours, but Christ's, and we become His creation, His workmanship. How are we God's workmanship unless He does the work in us?"***

We are aware of the common teaching in the various Christian churches, that "good works" are prideful, that we can do nothing toward our salvation because Paul said *"By grace ye are saved... not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Eph. 2:8–9). The verse in question follows: *"For we are His workmanship, creat-*

*ed in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"* (Eph. 2:10). If God does the work, it is not our work but His. Does this passage tell us we must do nothing but allow God to work in us?

Let's take an example. You make plans for a new house. You hire a contractor who builds your house to your exact specifications. If someone inquired as to who built the house, your answer would likely be, "I did." Would the house reflect your workmanship? Yes, because the contractor built the house to your exact specifications. Your responsibility, your work was to provide a plan, precise instructions, the material, hire the workers, and oversee the project from start to finish. This is significant work on your part but someone else did most of the work. In the same sense, we are God's workmanship. The building is His, the plan is His, the specifications are His, and He has promised to pay His workers. But from beginning to end, it is His project, His materials, His work, and His workmanship.

All who are *"fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,"* are part of a structure God is building *"on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord"* (Eph. 2:19–21).

The Bible uses many different similes to show the working relationship between God and His people, and the responsibility of each:

- **As fellow laborers:** God's people are *"workers together with God"* (2 Cor. 6:1). Both must work.
- **As workers:** Jesus said both He and His Father worked (John 5:17): *"My Father is working until now, and I am working."*
- **As fruit-bearing trees of branches of the vine:** God's people are described as trees *"the planting of the Lord"* (Isa. 61:3), but the trees are expected to bear fruit. Any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down (Matt. 7:19).

Jesus makes the same point using the illustration of the vine and its branches, and again the point is the same: the branches must bear fruit—much fruit. *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit"* (John 15:8). If any branches do not bear fruit, the Master Gardener cuts them off (John 15:2)—is this fair if He is responsible for producing the fruit?

- **As vineyard keepers:** God's people are workers in His vineyard, and are expected to har-



vest fruit for Him (Matt. 21:33–34, 41, 43).

In each example, the workers are assigned a definite task, which they must perform if they would be part of the finished product. In each example, all of the property belongs to God, to be used for His cause, and according to His instructions.

Now let us look at Ephesians 2:10. This verse describes both God's part and man's: *"We are His workmanship [the product He is making], created in Christ Jesus for good works"* the work of adding the Christian graces, as in 2 Peter 1:5–7; becoming pure as Christ is pure, as in 1 John 3:3. Is this a new plan? No, this plan has been operating from the beginning—it is the standard which God *"prepared beforehand that we should walk in them [good works]."*

The general teaching in the Christian churches is opposite to the idea that each believer is responsible to bear his own good fruit or works. Many religious teachers seem to take every opportunity to explain that God, or His spirit, does the changing in us, that all we need do is submit to God's will. As stated above, it is widely believed that doing *"good works"* is prideful because Paul said *"By grace are ye saved...not of works, lest anyone should boast"* (Eph. 2:8–9).

### Consider:

If Paul was saying good works are sinful and wrong, why did he also say that those *"who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works"*? (Tit. 3:8).

Why would Paul have advised such concern for their working, if God was responsible for doing it in them? He wrote, *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"*? (Phil. 2:12).

Why was Paul so definite about the conditions for salvation, that immortality and eternal life are the result of (not the preliminary to) *"persevering in doing good"* (Rom. 2:7 NJB)? Why was he so specific in defining proper and improper conduct if God or Jesus or His Spirit makes us what we are? Why should Paul have said, as he did in Ephesians 5, that uncleanness should not be *"once named"* among us (vs. 1–16)? Will Jesus keep us from jesting, joking and foolish talking, as Paul commanded? Will Jesus make us give thanks instead (vs. 3–5)? Why did Paul say so directly, *"Let no corrupt word [bad language] proceed out of your mouth,"* but only *"what is good for necessary edification [helpful for the occasion–NEB]"* (Eph. 4:29)?

Who but the sincere, committed, God-obeying individual can live successfully within these God-set boundaries?

### What Works?

To understand what type of *"works"* Paul was condemning, we need to look more closely at Paul's writings. When we investigate the subject, we find that the *"works"* Paul condemned were those dictated by the Jewish traditions, which were part of the Mosaic system of laws removed at Christ's death. Paul wrote, *"By the deeds of the law [of Moses] shall no flesh be justified"* (Rom. 3:20). The *"works"* Paul condemned were the self-assigned works Jesus condemned the Pharisees for—i.e., standing on a street corner to pray; giving alms to be seen of men (Matt. 6:1). Such *"works"* were clearly done to be seen; that is why Jesus said, *"They have their reward."* Such *"works"* were an occasion for boasting, as they were being done by the Pharisees of Jesus' day, and would not benefit toward eternal life.

To associate boasting with the works that Paul and other Bible authors commanded is to create a contradiction. The *"works"* the Bible commands, and by which one will be judged worthy or unworthy of salvation, are those which Jesus Christ both taught and exemplified in His life. And Jesus was the epitome of humility, not pride. It would be impossible for one to obey (do the *"good works"*) the Bible commands, to be kind, patient, forgiving, humble, merciful, and so on, and at the same time be boasting. (For examples of the type of works the Bible commands, see 2 Peter 1:5–7; Rom. 12:9–21; Eph. 4:17–32; Col. 3:8–12; Phil. 2:1–4; Tit. 2:6, and many more).

The *"good works"* which Paul and Jesus and the other Apostles commanded as prerequisite to salvation are all focused on building a Christ-like character, adding the virtues of love, patience, peace, joy, goodness, humility, generosity, and good will to one's daily life (2 Pet. 1:5–7). The apostle Paul said directly that giving to the poor—which most people consider an essential *"good work,"* even to the point of giving one's body to be burned—would not avail to one's salvation (1 Cor. 13:1–3).

Any *"works"* that avail to our salvation will result in our becoming more like Christ, more kind, more forgiving, more humble, more patient and long suffering with one another. All these are virtues we must acquire if we hope to receive eternal life when Christ returns (see Rom. 2:7; James 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:7–8).

For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see the booklets, *What Must We Do To Be Saved?* and *God's Spiritual Creation*. ♦

*The "good works"*  
Paul and Jesus com-  
manded are all  
focused on building a  
Christ-like character.

### WELCOME SPRINGTIME!

We are having beautiful spring weather here in Texas. The wild flowers are exceptionally beautiful this year. In this area the blue-bonnets can create a sea of blue in spots that is spectacular. When flowers of other colors are mixed in with them, it is an awesome sight. Everywhere you look there are signs of new life. The many different shades of green in the trees as they leaf out, or the bright pink of the red buds in bloom, make the heart swell with the wonder of God's creation. How happy I am to be alive!

There are so many sad things occurring in the world today. But this is nothing new. There has always been suffering. For those of us that know the plan God has for the earth, these things are just reminders of the brevity of life and spurs to keep us working to be worthy of all the future blessings of the coming Kingdom of God. Our sights must be set on things above, not on the things of this earth.

Every bit of worldly knowledge or every scrap of worldly goods we could accumulate in this life will be nothing when our probation day is

over. Only what we have stored up in heaven will endure.

I have a little plaque that says, "Lord, help me not to be so busy making a living that I forget to make a life." It is so easy to forget that the reason for our existence is to prepare for Life, the life that will never end. If that is what we are concentrating on, whatever is happening in the world around us will not really affect us except to renew our determination to be worthy of every blessing promised the faithful.

With every Abib we celebrate we know the time for the arrival of Elijah and then the return of Christ is getting closer. While the tarrying is a blessing to us who are working to finish the work before us, we cannot help praying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come." I can hardly wait to see this earth made over new, for there to be no sickness, pain or death; for there to be no more selfishness and greed. The Day when there shall be peace in all the earth, when each will look out for the good to be done for another and when all will praise the Lord will be a Day that is well worth working for.

Let each of us redouble our efforts to be part of that grand and glorious Day.

P.F., Texas

### LIVING IN HOPE

As we get older, all of us experience some kind of physical loss. It might be our failing eyesight, or our hearing, or one of our hands or limbs. But God doesn't promise that we will have perfect health our whole life through. We must remember that we are mortal, and in this condition all things are possible. And sometimes we don't truly appreciate what we have had until we lose it! I think about the Apostle Paul, who had a "thorn in the flesh." We don't know what it was, but it must have been grievous to him because he asked God for the removal of it three times. God's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." This tells us God's thoughts are not always man's.

Perhaps God is allowing us to be tried in these last days to help us get stronger. Soon Elijah will come, and he will be able to remedy our problems if we are proving faithful. I think of Moses leading that complaining, rebellious people 40 years. Yet when it came time to enter Canaan, he was only allowed to see it from the heights; he could not enter.

The Scriptures have so many examples to teach us lessons, but it is up to us to listen and have faith in God and know that in the not too distant

future "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). I'm living in the hope of sharing the kingdom with my spiritual brothers and sisters; that is all that matters.

If I had counted on my family for my happiness I would be lost, but they lived as they wanted and that is what matters. I want to be a part of God's future world, so I have to let them go their way. My grandmother lived to be 106, but she wasn't too happy; those last years were lonely as she said "all her friends were gone." I see it already at my age. We all have to keep working to put away sin and make ourselves right in God's sight. First, when we know a thing is wrong, we must say "no" and turn from it. We must change our attitude first and determine that we want that future reward and set our mind on the higher, eternal things, not the temporal. We must "study" to show ourselves "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

I spend quite a bit of time reading the old Messages and the Bible. The Bible is God's Word to us, and what better direction can we find than that?

D.H., Pennsylvania





## To SIN OR NOT To SIN

GOD KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU

Slow down!" gasped Nathan as he and Mark ran across the parking lot of the shopping center. "I'm tired! What's your hurry anyway?"

"Did you see anyone follow us?" asked Mark breathlessly.

Nathan looked around. "I don't think so. Why?" In reply, Mark pulled a magazine from under his jacket. "Where'd you get that?" Nathan asked. "I didn't see you buy anything."

Mark snickered. "I didn't," he said. "I took it." "Took it!" exclaimed Nathan. "You mean you stole it? Why?"

Mark shrugged. "Take a look," he said, holding out the magazine to Nathan. "Would you dare walk right up to the counter and take a

chance on someone seeing you *buy* a magazine like this?"

Nathan was shocked. "That's a filthy magazine, Mark! You'd better take it back!"

Mark sneered. "What's the big deal?" he asked. "Nobody saw me take it, and nobody will see me look at it, so nobody will know the difference — unless you're gonna go tell your mommy." He slipped the magazine back under his jacket. "C'mon," he coaxed. "Let's go over to my house and sneak up to my room. It's not going to hurt anything."

Nathan shook his head. "I'm going home," he said firmly.

Mark frowned. "Well, keep your trap shut about it," he said. "I know, and you know, and nobody else better find out!"

As Nathan watched Mark leave, a thought came to his mind. "Say, Mark," he called out, "you forgot Somebody! God knows!"

Mark scowled and continued walking.

## A BETTER COMPARISON

COMPARE YOURSELF To JESUS

How are you, honey?" Mom smiled as Carrie slid into the car and snapped her seat belt in place. "How was school?"

Carrie looked out the window. "Fine," she said softly.

Mom backed the car out of the parking place. "Anything interesting happen in class today?" she asked.

"I got a seventy-three on my math test." Carrie forced a smile.

"Seventy-three?" Mom glanced at her. "What happened?"

Carrie shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know," she said. Then she added, "But that's not such a bad grade compared to a couple of the others who got forty on the test."

Mom sighed. "I see," she said. "And what was the highest score?"

Carrie didn't speak for a moment. "A hundred," she said finally.

They rode in silence for a while until Mom spoke. "Well, if you compare your score with a forty, a seventy-three looks pretty good," she agreed, glancing again at Carrie. "But, if you compare it with one hundred per cent...well, seventy-three doesn't look so good, does it?"

Carrie shook her head and stared out the window.

"If seventy-three is the best you can do,

that's fine," said Mom, "but I don't think it is. How about letting me help you with some of the problems you got wrong?"

Carrie shrugged her shoulders. "All right," she said, "but I still don't think seventy-three is so bad."

Mom frowned. "You know something, sweetheart," she said at last, "maybe we can both learn an important lesson about living for Christ from this test you took."

"What do you mean, Mom?" asked Carrie.

"Well, you think seventy-three isn't so bad when compared with forty, and it's easy for us to start thinking some wrong things we've done aren't so bad when we compare ourselves with others who use bad language, or steal, or get into fights. When we compare ourselves with the things others do, we might even be tempted to think we don't need to ask God to forgive us for our 'little' sins. But if we compare ourselves to Jesus, who obeyed the Father one hundred per cent, we realize how much we fall short—and Jesus is our standard."

Carrie was silent, thinking. Then she turned to look at her mother. "I guess that's true, Mom," she said. "I felt better comparing myself with those who got forty, but maybe I should be looking *up* instead of *around*." ♦

The above stories are adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1997

### HOW ABOUT YOU?

To Think About:

- ♦ What would you do if you were Nathan? Would you tell your parents or not? Why or why not?
- ♦ Do you think that nobody saw you cheat? or take money out of your Mom's wallet?
- ♦ Do you think no one knows the angry thoughts you have about your brother or sister? or that deep inside you really enjoy dirty jokes?

You're wrong! God knows all about you. That's comforting sometimes, but it can be scary, too. Ask God to help you say "No" to bad things so that you can be the kind of person He wants.

### HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you compare yourself with others, thinking, "I'm not as bad as they are"? Remember, all sin is bad, even those things we call 'little' sins.

Compare yourself with Jesus, and you'll realize that everyone needs to change. The wonderful thing is that God will forgive us when we turn and do right.



Hummingbirds have the highest metabolic rate of any animal on Earth. To provide energy for flying, they must consume up to three times their body weight in food each day.

wind, rain, snow or ice, they thrive in the environments for which they were designed.

To illustrate a few of their varied abilities, I would like to look more closely at three record makers:

- The **Hummingbird**, the only bird that can hover, fly straight up or down or backwards.
- The **Peregrine Falcon**, which holds the record for the greatest speed.
- The **Arctic Tern**, which holds the record for flying the longest distances.

## Tiny Masters of Flight Agility:

### HUMMINGBIRDS

Think about designing a wing for a hummingbird. This wing must be supported by muscles that turn in all directions, so



### Hummingbird: Compared with us...

A hovering hummingbird has an energy output per unit weight about ten times that of a person running nine miles per hour. If a person were to do the same amount of work per unit weight, he or she would expend 40 horse power.

An average man consumes about two and a half pounds of food per day. If his energy output were the same as that of a hummingbird, he would have to eat and burn off the energy equivalent of 370 pounds of potatoes in a single day!



that the bird can fly forwards, or backwards, or straight up or straight down—even upside down for a short distance—and all the while flapping 70 times per second! The wings of this bird must also provide a strong forward thrust, because the bird must be capable of speeds up to 25 miles per hour, and up to 60 miles per hour when the bird is diving! This same wing must be able to

# AWESOME FLYERS

rotate in a pattern that allows the bird to hover in mid-air without moving at all for an indefinite period of time! And all the commands for acceleration, deceleration, even a complete reversing of direction—must be responded to, literally, in a split second! No other bird has such varied flight capabilities.

How is it possible? Did a series of mutations (mistakes) in nature give this tiny bird these awesome flying abilities? How did this tiny bird learn to use its singular flight abilities to dart in and out of between 1,000 and 2,000 flowers each day, lapping up the nectar that is such an important part of its diet and survival?

The agility and precision of the hummingbird has long perplexed scientists. Only recently with the invention of very fast cameras and super-sensitive instruments to measure air movements have they been able even to discover how the hummingbird flies—not to understand how it acquired its abilities.

Did the hummingbird design its singular anatomy? Did some mutation chance to give some bird of long ago a shoulder joint that could rotate its wings in a complete circle? Did some mutation give this bird muscles for flight that are proportionally larger than those of most birds, making up 30% of the hummingbird's body weight? What perfected the smooth operating of these muscles? And how were these mutations passed on to the next generation, and the next?

## Speed King:

### THE PEREGRINE FALCON

The peregrine falcon is the fastest known bird in the skies. It flies up to half a mile above the earth looking for its prey, which are mostly smaller birds in flight. When it spots a suitable prey, it dives for it. These dives have been clocked at more than 200 miles per hour! To minimize



Peregrine falcon





Peregrine going into a dive.



Peregrine reaches for its prey

the drag of the air, the falcon's feet are tucked in; its tail is folded back, and most of each wing, leaving only the tips of its wings for steering.

When flying, the falcon can actually search for prey because its eyes are set at a 40 degree angle, making it possible to look down while flying forward! (How did the falcon perfect this skill—and pass it on to its offspring—even given billions of years?)

How does the peregrine survive dive after dive at such a speed? Why doesn't the air rushing through the bird's nostrils straight into the lungs damage them? Because the falcon is designed with small bony tubercles in its nostrils to slow the rush and prevent this from happening!

We need a windshield to protect us when we travel at high speeds. Why aren't the peregrine's eyes damaged by particles of dust or debris in the air when it zooms down at 200 mph? Again, its eyes are evidence of design. The peregrine falcon has an extra protective eyelid to shield its eyes.

### Champion Migrant: THE ARCTIC TERN

A very small bird, probably weighing less than your cell phone (about 3.5 oz.), the Arctic tern is truly a wonder flyer.

Nesting in the far north near the Arctic Circle during the long northern summer, they start south as soon as the young can fly, about mid-August. Their migration takes them to the oceans around Antarctica, where they enjoy the long days of the southern hemisphere summer, then return to the Arctic by the time the northern summer returns, to raise their brood. Formerly thought to cover some 20,000 miles a year, it is now found that they travel more than twice that distance! Theirs is by far the longest known migration of any animal. (See report of a recent study on page 28.)

Not surprisingly, they perform most of their tasks in the air. They eat and rest on the wing, and the young are taught to scoop small fish and other invertebrates from the surface of the oceans as they glide along.

The Arctic terns are long-lived, often reaching the age of thirty. Can you imagine a small bird flying more than 1,200,000 miles in its 30 years? Doesn't this wonder increase our awe of these little creatures—or rather, of the Creator who designed them?

Scientists can study the habits of these birds, and marvel at their uncanny abilities; but—sadly—many deny the existence of a Designer. What tells these birds when to leave the Arctic to arrive in the Antarctica by the time it is summer there? How can they fly day after

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



An Arctic tern beside a seagull

### Evolution's Answer

What is commonly believed about the origin of birds? Here is the answer being widely taught to grade school children:

"Most ornithologists believe that birds evolved from dinosaurs. The first known species of bird, the archaeopteryx, lived about 150,000,000 years ago. Although it had feathers and wings, it also had reptile features, such as teeth, claws on all four limbs, and a long, bony tail."\*

We have to ask: how did the varied species of birds, each adapted to its environment, develop over time—with no direction?

How did they **lose** the reptile features (teeth, claws, crawling on all fours) and **add** the muscle structure, hollow bones, and beak of birds—plus the skills and instincts needed to travel thousands of miles every year?

\*<http://animals.howstuffworks.com/birds/bird-info3.htm>



An Arctic tern glides along

### Designed to Fly...!

All birds are vertebrates, i.e., they have backbones. But unlike other vertebrates, the backbone of the bird is rigid, most of the vertebrae being fused (unjointed). This rigidity provides the strong support the bird needs during flight.

Most flying birds also have hollow bones. (How did the bird "select" hollow bones to make flying easier?) Are their bones weak for being hollow? No, they are reinforced with "struts" to withstand the stresses of flight. In some species of birds, the hollow cavities are passageways from the lungs so that the bird quickly gets the oxygen it needs to fly—another marvel of design!

# New Study of **The Arctic Tern** completed in 2010

Reported by BBC News



**T**he Arctic tern's extraordinary pole-to-pole migration has been detailed by an international team of scientists.

The researchers fitted the birds with tiny tracking devices to see precisely which routes the animals took on their 43,000 mile round trip.

The study reveals they fly down either the African or Brazilian coasts but then return in an "S"-shaped path up the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The long-distance adventure is described in the US journal PNAS.

**"F**rom ringing, we knew where the Arctic tern travelled," said Carsten Egevang of the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources.

"The new thing is that we've now been able to track the bird during a full year of migration, all the way from the breeding grounds to the wintering grounds and back again."

Starting in August and September, this small bird—which weighs little more than 100g (3.5 oz)—will head away from Greenland with the intention of getting to the Weddell Sea, on the shores of Antarctica. It will spend about four or five months in the deep south before heading back to the far north, arriving home in May or June.

A team from Greenland, Denmark, the US, the UK and Iceland attached small "geolocators" weighing 1.4 g (or 1/20 of an ounce) to the animals to find out exactly where they went on this polar round trip.

The devices record light intensity. This gives an estimate of the local day length, and the times of sunrise and sunset; and from this information it is possible to work out a geographical position of the birds.

The first surprise is that the terns do not make straight for the Antarctic when they leave the Arctic, but make a lengthy stop-over in the middle of the North Atlantic, about 620 miles north

of the Azores. Here, they feed on zooplankton and fish to fuel themselves for the long journey ahead.

The birds then head south along the coast of

western Europe and western Africa before making a choice, either to continue hugging Africa or sweep across the Atlantic from the Cape Verde Islands to continue the journey along the Brazilian coast.

About half the birds that were tracked decided to take the South American path. It is not clear why, but the researchers believe wind might make either route seem favourable to the terns.

"This is completely new knowledge," Mr. Egevang told BBC News.

"They make a detour of several thousand km but once we start comparing the route to the pre-



vailing wind system, it makes perfect sense—moving in a counter-clockwise direction in the Southern Hemisphere, and clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere.

"It's just more energy-efficient for them to do that, even though they are traveling several thousand more miles than if they flew in a straight line." ♦



C Egevang



After setting out (yellow line) the Arctic Terns pause in the North Atlantic (red circle) to feed. Going home (orange line), they follow the winds.



With such a small bird, the tracking device also needed to be tiny.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8451908.stm>



## AWESOME FLYERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

day without landing to rest? How do they find their way from pole to pole without a compass or GPS? What instinct gives them the directions to return to the very place where they were born to raise their broods? How could the bird acquire this information by any type of “natural selection,” even given eons of time?

In every area of God’s creation we see the handiwork of the Designer, the Divine intelligence that can build remarkable abilities into these humble creatures. Should we give credit to little—yet awesome—human minds for the inventions we use every day (the computer, the

radio, the cell phone, the automobile) and not give credit to the One who gave us our very life and breath?

Do we wonder that the Bible calls the one who refuses to acknowledge the Creator a “fool” (Ps. 14:1)?

All praise to our everlasting Creator! And what we know and see now is only a very small part of the knowledge that God has to impart to those who are worthy to become an everlasting part of His eternal family. ♦

### Sources:

<http://howtoenjoyhummingbirds.com/index.htm>

<http://www.helium.com/items/1225685-interesting-facts-about-the-perigrine-falcon>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/index.html>

<http://animals.howstuffworks.com/birds/hummingbird1.htm>

# “I Am the Truth”

When God sent His Son into the world, He had a great purpose in view. Jesus Christ was no ordinary man. Though He was “*made in all points like his brothers*” (Heb. 4:15), in character achievement He is vastly superior to any other person who ever lived on this planet.

Jesus was the Master of men, a “model” of the life God desires.

After Jesus, things could never be the same again, for He was the perfect Pattern. God had planned that from that time forward all who would be saved should, in the words of Paul, be “*copies of the likeness of His Son*” (Rom. 8:29, Wilson’s Diaglott). Christ is the truth, and we copy Him.

Peter the apostle said that “*as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*” (1 Pet. 1:15). Paul wrote that God chose us “*that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Eph. 1:3).

Are we inclined to think of Christ as a moral giant whose goodness is unattainable? When Jesus said, “*I am the truth*,” He was showing us the truth. That is why it is written that everyone who shares the hope of being made physically like Christ must “*purify himself even as he [Christ] is pure*” (1 John 3:3).

How was Christ “*the truth*”? Because He lived it so perfectly. He was God’s law in real life. He gave flesh and blood likeness to all the godly qualities of the character—by practicing them. He brought all the heavenly

virtues into the loveliness of a sinless life.

Jesus didn’t just *talk* about:

**humility**; He showed it in *submitting totally* to doing the will of His heavenly Father (Heb. 10:9).

**truth**, He exemplified *the truth* in every action, thought and word.

**mercy**, He was Himself *merciful* and taught others how to show mercy to each other.

**love**, He showed true, selfless *love*—to His heavenly Father, His disciples, and any who would take up their cross and follow Him.

**holiness**, He was holy, consecrated, set apart for the service of His Father. “*I do always the things that please Him*” (John 8:29), He could say. Not *sometimes* but *always*. This left no tiny gap to be filled by backbiting, bitterness or revenge; no room for any surliness or faultfinding or contention. He was committed to pleasing His heavenly Father *always*.

Do we say, “But that was Jesus”? Hear His message: “*I have given you an example that you should do as I have done...The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher*” (John 13:15; Luke 6:40 RSV).

There is only one way to obtain the abundant, eternal life He offers, and that is to follow Him and live by the gospel He called “the truth.” ♦

Jesus was the Master of men, a “model” of the life God desires.




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*"This day is Thine,  
the night also is Thine"*  
 (Psalm 74:16)

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*A year untried before me lies,  
What it shall bring of strange surprise,  
Of joy, or grief? I cannot tell;  
But this is sure: God sees it well.*

*I make it no concern of mine,  
But leave it in His hand divine.  
The sun may shed no light by day,  
No stars at night may light my way.*

*But still, I shall have naught to fear,  
With God my Father ever near;  
Though all the earthly lamps grow dim,  
He walks in light who walks with Him.*

*No ill can come but He can cure,  
His Word does ev'ry good insure:  
He'll see me through the journey's length,  
For daily need give daily strength.*

– Selected

## STARTING OVER

**E**ach year brings a time to reflect on our lives...a time to reevaluate what is really important...a time to think about where we have been and where we are going.

A new year gives us a time to start over, regardless of our past hurts and mistakes. It is time to begin anew!

If you have experienced a loss within the past year, you know the pain of having to pick up the pieces of your life and move on.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:13: *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

Knowing that you can have Jesus' strength and that it enables you to go on living despite the loss, gives you the greatest comfort!

Be thankful for the happy memories and don't look back by rehearsing wounds that destroy life in the now.

Resolve to give life your best! With Jesus, you can rise to new heights! You can have a song in your heart, a smile on your face, and a spring in your step.

Allow the *"joy of the Lord"* to be your strength! (Neh. 8:10). Above all, be grateful for the seasons in your life and *"Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say rejoice"* (Phil. 4:4).

Remember, every day is a brand new day. It has never been lived before. How we live it is up to us.

Every day is an opportunity to excel.



# Spiritual LET'S TAKE AN INVENTORY

never ← → consistently  
1 2 3 4 5

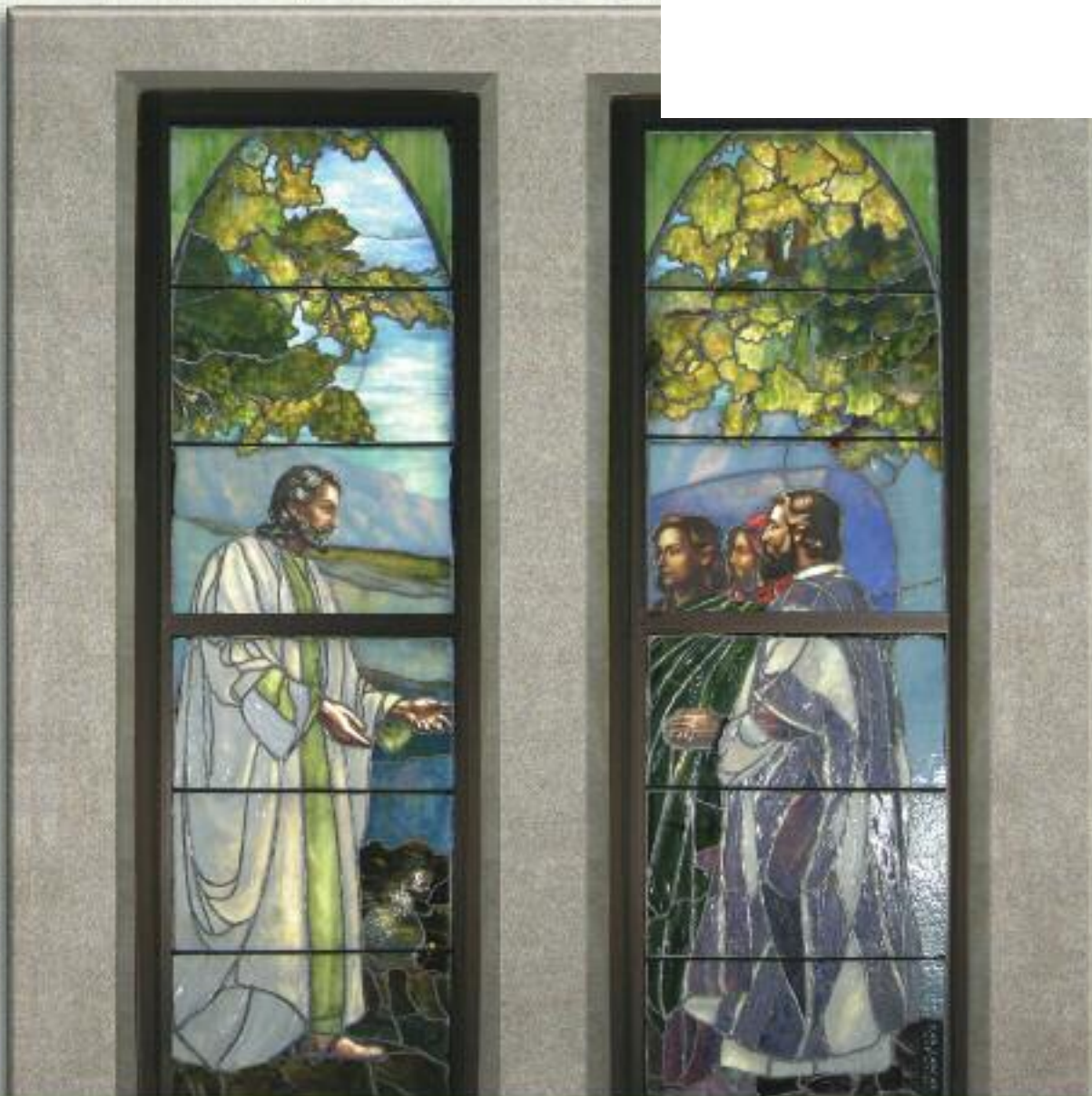
1.						I am able to forgive anyone who wrongs me.
2.						I listen to advice from those I respect.
3.						I find self-discipline gratifying.
4.						I am consistently patient with the routine of my duties.
5.						I am long-suffering with the inaccuracies or slowness of others.
6.						I am consistently kind to those who are unkind and unreasonable.
7.						I refrain from doing anything that I would condemn in someone else.
8.						Those at home get "my best" in kindness, courtesy and consideration.
9.						My friend's reputation is safe in my hands.
10.						My co-workers think of me as one they can trust and depend on.
11.						I am always truthful.
12.						I am faithful to Bible study and to prayer.
13.						Those who know me best can count on me to do what I say I will do.
14.						I have firm, unwavering convictions.
15.						I consistently defend what I truly believe in, even if others oppose me in it.
16.						I make constructive use of my leisure time.
17.						If at all possible, I plan my work, then work my plan.
18.						I consistently do more than is expected of me.
19.						I take interruptions with grace (not a grudge).
20.						I keep my mind and body pure.
21.						I love to be alone with God and my Bible.
22.						I take criticism with good grace even when it is offered unkindly.
23.						I am quick to acknowledge a fault in myself and ask forgiveness.
24.						I am quick to listen to a new suggestion.
25.						I consistently do "first" things "first."
26.						My heart is set on sharing a place in Christ's coming kingdom.
27.						I approach conflicts with poise and self-control, remembering that I am accountable to my heavenly Father.



*Let us not seek an easy life for it would be hollow and shallow.*

*The average human heart beats 100,000 times a day.  
Make those beats count.*

*The path of truth always takes us in the right direction.*



**WHY CALL ME LORD, LORD, AND DO  
NOT THE THINGS I SAY?** –Jesus (Luke 6:46)

You call Me the **way**, and **walk** Me not.

You call Me the **life**, and **live** Me not.

You call Me **Master**, and **obey** Me not.

You call Me **bread**, and **eat** Me not.

You call Me **truth**, and **believe** Me not.

You call Me **Lord**, and **serve** Me not.

If I **condemn** you, **blame** Me not."

– Geoffrey O'Hara