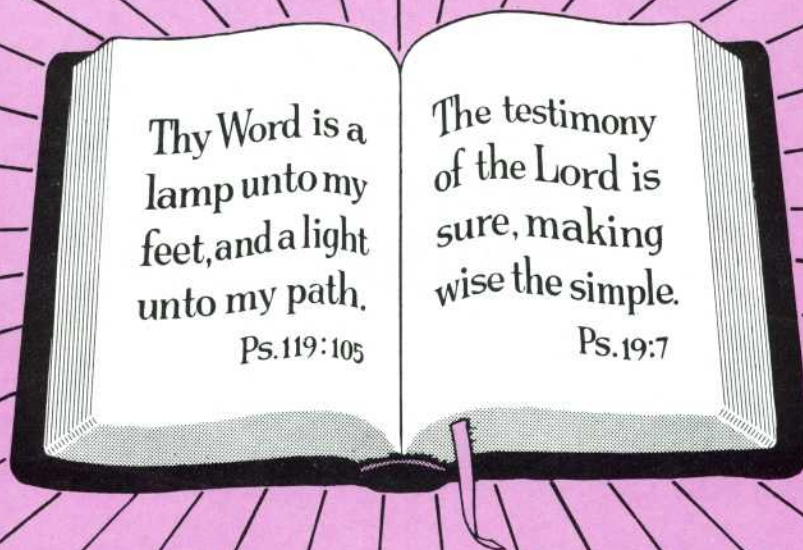


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



If the Outlook Is Bad, Try the Uplook!

How Are Your Eyes?

Captive Heroes

Study—Learn

Thy Will Be Done

WE RECOGNIZE it immediately as a line in the Lord's Prayer. In all the times we have repeated this prayer, we have probably never made the mistake of saying "MY" in place of "THY will be done." To say "My will be done" sounds outrageous, sacrilegious, disrespectful in the extreme. We would have plenty to say if anyone should challenge the wording of the prayer and wish to substitute "my" for "Thy."

But when it comes to real life—on the street, in the shop, in the classroom, at the office—do we still keep it riveted in our minds and petition, "Thy will be done," or is it occasionally—quite occasionally—MY will that we really want to be done? Oh yes, we may still say "Thy will be done," but if we could examine the book of the recording angel, we might spot several occasions where the "Thy" became "My." Did the angel make an error? Surely that was not what we said. No, but actions speak louder than words, and we must answer to Him by whom "actions are weighed."

In real life we are quite reluctant to say "Thy will be done," even if "thy" is a friend or brother. To give up our own way and our right to our own idea of how something should be done is not an easy matter. Quite naturally we know! Of course we do!

How can we know what is God's will? At times there is no question. Surely a kind word, a patient spirit, a loving thoughtfulness for the welfare of another is God's will. He would not have us do anything contrary to the principles underlying His commands.

But beyond the realm of direct commands, God's will may be difficult to discern. Not everything that is sponsored by a church; not every activity done in the name of religion; not even every word spoken in the name of the Lord is of God or bears the stamp of God's will; in fact, very little of it is His will. Much of it is as wholly

self-centered and self-oriented as its sponsors.

Neither can we use "Thy will be done" as an automatic password to relieve us of the responsibility of making intelligent decisions. Even when we will God's will, we have to think for ourselves and apply what we know of His law to the various situations of our lives.

How do we let God have His will in our lives? When we confront a situation requiring a decision, do we always present the alternatives to Him, and let Him decide? We might do this if the alternatives are not that meaningful to us, if we really don't care too much which way the decision goes. But how about the times when we are passionately interested? What then?

How do we do God's will in our lives? Does He magically make us do His will by some secret formula which He applies without our knowing it when we pray, "Thy will be done" and henceforth all our decisions will be according to His will? No. We must study, must learn His precepts and principles, and then apply what we have learned in an intelligent manner. Using our very best judgment, directed by the examples recorded in His Book for our learning, and by the good counsel He has given, we have to decide for ourselves what is His will in our situation.

Praying "Thy will be done" is opening our lives to His direction, submitting ourselves to the dictates of His law, doing what we know to be in line with His will, and then, as far as lies within our power, letting Him take care of the rest.

Praying "Thy will be done" is a prayer of submission, of growing, of saying, "Whatever your law says for my life, that will I do." It is saying, I am willing to grow, to learn what you wish, to do what you desire, in any and every area of my life.

Yes, "Thy will—not mine—be done."

MM

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 (II Cor. 10:4-5).

We believe

—in God the Creator of all things, all men, and all life.

We believe

—in the Bible as containing the genuine revelation of God and His purposes for men, and as being our only source of divine knowledge today.

We believe

—in Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

We believe

—in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.

We believe

—in all mankind as providing the nucleus from which a superior, God-honoring people shall be chosen to receive the blessings of immortal life.

We believe

—in ourselves as capable of fulfilling the demands and disciplines given us in the law of God, thus perfecting that high quality of character which God has promised to reward with life everlasting in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.

We believe

—in the promise of God, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth will be filled with His glory, His people, and His will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Bible quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—New English Bible

NIV—New International Version

NAS—New American Standard

RSV—Revised Standard Version

TLB—The Living Bible

TEV—Today's English Version

JB—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English

Berkeley—The Modern Language New Testament

Weymouth—The New Testament in Modern Speech

Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation

Williams—The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People

Rotherham—The Emphasized Old Testament

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, **Founder**; Kenneth E. Flowerday, **President and Editor**.

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If the Outlook Is Bad, Try the Uplook!

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 59:1-10, 13-31.

THE OUTLOOK is bad. No sane person living in 1983 can deny it. These are times that try men's souls. Who is not saddened to see our nation lapsing into something worse than savagery, to see the hard-won gains of the best civilization we have known being trampled by those who choose to live on the level of beasts? We are living in a time of crisis, a civilization crisis from which no nation on earth is exempt. Mass media and politics make almost all problems universal. Ours is a planet in peril.

What is the outlook in our own proud nation? Some believe Western civilization is coming "unglued." For all its wonderful benefits to our lives, and all its promise of a bright tomorrow, scientific technology seems destined to crumble in the ashes of a society that abandons ethical and religious values. Says a noted religious analyst, "Who is to say that the 'end of all ends' may not actually be upon us, that tomorrow may not be the very last day, or tonight the last night?" These are the words of Billy Graham: "People ask me sometimes, 'Are we in the last days?' and I tell them 'no.' I don't think we're in the last days; I think we're in the last *minutes* of this dispensation, or maybe in the last seconds, as God counts time. That Day will come soon."

Malcolm Muggeridge, a well-known British author of this century, wrote recently, "Let me boldly and plainly say that it has long seemed to me clear beyond any shadow of doubt that what is still called Western Civilization is in an advanced stage of decomposition, and that another Dark Age will soon be upon us, if, indeed, it has not already begun."

Note: If the Outlook Is Bad, Try the Uplook! is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

Mr. Muggeridge points out what is perhaps the most ominous sign of the present degeneracy—that it is happening with scarcely anyone realizing it. He illustrates his point with a distasteful but significant experiment conducted in a laboratory. A number of frogs were put into a bowl of water and the temperature of the water very gradually was raised to the boiling point. What was the result? The frogs expired without making any serious effort to jump out of the bowl. All of them could easily have jumped out as the temperature started to rise, but they did not realize what was happening; the change was so gradual. Then Mr. Muggeridge makes the analogy. We are the frogs. The water in the bowl is our habitat. Do we sense the change in the temperature of our environment? Do we sense it enough to take action and get out of it before it is everlastingly too late? Or will the boiling point come upon us unawares?

Mr. Muggeridge comments, "It is my own emphatic opinion that the boiling point is upon us now, and that as a matter of urgency Christians must decide how they should conduct themselves in the face of so apocalyptic a situation."

The outlook is dark. Pick up almost any daily newspaper, and you can read of war and strife between nations, war in the Middle East, war in South America, oppression in Poland, disaster in the Far East, corruption in government, crime in the streets—and one could go on and on. So much is the result of man's mismanagement. Peace does not reign—either among the nations or among individuals. Righteousness is not the ruling standard of the world. Holiness does not beautify the lives of all men. Much as we would like to think all people honest and fair, we cannot. Oppression, cruelty, selfishness, debauchery, lust, deceit, sedition, strife, hatred and murder blot the records of mankind.

And signs of a bleak near-future are unmistakable. Mammoth problems confront the human race. Overpopulation, famine, depletion of natural resources, pollution, nuclear destruction—all loom large upon the horizon of man's system, presenting trouble aplenty. Yet these are by no means the worst of our woes. Underneath is a moral rottenness, a sinking in values, an undermining of devotion to loyalty and truth.

Pressing Problems

The really pressing problems of our age are the deeper facets of the civilization crisis: the crisis of conscience, the crisis of truth, the crisis of spirit. A moral and spiritual dilemma has overtaken our generation. It shows itself in a deteriorating of initiative, a general spirit of ingratitude, and a setting aside of moral values. It shows itself in the breakdown of family life and the unhappy, disillusioned children that result. It shows itself in the lack of real leadership. We see it in corruption at the seat of government. We see it in the corruption of the business world. We see it in the leniency of our courts. We see it in our schools, where law enforcement officials must often be stationed in the halls to protect the innocent. Authority is challenged at every level. Moral values are counted secondary in the passionate craze for monetary gain. Might overpowers what is right, and truth is viewed as a changing commodity subject to individual definition. Many a serious-minded person is asking, What is it all coming to?

Thank God that these trends have not overpowered all goodness in our world! But the picture is alarming enough. The outlook is dark. Witness the public acceptance of homosexuality—some churches are even ordaining homosexuals as bishops! Witness the mounting divorce rate, which is most alarming among ministers; see the spread of pornography, the increasing brazenness of organized crime; the spread of kidnappings, hijackings, assassinations, bombings, muggings, and assaults; the heightened gambling craze; the increase in lying, cheating, and stealing.

What would be the natural outcome of all this, were present trends to continue uninterrupted? Some believe it would be a barbarism that would dwarf anything known to the pagans of pre-Christian times.

The outlook is dark.

The Solution?

In times like these, men look for answers to their perplexities. What possible solution is there? At the very least, how is a man to "cope" with his portion of the problem?

The outlook is bad. No sane person living in 1983 can deny it.

One common method has been called the "Band Aid" solution. It is comparable to this: You have a broken bone, or an inflamed appendix, or a deep puncture wound, and the doctor says, "I have just the thing that will fix you up," and he applies a band aid to the source of the pain. Now anyone knows that such an approach cannot yield much benefit. But the Band Aid solution to the present world crisis is popular. It is the philosophy of "Eat, drink, and be merry," apply a patch to cover the trouble and forget about it; get all the pleasure you can out of life, because you haven't long to live anyway.

But if such a philosophy does anything for today's problems, it only makes them worse.

Then there are those who seek to escape into humanism, into secular philosophies, and into mindless superstitions. Beliefs in weird doctrines of devils and demons and spirits of the occult seem to be at an all-time high.

Secular philosophies at one time seemed to offer a few answers, but many people today have lost faith; for all men are mortal and the basic issues of life and death remain unanswered. Much philosophy today debunks even reason and—of course—all belief in God. Someone has compared the people of our nation to those of Judah long ago. When Jeremiah described conditions in ancient Judah, he also described what we see today. Listen to God's indictment of the problem: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

Men have turned to science, but science has no help to offer. It states nothing with finality. It has to hedge all its proposals with uncertainties. Much of what we call scientific progress is but the revising of assumptions that have been proven false, replacing them with other "guesses" hopefully more educated.

Nevertheless, science has made tremendous strides. Science has made life more convenient; but it has neither made us wiser nor morally better. Science only makes us more knowledgeable about every wonderful phenomena which God built into our world ages ago. Science cannot identify God, or fixed values, or enduring truth. Science is not the answer to the dismal outlook.

Pessimistic? No!

Is this world-view pessimistic? Are we being pessimists to see human problems without human solution? Many will say yes. But shall we be pollyanna, and close our eyes to the facts? Suppose you learned that a friend of yours was planning to establish his business headquarters on the rich slopes of a certain mountain which you knew to be a sleeping volcano. Would you be pessimistic if you did not support him in the venture? Should you expect to be criticized if you went so far as to warn him of the risks he was taking? Would you not be far more pessimistic—and unkind—if you said nothing?

It is not pessimistic to avoid trouble. It is not pessimistic to heed a warning signal before trouble strikes. It is not pessimistic to listen to the word of the Lord and "Flee out of the midst" of modern-day Babylon, as the Lord commanded through His prophet Jeremiah long ago (Jer. 51:6). On the contrary, it is most pessimistic to suggest that all things continue as they have. It is most

pessimistic to suggest that we should base our lives and goals on the present system, which is doomed and perishing, when God has decreed that change is coming. It is most pessimistic to build on the sand when the dark clouds are gathering in the sky and the rumbling of the approaching storm can already be heard.

The Significance

What is the significance of the present outlook? It was all forecast by God's spokesmen centuries ago. Perhaps we do not realize what this means. Who of us today would venture to describe what conditions will be in the year 3850? Yet, this would be comparable to the apostle Paul's describing in the first century what we see today. The accuracy of his words is no less than astounding. Listen: "In the last days there are going to be some difficult times. People will be self-centered and grasping; boastful, arrogant and rude; disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, irreligious; heartless and unappeasable; they

Let Us Pray...

O Lord our God, to whom be all glory and adoration, we come into Thy presence that we might worship Thee who art the King of kings and Lord of lords.

We thank and praise Thy name for all Thy manifold blessings that Thou hast bestowed and art bestowing upon us. They are as many as the stars of the sky and the sands of the beach. We marvel that Thou art mindful of us, and that Thou knowest our most insignificant thoughts and concerns. We thank Thee for Thy presence in our lives, and for the undeserved right and privilege of knowing Thy saving truth, and that Thou hast set eternity in our hearts, and made it possible for us to qualify for a full salvation in the world to come.

Father, as we see the evil running rampant on every hand, when men are doing evil with both hands earnestly, when right is on the scaffold and wrong on the throne; when judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey—or is accounted mad—we rejoice in the assurance that this is but the darkness before the dawn, and that at such a time as this Thou wilt put on righteousness as a breast-plate, and an helmet of salvation upon Thine head. According to the deeds of ungodly men, so Thou wilt repay.

Father, we admit that the outlook is bad, very bad, but help us to look up, to look beyond the sordid happenings of this decadent age. It is at just such a time as this that the Redeemer will return to earth to cause all wars to cease, to inaugurate a new and better form of government whose officers shall be peace, and its exactors righteousness.

As we see these things beginning to come to pass, may we look up and rejoice, confident that our redemption draws nigh. It is Thy determination that this earth shall ultimately be filled with Thy glory, Thy will shall be done here as now it is done in heaven above where Thy plan is in complete operation.

Father, help us to prepare ourselves to be on the winning side when Thou arisest to shake terribly the earth and remove the sinners out of it. Help us, Father, to be as men expecting their lord to come and reckon with them, as those who will be obliged to render an account of how they have spent or misspent their time.

Lord we beseech Thee to lay Thy hand of healing upon those who are sick or afflicted at this hour, and if it be Thy will may they be restored to health and vigor. We confess that we have sinned in Thy presence and have not walked as we should in the paths of righteousness. Forgive, merciful Father, those sins we now confess and forsake, and grant that we shall not forsake Thy guidance, that we may be led to the tree of life, and share with all the good and faithful the bliss of an eternal existence. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

will be slanderers, profligates, savages and enemies of everything that is good; they will be treacherous and reckless and demented by pride, preferring their own pleasure to God. They will keep up the outward appearance of religion but will have rejected the inner power of it" (II Tim. 3:1-4, Jerusalem Bible). How could Paul know? The mighty God of heaven revealed it to him. The future is as vivid to God as the past is to us. The outlook today is dark, but no darker than we should expect, when we read what has been forecast.

Listen to the outlook as described by another of God's prophets: "The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up" (Mic. 7:2-3). Do we not see it fulfilled in the outlook today?

...Try the Uplook!

But God be praised!—out is not the only direction we can look. The Psalmist wrote, "I will lift up mine eyes." So let us *lift* our eyes above the welter of fear, trouble, distress and sin around us, to the realm where God reigns above. In the words of Jesus, look up!

Isn't this what Jesus directed us to do? First He described the outlook as we see it today: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars [representing the political powers of earth]; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26). This is the outlook; this is what we see today. But what does Jesus say we should do? "And when these things begin to come to pass"—be alarmed, worried, frightened because of the terrible things going on around you? No. "When these things begin to come to pass, then *look up*, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). The dismal outlook is no cause for fear or alarm. It is a guarantee of the glorious up look.

The uplook is superb! Never before in the history of our planet has it held more of hope and promise. Never has it been more sure; and never has its reality been so near. In the midst of darkness, we have hope, hope that is an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast. The darkness is but for a moment; look up and rejoice!

The more we look up, the more we see. It is all revealed in the Word of God. There is a new world coming—a

The really pressing problems of our age are the crisis of conscience, the crisis of truth, the crisis of spirit.

whole new arrangement. There will be a new King, new rulers, new populace, new laws, new government; all things will become new (Rev. 21:5). This *new world* was the purpose God had in mind when He formed this planet. "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18).

God formed this earth to be inhabited by whom? by the bungling mass of unregenerate humanity who now swarm and squabble over its surface? No, indeed. Long ago God took His oath: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21). His glory, His people, glorified immortals are the people destined to inherit this planet.

Through the centuries God has been silently working, selecting the best from the vast reservoir of humankind, much as a lumberman might select a few choice trees from a great forest. The rest of the trees, not being usable, are permitted to flourish at will, so long as they do not interfere with the growth of his select trees, in which case the axe of the forester may be used. So God selects a choice few, those in every land and time who will make themselves part of His eternal plan by complying strictly with His laws. These will be His managers in the new order. The rest, who demonstrate no strong desire for anything more than the present, are permitted to live as they please, according to the course of this world—and what a course it has been!

But it shall not go on forever; God has decreed an end.

A new government shall displace the old, and the new will rest in the hands of fully competent rulers. Christ Himself will be King, and thoroughly qualified for His exalted position. Nineteen centuries ago He came into the world to prove His qualification for the task and to leave us a perfect example. So great was His faith and so intense His devotion to the task that He never had to learn a lesson twice. Now for nearly two thousand years He has been at His Father's right hand, enjoying His well-earned reward and receiving the most advanced course of instruction in Planet Management. Soon He

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will be departing for His home—He may have left already. He shall come, in like manner as He went away. This was the promise of the angels the day He ascended: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

He Is Coming! Look Up!

What will come with Him and the new authority? It will be a whole new system. But let us not think that the transformation will take place in a moment, as if by magic. The evil so rampant now will have to be forcefully removed; hearts of men must be purged, a rebellious element eliminated, and all others brought into submission to the new order.

Just as a worthless scrub forest must be cleared away to make room for a bright new settlement, so the jungle of lawless humanity will have to be cleared away before God can beautify the earth and fill it with His glory. This, too, is part of the outlook.

But let us pause to ask: How will it be with each of us then? When the old systems come crashing down, where will we be? Will we be safe in the Lord’s protection, or dangerously entangled with the perishing?

When Christ comes, with law and authority to rule, His reward with Him and His work before Him (Isa. 40:10), the ultimatum will go forth, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come” (Rev. 14:7). It is time for human misgovernment to pack up and depart; its day is gone forever. A new age is dawning; a new power looms on the horizon, the power of Jesus Christ and His righteous government. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. Look up!

Hearken! “Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come.”

By Force

This will be no gentleman’s request; behind this appeal is force. The time for men to take it or leave it is gone. This is God’s cleanup time.

The resistance will be desperate; all nations will gather against Jerusalem to battle (Zech. 14:2). But the work of

eliminating the rebellious element and uprooting the evils which have plagued men for centuries will go forward unimpeded. Men will quickly learn that they are fighting a power beyond their ability to defy. “For behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many” (Isa. 66:15-16).

For the first time in centuries, men will find themselves fighting against God. It will be a time of judgment, a time of trouble “such as never was since there was a nation” (Dan. 12:1). Imagine Christ arriving today and calling upon the President of the United States, and the Queen of England, and the rulers in Moscow, and all the other national leaders in the world, great and small, to turn over their authority to Him. It is not hard to see why men will resist. But when they see that their resistance is in vain, that they are steadily losing and the new authority is gaining, when they see themselves suffering nothing but defeat and the new power having NO defeat, they

The more we look up, the more we see.

will reconsider. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9).

For the first time in history, war will not result in wanton destruction. In this battle, the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16), none but the wicked will suffer. For “it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call” (Joel 2:32). For the first time in history, all will be just and right, and the outcome shall be for the good of all. Right shall triumph, and Christ shall reign “from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Ps. 72:8). We know; we see it in the uplook.

The Result: Peace

What will be the result of eliminating evil at its source and establishing a new government upon righteous principles? Here the uplook is bright indeed.

The result will be a millennium of peace, universal peace. With one nation extending from sea to sea, there will be no strife between nations; and strife between

individuals will also be gone, for laws of justice and kindness will prevail. The happy result: "quietness and assurance forever." This is the word of God's prophet Isaiah: "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever" (Isa. 32:17). "I will also make thine officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness" (Isa. 60:17). It will be a time when righteousness shall "flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth" (Ps. 72:7).

The present trend will be completely reversed. "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks"—the very opposite of what we see today. "Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it" (Mic. 4:1-4). What promises could be brighter! Men will not even study war again—all the army and navy academies in the world will be shut down.

"Behold I Create"—a New, Eternal World

With grand solemnity and joyous hope the prophet Isaiah enlarges this picture of the uplook. Speaking for God he says, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17). "Behold"—look up! Something is coming. "Behold, I create"; it is the same word that describes God's creating work in the first of Genesis; it is all tending to the same glorious climax outlined there, a whole new spiritual creation of men and women who shall live and glorify God forever. It is a creation of select men and women, thoroughly tried and true, chosen and faithful, who will rule with Christ and form the new heavens of that new world. And it is the creation of multitudes of happy inhabitants of this planet, who will also have become pure and holy by the standard of Christ. It will be a creation so wholly new, and which will so completely replace the old, that "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Not even a trace of distress or anxiety will the former cause, so fully will the new supply every need. It will be the full reality of all that the prophets of God have foretold; it will be "the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2:5).

And what a time of joy will come with this new creation. Instead of remembering the old, the people of that time will rejoice and be glad in the new. The idea of joy is repeated six times in the next two verses. "But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in

The glory of the uplook changes the gloom of the outlook into a reflection of glory itself.

her, nor the voice of crying" (Isa. 65:18-19). To create Jerusalem a "rejoicing and her people a joy" is to create her into that which will be an object of joy. At the center of God's Kingdom will be the happy individual, the human being who made himself into a new creation according to God's pattern, and is then crowned with glory and honor and everlasting life. What joy unspeakable and full of glory will fill each one who merits that blest recompense! They shall come to Zion "with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads" (Isa. 35:10). "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Who does not long to be of them!

Rejoice!

In that day, all men everywhere will rejoice in the Lord their God and joy in His salvation. Not only this, but the prophet Isaiah sees in the uplook that God will rejoice in His people. Imagine the mighty God of heaven rejoicing in our joy! "In all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa. 63:9). So now, in all their joy He will rejoice. "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people."

What a time of rejoicing that will be! The presence of such joy means that all the needs of every heart have been satisfied. And "everlasting" joy means that they have been satisfied forever. Never again shall they know woe, or misery, or suffering, or grief. Never again will they know the pains of sin, or even the pricks of temptation. No wonder the Prophet could exclaim: "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord...hath redeemed Jerusalem....and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:9-10).

What a time that will be! "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55:12). What abounding joy it will cause to see trees of the Lord's own planting, spiritual trees of righteousness, springing up everywhere on this broad earth. Truly, "the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isa. 65:19). Why? For

Moving Up

*It's hard to miss those
boulders of trouble that
come rolling into my
life, Lord.*

*They're big enough to
climb on.*

*So take my hand,
Lord, and let me move up
with*

Your help.

*It's those little pebbles
of pressure,
of noise,
of routine,
and everyday frustration
that are nearly stoning
me senseless.*

*Lord, toughen my skin,
and
soften my heart.*

*Teach me to walk that
slow, winding cobblestone
path
to Christian maturity.*

We may not see a way out of our difficulties; but beyond the threatening rocks is a beautiful Bay of Peace.

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

All this is in the uplook! It is glorious beyond description. And these are not fanciful imaginations; these are the sure promises of the Creator, sealed with His Word. "Things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him" (I Cor. 2:9, Jerusalem Bible).

The glory of the uplook changes the gloom of the outlook into a reflection of glory itself. Each sign of breakdown, however immediately painful and menacing in its future consequences, becomes an occasion for hope and renewed optimism; it reminds us that God is true and that the glorious things which He has promised will come.

In fact, the cracking conditions we see today are more conducive to hope and faith than stability and prosperity could possibly be. Did not Jesus say, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The present disorders are a solid confirmation of our faith.

The early Christians looked forward through the centuries and rejoiced. What blissful relief for them to turn aside from the capers of an Emperor Nero and joyously prepare for the Second Coming of their Lord and Saviour! If they, centuries removed from its reality, could rejoice, should not we today? What the uplook did for them it can also do for us—and more. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up", and—rejoice! Rejoice that God has given us the privilege of living in this great time, to be alive in such an age; rejoice that we can see beyond the present calamities and look forward to the Day when we may stand in our lot in the Kingdom of the Messiah.

There is no question about the uplook; Christ is coming, His return is breathtakingly near, even at the door. Are we preparing for it as fast as it is approaching?

Along with the outlook, and the uplook, should come the *in* look, a deep searching look into our own hearts and characters. Are we in any way—even in thought or desire—part of the present system that is doomed and perishing, or is all our interest bound up in the uplook, the things which are soon to be revealed?

All things do not continue as they were. The day of the Lord is near and hastening greatly. When that Day arrives, it will be too late to choose where we shall stand. That will not be the time for choosing, if we have had opportunity now. That will be the time when we shall discover what we have really chosen, whether or not we realized it before. Now, today, this very day is our time to choose the right side and place ourselves on it. Perhaps Christ is holding back this very hour to give us one more chance.

But He will not wait forever. As the outlook grows darker, our day of opportunity grows shorter. Oh, let us look up! And if when we look up, when viewing by faith the great and wonderful events soon to take place on our planet, we can see our hands becoming cleaner and our hearts stronger, then may we rejoice in His confident assurance: "Your redemption draweth nigh."

MM

The Temptation to Gamble

Is gambling really so bad?"

Many people apparently are answering in the negative. More than 80 percent of Americans now regard gambling as an acceptable activity.

According to an article in *Time* magazine, gambling is among the "biggest and fastest growing commercial activities in the United States."

The "purposes" of gambling are many. Sometimes it is a means of supporting worthy causes, from education to tax relief for senior citizens. State lotteries are now regarded as a suitable and successful means of raising funds.

Why the trend toward gambling? It is the something-for-nothing philosophy. "Something"—things, things, things, are the lifeblood of a materialistic society. And where things are in the saddle and riding mankind, as a statesman of yesteryear said, gambling thrives.

There is talk of legalizing casino gambling in our state. What is your opinion on the issue?"

Our church is strongly and unquestionably opposed to gambling in any and all of its forms. Whether it is operated to raise money as a business enterprise or for worthy causes, gambling is fundamentally, morally and socially wrong and should not under any consideration be "legalized." (Whether legalized or not, its nature remains unchanged.)

Among our reasons for our position against gambling are the following:

1) Gambling creates an unnecessary risk, and thereby a needless squander-

ing of God-given resources. Life has risks; sound investments have risks; but a risk that is taken solely in the hope of gain *by chance* cannot be justified as a wise stewardship of one's possessions. All that we have and are is ours as a trust from God (I Chron. 29:14), and should be used as wisely as possible *and to the glory of God*. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31) could never include risk the only surety of which is chance.

2) Gambling is selfish, covetous, and generally uncontrolled. There is no way to "win" in gambling except by taking what belongs to someone else. Each person who gambles does so for the same selfish reward—at another's expense. If the motive in each person's "giving" were to help another, a similar pooling of funds could be done, and the proceeds could go to a worthy cause, a worthy individual, or be given as a gift to one whom the donors appointed. This would not be gambling but freewill offering, and could be honorably—and justifiably—done. However, gambling would be no part of it.

3) Gambling stimulates the lower, not the higher, instincts of human nature. Gambling breeds greed for money, and more greed for money. It also nurtures other types of evils which might be useful in securing the hoped-for gain. The person who gambles becomes more and more self-seeking, more easily irritated, less self-controlled, less spiritually-minded as a result of the gambling spirit, less kind to others and less generous. Generally speaking, "successful" casinos have

not yet proved to be great benefactors of mankind.

The spirit of gambling is strongly anti-Christian and *unChristlike*. We are commanded, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). Again, "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Rom. 15:2). Gambling is decidedly *self-pleasing*. It seeks all for self and completely disregards the high ideal of "pleasing" another "for his good to edification."

4) Gambling makes a priority—even a "god"—of materialism. Its only possible gain is monetary. There is benefit to none, enrichment to none, wholesome communication with none, spiritual advancement for none. Material gain is all in all, and God is crowded out. This is why Jesus told us, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). Gambling is "serving mammon" to such an extent that mammon completely displaces God.

In short, the whole thrust and purpose of Scripture is contrary to the act and spirit of gambling. For these reasons, as a church group we refrain totally from any and all forms of gambling.

MM

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How Are Your Eyes?

OF ALL man's physical endowments, none is more precious than the ability to see. Only those deprived of sight after having known its blessings can fully appreciate this.

A young minister was grappling with problems of faith and doubt, and tended to be frequently depressed. While working as a missionary in China, he came upon an elderly blind man who lived all alone on a small riverboat, yet who was consistently—and unbelievably—happy and thankful. At last he approached the blind man to inquire how, being totally blind, he could be so buoyant. “You can’t see the sunrises, the flowers, your friends—how can you be so happy? What is your secret?” The man replied, “I’m so fortunate....I thank God that I have been blind only 41 years. I can remember what a sunset is, a flower, a tree—some people have never seen all these.”

But eyes are of more than physical benefit. Whether or not we have physical eyes, we are all blessed with spiritual eyes, which are just as marvelous, and just as much to be appreciated. In the dictionary we find the eye spoken of as the faculty of discrimination, perception, or discernment, and there are repeated references to the eyes in

Scripture. These Scriptural references usually have a spiritual application. Let us consider some of them.

Spiritual blindness is ascribed by Isaiah to those who should have been God’s watchmen but failed: “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” (Isa. 56:10).

This same spiritual blindness is attributed to deceitful teachers such as the Pharisees of Jesus’ day: “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind” (Matt. 15:14).

Those who willfully rejected God’s law in all ages are said to be spiritually blind. Isaiah described the condition in his day: “See ye indeed, but perceive not” (Isa. 6:9). The same was true of multitudes during Jesus’ ministry. Of them He said, “Their eyes they have closed, lest at anytime they should see. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 13:15; 15:8-9). Paul wrote: “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (II Cor. 4:4). This is still

true today. The same gods are still blinding human eyes. Let us beware.

But one does not have to be blind to have a serious vision problem. Like our physical eyes, our spiritual eyes can be *out of focus*. This spiritual out of focus condition causes us to confuse immediate advantage with eternal values, secular issues with the work of God, and our own opinions with the divine revelation.

The apostle Paul speaks of those whose spiritual eyes are *in focus*: “We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Cor. 4:18). Properly focused eyes belong to those who set their sights on things that are not seen, the eternal verities of God’s realm, who look for a “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” They are the far-sighted individuals, who are willing to invest everything of the present in the promises of God.

Then there is the *evil eye*—the eye of him who criticizes the good. He judges everything by human standards, even daring to criticize God. Jesus speaks of the impossibility of clear sight with

such an evil eye: "If thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

Sometimes vision is hampered by a foreign body in the eye. A speck of dirt, a cinder, or anything else in the eye causes discomfort and distortion of sight, and instinctively we try to remove it. These foreign particles in our eyes might be compared to our faults, our evil tendencies. When these bits of foreign matter, be they ever so small, get in our spiritual eyes, what misery they cause. And how diligently we should work to remove them.

The more our faults cause pain and irritation, the more prone we are to see the shortcomings of others—to pre-judge, misjudge, criticize, and slander. Concerning this all too human tendency, our Lord asks, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, and fail to notice the plank in your own?" (Matt. 7:3, Phillips). If we would but realize that the real problem is not in another's eye but in our own, how easily we could remove the cause of the pain.

What is the cure for short-range vision? Look up! Said the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1-2). He looked up knowing that his help came from the Lord, the Creator of the universe. Paul tells us to seek and set our affections on the things that are above. We are to look to God and not to this world. Our Lord, in describing conditions that will prevail near the end of the age, says to believers, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Again, "Look up."

How often our eyes are selfish and calculating! Even as Eve "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree

was to be desired to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6, RSV). Humankind have always disobeyed God for a fancied personal advantage only to find in time that they have exchanged eternity for a mess of secular pottage.

How many times we have looked at material things and have deliberately put them first. We have forgotten Christ's command, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" and His promise that the necessities of life will surely follow such a choice. The problem is our eyes, our short-sighted vision.

We live in a day when the lustful eye is a deadly problem. Evil-minded men love to have it so, and evil-minded women promote it, but God condemns and condemns. The apostle Peter foresaw this evil with painful accuracy: "These are the men who delight in daylight self-indulgence.... Their eyes cannot look at a woman without lust" (II Pet. 2:13-14, Phillips). It is all part of the perishing world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life (I John 2:15-17).

We have good reason to control these lusts. "For the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." Only "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:17).

Strange to say, many have deliberately closed eyes—eyes that cannot see because of prejudice, presupposition, unbelief. Our Lord wept over the people of Jerusalem because they had willfully closed out spiritual truth and true value; "now they are hid from thine eyes," He said (Luke 19:42). Again He said, "their eyes they have closed." And our own generation is no different. Some eyes are closed because of laziness, some because of

fearfulness, some because of a deadly indifference, and some because of near obstructions.

But for all diseases, all impairments of vision, there is a cure.

Jesus outlined the steps to spiritual healing. The first was to recognize our serious and wretched condition: "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Often we need the help of trusted friends to see ourselves as we are. Among other things they were to anoint their eyes with the God-provided eyesalve of wisdom, that they might see. Then came this admonition: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:17-19).

Our Lord came preaching and healing, giving physical sight to many who were blind and spiritual sight to as many as would heed Him. And today He offers the same spiritual eyesight, with light and abundance of knowledge. "Open thou mine eyes," prayed the Psalmist, "that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Pride is blinding. It closes out spiritual light and spiritual blessing. When we are proud, we don't need God; we are self-sufficient. But if we realize our need, like the beggars of old we should come humbly seeking the boon of sight, as the blind man of old sought physical sight, and petition: "Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David.... Lord, that our eyes may be opened" (Matt. 20:31, 33). When we acknowledge our blindness and walk in His light, we will be in a position to receive His healing touch. Then we too can sing, "Once I was blind, but now I can see!"

MM

True glory consists in doing what deserves to be written; in writing what deserves to be read; and in reading what deserves to be lived, and living what deserves—by edict of the great Creator—an eternal blessing and surpassing glory.

He Is Coming—Soon!

Reflections of hope and faith from our readers near and far.

Jubilee!

O, to be in that wonderful jubilee, when the saints are gathered home. But wishing and dreaming will not make it materialize. "There's a work for us to do each day, There's a yoke to meekly wear; There's a cross to overcome our way, And the Saviour's image bear." But in the end, there will be rest, sweetest rest ever more. And if we believe this, we will go to work in earnest to finish killing out the old nature within us.

—R.S., Charleston, Mississippi

A Shock

When the Lord returns and the covenant-makers are taken to judgment, what a shock it will be for those who realize the gravity of the situation and roam from sea to sea in search of God's knowledge.

It makes one shudder to think of how easy it would be to be caught in this mess. All we have to do is just do nothing now, as we have heard in the sermons, and this will be our lot in that soon-coming day.

—E.H., Minnedosa, Manitoba

For Something Better

This present order of things will surely come to naught, so it behooves us to prepare ourselves for something better that has been promised us. Our heavenly Father will give, according to His promise, more than eye has seen or ear has heard or the heart of man has imagined (I Cor. 2:9). He will give even "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

—H.W., St. Joseph, Missouri

When the Old Falls

Truly, this present order will surely come to naught. Yes, this present arrangement of things will soon pass away. Just as the three preceding world empires of earth spoken of in the 7th chapter of Daniel passed away, just that certainly will the present powers come to an end. And we, who have had the eyes of our understanding enlightened, realize that man's allotted time to rule the earth is only six thousand years, and we know that period of time is almost expired. So this calls for greater spiritual preparations on our part, if we would be found ready and worthy when this old pagan system falls and the new Government of peace and righteousness is ushered in.

Now, if we are truly intelligent creatures, we will heed Brother Paul's fatherly advice and advance spiritually, for Paul also says, "...the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:18).

—R.B., Kooskia, Idaho

Imminent

I was reading and rereading many of the later MESSAGES. I know for a fact that you just have to look around you and see the world as it exists presently and you have to be aware of the fact that the time is certainly imminent for the return of Christ and prior to that, Elijah. It is a wonder how conditions can become any worse!

—D.K., Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Cries of Peace

The world is crying "peace, peace," when they are preparing for war. The Prophet said that they will be beating their plowshares into swords, the weak saying they are strong. We know these things will be going on when Elijah comes.

How thankful we are that God has told us so much that has caused us to be looking and working to be in the New World. We would all be upset seeing all the things that come out in the daily news if we didn't know and understand that our Heavenly Father is working with us, teaching us to see these problems and overcome them with good. The world is so full of wickedness. Surely the time is almost here for Jesus to come and take over. So let us just be patient and keep working to put away every evil and replace it with good.

God knows what we need better than we do ourselves. Let us keep working.

—E.T., Milton, Iowa

Living with Purpose

We need every minute to get ready and there is not much time left, so we must work with a will, for when the time comes we would not like to be on the wrong side of the door. We must, therefore, live with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life. We must make the best use of the time left to us, despite all the difficulties of these days and thereby receive in due time the wonderful promises God has given to His faithful children.

—M. S., Swansea, South Wales

Concerned

Peter wrote that scoffers would come in the last days saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were since the beginning of creation." They say, "People have been saying for two thousand years that Jesus is coming back to earth and He isn't here yet. So why be concerned about it? He may never come back." We even find many so-called Christians saying this, with their lives if not with their lips. They show by the way they live that they are not expecting His return. No doubt many of them hope He does not return.

We are convinced, however, that the Lord's second coming is imminent, despite what the scoffers say. Without the promise of His coming we would have no hope. The world would be doomed.

—S.K., Cleveland, Tennessee

What Are We Doing?

I wonder how many will be saying to themselves "The harvest is past. The summer is ended, and I am not saved!" We have had the advantage of escaping from the thick darkness of confusion in the world into the glorious light of God's knowledge. The question is: How brightly are our lamps burning? Is it only a pale flickering or a bright light? We have not much time left for our choice between life and death. If we neglect so great a salvation, how shall we escape?

This is certainly not the time for us to allow our lamps to go out. We are living right on the threshold of a new era. The coming of our Lord draweth nigh.

—G.S., Swansea, South Wales

Running Out

Our time is indeed running out. To squander our opportunities for growth is to spurn our Father's training hand for our eternal good. It ought to give us great comfort and a wonderful sense of well being to know God is looking out after our spiritual welfare. We should always be ready to obey, to take whatever correctionary disciplines life imposes and profit by them.

In view of the grand good time coming, we cannot afford to grow weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

—South Amboy, New Jersey L. K.

The Hour Is Fixed

Nothing can stay the destined hour. Shall we be ready? We have no excuse for not being so. As we see that Day so very imminent, let us redouble our efforts and get ready. With so many to help, to guide, to draw us on to holier living, our aim must be: it can, it must, it will be done.

Nothing need hold us back. Will power is needful, pushing ahead against all odds. An all-wise Creator has set the standard. It is high, yet it is attainable. We can find the strength to press on for the mark, as did Paul. Let us keep pressing on, on. Some day we will all meet at the sounding of the Trumpet.

—N.T., Crewe, England

Signs, Signs

Indeed, evil is rampant in the world and this would be a good time for us to reflect and reassess our progress in the Christian walk.

It looks as if many people do not want what is true; they prefer their own selfish way. It is a sign of the last days, "As it was in the days of Noah." We need to be pressing on, be about our Father's business. Like the apostle Paul, may we too say, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus." A child of God should be happy and radiant. We have the Word of God that can comfort us in these troubled times.

—R. C. Stanley, Virginia

High Calling

We have been called to a high calling in this eleventh hour of the day. God has called us to work for a reward that will endure forever. May we so work that we may receive that full reward, for it is recorded that many are called but few are chosen.

—B. & G.M., Selma, Iowa

Certainty

We can never tell for certain about the weather. One thing, however, we can be very certain about, and that is: Maranatha! so may we redeem the precious moments to be ready when He comes.

—R.B., Swansea, South Wales

God is not in a hurry, dear!
The work He chose for you
Can wait, if He is giving you
Another task to do;
Or, if He calls you from your work
To quietness and rest,
Be sure that in the silence
You may do His bidding best.

You cannot be a joy to Him
If thus with frown and fret
You turn at each new call of His,
To find new lessons set.
The old familiar tasks were dear,
And ordered by His hand:
But come and tread another way;
It is as He has planned.

And yesterday He led you there;
And now He leads you here;
And what shall be tomorrow's work,
Tomorrow shall make clear.
So patiently and faithfully
Let each day's course be run:
God is not in a hurry, dear,
His work will all be done.

Deceased

Lila F. Meier

"Just a short note to let you know that my mother passed away Sept. 18, 1982, after a long illness. I know she is at peace, but I miss her very much. I loved her, and was with her at the hospital. With God's help and strength life goes on, but I know I'll see her again in the resurrection day when our Lord comes again, which I feel is near."
—Dorothy Moser, Saugerties, New York

Sister Meier was a subscriber to the *Megiddo Message* for 21 years, and visited the Rochester Congregation each Abib Season as long as her health permitted. —Editor.

Answers from Page 27

Errors: "gently" should be "roughly"; "eleven" should be "ten"; "eldest" should be "youngest"; "that evening" should be "at noon"; "gold cup" should be "silver cup"; "five hundred pieces of silver" should be "three hundred pieces of silver."

Captive Heroes

Final Scene

Visions of the Future

ONE OF the first acts of the victorious Cyrus was to give the Jewish exiles permission to return to their land and rebuild their holy city and Temple. A large company of the more dedicated and patriotic members of the community responded.

Troubles with the neighboring tribes soon developed. Zerubbabel, now governor of Jerusalem, to gether with Joshua the high priest and the young prophets Haggai and Zechariah, returned to Babylon to confer with the king. In this scene we witness their meeting with the venerable Daniel, and hear of his visions of the future.

The time is two years after the fall of Babylon and the end of the Captivity. The scene is Daniel's home in Babylon.

Characters: Daniel Elderly Prophet
Zerubbabel Israelite leader of
. the returned captives
Joshua High Priest
Zechariah Prophet of the Lord
Haggai Prophet of the Lord

Daniel is seated, writing. Enter Zerubbabel, who bows gravely. Daniel goes forward to greet him with both hands extended.

Daniel:

Welcome, welcome, Zerubbabel. For many days I have waited for this hour, ever since Cyrus the king summoned you home to confer with him. What of the journey?

Zerubbabel:

An uneventful journey, Father Daniel. Hot in the desert, of course, but we expect that. How has your health been?

Daniel:

Excellent for a man of ninety plus. But I feel my time is growing short. This meeting may be our last, so it is all the dearer to me. Your companions were—

Zerubbabel:

Joshua the high priest, and the young men Zechariah and Haggai, who have strengthened my hands greatly. I foresee a great future for them in the service of Jehovah.

Daniel:

How goes the building of the Temple?

Zerubbabel:

The foundation is laid—

Daniel:

Praise the Lord! O that my eyes might see the holy house restored before they close in death....But that can never be. I am too old for such a long journey, even if the king should consent.

Zerubbabel:

But there is trouble.

Daniel:

Trouble?

Zerubbabel:

Yes, trouble. The Samaritan chiefs and governors are jealous and do not wish to see Jerusalem restored. They are trying to frustrate us at every turn. Right now they have an ambassador here at court to fill the king's ears with lies and accusations, and to corrupt his officers with bribes.

Daniel:

Then that is the reason for your presence?

Zerubbabel:

Yes, among other things. But—here are my brethren.

(Enter Joshua, Zechariah and Haggai. Exchange warm greetings. Daniel remains seated.)

Zerubbabel:

I have been telling the Prophet of our troubles. If the work is stopped, as it seems certain to be, I fear I shall not live to see the completed house, for our enemies are many and strong. Zechariah tries to comfort me by telling me this is not to be.

Zechariah:

I speak this, Sir, not of myself, but by inspiration.

Daniel:

By inspiration? Does the Spirit of the Lord rest upon you also?

Zechariah:

It has done so. I have felt from time to time the stirrings of the spirit of prophecy, and I have seen visions. I am altogether unworthy to be a prophet, but it is so.

Daniel:

(taking both his hands) How wonderful! God's blessing on you, my son. And what said the Lord to you?

Zechariah:

This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: "the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of the house: his hands also shall finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things?"

Daniel:

(to Zerubbabel) This is truly the word of Jehovah. Have faith in yourself and your mission, Zerubbabel. Be strong and of good courage, for with His help you cannot fail. If He says wait, wait. When He says work, then arise and work.

Joshua:

With enemies all around us hoping and working for our failure?

Haggai:

What we seem to have in greatest abundance is shortages.

Daniel:

I had hoped to hear you say faith and zeal, for with them nothing is impossible, and without them nothing can be accomplished. My counsel for you is to be strong, fear not. Cease complaining, and be men. You are God's pioneers, and pioneers must always endure hardships, as I and my companions endured when we were pioneers in Babylon.

Think of the glory of your mission. Look to the end—and never stop working.

To you, O Joshua and Zerubbabel, I say, keep yourselves pure, above all things. Never let the breath of scandal touch your persons or your government. Remember that the people will never rise higher than their leadership.

You are commissioned to be God's representatives, examples to your people for good or ill; you are responsible to God as well as to man, and He expects great things of you. Remember well the terrible lessons our nation has received—and deserved. Israel's desire to be like the nations has always been their downfall, so learn not the ways of the heathen. For you, O Zerubbabel, prince of the royal house, descended from King David himself, how fitting it is that you should be chosen of God to build His house after these seventy years of desolation. What greater honor could come to a son of Abraham?

Zerubbabel:

I believe it was through your influence that I received this commission from the king. I shall not fail you.

Daniel:

Be that as it may, the commission is from Jehovah; do not fail *Him* and the remnant of His people.

Joshua:

Has there been any word from the Lord to you, by angel or by vision?

Daniel:

Marvelous visions have I seen and heard, my brothers. Almost too wonderful for mortal ears to hear. I have talked face to face with the angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God. His hand has touched me.

Others:

Tell us! tell us!

Daniel:

Know therefore and understand, he said to me, that from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, three score and two weeks. Four hundred eighty-three years, prophetic time, and the hope of Israel will be here.

Zechariah:

And the kingdom of God?

Daniel:

No, at His first advent the Messiah comes not to reign but to prepare Himself; for the angel revealed to me that He must suffer death, and rise again.

Haggai:

Aye, but we shall not see it.

Zerubbabel:

No, but a comfort it is to know the time is revealed.

Zechariah:

What more, Father?

Daniel:

In vision I saw the power of Persia overthrown by the Grecians, and the Grecians subdued by the fourth great empire. And out of the divisions of this kingdom shall arise a power—a little horn, it appeared in my vision—which shall make war with the saints, wear them out, and cast down true religion to the ground.

Joshua:

A dreadful thought. Is this before the Messiah is born?

Daniel:

No, no, long after. A dreadful state it will be, a tribulation never before known on earth, to last for a time, times and the dividing of time, even for 1260 long, dark years.

Zerubbabel:

And then?

Daniel:

And then, Light! "I looked, and behold there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river." The

angel of God stood upon the waters to protect the Word of Jehovah through the long night of darkness. Then, at the time of the end, a great man, an excellent teacher, shall be raised up from among the people, to stand up, to lift once again the light of divine knowledge, to open again the highway of holiness, as said the prophet Isaiah. It is coming, brothers, it is coming—great, terrible, glorious things lie in the future.

Zechariah:

I see it clearly now. My vision reaches down to the same time, the very same time. There is to be a Zerubbabel of the last days, a spiritual builder. His hands shall lay the foundation of the restored house of the Lord, and his hands shall also finish it!

Daniel:

A tall man casts a long shadow, and the shadow of this towering character has reached forward thousands of years, even to us, and if I mistake not, it will reach beyond, the other way, even into eternity. Such a man is not for this time only, but for the ages.

Haggai:

What more, Father, as if this were not more than we can comprehend? When the latter day house shall be finished, what then?

Daniel:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

Zechariah:

What glorious things are spoken for the end of the days!

Daniel:

And then I had one last message from the angel, which I shall never, never forget. "But go thou thy way," he said, "till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days, in the kingdom of the Messiah." (The End)

MM

And Still She Speaks

Extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments
by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).



The mighty God we serve is gracious and merciful and He will not turn His face from us if, if—if we turn to Him.

Just take it in this lovely morning, take in the depth of meaning in those words: "Anything, Lord, for Thee." We find every day something comes across the natural mind. Maybe we are warned of some besetting sin, and we start to justify ourselves. But we must do as Jesus told His disciples, "Take up your cross and follow Me." This will bring us comfort and joy.

I can remember when impatience brought me much unhappiness; I would get impatient over this and that, and it did not bring any joy and peace. No, no! impatience does not brighten the day. But if we prepare our heart and stretch out our hands to the Almighty, and put iniquity far away, then we shall remember our miseries as waters that pass away.

The only way that we can become somebody and endure, is to seek God, learn His laws and keep His commandments.

Oh, our merciful, just God exacts of us less than our iniquity deserves! If we will only turn from iniquity, every sin and transgression of the past will be blotted out; He will remember them against us no more, they will never be mentioned.

God has endowed us with a mind and an intellect to grasp these deeper thoughts of His Word, if we will; and if we will not, He says we are no more than the beasts that perish. This stamps the Bible divine. You might peruse all the literature of the world and you would not find such thoughts penned by man. Yet we know that earthly fame and glory pass away. Everything perishes except that which God perpetuates.

If we want the Saviour with us, if we want His loving, protecting care, we must not only read and understand but we must keep His commandments. We must listen to His law, be humble, meek and lowly, willing to be instructed by a higher, superior Power. We must cast aside our own thoughts, our own ways, and learn His ways and thoughts.

*God's thoughts are not man's!
How much higher are God's thoughts!*

We should long to be worthy of having Jehovah with us; but we must realize that He is with only those who are with Him. We dare not, oh, we should all feel we dare not walk alone! We need to draw near to God. If we walk alone, if we walk in the ways of sin and evil, we will not have His protecting care, and death and destruction will be our doom.

God says, Just as surely as the heavens declare My glory and the firmament shows My handiwork, just so certainly will I fulfill the promises I have made to the children of men. Oh, we can look with faith and confidence to such a Being! Change has never reached His abode. Though one eternity after another has rolled into the past, yet the power of His might is still manifested, the glory of His wonderful works has never tarnished. All the monuments and works of men are perishing and crumbling to dust, but the works of God have endured. He does not point us to perishing things of earth but says, Look into the heavens and see My glory, see what I have done! That same Mighty God declares He is going to fill the earth with His glory (Num. 14:21). That is why we exhort those who have begun a good work to hold on unto the end. MM

Study...Learn

THERE SEEMS to never be enough time in a day. No wonder we are admonished to redeem the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). But praise be to our great and merciful God that we have been "called... out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Pet. 2:9), and have come to know how we should spend our time.

It may be summed up in II Tim. 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We normally think of studying as a process of searching out, learning and committing to memory a certain course of study until we have accumulated enough knowledge to receive a certificate or diploma or otherwise a satisfaction of a working knowledge of a subject. But, "Study to show thyself approved" includes much more.

Not only must we study to acquire knowledge of the Scriptures but we must also study to apply this knowledge to ourselves in a Godlike manner until we have perfected a righteous character.

It is said that to really learn a subject you must teach it. There is much wisdom in this statement. We may study and learn to our own satisfaction; but if we are ever called upon to make a presentation of our knowledge, confidence drops to near zero. We suddenly realize that we don't know so much after all. Wouldn't it be an embarrassing situation to stand before a class and confess, "I am at a loss, I cannot instruct you"? So the teacher thoroughly researches each presentation before class until all is perfectly clear from every view. We study to show ourselves approved.

But the admonition to Timothy was "Study to show thyself approved unto God." We may be a well respected instructor to a class of students, even if we make a few errors; we can still be highly approved. But would we be so confident if we were to present ourselves to God? Are we really making preparation for that day when we stand before Christ? Are we really studying to show ourselves approved unto God? "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jas. 2:10).

When we read to satisfy ourselves, we do it halfheartedly. If we know we will have to prove ourselves, we make an "honest effort." But we, as chosen vessels of God Himself, must study and apply our knowledge with

all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).

This saving knowledge does not come easy. We must dig deep as for hid treasure; crying out for God's help, humbling ourselves before Him and putting away our sins as we learn of them. Only then can we be freed from the jaws of sin and death.

*When I was trapped in the jaws of sin,
Thinking that freedom I could never win,
In the darkest pit of dark despair
A new song filled the air.*

*'Twas glorious light I saw above
Oh, to be free I would dearly love.
To walk in this way of heavenly light,
Ne'er to return to the dark of night.*

*With wonderful hope swelling in my mind,
I began in earnest to start my climb.
A journey long it was sure to be,
But light ahead I could plainly see.*

*The climb seemed, oh, so steep, so steep,
And I began to cry out and weep.
And just when it seemed I was there to stay,
A helping hand came my way.*

*I'll never leave, nor yet forsake
Was the promise He to us did make.
If only we continue fast,
His gracious promises we shall grasp.*

*Oh, bliss supreme when we shall stand
Forevermore in that Promised Land.
Oh, shout for joy! What love divine!
Far, far past dreams of the keenest mind.*

*What joy to meet each one of you there,
My brother, my sister, my fellow-heir,
And be welcomed by the King of kings
While the choir of heavenly angels sings!*

What a wonderful joy, indeed, to stand before Christ unashamed and unafraid knowing we had successfully run our course and had been ready and watching for His coming. But we will never know that joy unless we now do what He has commanded us in His Word.

Scripture is the key that unlocks the door to the crown of life: and it may be said that our humble obedience to the ordinances of God is the knob which opens that door. Through Scripture we become perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

If we believe Christ died on the cruel Roman cross, paying the penalty for our sins, appeasing a wrathful God, we will never understand that we must do "works of righteousness," that we must perfect our characters until we obey the commandment, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Scripture makes us wise unto salvation (II Tim. 3:15). Without Scripture, we would be like the rest of the world. But let us be like David when he said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Ps. 119:11). Without Scripture we would never be accounted as blessed of the Lord.

The Lord has commanded us to keep His precepts diligently, having respect unto His commandments. If we do not, we shall surely be ashamed before Him at His coming. I shudder to imagine standing before Him ashamed. Such a waste of life and energy! I often think of the words of Jesus, as we stand to be judged, when He will say to many, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Luke 13:27). But what unspeakable joy to those clothed in the wedding garments of righteousness!

May we apply His law with zeal to our lives until we are accepted as part of Christ's glorious bride. MM

Self-Denial Week

The week beginning Sunday, February 6, will be the annual observance of self-denial week for the Megiddo Church congregation and all scattered members and friends who wish to observe it with us.

During this week we will limit ourselves to three articles of food at each meal. Selection will be made from simple, plain, common foods, varied each meal as desired. We shall refrain from all specialties, all cookies, pastries, desserts, and fancy foods. We will think of our need rather than our desire.

What is our purpose in this? Self-control and self-denial has been practiced by all of God's people in all ages; and as followers of Christ seeking to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," we must learn to say "no" to ourselves—in greater things as well as in lesser. But saying "no" in small, everyday matters can be an exercise to help us in the greater tests that shall surely come as we strive to follow our Great Example.

Obituary

Hilda A. Walck

On January 6, we met to pay our last respects to a friend and lifelong sister of our Rochester Congregation, Hilda A. Walck.

Sister Walck was born in 1915. She first heard of our group when her family met some of the Megiddo brothers in Martinsville, New York, where the Megiddo yacht was temporarily anchored. The Church's missionary effort at that time was by means of this small yacht, which traversed the state's waterways, principally the Barge Canal. Sister Walck's father was impressed by what he heard, purchased the set of Brother Nichols' books, and challenged one of our members to explain where Cain obtained a wife. Satisfied with the answer he received, he continued to investigate. From that point the family's interest grew, and for seventeen years—until they relocated to Rochester—they drove 70 miles biweekly to attend the Megiddo church and to participate in church activities.

Sister Walck took her religion seriously, participating actively in the work of the church, as much as her strength allowed. Being exceptionally gifted as an actress, she contributed generously of her talents to the religious dramas presented by the church. But her willing spirit was restrained by her limited strength. From childhood, she had an almost continual battle with illness, undergoing numerous operations. For the past thirty years she has been almost totally confined, in the affectionate and diligent care of her sister with whom she made her home. However, Sister Walck bore her afflictions nobly, with exceptional patience and courage. Her sister says that she never knew Hilda to complain. Her ever present hope—of health and healing at the coming of Elijah—was her sustaining power.

Sister Walck is survived by her sister, Martha Walck, of Rochester, New York. Funeral services were conducted by Newton H. Payne, and interment was in Mt. Hope Cemetery, where rest others of our beloved dead who shared our sister's hope, of the day when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise."

***With a learned physician and an obedient patient,
sickness soon disappears.***

Seeing His Salvation

"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God"
(Psalm 50:23).

HERE and there through the Scriptures of truth is a text which seems to tell the whole story in a few words, leaving no room for argument or question. Such is the passage upon which we meditate. It is a remarkable ending to a remarkable Psalm.

In the preceding verses the Eternal calls attention to His plan for the children of men, His judgments at the coming of His Son to earth, His might and dominion, His mercy and justice, and the fate of the disobedient. Our text comes as a fitting conclusion to a chapter of stately and significant phrases. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." That is plain enough; but it is just as unequivocal and perhaps less open to misunderstanding if we read, "Whoso glorifieth me offereth praise."

That is even plainer, is it not? So firmly imbedded in these words are the ideas of the Creator that they mean the same in either order. Not all praise glorifies God.

There is a great deal of lip-service which passes for praise in this world but which is, in the light of Proverbs 28:9, nothing short of abomination to God. That sort of praise carries no glory. But to do all, whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, with an eye single to the glory of God, is a song of praise which reaches the ear of the Almighty. This is confirmed in Hebrews 13:15, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

The "sacrifice of praise" is strange but significant phraseology. Lip-service, whether in the sonorous litany of formal worship or the ecstatic hallelujahs of an emotional campmeeting, calls for no sacrifice. But the daily "dying to sin," the offering of our bodies a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1), is acceptable with God, and a life so ordered will prove at the great Assize a more eloquent plea, a sweeter hymn of praise than all the fine phrases, majestic songs and impressive rituals offered

through the centuries by blind leaders and their blind followers.

A life, though utterly lacking in musical sense and unable to sing a note, can become an anthem of praise, abundant and rich with the harmony and melody of developing character, growing strength, overflowing faith. This glorification of God which is acceptable praise is not something separate and apart from our daily routine but covers and controls every act, word and thought of our life, becoming a veritable part of our being. It is not a pastime or a part-time activity, nor a thing to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly, but only after due consideration, after a careful comparing of sacrifice with reward. Body and mind, affections, ambitions and emotions must all be brought under the altar. Nothing is left to serve the flesh, or self, when a full and unconditional surrender is made.

In Paul's day the Corinthian church, or a fraction thereof, seems to have advanced the strange and perverted idea that the work of the Gospel was purely a mental affair, that so long as they served God with the mind, deeds of the body were of no consequence.

In the atmosphere of moral depravity for which Corinth was notorious, this notion easily opened the way to the grossest immorality, which the Apostle sternly rebukes in I Corinthians, chapters 5 and 6. "What?" he exclaims, "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit . . . and ye are not your own? . . . Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Not only this, but there is a penalty: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (I Cor. 3:17). The body, as the agent of the mind, is strictly responsible for its actions, with no allowances made and no excuses accepted. In our natural condition, the spirit

(Continued on page 26)

• Who Shall Remain?

"In your booklet, God's Spiritual Creation, page 55, it states that 'every inhabitant upon the face of the earth shall partake of the tree of life and drink of the river of pleasures for evermore' (Ps. 36:8). How does this harmonize with your statement on page 54 where it reads 'that on the Day of Reckoning the unfaithful will be destroyed'? Psalm 36:12 tells of the wicked being cast down, and not able to rise. Could you explain this contradiction?"

The two statements apply to two distinctly different times. The Day of Reckoning is, of course, the time of Judgment, when faithful and unfaithful servants will be separated, as Jesus pictured in His parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25). The unfaithful will be destroyed, for "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). However, after the Judgment, those who remain will continue to serve God through all the ages to come, and at that time—after the Millennial reign of Christ and the saints—when God's plan for this earth is finally complete, all sin and death will be forever abolished and "every inhabitant on the face of the earth shall partake of the tree of life."

There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that God plans to give eternal blessings to the unfaithful, the wicked, the ungodly. "The candle of the wicked shall be put out," we read (Job 18:6; 21:17); and "the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Ps. 1:6). Only in this way can God have a perfect world without sin or evil when His plan is complete.

God's plan for this earth encompasses three periods of time. First is the six thousand year period during which He is selecting those who will reign with Christ. During this period, righteous and wicked, faithful and unfaithful exist together. Second is the one thousand year period, the Millennial period, during which He will select the inhabitants to live forever on the earth, the populace, the "great multitude." During this time, also, both faithful and unfaithful persons will be living. Only during the third and last—and everlasting—period when God's work is completed, will every inhabitant of the earth partake of "pleasures for evermore," and this will be because after the last Judgment none but the fittest will survive. Every one who lives on earth then will be immortal.

• Concerning Israel "Gathered"

"On page 74 of God's Spiritual Creation, you cite Ezekiel 28:24-26—especially verse 25 which states, 'When I shall have gathered the House of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered.' To whom do these verses refer—to Israel of old or to Modern Israel?"

"Is the gathering of the Jews to the Holy Land (Palestine—now known as Israel) significant for these end times? In the past, I have been told that the English-speaking peoples of Great Britain, United States, Canada, Australia, etc. are the House of Israel people who migrated from Assyria long before the House of Judah went into captivity, and that very few of the ten tribes returned with Judah at the time of Ezra. Could you explain this to me?"

Many times in the Scriptures when the word "Israel" is used it refers to *spiritual* Israel and not to the natural nation of Israel. (See Rom. 9:6-8, Rom. 2:28-29.) After the Jews rejected God's leading and God turned to the Gentiles to find the principal source of His raw material, the natural Jew has had no priority in God's plan. Peter stated clearly God's basis for selecting His people (Acts 10:34-35). God judges by character alone, never by nationality, color or sex.

We are not able to be certain about the correct application of all the prophecies in the Bible concerning Israel; some refer to the former Israelite nation, some to the spiritual people of Israel at Christ's second coming; and some may refer to the modern nation of Israel. It seems unlikely that the modern state of Israel figures largely in the plan of God, however, any more than any other nation. There has been much speculation along this line but most is just that, speculation. And many of the passages (such as the one you mention in Ezek. 28:24-26) seem much clearer if applied to spiritual Israel, God's righteous people.

We find no Biblical or historical foundation to prove that the English-speaking peoples are descendants of the House of Israel who migrated from Assyria. Passages referring to the gathering of Israel (especially in a context of eternal blessings and prosperity) could be appropriately applied to *spiritual* Israel also, who shall be richly blessed of the Lord. They are the righteous and faithful

people of God, who will have to be gathered when Christ returns. Jesus spoke of "gathering together his elect" (Matt. 24:31); also of "gathering" the "wheat" (symbolic of the faithful). All are spiritual Israel, and shall be judged and rewarded according to what they have done.

• The Law and the Everlasting Covenant

"In Isaiah 24:5-6 we read of those who transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broke the everlasting covenant. If the Ten Commandments were abolished, what law is the Prophet talking about, and which ordinance? Which is the everlasting covenant?"

As you observe, the Ten Commandment law cannot properly be styled "everlasting," because it was abolished (II Cor. 3:7, 11); also there is no evidence of its existence until the time it was given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

However, we do not suggest by this that there was no law until the time of Moses or that the everlasting covenant was ever suspended. The everlasting covenant, God's "compact" with those willing to serve Him, has been in effect whenever He has had people serving Him on earth, from the time of Adam. It is, simply stated, a law of faith and obedience. "Obey and live, disobey and die."

Whatever God says to anyone in any age, that is the law they must obey, if He is to fulfill His part of the compact toward them and grant them eternal blessing. When Adam was placed in the garden "to dress and to keep it" (Gen 2:15), God was giving him commands, something to be done. When God told Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," He was again spelling out the everlasting covenant of faith and obedience. Following this statement is a definite promise of blessing, the other part of the covenant: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee,...for an everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:1, 7, 9). This was all long before the Ten Commandment law was given.

The Ten Commandment law was a lesser, simpler code of outward rules to be kept by the nation of Israel as a civil law, much as we abide by the laws of our country. It was *added* to the already existing everlasting covenant (Gal. 3:19), for a limited period of time, for the external discipline and training of the Israelite people newly come from Egypt. I am sure you will agree that much more diligence and sincere effort is necessary to "walk before [God] and be...perfect," than to avoid coveting our neighbor's possessions, or killing, or committing adultery, etc. One is a law of the heart; the second governs only the hand. The one is the everlasting covenant which, when obeyed, will insure salvation to

the keeper, which the law of Moses could never do (Heb. 7:19).

Jesus reiterated the everlasting covenant when He said in Matt. 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Again in Rev. 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments"—not just the Ten but *all* the commands of God. Any way to salvation that does not require obedience to the whole law of God is not the true teaching of God as given by His prophets, Jesus and the apostles. And people who "transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and [broke] the everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:5) were surely not approved of God, even though they might have been adhering faithfully to the Ten Commandment law.

• A literal "burning up" of the earth?

"In II Peter 3:10 it refers to the earth and the works that are therein being burned up. However, in other translations such as Rotherham's Emphasized Version it speaks of the earth (land, from the Greek ge which means soil or land) and the works therein will be discovered. I have been told that the words "burned up" mistranslate the Greek terms katakaio which mean "UNburned up" literally uncovered. New land (now covered by the oceans) will be uncovered to make way for all that are in the graves who shall be resurrected. Also, they say that these oceans will be siphoned up to the atmosphere from whence they came down during the flood. Please explain. Do we await a literal burning up of the earth by God's wrath? Where will God's people be during this time of great trouble?"

Second Peter 3:10-13 reads, "The earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The Greek word *ge* used here and rendered *earth* does generally apply to the "soil" or "land." But there is another prominent meaning which seems more significant in Peter's context. It is "the earth as opposed to the heavens; involving a suggestion of mutability, frailty, infirmity," "earthly in contrast to heavenly." It is similar to what John said, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (I John 2:15-17)—but not meaning the physical earth on which we live, for "the earth abideth for ever" (Eccl. 1:4).

I have never heard of the translation of the Greek word *katakaio* that you cite. I have consulted all the lexicons and Greek dictionaries that we have access to and all give the idea that the word *does* mean "burned up." I would be curious as to the source of the definition you quote. I have also checked the words from which this

Greek verb is derived, and there seems to be no idea of "un-burned-up, literally uncovered." It does seem sometimes that people try to give an elaborate explanation of something they don't understand (or maybe don't like!) in the Bible. Of course, the "burning" does not have to be taken in a literal sense. Fire is often used in the Bible as a symbol of God's judgments, as in the parable of the wheat and the tares, where the chaff is consumed with fire; or "the fire of thine enemies shall devour them" (Isa. 26:11); or the "flaming fire" used symbolically in II Thess. 1:7-9, which will result in their "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord."

• Christ's glory "before the world was"?

"In the booklet The Great Apostasy, page 34 reads 'His obedient Son, who had no existence until born into the world.' In John 17:5 we are told of the glory Jesus had with His Father before the world was. This does not harmonize. Please explain."

In John 17:1 and 5, Jesus does speak of "the glory" which Jesus had with His Father. But Jesus' whole life was geared forward, not backward. In the preceding verse He is asking to be glorified, to be crowned with immortality, in the presence of His Father. "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee....And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self"—literally, "in thy presence,"—"with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This last phrase in the original Greek is *pro tou ton kosmos einai*, which may read, literally translated, "before the world to be" (Wilson's Diaglott confirms this rendering). This is the world for which Jesus worked and lived, the world to come, the "world to be," the eternal Kingdom; and He knew that before He could begin the next phase of His life on earth He would have to be glorified, made immortal. He knew at this point that He was ready to receive that glory, that His work was complete. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be at that point in our career, to know that we were certain of God's favor and eternal blessing and glory!

• Celebrate Christ's Birthday?

"I have noted in the Holy Bible that there are only two birthdays mentioned—that of Pharaoh and that of King Herod—both of whom were pagans. Isn't there the possibility that we should not celebrate the birth of Jesus but only His death and resurrection?"

You are correct in your observation that the only two birthdays mentioned in the Bible are those of Herod and Pharaoh. But this says nothing for or against as a state-

ment of God's attitude toward the remembrance of birthdays. Doesn't it seem that the difference lies in who is being honored and for what? If honor is not due our coming King (Paul said that we should render "honour to whom honour" is due), it would be difficult to find anyone to honor.

Our group is very careful not to worship the babe in the manger, though. The "baby" stage is not the Christ we want to recognize and remember. We set aside a day in honor of our coming King, and also in remembrance of the beginning of the sacred New Year and God's great continuing gift of time. It is far from a "birthday" celebration. We have to do whatever we do to "the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31), so this must be our guideline here also.

• The Ten Tribes

"In Luke 1:33 it reads that at the time of Christ's return, 'He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' If Christ is to reign over the house of Jacob, would not this necessitate a generation of Jacob's sons and daughters—not only the Jews but those of the House of Israel, the ten tribes?"

We take the reference to the "house of Jacob" in Luke 1:33 as a figurative illustration of "God's people," "the saints," not a literal Jewish family. Paul speaks of the Jew "inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:28-29). He also says that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6), indicating that God's true "Jews" are not necessarily blood descendants but "adopted" into the family (Rom. 8:15-17). James addressed his letter to "the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," and greets them in the next breath as "My brethren," indicating that the two terms are equal (Jas. 1:1-2).

MM

Abib Is Coming

The Abib season is approaching once again. The new moon following the March equinox occurs this year on April 14. Accordingly, Abib First will fall on the evening of April 13 and continue through April 14, Bible time being measured from evening to evening (Lev. 23:23).

The day will be celebrated at the Megiddo Church with special services of prayer and praise marking both the beginning of the New Year and the remembrance of Christ, His birth, life, work, ministry and future destiny.

Plan now to join us for this sacred season. The anniversary of Christ's New Passover this year (Abib 13) will occur the evening of April 25, followed by the anniversary of His Resurrection on the morning of April 28.

Meditating On the Word

(Continued from page 22)

is willing but the flesh is weak. Only in the strength of Jehovah can we say, "The spirit is willing and the flesh *must*."

"And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." The sixteenth century construction is slightly misleading, due to the use of the word "conversation." Today, of course, the term refers to speech; but the dictionary gives as archaic meanings, "Behavior; conduct; deportment." That is the meaning of the word as used in this Psalm. True, it includes speech, for the tongue is a very stubborn and unruly member; but it is only one of the elements in this "conversation."

It is interesting to note other translations of our text:

"Whoever holds by my rules in his life, I will let him enjoy my help" (Moffatt).

"He that sacrificeth a thankoffering will glorify me, and will prepare a way by which I may show him the salvation of God" (Rotherham).

"He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving does me due honour, and to him who follows my way I will show the salvation of God" (NEB).

"Whoever makes thanksgiving his sacrifice honors me; to the upright man I will show how God can save" (Jerusalem Bible); "...to him who orders the course of his life properly I will extend divine deliverance" (R. K. Harrison, Psalms for Today).

Note that in nearly every instance the word *way* is included. Historians tell us that in the early years of the true Church, before the term "Christian" was generally accepted, it was known simply as the Way. And so it is—a way of life, a strait and narrow way, *the way* leading to eternal glory. If we heed this Way, and at the same time consider our own ways (Hag. 1:7), diligently comparing the two, holding the law in one hand and our soul in the other (Ps. 119:109), and if we mold our lives to fit the pattern, we shall be shown the salvation of God.

The saints will be shown this salvation. "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God" (Luke 13:29). With special invitation they shall be bidden to partake of the glories that await: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9).

Others will see the salvation of God, but only from a distance. They, the unfaithful, the covenant-breakers, will be outside, looking in. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out" (Luke 13:28). If we are counted among them, we shall then realize, if never before, that we paid too high a price for the doubtful privilege of having our own way.

Why not follow the right way, and be ready and acceptable when the time comes for God to take us around and show us His salvation!

MM

The High Price of \$tubbornness

PLIANCY pays dividends. Stubbornness has a price, a very *high* price—as Pharaoh found out.

Pharaoh had a genuine opportunity to listen to God, and reap the benefits; but he refused. When Moses and Aaron first approached him, delivering the word of the Lord: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go," Pharaoh replied, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." True enough, at that point he knew not the Lord. But he was soon to learn.

Moses and Aaron pleaded: "The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword."

But the king of Egypt would not listen. "Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens." And he commanded that the taskmasters of the Israelite slaves no longer give them straw to put into the brick; henceforth they would have to gather straw for themselves—and still produce as many bricks. "For they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God. Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein; and let them not regard vain words" (Ex. 5:1-9).

Hardhearted, stubborn and unreasoning, he had no pity for the cries of the Israelites that resulted from his burden of mistreatment. But the Lord assured Moses that He had a plan for His people, and that all would eventually work

out. "I am the Lord; and I...have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore...I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: and I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God" (Ex. 6:2-7). God was fortifying Moses for the battle, assuring him that eventually Pharaoh not only would let the people go but would actually drive them out (6:1).

When the situation seems most hopeless, God steps in with His almighty power—and, in this case, deliverance.

The chapters that follow recite a pattern that is circular: It begins with God's demand, followed by Pharaoh's refusal; then follows judgment, relenting and lifting of the judgment; then renewed demand, and the cycle begins again.

Stubborn Pharaoh is set forth in Scripture as an illustration of stubbornness and unyielding disobedience. At the same time, Pharaoh is an illustration of God's sovereignty in the exercise of His power and His mercy.

Many people are perplexed at the seemingly contradictory expressions that are found in this section: "Pharaoh hardened his heart" and "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart."

The Bible teaches that men are responsible for their actions and must give account to God. But the Bible also teaches God's sovereignty, that "all things work together" and He "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

Pharaoh hardened his own heart; as the record in Exodus 9:34 plainly states: "And when Pharaoh saw that the [plague] ...ceased, he...hardened his heart." He was not compelled to do so. Pharaoh's

own rebelliousness caused him to harden his heart. Yet even in Pharaoh's rebellion God was working all things according to the counsel of His own will. He allowed the precise situation which eventuated in Pharaoh's hardening of his heart. In a judicial sense, then, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and finally abandoned him to judgment. This was the Hebrew viewpoint. God in His omnipotence was said to do everything that He permitted to be done. Paul states it in these words: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:17-18).

There was design in God's actions against Pharaoh. God wanted Pharaoh to pay heavily for his obstinacy. Each of the plagues was a reminder of this

fact. Each was directed against a single Egyptian deity.

For example, the first plague was on the Nile. The deluded Egyptians made the Nile into a god and worshiped it. Without the Nile, Egypt would have been a desert; with it, Egypt was a garden. Therefore to the Egyptians, the Nile was a "god."

The plagues went on, from one to another, increasing in their intensity until the word of God should be fulfilled—plagues of blood, of frogs, of lice, of flies, of murrain, of boils, of hail, of locusts, of darkness, of death. Pharaoh lost heavily—his army, his country's livelihood, finally even his own life. It was all loss, loss, loss.

And all for his own stubbornness, and resisting the authority of God.

What a high price to pay.

The price has not changed.

What of us? Will we persist in our own ways and pay that exorbitant price for our stubbornness? MM

SO WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Detect the Errors

Joseph in Egypt

When Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, he sent eleven of his sons down to Egypt to buy corn. When Joseph, who was then governor of Egypt, saw his brothers, he knew them and spoke gently to them. He had them put into prison for three days for being spies.

Joseph told them that if they were true men, they should let one of their brothers remain bound in Egypt while they took corn back home. He also asked that they bring back their eldest brother with them.

Jacob finally consented to let Benjamin go into Egypt with his brothers. When Joseph saw Benjamin, he told the ruler to invite them to dine with him that evening.

Before they returned home, Joseph commanded the steward to put his gold cup in Benjamin's sack. After they had gone out of the city, Joseph told his steward to overtake them and tell them that the one who had the cup would die. The cup was found in Benjamin's sack, so they all returned to Joseph's house and fell down before him on the ground.

After Judah pleaded with him, Joseph could no longer refrain himself and told them that he was their brother, Joseph. He gave five hundred pieces of silver and five changes of raiment to Benjamin and sent them home to bring their father, Jacob, back to Egypt. (Answers on page 15)

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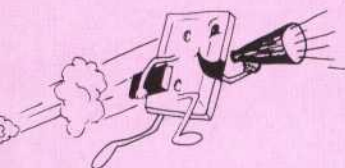
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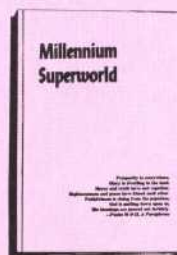
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